

Lake George Watershed Conference

Operating Procedures

Background

The Lake George Watershed Conference was created in 2001 through a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the member organizations who participated in preparation of "*Lake George - Planning for the Future*," a long-term plan for protecting and improving Lake George's water quality. The New York State Secretary of State chairs the Conference and a Project Manager undertakes duties in support of the Conference. Activities of the Conference are largely financed through Environmental Protection Fund grants, funds appropriated annually by each watershed municipality, and in-kind/volunteer services and materials from the member organizations.

The Conference includes nine municipalities and three counties around the Lake, five state agencies, and nine nonprofit organizations involved in protecting the Lake.

Role of the Conference

The Watershed Conference serves as a forum for local governments, non-governmental organizations, and state agencies to work in partnership to address complex Lake issues in a coordinated manner. The Conference has no approval or review function for actions proposed or undertaken by the individual members, or other organizations. Beyond serving as a cooperative forum, the function of the Conference is to agree upon annual and long-term priorities for protecting the Lake, including the scope of applications submitted on behalf of the Conference to implement these priorities.

The charter of the Conference, as described in the Memorandum of Agreement of August 2001, is as follows:

- a. Advance activities to implement the water quality protection plan for the Lake, entitled "*Lake George: Planning for the Future*;" and the sequel to same, entitled, "*Implementation Status & Future Priorities Report*"
- b. Periodically establish, review, and update priority actions for protecting the Lake;
- c. Identify funding priorities for consideration by members when applying for grants and other financial assistance;
- d. Periodically review activities undertaken to protect the Lake;
- e. Facilitate coordination of efforts, sharing of information, and increased education of Conference members related to water quality issues affecting the Lake;
- f. Approve an annual work plan and budget for the Conference;
- g. Convene an annual forum for the purpose of reviewing past accomplishments and discussing actions needed to further protection of the Lake;
- h. Establish sub-committees, as needed; and
- i. Adopt bylaws and procedures for the conduct of its business, as necessary.

Membership

The Watershed Conference includes the following members, or a designated representative: the Chief Elected Officials of the Village of Lake George and towns of Lake George, Bolton, Hague, Ticonderoga, Dresden, Putnam, Fort Ann, and Queensbury; New York State Secretary of State; Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation; Chair of the Lake George Park Commission; Chair of the Adirondack Park Agency; Chair of the Boards of Supervisors for Warren, Washington, and Essex counties; Chair of the Soil and Water Conservation Districts for Warren, Washington, and Essex counties; District Conservationist of the Natural Resources Conservation Service; President of the Lake George Association; Chair of The Fund for Lake George; Associate Director of the Darrin Fresh Water Institute; Executive Director of the Lake George Land Conservancy; Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Warren County; and the Executive Director of the Lake Champlain - Lake George Regional Planning and Development Board. The New York State Secretary of State shall serve as Chair of the Watershed Conference.

Role of the Chair

The Chair of the Watershed Conference shall be responsible for the following:

- a. Scheduling meetings of the Conference, preparing the agenda, and conducting Conference meetings;
- b. Establishing sub-committees and naming the chairs;
- c. Overseeing duties of the Project Manager; and
- d. Fostering cooperative approaches to issues affecting protection of Lake water quality.

Role of Subcommittees

The Conference Chair may establish subcommittees, as needed. The Conference Chair shall appoint a subcommittee chair from Conference members. Current subcommittees are established for Project Management and Public Participation.

The Project Management Subcommittee works to facilitate completion of previously agreed upon water quality priorities, as set forth in an annual or multi-year work program. The subcommittee shall also provide recommendations for future cooperative projects to the full Conference for consideration and acceptance by the full Conference, including, but not limited to, grant applications to implement agreed upon priority projects.

The Public Participation Subcommittee is established to deliver public outreach and education on issues related to Lake George water quality. The subcommittee shall prepare an annual Public Participation and Outreach Plan, which shall be presented to the full Conference for its acceptance, and shall undertake its activities in accordance with such plan.

Each subcommittee chair shall provide the full Conference with a progress report of activities underway on a monthly basis, including, but not limited to contacts made to advance the project, correspondence, suggestions for modification to how the project is being advanced, and problems encountered and actions taken.

All Conference members are eligible and encouraged to participate in these, or any, Conference

subcommittees.

An Executive Committee is proposed that would be charged with reviewing actions and acting on behalf of the Conference when action is needed between meetings or when a meeting cannot be held.

Conference Director

The Conference Director shall have the following duties:

- a. Provide support for meetings of the Conference, including assistance in the preparation of agendas; provision of supporting material, including correspondence, to Conference members; and preparation of meeting summaries;
- b. Assist in establishing, and provide support for, Conference subcommittees to deal with specific program initiatives or issues;
- c. Establish office space for the Conference at a location acceptable to the NYS Department of State;
- d. Oversee completion of the priority projects agreed upon by the Conference, including coordination and review of such initiatives and projects with Conference members;
- e. Report on expenditures made under various grant programs or other sources of revenue that support the work of the Conference;
- f. Advise Conference members of issues related to Lake George water quality;
- g. Communicate progress of, and challenges to, efforts throughout the watershed, including the identification of opportunities for cooperative problem solving;
- h. Prepare and maintain an annual work plan for implementation of the priority projects established by the Conference;
- i. Advise Conference members of funding sources available for implementation of projects identified in the watershed plan;
- j. Prepare project funding applications for priority projects agreed upon by the Conference, and submit to the Conference for approval prior to submission of such applications; and
- k. Organize and participate in an annual forum that examines achievements in advancing elements of the plan, re-assesses plan priorities, and reports to the public the progress in implementing the plan and other efforts to protect Lake George.

The Conference Director will report to the Director of the Division of Coastal Resources, NYS Department of State, and will oversee or directly undertake assigned tasks to the satisfaction of the Department of State. The duties and compensation of the Conference Director will be set forth in annual subcontracts with a particular municipality serving as the recipient of an Environmental Protection Fund grant awarded to implement established priorities on behalf of the Watershed Conference, which shall be approved by the NYS Department of State. Specific activities to be undertaken by the Conference Director will be described in quarterly work programs prepared by the Conference Director, acceptable to the Department of State.

To keep Conference members informed, the Conference Director will provide quarterly work programs to Conference members. , together with the status of key projects that are not reported on by subcommittee chairs,

Meetings

The Conference and its sub-committees shall meet at least once very three months, or more frequently as may be needed.

Agendas for Conference and subcommittee meetings will be prepared and provided to Conference members in advance of meetings and posted on the Watershed Conference web site. Summaries of decisions made and actions taken at the meetings will be prepared and provided to Conference members, as well as posted on the Watershed Conference web site. Agendas for Conference and subcommittee meetings will be established by the Conference Chair, or subcommittee Chair. Suggestions for topics of discussion for such meetings from Conference members are encouraged, and should be communicated to the Conference Director.

Decision-making

The following actions will be presented to the full Conference for discussion and acceptance by a majority vote of the Conference members:

- a. Updates to "*Lake George - Planning for the Future*," status reports on progress made to implement "*Lake George - Planning for the Future*," and priority actions to be taken to implement the plan as presented in a multi-year work program for the Conference;
- b. Annual work program for the Conference Director;
- c. Work programs for specific projects undertaken through Environmental Protection Fund grants to implement priorities of "*Lake George - Planning for the Future*."
- d. Grant applications submitted to implement the work program and priorities of the Conference; and
- e. Correspondence, press releases, speeches, or other communication that represents the policy of the Conference or that sets a direction for the Conference as a whole or which affects the implementation of "*Lake George - Planning for the Future*" or of EPF-funded grant projects.