Fact Sheet/Spring 2005

Lake Champlain Basin

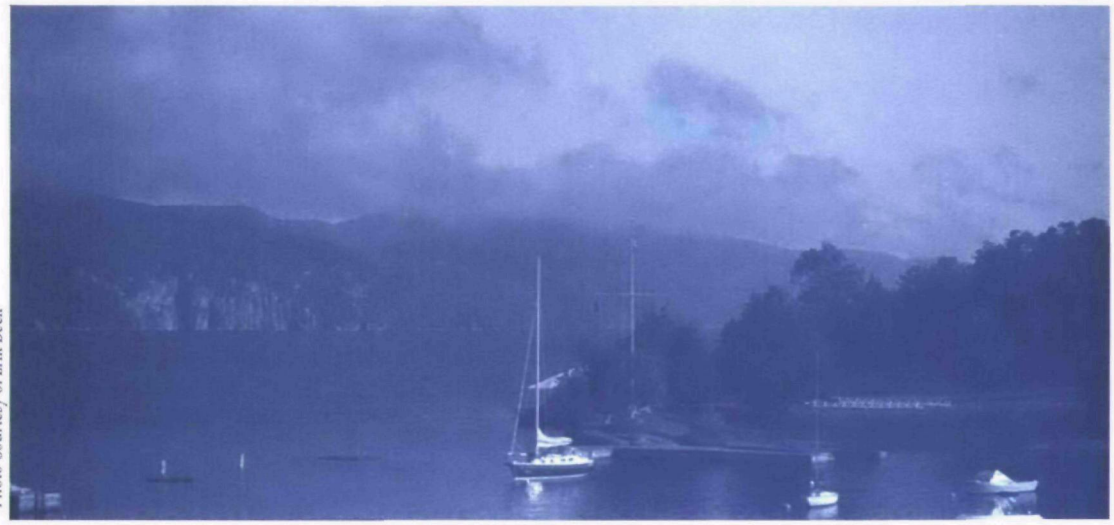

Photo Courtesy of Erik Beck

Watersheds

A watershed is the land that water flows across or under on its way to a stream, river or lake and is nature's way of dividing up the landscape. New England includes many eco-systems that, by virtue of their ecological value, recreational value, or proximity to large populations, hold a special significance to us. EPA New England is focusing particular attention and resources on these special places. Working closely with our federal, state and local partners, these community based initiatives aredelivering tangible environmental improvements to these watershed areas.

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What Makes Lake Champlain Basin Special?

- ▶Lake Champlain is a rich biological resource with the unparalleled beauty of rural farm and small town landscapes nestled among mountains.
- ▶It is the largest lake in New England and has been designated as part of a United Nations Biosphere Reserve. Through the Moynihan Act of 2002, Congress has again recognized the lake as a place worthy of protection.
- ▶The lake has a rich concentration of underwater historical artifacts, and is considered by some to be the most historic body of water in North America.
- ▶Economic impact of tourism along the lake is over $154 million annually.

What are the Environmental Issues?

- ▶High levels of phosphorus encourage algae blooms and excessive plant growth in parts of the lake.
- ▶Persistent toxic contaminants are found in the lake's sediments and fish.
- ▶Invasive, non-native aquatic plants and animals—such as zebra mussels, water chestnuts, alewives, and milfoil—displace native species and reduce recreational values.

What are the Long Term Goals?

- ▶Continue to reduce phosphorus loads to the lake to improve water quality.
- ▶Improve riparian cover along rivers and streams in the basin.
- ▶Prevent the spread of alewives to new basin locations.
- ▶Reduce frequency and extent of blue-green algae blooms.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Progress has Been Made?

- ▶In 2004, EPA funded the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) with about $1.6 million to assist their efforts.
- ▶EPA has funded geomorphic assessment protocols and funded studies for many streams restorations in the basin.
- ▶University of Vermont, with funding from EPA through LCBP, has been researching the emergency and toxicity patterns of blue-green algae blooms.
- ▶The extent of water chestnut infestation has been reduced by 40 miles.
- ▶The Lake Champlain Management Plan has been revised and published in English and French.
- ▶A stream stability assessment and demonstration project has been completed on the Trout River.
- ▶NY DEC removed 20,000 pounds of PCBs from Lake Champlain's Cumberland Bay by dredging 140,000 tons of material from a 50 acre site at an approximate cost of $35 million. EPA funded the study that found the contamination.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2005?

- ▶Research the possible connection between herbicide residues and increase blue-green algae growth.
- ▶Investigate non-chemical means for controlling sea lampreys in Lake Champlain tributaries.
- ▶Continue water quality monitoring started in 1992.

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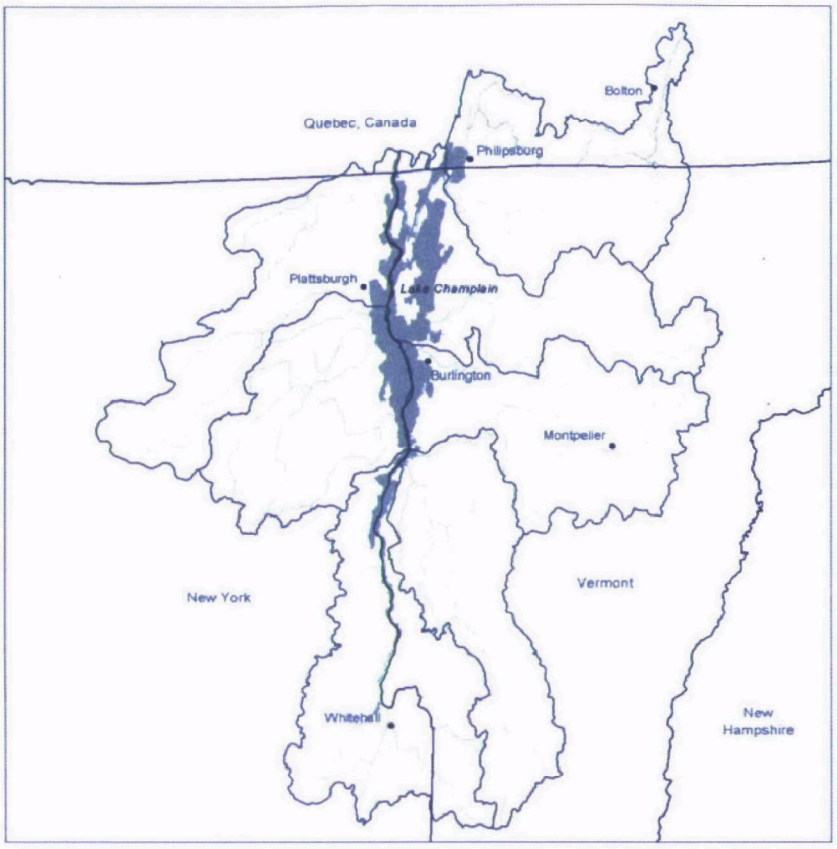
Lake Champlain Basin



Legend

- Surface Water
- Rivers
- Watershed Boundary
- State Boundary

N

10 0 10 20 Miles

Data Sources: Political boundaries from NYGIS and VCGI at 1:24,000.
Watersheds from USGS at 1:250,000.
Surface water from USGS at 1:2,000,000.
January 17, 2002

About the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP):

The federal Lake Champlain Special Designation Act of 2002 created the LCBP to develop a comprehensive pollution prevention, restoration and control plan for the lake. Plan implementation by the LCBP is guided by the Lake Champlain Steering Committee, which represents diverse lake and basin interests. The program is administered by the US EPA and the states of New York and Vermont, and gets input from Vermont, New York and Quebec Citizen Advisory Committees, a Technical Advisory Committee, and an Education and Outreach Committee. Funding for the LCBP is provided primarily by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), with additional funding by the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Watersheds

Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • EPA Region 2 • US Agency of Commerce and Community Development • VT Agency of Natural Resources • VT Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Markets • NY Dept. of Environmental Conservation • NY Dept. of Agriculture and Markets • Many Province of Quebec Agencies • New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission • USACE • USFWS • USDA • USGS • NPS • NOAA • Sea Grant • Environmental Organizations • Watershed Associations • Lake Champlain Research Consortium • VT/NY/QUE Citizen Advisory Committees • Lake Champlain Chambers of Commerce • Center for Lake Champlain • Lake Champlain Maritime Museum • Champlain Basin Educational Initiative • 232 towns • Universities in NY/VT • WPTZ • Empire State Development • VT Agency of Transportation • NY State Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

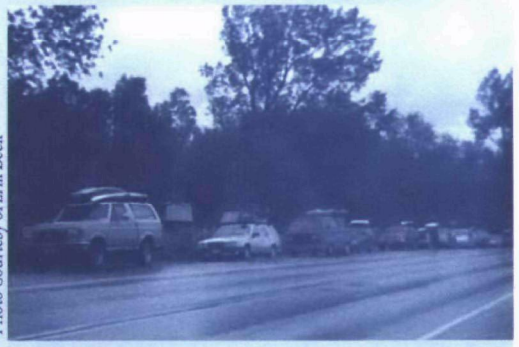


Photo Courtesy of Erik Beck

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