SAAWA

Working to Restore the Bay

January 31, 2011

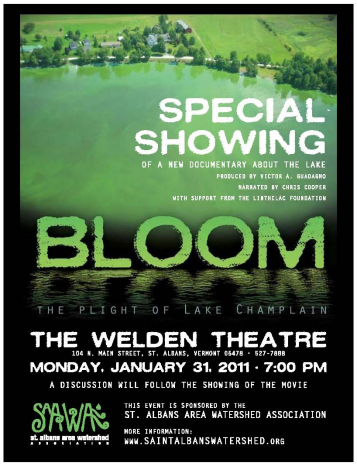
St. Albans Area Watershed Association

From the President

Eric Wolinsky

Though the lake is frozen over, that doesn't mean SAAWA has stopped working on 'Restoring St. Albans Bay.' There is a lot going on.

We are presenting a special showing of *Bloom – The Plight of Lake Champlain,* a documentary about the state of the Lake. Please be sure to join us Monday January 31 at 7:00 at the Welden Theater. This half hour movie explains the problems with water quality of the lake and proposes some directions for a solution. It is a must see for everyone who is interested in the Lake. St. Albans Bay shows up quite a bit, as does yours truly.



Vermont has a new Governor. We also have new people at the regulating agencies. SAAWA is in the process of having meetings with them to increase the urgency of improving the state of the lake. The State (and Federal) budgets are going to be tight these next few years, so we must lobby effectively for funding for Lake Champlain at the same time we work on cost effective solutions.

On the ground, we have quite a few initiatives and projects. Weed harvesting will continue this summer. We are working with the town to improve the usability of the town park. We are also in the beginning stages of working with landholders to increase the buffers along the waterways in the watershed. We continue to try to hire a part time Project Coordinator. We are always looking for volunteers to join our board or to participate in a project.

I invite each of you to attend our meeting, the third Wednesday of each month at 5:00pm, held in the summer at the Bay Park Pavilion, and in the winter at the St. Albans Free Library. Check www.saintalbanswatershed.org for current meeting places or changes.

We hope to see you there.

Spread the word & bring all your friends who care about the lake!

BLOOM is …

… the *sign of disrepair* of our food systems, our urban communities, and our aging economic infrastructure.

… the *symptom of neglect* in the Green Mountain State.

… the *call for action*, to save our soils, streams, and lakes - the very foundations of our communities and economies.

… the *story of Lake Champlain*.

What is *and* what could be.

Join us for a special showing of "Bloom" the movie, a documentary about the lake.

Monday, January 31st 7:00 p.m. Welden Theatre

A discussion will follow the showing of the movie.
104 North Main St
St. Albans
802-527-7888

Summer 2010…The Summer of Our Discontent

The combination of hot weather and low water conditions led to one of the worst years in recent history of St. Albans Bay water quality. These conditions led to a well attended mid-summer meeting at the St. Albans Bay Park with Julie Moore, Director of Clean and Clear, a division of the Agency for Natural Resources.

Please consider becoming a member of the St. Albans Area Watershed Association and let our voices be heard in Montpelier. **A membership form is on the last page of this newsletter.**

Weed Harvester Progress in the Bay

Steve Cushing

The St. Albans Area Watershed Association has now coordinated mechanical weed harvesting on St. Albans Bay for five seasons. For three years we contracted out the harvesting at significant cost which included rental of a tractor and dump cart which was operated by volunteers. In 2008 we purchased a harvester. We have operated that machine during the summers of 2009 and 2010. Operation of the machine is done by an independent contractor, John's Car Clinic, Inc., who also maintains the weed harvester. The cost of weed harvesting has been significantly reduced.

The weather during 2010 was ideal for weed growth. An early Spring, relatively low water levels, good water clarity and abundant sunshine created ideal conditions for the worst weed infestation possibly ever experienced. We conservatively estimate that 120 tons of weeds were removed from the lake which, absent of water is about 12 tons of organic matter having the nutrient equivalent of cow manure.

We have concluded that a mini excavator with a bucket and thumb modified to rake and pick up the weeds along the shore would be next step our weed removal capability. The weeds will be loaded directly into a dump truck, a drawn dump cart, or onto the weed harvester where access prohibits the use of a dump truck or tractor drawn dump cart.

Removing weeds from St. Albans Bay reduces the amount of phosphorus in the Bay which would accumulate if allowed to decompose in the lake. A ton of weeds allowed to compost out of water has a nutrient content comparing favorably with cow manure. Removing he weeds also reduces the amount of organic matter accumulating at the bottom of the bay. More than 40 cubic yards of weeds were removed during each day of operation (approximately six 7-yard dump truck loads.) We think we can increase the volume of weeds being removed through the use of a mini excavator and clear critical areas of the shore line.

Removing the dense weed masses which grow about 100 to 200 feet off shore has dramatically improved water circulation and allowed wave action to reach the shore. Wave action and water circulation improves water quality through oxygenation and reduces the occurrence of algae blooms. Having the capability to remove weeds from the shore line will greatly enhance the effort to maintain water quality and reduce algae booms.

PRESS RELEASE

EPA Takes Step to Improve Lake Champlain Water Quality

(Boston, Mass. – Jan. 24, 2011) – After a careful review, EPA has disapproved Vermont's 2002 water quality plan that set phosphorus targets for discharges into Lake Champlain. Following this action, EPA intends to work closely and collaboratively with the State to develop a new plan for reductions in phosphorus from sources in Vermont. Elevated levels of phosphorus cause algae blooms and other water quality problems in Lake Champlain. Today's action follows EPA's reconsideration and withdrawal of its 2002 approval of the plan. The Conservation Law Foundation had challenged that approval in federal court.

EPA's decision concerns Vermont's 2002 Lake Champlain Phosphorus "TMDL," a technical document that establishes the "Total Maximum Daily Load" for phosphorus in the lake. The TMDL is a pollution budget for an impaired water body, which identifies the pollutant loads that may be contributed by various sources at levels that will restore and maintain water quality. Under the federal Clean Water Act, TMDLs must meet certain requirements.

In the decision announced today, EPA concluded that certain aspects of Vermont's 2002 phosphorus TMDL for Lake Champlain did not satisfy federal requirements. EPA found that the TMDL did not provide sufficient assurance that phosphorus reductions from polluted runoff will be achieved, and it did not provide an adequate margin of safety to account for uncertainty in the analysis. EPA will now begin working closely with Vermont environmental officials to prepare a new TMDL for the parts of Lake Champlain addressed in Vermont's 2002 TMDL. During this upcoming process, EPA will ensure ample opportunity for public input. "We plan to work together with the State in our shared goal of better protecting Lake Champlain," said Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA's New England office. "Our action today doesn't mean that Vermont's earlier efforts haven't had value. But looking forward, clearly more needs to be done to address the challenges presented by ongoing pollution. This action also should not affect ongoing lake restoration projects such as those supported by Vermont's Clean and Clear initiative and the Lake Champlain Basin Program. These projects are very important and should continue while the TMDL is being revised."

With or without the 2002 TMDL in place, Lake Champlain remains impaired and in need of restoration. Water quality monitoring data clearly indicate that significant work is needed to reduce phosphorus to the levels necessary to protect the lake. In the past, some observers have speculated that a new TMDL could result in stricter pollution limits for wastewater treatment plants within the Lake Champlain basin, but Spalding cautioned that "It is too early to know what effect a revised TMDL will have on permits for wastewater treatment plant discharges or stormwater discharges. This will become clearer as the TMDL is developed."
Although this disapproval does not apply to the New York portion of the Lake Champlain TMDL (which was approved separately from the Vermont portion in 2002 and was not contested), EPA will seek to involve New York in the development of any aspects of the new Vermont TMDL that might affect the New York TMDL, including for example, any updates to the lake modeling work used to develop the phosphorus loading capacity of the lake.

Contact: David Deegan, EPA Public Affairs (617) 918-1017

Become a Member of
The St. Albans Area Watershed Association

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Summer Address (if applicable): _____

CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP LEVEL

Student	$5	___	Lake Advocate (receive a SAAWA Hat)	$ 50	___
Individual (under 18 receive a SAAWA Hat)	$10	___	Lake Steward (receive a signed Mike Winslow book)	$100	___
Family	$20	___	Business	$150	___

St. Albans Area Watershed Association
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