



FINAL REPORT

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STREAM WISE AWARD PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT – 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) developed a Stream Wise Award Program in the Lake Champlain Basin, modeled after the Lake Wise Award Program in Vermont, which will educate and incentivize communities to engage in streamside stewardship activities with a consistent message and brand. The award program was developed with federal, state, and provincial input, incorporating best practices from existing programs and with regard for the capacity of local organizations to run the program successfully. The first phase of the Stream Wise Award Program (Phase 1) was finalized in December of 2021 when all assessment protocol guidelines and associated documents, as well as branding and communications materials, were delivered to the Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Under Stream Wise Award Program Development - Phase 2 in 2022, the materials and methods developed during Phase 1 were tested and refined with two watershed organization pilot partners – the Friends of the Winooski River (Friends) in Vermont and the Ausable River Association (AsRA) in New York. A third partner, the Organisation de Bassins Versant la Baie Missisquoi (OBVBM) in Quebec, was initially supposed to be involved in the pilot phase but staffing changes meant that ultimately, they were not able to participate in 2022.

In 2023, the program was further scaled up to include nine (9) different organizations throughout the Basin. The organizations were:

- Ausable River Association
- Franklin County NRCD
- Franklin Watershed Committee
- Friends of the Winooski River
- Lake Champlain Committee
- Lamoille County Conservation District
- Missisquoi River Basin Association
- OBVBM (using 2022 funding)
- Paul Smith's College Adirondack Watershed Institute

Further, the Stewards of Greensboro Watershed participated as well in a non-contractual basis.

During 2023 these organizations conducted 78 assessments resulting in 42 Awards and all property owners received a follow-up report with suggestions for how to improve the property to meet Stream Wise standards.

Tasks funded by this grant contract and completed during 2023 include:

1. Report Template Creation (to provide partner organizations with an easy to use, branded template for follow-up with property owners)
2. Photo Curation and Acquisition (gleaning photos from assessments performed by partner organizations and curation with titles and keywords in a common database)
3. Support E-news and Social Media of Stream Wise and partners (media strategy and content creation for partner organizations)
4. Training and Outreach Media Development (illustrations of Stream Wise conditions to be used in various digital and print media)
5. Develop Event Poster, Rack Card, and Postcard
6. Introduction to Stream Wise Webinar (hosted and recorded)

7. Branding and Communications Training (hosted and recorded)
8. Social Media and Outreach Materials Training (hosted and recorded)
9. Desktop Assessment and Atlas Training (hosted and recorded)
10. Field Assessment Trainings (two in-field training sessions assessing properties)
11. Review and Feedback Meeting (meeting held to gather feedback on process and season from all partner organizations)
12. Reporting (quarterly and final as required by NEIWPC)

CONTENTS

Executive Summary..... 2

1. Project Synopsis..... 6

2. Tasks Completed..... 7

3. Methodology 11

4. Quality Assurance Tasks Completed 14

5. Deliverables Completed 15

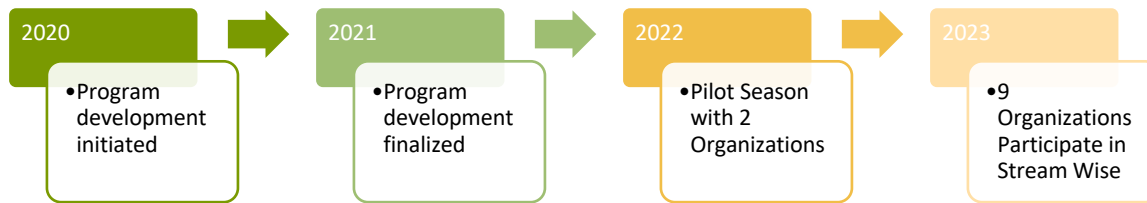
6. Conclusions 16

7. References 17

8. Appendices..... 17

1. PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Below is a basic timeline of Stream Wise to date.



Stream Wise Award Program Development 2023 built on the ‘pilot phase’ of Stream Wise conducted in 2022 with two partner organizations, the Friends of the Winooski River in Vermont and the Ausable River Association in New York. A third organization, the Organisation de Bassin Versant la Baie Missisquoi or OBVBM, did not participate as planned due to staffing issues but did join in 2023. In 2023 the participating organizations were:

- Ausable River Association (second year)
- Franklin County NRCD
- Franklin Watershed Committee
- Friends of the Winooski River (second year)
- Lake Champlain Committee
- Lamoille County Conservation District
- Missisquoi River Basin Association
- OBVBM (using 2022 funding)
- Paul Smith’s College Adirondack Watershed Institute

Further, the Stewards of Greensboro Watershed participated as well in a non-contractual basis.

Stream Wise’s goals were based, in part, on LCBP’s 2018 *State of the Lake* which indicates that 18% of the phosphorus load to the Lake comes from stream bank erosion. In addition to contributing to eutrophication, bank erosion can also affect aquatic and riparian habitats, threaten property and life, and worsen flooding – all impacts noted in the 2021 *State of the Lake* report as well. Social marketing research has demonstrated that behavior change results from consistent messages that describe specific actions, the effect of the action, and seeing other people take action¹. Creating a consistent message of positive proactive engagement through development of an award program designed to promote stream bank stability will help reduce stream bank erosion in the Lake Champlain Basin.

¹Behavior Factors & How to Effect Change in Flood Mitigation & Preparedness Dennis S. Mileti, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus University of Colorado at Boulder Gilbert F. White National Flood Policy Forum “Managing Risk to Humans and to Floodplain Resources” Marvin Center, George Washington University March 9, 2010

The need for this work is great as the Lake Champlain’s Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) predicts that, in addition to the many regulatory practices which will be mandated to occur in order to reduce in-lake phosphorus to acceptable levels, many other non-regulatory practices will also be necessary to meet targets. Stream Wise specifically seeks to engage and enact best management practices for runoff mitigation and stream bank stability on facultative, non-regulatory properties throughout the Basin.

2. TASKS COMPLETED

1 - Report Template Creation

This task created a branded report template in a commonly-accessible software format for assessment follow-ups with pages showing existing conditions relating to Stream Wise criteria and potential solutions. Template pages included:

- Cover/credits/contents;
- Site visit summary;
- Site map; Recommended practice (2-3 layout templates);
- Implementation/construction detail (2-3 layout templates);
- 'Drag and drop' imagery and 'canned' language of common issues and solutions
- Resources;
- Closing

A 'How-To' document describing the use of this template was created to guide practitioners.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Branded Report Template (PowerPoint), How-To document, Common issues/solutions pages.

2 - Photo Curation and Acquisition

This task obtained photos from the Stream Wise Field Assessment App records illustrating various buffer conditions and/or other pertinent features from practitioners' Stream Wise assessments and cataloged these photos on LCBP's pics.io account using folders and image tags in order to make them more easily searchable by practitioners for use in outreach or training.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Photos of different buffer conditions (~120+ photos) to support field assessment training and social media outreach. Written summary of process, including tags and organization system.

3 - Support E-news and Social Media of Stream Wise and partners

This task created social media posts, stories and campaign monitor email templates by topic and type after consulting with practitioners and the host organization on what material is most useful. During consultation a strategy and schedule for posting material was created to guide the use of this material. 24 posts and 30 stories were created in Canva with a written summary for use. 1 Campaign Monitor email template was created in Createsend with written summary.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Social media strategy and schedule. Creation of material as above for partners/host organization to post. Written summary of process.

4 - Training & Outreach Media Development

The outcome of this task was the creation of visuals to support training, assessments, follow-up reporting, and outreach. Illustrations were created to support assessment criteria, BMP recommendations, or other messaging surrounding common conditions and Stream Wise goals.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: 3 Illustrations or visualizations (delivered as high-resolution native files and JPEGs).

5 - Develop Event Poster, Postcard, Rack Card

In order to facilitate more traditional types of outreach and communication, this task created customizable print media templates for local events, mailings, and posting at local public places. A card was developed to hand out after Stream Wise site assessments to replace the Certificate of Participation and a 'Buffer Basics' (or similar) card was developed to be able to easily disseminate information on why vegetated buffers matter. Media will allow local or regional practitioners of the Stream Wise program to write-in pertinent local details about Stream Wise events or other information.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Poster, Rack Card, Postcard templates for practitioners to customize (editable format).

6 - Introduction to Stream Wise – Webinar

An introductory webinar was developed and delivered on the overarching Stream Wise program. This webinar was an updated version of the webinar given during 2022, delivered online and was approximately 30 minutes in length. Modules within the webinar included:

- What is Stream Wise? Brief overview of program goals
- Branding and Communications Plan – materials and methods for use as well as best practices for participating organizations to use
- Desktop Assessment methods for interested property owners, focusing specifically on the use of the Stream Wise Desktop Assessment Atlas (developed under a separate scope of work). This module will provide basic instruction on how to use the Atlas to fill out the Desktop Assessment portion of the Field Assessment App.
- Field Assessment methods for assessing properties in the field, primarily focusing on the use of the Stream Wise Field Assessment App (developed under a separate scope of work). A basic introduction and instruction will be provided on how to use the app and associated field assessment methods documents.
- Landowner follow-up, BMPs and further resources (information, local orgs)

Deliverables to LCBP included: Copy of final recorded introductory webinar, copy of introductory webinar PowerPoint slides and related content in editable format, Written how-to document/summary of info shared

7 - Branding and Communications Training

An online training session of approximately 30 minutes was delivered one time for participating Community Partners who are planning on conducting assessments under Stream Wise 2023 funding (combined with the Social Media and Outreach Materials Training session). This training session covered:

- Introduction to Branded Materials and their use
- Communications Plan Best Practices
- Leveraging materials for effective engagement
- Overall communications workflow between Host Organization, Community Partners, and property owners
- Award distribution
- Tracking and Reporting

At the conclusion of this training session, Community Partners had a clear understanding of how outreach will be conducted for Stream Wise.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: copy of final recorded training webinar, copy of training webinar PowerPoint slides and related content in editable format, How-To Document on using Branding and Communications materials.

8 - Social Media and Outreach Materials Training

An online training session of approximately 30 minutes was delivered one time for participating Community Partners who are planning on conducting assessments under Stream Wise Phase 3 funding. This training session covered:

- Introduction to Social Media Materials and their use
- Social Media Overall Strategy and Schedule
- Email Template Use
- Leveraging materials for effective engagement

At the conclusion of this training session, Community Partners had a clear understanding of how social media and email templates can be used for Stream Wise.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Copy of final recorded training webinar, copy of training webinar PowerPoint slides and related content in editable format, How-To Document on using Social Media materials.

9 - Desktop Assessment and Atlas Training

Online video tutorials were recorded for participating Community Partners in each region. The tutorials covered:

- Basic introduction to using the Desktop Assessment methods and tools (online Atlas and app) to assess property characteristics and record them using the app
- Browser access to the Fulcrum field app for Stream Wise assessments
- Using the Desktop Assessment Atlas to assess a property according to the Stream Wise criteria
- Entering information in the Stream Wise app
- Viewing field assessment records in the Fulcrum browser

A 'How-To' document was created on using the Desktop Assessment process.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Meeting with LCBP to discuss content, Copy of final recorded tutorial, How-To Document for overall Desktop Assessment Process.

10 - Field Assessment Trainings

Two in-person, in-field training sessions of approximately three hours were conducted for participating organizations. The locations were chosen as central locations for most participants in the Basin (Waterbury and Morrisville, Vermont were the training sites). The consulting team chose the properties to assess while participating organizations or LCBP provided the meeting room locations.

The in-field training session covered in-field assessment of a property using the Fulcrum application for data collection for properties where desktop assessment has already occurred. Topics explored included:

- Basic app interface navigation
- Adding records or accessing existing records
- Updating record status
- Collecting background information
- Conducting Initial Field Assessment – in-field techniques for each Buffer Category and how to assess Stream Wise criteria for various property conditions (to be refined with Community Partners in the field)
- Updating the Award Status fields
- Understanding and Using the Follow Up Visit Section
- Basic Reporting and Tracking
- Sharing methods of how to communicate with landowners

A 'How-To' document was created on app use.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Meeting with LCBP to discuss content of training, How-To Document on App Usage, important resources, and reminders (take photos & caption), support during the field season for questions and issues.

11 - Review and Feedback Meeting

A review and feedback meeting was held in person (with an online option for those unable to travel to the meeting location in Essex, VT) over a period of four hours. The session covered what worked well, what worked adequately, and what didn't work between the Branded Materials, Communications Plan, Desktop Assessment process, Field Assessment process, and the awarding of Stream Wise signs, as well as general tracking and reporting processes.

Feedback was gathered in person using targeted questions, breakout discussion sessions and whiteboards / post-it notes (and an online version of this as well), and roundtable discussions with the entire group. This feedback was collected and synthesized by the consulting team for use in material updates for 2024.

A punch-list of edits and revisions to Stream Wise materials or processes was created for future amendments to materials.

Deliverables to LCBP Included: Results of feedback summarized. Hosted meeting to discuss Stream Wise season. Punch-list of action items to update in subsequent year (2024).

12 – Reporting

As required by LCBP and NEIWPCC, quarterly reports were filed on the 10th day of July and October and followed the required formatting.

A Final Summary Report was prepared and followed the standard final report template as required by LCBP and NEIWPCC.

3. METHODOLOGY

1 – Report Template Creation

Methods for this task included:

- Communication with 2022 pilot partner organizations on the reports they created or needs they felt they had with respect to reporting results of Stream Wise assessments to property owners.
- Development of branded reporting materials including Overview, Site Assessment Summary, Existing Conditions, Criteria Review, Solutions and Recommended Practices, and Glossary pages. Materials were created in PowerPoint to facilitate access by all organizations.
- A How-To document was created describing best practices in creating custom reports, in particular dealing with photo customization.

2 – Photo Curation and Acquisition

Methods for this task included:

- Review of Fulcrum database records, in particular sites that were given Awards or Reports.
- Each record was reviewed to determine if the participant gave permission to use photos in outreach materials (some records were lacking a signature but had a ‘Yes’ checked on the photo permission field – it was assumed that it was OK to use photos from these sites).
- Photos were reviewed and downloaded individually, then uploaded to the LCBP pics.io account in the Stream Wise sub-folder. Sub-folders were created under Stream Wise to further organize photos.
- Each photo was given a description including Organization taking the photo, the Year the photo was taken, and the Basin location. Photos were also described as to how they could potentially be used based on the context of the photo or the caption given the photo by the partner organization.
- Photos were keyworded to facilitate searching.
- The photo interface on the streamwisechamplain.org site was updated to allow for viewing of sub-folders and also to allow for keyword searches.

3 – Support E-news and Social Media of Stream Wise and partners

Methods for this task included:

- Communicating with LCBP regarding the desired social media strategy form and overarching seasonal schedule.
- Communicating with partner organizations during an in-person meeting about the potential schedule and their anticipated needs.
- Development of specific social media material to use on the various social media platforms managed by LCBP and partner organizations. Materials were laid out using Canva to more easily facilitate sharing by partners (materials included both posts and stories).
- An email outreach template was created in Createsend for use in Campaign Monitor to facilitate emailing potential and current Stream Wise participants.

4 – Training & Outreach Media Development

Methods for this task included:

- Communication with consulting team on potential media needs for print materials, social media, or other outreach materials.
- Communication with partner organizations, in particular pilot partners, on potential media needs with respect to illustrated Stream Wise condition graphics.
- Creation of graphics by hand and digital means to create three high-resolution illustrations of Stream Wise buffer conditions to graphically communicate ideal or problematic conditions.
- Export of these illustrations in lower-resolutions formats more easily shareable on various platforms.

5 - Develop Event Poster, Postcard, Rack Card

Methods for this task included:

- Communication with partner organizations, in particular the pilot partners, on materials they felt would have been helpful to them in their outreach efforts. The consulting team also communicated with LCBP on its needs with respect to these materials as well.
- Attention was paid to past materials developed by the pilot partners, in particular to event posters they had created on their own.
- A branded poster template was created in PowerPoint to allow partner organizations to easily input their own event information (time, date, location, etc.).
- The postcard and rack card were created (and translated into French as well) according to input from LCBP and pilot partners.

6 – Introduction to Stream Wise – Webinar

Methods for this task included:

- Creation of a slide deck with narration regarding the Stream Wise program overview, methods, and seasonal schedule.

- The webinar was delivered online and recorded. The recording was then edited and uploaded to the LCBP YouTube and subsequently shared to the streamwisechamplain.org webpage.

7– Branding and Communications Training

Methods for this task included:

- Creation of a slide deck with scripted narrative on the use of the various branding and communications materials, in particular how to find and leverage the assets to ensure branding consistency across posts and creation of region-specific materials by pilot partners.
- Presentation of the slide deck online and recording of the presentation for posting to the LCBP Stream Wise YouTube channel for reference by partner organizations during 2023.

8 – Social Media and Outreach Materials Training

Methods for this task included:

- Creation of a slide deck with scripted narrative on the use of the various branding and communications materials, in particular how to find and leverage the assets to ensure branding consistency across posts and creation of region-specific materials by pilot partners.
- Presentation of the slide deck online and recording of the presentation for posting to the LCBP Stream Wise YouTube channel for reference by partner organizations during 2023.

9 – Desktop Assessment and Atlas Training

Methods for this task included:

- Creation of a scripted step-by-step video tutorial describing the overall use of the Desktop Assessment Atlas tools, as well as the region-specific data layers necessary to conduct the assessment.
- Videos were uploaded to the LCBP YouTube page and integrated on the streamwisechamplain.org page for use by partner organizations.
- A PDF How-to Standard Operating Procedure document was also created illustrating the step-by-step process for the assessment to provide another tutorial tool for assessors. This document was also integrated on the Stream Wise web page.

10 – Field Assessment Trainings

Methods for this task included:

- Creation of presentation materials for use during an in-person training session showing Fulcrum app and database use for field assessment.
- Identification of two locations (Waterbury, VT and Morrisville, VT) where meeting rooms and good training locations were located in proximity to each other and that were amenable to participating organizations.

- Instruction consisted of walking participants through the assessment app while in the classroom then going outside to the assessment site where various aspects of the Stream Wise Assessment Protocol could be seen and discussed in a real-world setting, while also using the app in real-time.
- A summary discussion was held after the mock assessment to answer questions or issues encountered while in the field.

11 - Review and Feedback Meeting

Methods for this task included:

- Communication with LCBP regarding the material to be discussed during this meeting.
- The meeting was held in-person and a suitable, centralized location was chosen in consultation with LCBP (the meeting location was the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources office in Essex, Vermont). An online meeting space was also offered.
- The meeting was divided into four main components for General Discussion of things that worked well and things that were challenges during 2023, Assessment Materials including training sessions, desktop and field assessment materials, and landowner follow-up processes, Outreach and Communication materials including social media kit, style guide, and print materials, Award criteria including a discussion of 'outlier' conditions that are hard to assess or Award, and a discussion of the Future 2024 season and partner organizations needs or wants for that season.
- Quiz questions were included as well to both test knowledge and remind partner organizations of important aspects of Stream Wise.
- Feedback was collected on large sheets of papers using targeted questions and post-it notes, then synthesized for future inclusion in Stream Wise where applicable. An equivalent online version of this method was also offered in order to gather information from participants there.
- No online survey was offered as it was felt that gathering feedback in person was potentially more impactful and effective.
- A summary punch list was created of potential changes for inclusion in future versions of the Stream Wise process.

12- Reporting (quarterly and final)

Methods for this task included:

- Tracking project progress by quarter with respect to Task Deliverables and writing reports as scheduled.
- Tracking overall project progress and creating the final project report based on the quarterly reports as well as notes taken during project implementation.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE TASKS COMPLETED

N/A

5. DELIVERABLES COMPLETED

Task #	Task Title	Deliverable or Output	Timeline	Problems and Solutions
1	Report Template Creation	Template in PowerPoint with pages for: Overview, Site Assessment Summary, Existing Conditions, Criteria Review, Solutions and Recommended Practices, and Glossary pages. How-To Document	June 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
2	Photo Curation and Acquisition	Photos of different buffer conditions to support field assessment training and social media outreach. Written summary of process.	November 2023	Many records lacking photos and/or captions for photos.
3	Support E-news and Social Media of Stream Wise and partners	Meeting with stakeholders to identify needs. Social media strategy and schedule. Materials in Canva / Createsend.	June 2023	Contract delay resulted in deliverable later in season than ideal.
4	Training & Outreach Media Development	3 Illustrations / visualizations of common buffer conditions	November 2023	Contract delay resulted in later delivery of this than anticipated.
5	Develop Event Poster, Postcard, Rack Card	Poster, Rack Card, Postcard	June 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
6	Introduction to Stream Wise – Webinar	Meeting to Discuss Content Recorded webinar of ~20-30 minutes	April 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
7	Branding and Communications Training	Meeting to Discuss Content 30 minute recorded training session, delivered online, and posted to Stream Wise YouTube How-To Document	May 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered

8	Social Media and Outreach Materials Training	Meeting to Discuss Content 30 minute recorded training session, delivered online, and posted to Stream Wise YouTube How-To Document	May 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
9	Desktop Assessment and Atlas Training	Meeting to Discuss content. Recorded trainings for each of the Stream Wise regions (VT, NY, QC) showing the Desktop Assessment process (length will vary), posted to Stream Wise YouTube. Hosted Q&A session for partners How-To Document	May 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
10	Field Assessment Trainings	Meeting to Discuss content. Two In-person field assessment trainings On-call app support following training (email) How-To Document.	June 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
11	Review and Feedback Meeting	Feedback gathered throughout season with LCBP and partner organizations. In-person meeting to gather feedback. Punch-list of action items (updates to Stream Wise materials and processes) developed for 2024.	November 2023	No Significant Issues Encountered
12	Reporting	Quarterly and Final Reports delivered on schedule.	Quarterly: 7-10-2023, 10-10-2023 Final: 12-31-2023	No Significant Issues Encountered

6. CONCLUSIONS

During Stream Wise 2023 the community partner organizations conducted 78 assessments resulting in 42 Awards and all property owners received a follow-up report with suggestions for how to improve the property to meet Stream Wise standards. Generally speaking, it seemed as if interest in Stream Wise is high and growing as many organizations reported having more interest in participation than their organization had capacity for in terms of assessment and reporting time.

In general, future work anticipated during 2024 is envisioned as follows:

- Integrate feedback received during the 2023 season review meeting including:
 - Revisions to assessment tools and materials, outreach materials and strategies, and associated training and how-to materials provided to partner organizations based on feedback received in 2023.
 - Revisions to the Report Template to make it both smaller (easier to distribute) and more user-friendly, along with additional training materials to supports its use
 - A discussion of the Assessment Protocol and the Award process to allow for more inclusivity (i.e. including more properties or participants who may not own property in the Stream Wise community) and to allow for easier assessment of larger, more complex properties. Some of this discussion may entail looking at specific criteria or the scoring process to introduce more nuance into the way properties are assessed.
 - Discussion around the creation of a Stream Wise ‘Steward’ track that would potentially reward participants for actions (i.e. recruiting more Stream Wise participation, etc.) and not just property aspects or that could recognize other property benefits.
 - Creation of materials to facilitate in-person outreach (i.e. tabling at events). Assets may include a presentation, one-page print document about Stream Wise, customizable rack cards and post cards, etc. Training and outreach strategy development will also be part of this. The ‘Events Toolkit’ was a direct result of the Review Meeting in 2023.

7. REFERENCES

N/A

8. APPENDICES

All project deliverables have been sent to the LCBP Project Officer and saved to the grant file.