

Press-Republican  
December 5, 2011

## Committee looks into lake-level problems

ALVIN REINER

WESTPORT — How to mitigate flooding from events like the record spring levels of Lake Champlain and Tropical Storm Irene remains an enigma.

But the Lake Champlain Citizens Advisory Committee of New York State and others hope to find a solution.

The Advisory Committee, comprised of a cross-section of agency representatives and individuals, provides information and works with other groups and governmental entities.

### FUNDS

At a recent committee meeting, Chairman Ron Jackson had concerns about future funding because, due to the economy, many projects are no longer earmarked, though he said a line item of \$1.4 million in President Obama's budget "keeps the lights on."

Jackson said it is crucial to keep the lake pristine.

"We thought we were doing well until the floods of this year. There has been too much sediment, though it has been no one's fault."

Jackson referred to effluents such as phosphorus and manure, which cause growths of dangerous blue-green algae.

Another problem cited is the fact that the lake is overseen by two states and two countries.

### RARE EVENT

Mike Winslow, the committee's staff scientist, informed the group that the lake's level is regulated by the underlying rock sill, not by a dam of any kind.

In addition, Winslow attributed some problems to a high level of plant growth in the lake.

"It's not a great idea to regulate our policies with a great event," he said. "This was a lake level that had never been recorded. This was a rare event."

### DEVASTATION

Frank Pabst, whom many consider to be one of the most knowledgeable individuals concerning the lake, pointed out that since 1939 there have been nine events in which the lake level has risen to flood stage.

"No one can appreciate the devastation of moving water," he said.

Pabst told of a musket, circa War of 1812, that he found about 15 feet back from the entrance of an underwater cave and thus surmised the lake level may have been much lower at that time.

Winslow said the only real records go back to 1936, and there may have been levels over 103 feet since the glacial age.

## FLOOD MAPS

Adirondack Council Executive Director Brian Houseal sees a need for upland flood mapping, which has an impact on people who live in a flood plain.

"I don't think it costs a whole heck of a lot to do."

He expressed concerns about small rural areas and their infrastructures, such as roads, bridges, as well as water and sewage systems.

Ward Freeman, director of the U.S. Geological Survey Water Science Center in Troy, felt maps and monitoring are "valuable tools to let people know their houses will be getting wet and to move their cars and get things up from the basement."

Freeman gave a report on the implementation of gauges (the USGS spells it gages) that record water levels.

He said information obtained from gauges can be used for a variety of purposes, such as navigation, water supplies, power, drought conditions, habitat monitoring and flood warnings.

Email Alvin Reiner at:

[rondackrambler@yahoo.com](mailto:rondackrambler@yahoo.com).