



International Lake Champlain - Richelieu River Study Board

Groupe d'étude international du lac Champlain et de la rivière Richelieu

Public Advisory Group

Meeting Minutes

Date: May 29th 2018 from 1 to 4 pm

Location: Lake Champlain Basin Program office, 54 West Shore Road, Grand Isle, Vermont

PAG attendees: Marla Emery, Lori Fisher, Teresa Gagnon, Eric Howe (acting US Co-Chair), Josée Julien, Jérémie Letellier, Mark Malchoff, Madeleine Papineau (Canadian Co-Chair), Renée Rouleau, Philip von Bergen, Harm Sloterdijk (phone), Pierre Leduc (phone)

Additional meeting participants: André Champoux (Outreach Coordinator-Canada), Michael Laitta (US International Joint Commission (IJC) Liaison), Keith Robinson (US Study Co-Chair), Perry Thomas (US Co-Lead Resource Response TWG), Matthew Kraft (RR TWG), Randi Morry (LCRR Communication advisor), Pierre-Yves Caux (Canadian IJC Liaison), Marion Melloul (COVABAR, Study secretariat), Ellen Kujawa (LCBP, Study secretariat)

1. Welcome, introductions, minutes and action items from last meeting (PAG Co-Chairs)

- PAG Co-Chairs discussed the meeting agenda and provided background information. Participants introduced themselves.
- Michael Laitta showed the PAG the Story Map of the PAG's role, activities, meetings, and members.
 - US Study Co-Chair: Will PAG meeting minutes be available on this website/Story map? Mike: Possibly. We need to be careful about making all minutes public, but we may be able to limit how discoverable minutes are and still upload them to the website.
 - A PAG member asked how accessible will this website be to the public? Mike: We can limit any individual piece of information's discoverability.
 - PAG member: Could this tool involve the specific work being undertaken by individual municipalities and counties? Mike: Yes. The first course of action there would likely be to identify each of the counties affected by flooding in the past. We could continue to broaden the uses and applications of this tool over time. US Study Co-Chair: this is something the PAG or the Study could use as a widely applicable tool moving forward. If the PAG approves of this type of tool, they can recommend Story Boards to communicate more findings and actions of the LCRR study moving forward. Mike: this is also a way of collecting the many documents and pieces of information that the Technical Working Groups will be producing.
 - PAG member: Are these products able to evolve once they've been published online? Mike: Yes, they can fairly easily be edited.
- Action and decision items:
 - Michael Laitta will continue to work with PAG members as they identify further opportunities for story boards.
 - PAG approves the current story board going online (with corrected dates). This will be

done by Michael Laitta.

2. Overview of LCRR Study Progress (Keith Robinson, US Study Co-Chair)

- US Study Co-Chair provided an update of the larger LCRR study. The last six months have been very productive. All technical workgroups have been producing new materials; for example, the
 - The Resource Response (RR) group has provided a set of performance indicators and is working on a retrospective analysis of flooding in the Basin. They will also be hosting a watershed storage workshop on June 4th and 5th in St. Albans, Vermont.
 - The Flood management and mitigation measures (FMMM) group continues to evolve their set of potential mitigation measures and plans to meet with stakeholders this summer to discuss these possibilities.
 - The Hydrology, Hydraulics and Mapping (HHM) group has further developed the flood forecasting models for the Lake and River. They have been looking at potential effects of some mitigation methods on water levels in the Lake and River.
 - The Social, Political and Economic (SPE) group has been working on economic analysis and other tasks.
 - The Communications workgroup has produced an updated study brochure to be circulated to the public.
- This is a critical time for the PAG to prioritize what is most important to the public and stakeholders in the Basin as well as think about messaging. The next set of public meetings will be held in the fall and the Study Board will need to present their progress over the last year.
- PAG member: We have many public events coming up, and we'd like to communicate the progress and future actions of the LCRR study – Would you be able to provide a one-page document to this effect in the next two weeks? Keith Robinson: Yes, I think this will be feasible, particularly in collaboration with André Champoux, the Outreach coordinator.
- Action Items:
 - A one-page summary of the LCRR's actions and plans for public distribution will be produced in the next two weeks by Keith Robinson and André Champoux.

3. Session on Resources impacted by flooding with the Resource Response Technical Working Group (TWG) US Co-lead (Perry Thomas)

- Perry Thomas provided a summary of the Resource Response TWG's objectives and actions. Their performance indicators (PI) include critical resources (structural, environmental, agricultural) and water uses (intakes, navigation, and recreation). They have approached this process through an iterative selection procedure – an initial set of PIs will be discussed with stakeholders, and additional PIs will be grounded in the criteria that LCRR Basin decision makers will apply. The group has settled on a modeling system: an Integrated Social-Economic-Environmental System (ISEE). This will be used on both the US and Canadian sides of the border.
- Outreach coordinator: Are these performance indicators intended as modeling tools to determine potential impacts of measures on indicators, or as a post-implementation impact quantification tool? Answer: the model can be used for both of these purposes but is intended as a preemptive tool (before any action is taken).
- PAG member: Are you able to look at the various mitigation measures that have been undertaken on the Richelieu River? How far back does your model reach? Answer: some of this modeling has been undertaken by the FMMM group (retrospective analysis of human impacts)

on the Richelieu River). In addition, one of the RR group members grew up in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and has been able to provide on-the-ground information on these mitigation methods.

- Perry Thomas reviewed examples of other Performance Indicator species, across different taxa, and impacts to fish passage, particularly through Saint-Ours. Cyanobacteria may have an impact on water quality, particularly when blooms die back and affect oxygen levels.
- The group discussed the differences and opportunities to share data between the flood reference and the water quality reference. Perry Thomas noted that the Vermont State legislature just passed a bill to work to protect “lakes in crisis”.
- As mentioned earlier in this meeting, the Resource Response TWG has coordinated and will be hosting a watershed storage workshop in Saint Albans, VT on June 4th and 5th.
- PAG member: Where are the urban and regional planners in this approach? This is a group that should not be neglected as this study proceeds. US Study Co-Chair: many of the TWGs have planning membership and the PAG as well. One of the measures for mitigation is emergency readiness – planners will be contributing to review of this information.
- PAG member: Could you tell us more about the timing and process of adding additional performance indicators to the RR group’s list? We are concerned about the timing of input from indigenous/first nations/tribal leadership – what is the cut-off date for their input? Answer: There’s no real cut-off date, though we’d like to have this information as soon as possible. US Study Co-Chair: it might be helpful to have a tentative deadline – perhaps June, 2020.
- Perry Thomas noted that there was some concern on both sides of the border about priorities – many of the Richelieu River stakeholders had hoped for structural management practices, while stakeholders in Vermont and New York were particularly interested in wetland conservation, restoration, and protection. This may be a cooperative goal as the LCRR study moves forward, as wetland conservation will reduce some of the flooding impacts downstream.
- PAG member asked that the full presentation be shared by email after the meeting.
- PAG member: Can water quality itself be a performance indicator? Canadian PAG Co-Chair: is there a particular water quality indicator or index you could suggest? PAG member: I will defer to Eric Howe (LCBP) on that topic, but we have the benefit of a robustly monitored Lake and substantial data availability. US Study Co-Chair: We have been given explicit direction from the IJC to focus on flooding; we would have to get permission from the IJC commissioners to broaden our focus to water quality.
- PAG member: it is very difficult to model water quality impacts, as it’s a very variable metric. Notwithstanding the IJC limitations on this topic, it is important to model parameters that can be robustly modeled, like the rest of the performance indicators Perry Thomas discussed today.
- PAG member: One more consideration: Tim Mihuc, who serves on the RR TWG, is the New York coordinator of the Lake Champlain long term monitoring program. His experience will, at the very least, inform the RR group’s work.
- PAG member: Which economic and recreational impacts are you considering? Answer: A broad suite of impacts and our efforts have begun by modeling stage damage curves. This topic is still relatively preliminary, but we plan to expand this suite of indicators. Laurent da Silva (SPE economist) will be asked to contact this PAG member.
- Action items:
 - A PAG member requested that additional input be solicited from urban, regional, and land planners.
 - Perry Thomas’ presentation will be shared by email with the PAG.
 - After the watershed storage workshop, a summary notes and findings document will be shared with the PAG.

4. **LCRR Outreach components :**

First Nations and Tribes (Task group)

Conversation with the Outreach Coordinator (André Champoux)

Outreach coordination & Public meetings or events (Randi Morry, PAG Co-Chairs)

- A Canada-US task group has been formed to focus on first nations and tribal outreach. Some meetings have taken place with Abenaki and Mohawks. The US PAG Co-Chair will be following up with the State of Vermont. There have been emails with Mohicans – they requested a letter of request of consultation, which will be developed by the US Study Co-Chair. An indigenous people’s policy is being developed by the IJC and is nearly completed. At least one additional performance indicator will be developed based on discussion with first nations/tribal leadership.
- André Champoux was introduced and he will be acting as outreach coordinator for Canada. He described his role in the LCRR study.
- The next outreach meeting will be on June 8th, with Quebec leadership. On June 13th, there is a meeting with Quebec land planners in the Richelieu River Basin. It was suggested that if any organizations of PAG members would like to have André Champoux talk to them, that they contact him directly. This may be an opportunity to facilitate meetings with urban and regional planners, as a PAG member suggested earlier.
- Is there an equivalent to André Champoux on the US side? Answer: not yet, though we are working with it.
- Action Items:
 - André Champoux will share the document (Canadian Nature Conservancy) from the a recent meeting with PAG members.
 - Any PAG member from Canada who is interested in having André Champoux conduct an outreach meeting for their organization should contact him directly.
- Randi Morry discussed the Communication and Outreach calendar that has been put together for the LCRR study. This is currently available on the SharePoint site, and PAG Co-Chairs will send out this calendar monthly to PAG members. US Study Co-Chair: Will the calendar be shared on the public study site? Transparency is very important.
- Action items:
 - The calendar will be shared with PAG members once a month, and
 - Randi Morry will work to develop a public calendar to be published on the LCRR website.
- The next series of public meetings will be held in November, though this is tentative.

5. **Activity to prioritize LCRR communication and outreach products (introduction by Keith Robinson, leads: André Champoux and Randi Morry)**

- The US Study Co-Chair discussed the need for transparency in the LCRR study efforts. Transparency is particularly important as the IJC will be making recommendations to Vermont, New York and Quebec at the end of the study, and these recommendations need to be informed by public input.
- The PAG conducted an exercise in prioritizing communication and outreach opportunities, led by André Champoux. See results in the Annex.

- PAG member: as a new member, this was a difficult exercise. In the future, a group discussion of each item's content and cost, in addition to the LCRR's total public outreach budget, would be very helpful. Answer: that kind of discussion is likely too time-consuming for this PAG meeting, but the Canadian PAG Co-Chair suggested either forming a subcommittee or bringing this topic back to the PAG in the fall for further discussion with more information that could be provided by Randi Morry.
- PAG member: The study's website is an important first step, as this is one of the easiest ways of reaching a wide audience. People are looking for information about the Study but are not seeing it. Answer: the website currently has about 160 news subscribers; every time we put forth a new outreach material, that list of subscribers increases. US Study Co-Chair suggested posting regular progress reports (monthly).
- Action Items:
 - André Champoux will establish the prioritized list of communication and outreach products and it will be shared with the rest of the PAG (in the minutes).
 - Randi Morry will gather further information (costs, audience, etc) on the list of Communication and Outreach products and present to the PAG.

6. Next PAG meeting (PAG Co-Chairs)

- LCRR Study Board plans to bring any public meeting materials to the PAG before public meetings for a review. So the next PAG meeting will depend on the date of the next round of public meetings.
Other :
- A PAG member wished to share two documents with PAG members.
- Action item:
 - Copies (PDF) of the two documents from the PAG member will be shared with the group.

7. Summary of decisions and actions items (PAG Co-Chairs)

- Michael Laitta will continue to work with PAG members as they identify further opportunities for story boards.
- PAG approves of current story board going online. This will be done by Michael Laitta.
- A one-page summary of the LCRR's actions and plans for public distribution will be produced in the next two weeks by Keith Robinson and André Champoux.
- A PAG member requested that additional input be solicited from urban, regional, and land planners.
- Perry Thomas' presentation will be shared by email with the PAG.
- After the watershed storage workshop, a summary notes and findings document will be shared with the PAG.
- André Champoux will share the document (Canadian Nature Conservancy) from a recent meeting with the PAG members.
- Any PAG member from Canada who is interested in having André Champoux conduct an outreach meeting for their organization should contact him directly.
- The Communication and Outreach calendar will be shared with PAG members once a month, and;
- Randi Morry will work to develop a public calendar to be published on the LCRR website.

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- Randi Morry will gather further information (costs, audience, etc) on the list of Communication an Outreach products and present to the PAG.
- Copies (PDF) of the two documents from the PAG member will be shared with the group

Minutes approved by PAG Co-Chairs on June 7 2018 and by PAG members on October 24, 2018.

**Activity to prioritize LCRR communication and outreach products
Table of « voting process »**

PRODUCTS / ACTIVITIES	TOP PRIORITY	IMPORTANT	INTERESTING	NOT A NECESSITY
Products for the public about Potential flood mitigation measures and scenarios	6	1	1	2
Map handout	0	1	3	2
Video (on hydrology and other topics)	1	1	2	2
Public meetings—2018 to close of Study	3	3	4	0
LCRR Causes & Impacts Report and associated products for the public	1	7	1	1
Feature series--general - factsheets on study issues and new data and measures	4	5	2	1
Feature series—products for the public on new tools and models from the Study	0	2	6	0