



**International Lake Champlain -
Richelieu River Study Board**

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

**Public Advisory Group
*Meeting minutes***

October 24th 2018 from 1 to 4 pm
Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix Town Hall, 959, rue Principale,
Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix, Quebec, J0J 1G0

Participants:

Public Advisory Group: Lori Fisher (Executive Director Lake Champlain Committee), Kristine Stepenuck (US PAG Co-Chair), Pierre Leduc (Vice-President, OBV Brome Missisquoi), Jérémie Letellier (Farmer and local UPA vice-president), Teresa Gagnon (PAG member), Madeleine Papineau (PAG Co-Chair Canada), Renée Rouleau (Saint-George-de-Clarenceville mayor), Harm Sloterdijk (COVABAR administrator), Philip Von Bargen (retired Land use planner), Eric Howe (Program director Lake Champlain Basin Program - LCPB), Mark Malchoff (Scientist, Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program) and Ann Ruzow-Holland (PAG member).

Others: Serge Villeneuve (Study manager Canada), André Champoux (Outreach Coordinator Canada), Michelle Chabot (Land Planner, MRC Haut-Richelieu, observer), Keith Robinson (US Study Co-Chair), Randi Morry (LCRR Communication Advisor), Robert Flynn (U.S. Study manager), Jean-François Cantin (Study Co-Chair Canada) and Marion Melloul (COVABAR, Canadian Secretariat).

Regrets: Marla Emery, Josée Julien, Michael Laitta and Pierre-Yves Caux

1. Welcome, introduction of new members, minutes and action items from the last meeting

- The meeting started with a viewing of the Lake Champlain – Richelieu River (LCRR) video and a round table of participants. There will be a French version of the video for the public meetings.
- Public Advisory Group (PAG) members were invited to send any further comments or corrections on the minutes of the last PAG meeting to Eric Howe. Afterwards they will be final.
- Wednesday, October 24th was the official launch of International Joint Commission's (IJC) modernized website. PAG members were invited to send any comments on

possible bugs to Randi Morry.

- There is a new newsletter (*The Current*) with information about Technical Working Groups (TWG) and IJC progresses on the study. It will be made publicly available every two months. There are also articles about the study in Water Matters (IJC blog).
- The U.S. Study Co-Chair mentioned the Study Board agreed to move forward on a Watershed Storage study.
- The Communication and Outreach calendar was sent out and the PAG Co-Chair Canada and Randi Morry are continuing to improve the product.
- Randi Morry offered to share the Special Planning Committee project plan with the interested PAG members.

2. Feedback and advice for the LCRR Public meetings from November 7-9th 2018

2.1 Overview of the overall communication approach for the public meetings (Randi Morry)

- Printed copies of the factsheets were distributed to PAG members.
- Update regarding communication products:
 - There are 172 subscribers to the Newsletter.
 - Different products were being developed or are finished: Call to action, LinkedIn posts, social media posts, direct mail campaign taking place the week before public meetings, press release to media that are in the area of the public meetings.
 - Printing of a flyer and direct mailing to residents of the three public meetings locations will be done on the week of October 29th.
 - After the public meetings, to keep the momentum, the proposed activities are: posting of an overview of the event online, to respond after the event to any written or formal comments received during the event and release of a special edition of the newsletter in early December.
 - An anticipated question and answer (Q&A) sheet is being created to help the speakers respond to sensitive matters and be on the same page - not for the public.
 - PAG members were invited to send to Randi Morry the postal codes of highly relevant and most impacted neighborhoods by 2011 floods.
- PAG members were urged to share public meetings information within their network.
- A PAG member mentioned that direct mailing will be in competition with other mailings in the U.S because of election week and suggested to make a product that stands out.
- PAG members were invited to share with Randi Morry newspaper or other relevant platforms to share information about the public meetings in Quebec and the U.S.
- Communications are dependent on a set budget and we need to get the widest reach with the less expenses.
- PAG members requested that Randi Morry shares the existing list of media outlets with the PAG so they could help identify highest priority outlets to which to advertise, so as to utilize the limited budget most efficiently. It will be shared electronically.
- Another PAG member suggested reaching out to municipalities and adding the information to community calendars.
- PAG members were invited to suggest questions for the anticipatory Q&As.

A PAG member:

- indicated that the study needs to inform the public on how it is spending public funds, on what progress has been achieved on the flooding issue and it also needs to reassure the public regarding several rumors related to the causes of the 2011 flood (U.S. dams responsible of the floods, impact of the Chambly Canal).
- mentioned the dichotomy of opinions on both sides of the border and the need to understand the problem.
- mentioned that the white text in the figure on one of the fact sheets was hard to read and that white text should not be used at all in the series.
- indicated that the end result of the study should not be recommendations but rather actions.
- suggested that Randi Morry send the contact list for direct mailing to the PAG members so they can reflect on and respond to it.

2.2 Run-through of the LCRR Study progress PowerPoint presentation by Jean-François Cantin and PAG feedback

- The Canadian Study Co-Chair mentioned that the LCRR video will be played after the introduction by the PAG Co-Chair. He will then go into the LCRR presentation.
- Each PAG member was given 2 minutes to comment on the LCRR presentation. The following comments were shared by participants:
 - Set the stage for those who do not know anything about the LCRR study. Correct typo in the slide regarding "desirability." Recommendations came out in 1982 not in the 1970s.
 - The wording gave a general feeling that the study just started, for example, by using "we will assess." Use a more assertive wording like "we are assessing." The role of IJC compared to government needs to be better highlighted during the presentation. Add a slide specifying at the beginning what the IJC does (and does not). Remember that after the meetings, the presentation will be online and people won't be able to benefit of what was said during the presentation. When mentioning that the IJC is researching best practices and inspiration from North America and elsewhere in the world, give examples of the best practices and location they come from.
 - With respect to farmers, flooding farm land is mentioned as a solution but farmers are also victims of floods. The Canadian Study Co-Chair indicated the analysis of the quantification of impacts on agricultural areas was not done yet. Showing some empathy might help with the farmers that will be attending the public meetings.
 - One person wondered if there were results from the research carried out this summer (Isabelle Thomas and students) during which they talked to many local people. The impact of floods on the ability of soil to retain water afterwards was also seen as important.
 - People may ask questions about the water level graph in the presentation, slide 6 (What happened in the 1970's to create the step we see in the graph?). The Canadian Study Co-Chair replied that he will explain it. When looking at mitigation measures, people will want to know the impacts downstream such as sedimentation.

- People will want to know what the impacts are both upstream and downstream of the deflatable weir. When looking at obstructions in the river, there are also some at the end of the Chambly basin.
- Insist on the concept that the basin ties everyone together, on the unifying effect of the basin allowing a common understanding.
- The study will only be making recommendations. You need to clarify the subjects the IJC is not focusing on, for example, erosion or flooding impacts of the past. Insist on what it is about, flood mitigation because there might be a loss of understanding of what the study is.
- There are too many slides so you are going through them at a very quick pace. For certain slides (6 and 12) you may want to give out handouts to support the information on the slide itself. Someone else mentioned that when reading the slide, they tend not to listen. Slide 5 was seen as distracting because it contains too many details (remove the table and add red circles to identify those years on the flowing slide).
- There was a lot of discussion on slide 6: remove most of the text on slide 6 and underline the relevant peaks of water levels. Leave legend but switch the two trend legends to be above the appropriate years. Do not use the same colors for the two temporal averages. Highlight years related to special events (floods) that happened in the U.S and Canada, insisting that the public might not see this data as averages. Make sure to explain X and Y axis.
- It was suggested to insist more on the link with climate change but also on that with land planning with floods. The regulatory aspect is important for the locals and it was suggested to highlight further the integration and collaboration with the land planners. *What are we doing about people building in the flood plain?*
- Remember we can only recommend. We can't regulate. One of our principles might be that we can't increase the risk more than it was before.
- The IJC, through this study, is a great example of cooperation, of the building of a common effort by working in groups with the stakeholders. A slide could be added on this topic.
- The U.S. Study Co-chair wanted to add a slide on the integration of watershed storage in the study, mentioning preliminary analysis have been done (it is seen as an important issue especially on US side).

2.3 Meeting agenda and format

Public meetings will take place:

- On November 7, the meeting will be at Fort Saint-Jean in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu starting at 7 pm. The meeting will be in French with simultaneous translation.
- On November 8th, the meeting will be in Whallonsburg, New York at 6 pm at the Grange Hall.
- On November 9th, it will be at the Double Tree Hotel in South Burlington, Vermont, at 6 pm.

The format is basically: Registration, Part 1 LCRR Study Progress Part 2 Access to the experts and a Wrap-up. There will be a Communication table. In Saint-Jean there will also be an Outreach and Partnership table.

The themes and leads could be as follows:

- Flood mitigation : Ted Yuzyk/Bill Werick
- Flood forecasting : Jean Morin/Jesse Feyen
- Flood impacts : Perry Thomas/Glenn Benoy
- Flood planning and resiliency : Curt Gervich/to be confirmed

In Canada, a Study Board member will be assigned to each theme.

3. Role of PAG members during public meetings

For the Saint-Jean-sur Richelieu meeting, PAG members who attend are invited to be a special pair of eyes and ears for the study to gauge the reaction of the public. They are asked to be attentive to the exchanges with the public particularly during the interactive thematic sessions at the public meeting. It would be greatly appreciated if they send in a short report on what they saw as the highlights of the discussions with the public, after the event.

Regarding the US public meetings, the objectives will be the same as in Quebec, with the same format for the video and the presentation. There will be a Q/A period with experts (themes above). Afterwards, there will be an interactive session with 5 stations, each centered around one specific question where PAG members will help facilitate the discussion (writing ideas on a flipchart). The goal is to collect informal feedback from the participants. The 5 questions presented were suggested by the Technical Working Groups (TWG). The US PAG members are preparing a list of stakeholder groups and potential reasons each will have interest in the Study. The US PAG Co-Chair will send emails to invite those groups to participate based on the most relevant potential reasons of interest.

- The PAG was asked if there were any more important questions than the ones chosen or any other comments. A PAG member:
 - raised the concern that experts at the kiosks might monopolize the discussion on technical matters and limit the feedback from participants.
 - suggested to change the wording on the question regarding structural solutions, replacing “proposed solution” by “considered to be proposed”
 - the US Study Co-Chair suggested the following question : " Are there solutions you heard about and want to be considered by the study? "
 - wished to add " Are there considered solutions that you fear will personally impact you negatively?"
 - suggested rephrasing the first bullet "what idea do you have for any solutions?" (not only structural solutions)
 - asked if there was a reason why the words "your property" were not used in the questions and suggested to reword some questions to personalize them.
- Showing flood photos during the registration of the event was suggested. The Communication advisor will look at what was used during the last public meetings (Slideshow with flood photos from 2011) .
- In response to someone’s concern that Quebec attendees will not have the same opportunity to contribute ideas, for the Quebec public meeting, it was suggested to have a flipchart at each kiosk to write participants’ suggestions, in similar fashion to

the planned “world café” format to be used in New York and Vermont.

- A PAG member suggested these stations or “Knowledge cafés” serve as brainstorm sessions and not long dialogue with TWG experts.
- It was specified that all PAG members won’t be able to participate in every public meeting due to restricted budget and/or lack of time.
- The US PAG Co-Chair asked if the themes of the suggested kiosks were wide enough. The Canadian Study Co-Chair mentioned the word “forecasting” was not wide enough. It was explained that “forecasting” was chosen because it was the most useful for the study members but also for people.
- A PAG member mentioned the U.S. will be in an election week, which might affect the turn out results in the US.

4. Other updates

- PAG members were informed about Bernard Doyon’s land surveying project: surveyors are going to local properties to establish stage damage curve to assess the economic value of potential loss due to floods. A copy of the draft notice will be sent to Quebec PAG members.
- A PAG member gave an update on the legal issue regarding the contestation of high water level line established by the government in Quebec and informed the PAG members it will be postponed for an additional year.
- The US focus groups, planned with political entities preceding the U.S Public meetings have been postponed until the end of November.

5. Next PAG meeting

The next PAG meeting could be in April or early May 2019, will be in the U.S and might consist of a field trip in the morning, followed by the meeting in the afternoon. It was mentioned that the following Fall PAG meeting could be in Saint-George-de-Clarenceville.

6. Summary of actions

- PAG members are invited to send their corrections to the minutes of the last Spring PAG meeting to Eric Howe.
- PAG members are invited to provide any feedback by Friday to Randi Morry on the communications products produced for the public meetings (video and the fact sheets) and provide possible Q/As and key postal codes for the postal drop.
- Study Co-chairs and Study managers will take PAG comments into consideration and adjust the LCRR overview presentation.
- Bernard Doyon’s notice regarding the land surveying project will be sent to PAG members (in Quebec).
- Randi Morry will see if she can find the slideshow with flood photos from last year.
- PAG members that attend the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu meeting will send in a short report on what they saw as the highlights of the discussions with the public, after the event.
- A doodle poll to settle a date for next PAG meeting (Spring 2019) will be sent out in the following weeks.

Minutes approved by PAG Co-Chairs on November 21, 2018 and by PAG members on May 10, 2019.