CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED
IMPROVEMENT COALITION OF NEW YORK
CLINTON | ESSEX | FRANKLIN | WARREN | WASHINGTON | COUNTIES

Annual Report

2024

CWICNY REPRESENTATIVES

2024 Executive Board

Kristin Ballou, President
Alice Halloran, Vice President
Peter Hagar, Treasurer
Jim Lieberum, Secretary

2024 CWICNY Members

Soil and Water Conservation District

Peter Hagar, Clinton County
Alice Halloran, Essex County
Kristin Ballou, Franklin County
Jim Lieberum, Warren County
Corrina Aldrich, Washington County

Water Quality Coordinating Committee

Gary Henry, Clinton County
Vic Putman, Essex County
Shayla Pfendler, Franklin County
Sarah Brugger, Warren County
Ashley Leemans, Washington County

Lake Champlain/ Lake George Regional Planning Board

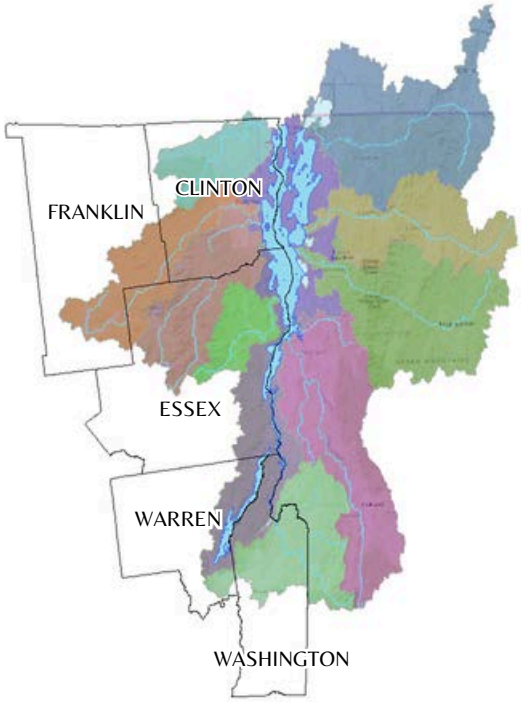
Sam Blake

The mission of the Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York is to foster collaborative planning and implement projects that protect water quality, increase resilience, and enhance natural resources to meet local needs and support a healthier Lake Champlain

Message from the President, Kristin Ballou

The Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York (CWICNY) is actively leading the charge in water quality initiatives, education, and information sharing. Since the development of our strategic plan, we have made significant strides in aligning our efforts with our organizational goals. In 2024, we successfully secured funding for a range of impactful projects and initiatives, including the implementation of soil health practices, erosion control projects along roadsides and in forested areas, and support for the North Country Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference. Additionally, we are already laying the groundwork for multiple project applications in 2025. To further enhance our capabilities, we will be hiring a CWICNY Coordinator in 2025, enabling us to better serve the community and execute projects and events across the watershed.

This report highlights our achievements over the past year. Our partnerships are stronger than ever, and we are proud of our collaborative relationships with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), the NYS Soil & Water Conservation Committee, NEIWPCC (New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission), the Lake George Association, Lake Champlain Sea Grant, the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board, the AuSable River Association, the Upper Saranac Foundation, the Boquet River Association, Trout Unlimited, and the LCBP New York Citizen Advisory Committee.

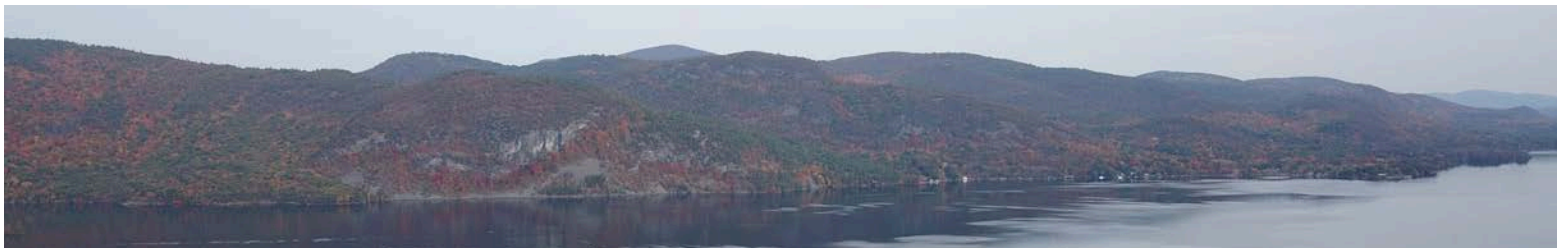


I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my fellow board members and CWICNY members for their unwavering dedication and contributions. Their commitment of time and resources has been invaluable in ensuring that CWICNY fulfills its mission and remains responsive to the evolving challenges facing Lake Champlain.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2024, we are truly enthusiastic about welcoming 2025 and the wealth of opportunities it holds.

Thank you!,

Kristin Ballou



WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER?

THE NORTH COUNTRY STORMWATER TRADESHOW AND CONFERENCE

Since 2005 the Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition of New York has been hosting the North Country Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference to provide a daylong conference on adaptive techniques to address stormwater for water quality. Each year this event has grown to offer a wide variety of courses that discuss current events, new and old techniques, and upcoming resources for stormwater management. This year's course included:

·*Forest Roads for the Future*

·*Surface Water Supplies: Regulations & Permitting, Detecting HABs*

·*Ms4 Permit: Tracking, Reporting, Compliancy… Oh My!*

·*High Performance Permanent Erosion Control*

·*Lake George Basin Septic Inspections: Program Development and Results*

·*Low-Impact Landscape Designs – Rain Gardens to Shorelines*

·*Unifying Stormwater – Engaging Landowners in the Watershed*

This event attracted 149 attendees ranging from municipal staff, planning and zoning, engineers, landscape architects, resource professionals, and more. 16 vendors showcased products, designs, and projects related to improving water quality. Attendees received continuing education credits for NYS Erosion & Sediment Control Certificate (NYS E&SCCP), Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC), Practicing Institute of Engineers, and American Planning Association.

Save the date for the North Country Stormwater Tradeshow and Conference

October 21, 2025 – hosted in the Champlain Watershed region!

Planning Committee Members:

- Maren Stoddard, NYS E&SCCP – Warren County Soil & Water Conservation District marens@warrenswcd.org
- Jillian Zajac – Clinton County Soil & Water Conservation District Jillian.zajac@ccsoil-water.com
- Randy Rath, NYS E&SCCP – Lake George Park Commission Randy@lgpc.state.ny.us
- Sean Doty, P.E. – Suozzo, Doty & Associates sdoty@sdapllc.com
- Kristin Ballou – Franklin County Soil & Water Conservation District kballou@fcswcd.org

Planning for the 2025 event has already begun! Save the Date for October 21, 2025!

WORLD WATER DAY

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) and the Champlain Basin Education Initiative (CBEI) brought World Water Day to the Champlain Centre in March 2024 in Plattsburgh NY. This fun day included over 30 exhibitors who had connections to the lake from environmental, conservation and historical perspectives, and close to a dozen hands-on activities for youth and adults celebrating water resources. Regal Cinema donated a theatre to show locally produced partner film shorts! CBEI also hosted its annual Student Artwork Contest. Exhibitors included Clinton, Essex, Warren County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, many non-profits and CWICNY. Over 300 community members attended the event! We look forward to World Water Day 2025.

2025's World Water Day will be held March 22nd at the Champlain Centre Mall!

INVASIVE SPECIES IN THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN WATERSHED

The sheer size of the Lake Champlain Watershed encompasses diverse landscapes and species. Biodiversity within plant and animal species is extremely important to the health of all ecosystems within the watershed. However, an expansive watershed such as the Champlain can be subject to threats to biodiversity, such as the infestation of invasive species. It is a large priority to address invasive species issues.

One prominent species found within the watershed is the hemlock whooly adelgid (HWA). These nearly microscopic insects can pack a large punch to the health of hemlock trees, found all over the Adirondacks. Hemlock trees are considered a foundation species, lining the shorelines of New York waterbodies and forming forests which provide shade, sediment stability, and habitat for many wildlife species. HWA will feed at the base of hemlock needles, sucking the sap from the tree and decimating the canopy. In September of 2024, CWICNY sponsored a woodlot ownership workshop at the YMCA Camp Chingachgook in Kattskill Bay, Lake George (Pg. 11).

Other invasive species are a threat directly in the waters of the Lake Champlain Basin. Over the summer, golden clam was found in the South Bay of Lake Champlain, in Whitehall, NY. Golden clam has been found in numerous waterbodies all over New York State, but this is the first time it has been found in Lake Champlain. Golden clams are known to form dense colonies in sandy locations, outcompeting native mussel species. It is also asserted that the clams can contribute to more frequent algal blooms as they feed on the plankton that would otherwise feed on the algae.

At this point in time, the NYS DEC, Lake Champlain Basin Program, and other partners have not been able to determine the extent of a possible infestation and will be conducting more surveys. Due to the ability of invasive species – aquatic and terrestrial – to reproduce at such rapid rates and outcompete native species, education on identification, monitoring, and reporting is extremely important in eradication efforts. Invasive species management can be costly and time consuming but can be successful if immediate action is taken upon discovery.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN COVER CROP PROJECT
ENHANCED AGRICULTURAL BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (BMP)

Through a Lake Champlain Basin Program grant, the five Soil & Water District members of CWICNY worked with farmers to implement cover crops on over 2,600 acres of 38 farms over the course of two years. Agriculture is a major land use in the Lake Champlain watershed. Cover crops improve soil health, making it a very effective best management practice (BMP) for farmers. Addressing agricultural concerns has been a consideration of watershed planning efforts in the Lake Champlain Watershed for several years.

This program offered reimbursement for farmers to implement cover crops that will reduce, abate, control, or prevent soil erosion/nonpoint source pollution originating from agricultural sources. Other benefits include improved soil health, conserving nutrients and increasing soil organic matter. $200,000 in funding was provided by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets specifically for projects in the Lake Champlain watershed.

NEW YORK CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN MANAGEMENT (NYCAC)

The New York Citizens Advisory Committee on Lake Champlain Management (NYCAC) is a group of volunteers from various fields who act as a voice for Lake Champlain Basin issues. Members of the NYCAC are approved by the Commissioner of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. The chair of the NYCAC is selected by it's membership and is a voting member of the Lake Champlain Basin Program's Executive and Steering Committees.

The NYCAC meets 7-10 times a year to serve as a forum on major environmental concerns, ongoing research and programs impacting the Lake Champlain Basin. Committee meetings usually include presentations of issues important to management of water quality in Lake Champlain and tributaries.

The committee prepares an annual *Focus Document* that summarizes priorities needed to support Opportunities for Action, the Lake Champlain Water Quality Management Strategy.

The 2025 Focus Document reflects CAC areas of concern as follows:

·Invest in Critical Water Infrastructure for Resilience - Water Supplies and Water Treatment
·The Need to Assess, Mitigate and Eliminate Chemical Contaminants – (chlorine from de-icing salt).
·Support improving community wastewater technology and education/outreach for Septic System operations
·Support Habitat Protection, Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors - Improved Culverts, Floodplain Management, Stream and River Buffered Corridors
·Reduce Nutrient Loading from all land uses – Phosphorous and Nitrogen that support algae blooms
·Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species – Boat Launch Stewards, Boat Wash Stations –
·Robust Education and Outreach Capacity

The NY Citizens Advisory Committee, through the Lake Champlain Basin Program, partners with numerous organizations, state and federal agencies to help support our efforts to improve the water quality of Lake Champlain.

Interested in participating or learning more?
Scan the QR Code or go to
lcbp.org/nycac for more information

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS!

Clinton County

A landowner contacted the District for assistance after a flood washed out a stream crossing on their private road. The existing crossing, made of two undersized culverts, was inadequate for the stream's width and water volume. The District, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation, Franklin County Soil and Water, and the Adirondack Park Agency, developed a plan to replace the crossing with a larger structure. Securing funding through the Champlain Watershed Improvement Coalition under the DEC Erosion Control Funding, a 20-foot span bridge was engineered using concrete waste blocks, steel beams, and timber, designed to restore the natural flow of the stream. By upgrading the crossing, the project improves aquatic life, reduces erosion, and minimizes flood risk and sedimentation, addressing the environmental impacts of undersized culverts.

Before Photo- Left

After Completion Photos- Below

COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS!

Essex County

Moody Pond Project

The town of St. Armand reached out to Essex County Soil and Water Conservation District staff asking for help to install erosion control measures alongside Moody Pond. A combination of inappropriate parking and abundant rains had led to the scouring and erosion of the roadside, allowing sediment and roadway pollutants to be carried directly into the pond that the community recreates on and around. ECSWCD staff worked directly with the Town to formulate a plan and set it in motion. Topsoil was placed, followed by a grass seed mixture applied with the District's hydroseeder, and then biodegradable erosion control blankets, to create a vegetated area that will continue to protect this much-appreciated community resource for years to come.

During Project Photo- Left

Completion Photo- Below

THE HWA WORKSHOP: EASTERN HEMLOCKS, FOREST HEALTH, AND THREATS TO THE FUTURE

The HWA Workshop: Eastern Hemlocks, Forest Health, and Threats to the Future, sponsored by the Warren and Washington County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Lake George Land Conservancy, and the NYS Conservation District Employee's Association, was held on September 21, 2024, at Camp Chingachgook in Kattskill Bay, NY. Forty-four individuals signed up to attend the workshop from various agencies, including the Essex, Warren, Washington, and Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Lake George Park Commission, the Lake George Association, APIPP, the Lake George Land Conservancy, and Cornell Cooperative Extension. We had thirty-seven attendees, seven of whom were seeking continuing education credits. The continuing education credits offered were through the International Society of Arboriculture, the American Institute of Certified Planners, the Society of American Foresters, and NYSDEC. Various resources and supporting materials were provided, including information on identifying and managing HWA, Spongy moth, Oak wilt, Southern Pine Beetle, and Beech Leaf Disease (BLD), information on managing forests for resilience and controlling invasive species and terrestrial forest pests, integrated pest management practices, and invasive species priority lists. The workshop focused on managing our forests for adaptation and resiliency while exploring known threats affecting the health of these ecosystems, including Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and Beech Leaf Disease. The workshop aimed to help participants increase their understanding of HWA and BLD, the impacts of invasive species on the forest ecosystems, and the important role forest professionals, landowners, and municipal employees play in maintaining sustainable Hemlock and Beech forests.

Session One

Kristopher Williams, Coordinator for the Capital Region Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (CR-PRISM), discussed forest resiliency, health, and productivity and the importance of incorporating climate change adaptations into forest management goals. He also discussed the importance of native species in supporting biodiversity and the impacts invasive species have on the health of our forested ecosystems. Kris did an outdoor presentation on the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines of the CR-PRISM for controlling invasive species and terrestrial forest pests, including describing and explaining different IPM practices and demonstrating how to properly use various tools for chemical and physical management.

Session Two

Dr. Mark Whitmore, forest entomologist and Director of the New York State Hemlock Initiative discussed the importance of Eastern Hemlocks in our forests as a foundation species. He explained the basic biology of the HWA, including its life cycle, how it feeds, and its distribution in New York and other states. Additionally, he discussed various IPM practices that have been used in attempts to control its spread, including the use of Dinotefuran and Imidacloprid as chemical controls, the use of silviculture as a mechanical control, and the use of various beetles and flies as biological control measures. He also discussed the basic biology of the BLD nematode, the signs and symptoms of infestation, and the unknowns regarding the disease.

Session Three

After lunch, there was a forest observation and training session in which participants hiked to the Buck Mountain trailhead to look for HWA in an area known to be infested. During this training session, Kris Williams discussed forest regeneration or lack thereof and further discussed options for supporting regeneration. Dr. Whitmore and Kris Williams also mentioned the importance of diversity in our forests to promote resilience. With the assistance of staff from the Lake George Land Conservancy, participants were able to see the Hemlock Wolly Adelgid on an infested tree and learn how to report invasive species sightings through NY iMap Invasives.

Conclusion

Upon completing the workshop, a survey was sent to gauge the participants' overall feedback and recommendations for future workshops. The feedback was good, and participants enjoyed the field aspects in addition to the PowerPoint presentations. Additionally, the participants appreciated the additional materials and resources provided. For future workshop topics, a participant suggested Forest Lot Management.