

ST. CLAIR RIVER BINATIONAL PUBLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL
(BPAC)

Minutes - Final
Meeting 2015-6

Tuesday, December 1, 2015
St. Clair Secondary School Library
340 Murphy Road
Sarnia, Ontario

ATTENDEES:

Donna Strang
Terry Burrell
Sheri Faust
Theresa Warren
Darrell Randell
Lori Eschenburg

Kathy Watts
Paulette Duhaime
Craig Griffiths
Naomi Williams
Phil Vallance
Marina Plain

Terry Richardson
Kris Lee
Judy Ogden
Patty Hayman
Fred Kemp

REGRETS:

Archie Kerr
April White

Jim Clatworthy

Peter Westfall

Call to Order and Introductions – K. Lee

The meeting was called to order by Kris Lee at 6:37 pm.

Adoption, Additions or Corrections of Draft Agenda – All

The draft agenda was reviewed and additions or corrections were solicited from BPAC members.

Moved by Terry Burrell and seconded by Kathy Watts that the draft agenda be accepted as prepared.

CARRIED

Approval of September 29, 2015 Draft Minutes and Actions – All

Actions arising from the last meeting on September 29, 2015 were reviewed along with the draft minutes.

Moved by Patty Troy and seconded by Fred Kemp that the draft minutes of September 29, 2015 be accepted.

CARRIED

Great Lakes Fish Farming – J. Ogden

This agenda item was moved before the "Lake Erie & St. Clair Binational Forum – 'Lake Perspectives' Articles" agenda item

Judy Ogden advised BPAC members of a proposal by the state of Michigan to develop two commercial aquaculture operations to raise Rainbow Trout in the Great Lakes (one in Lake Michigan and one in Lake Huron). Although not directly related to delisting the St. Clair River as an Area of Concern (AOC), it was felt that the council would be interested.

Presently, there are no American aquaculture operations in the Great Lakes however some aquaculture facilities exist in Ontario. Aquaculture operations involve the installation of a floating pen that is anchored to the bottom of the waterway that holds fish raised specifically for harvest. Currently, there is a worldwide seafood shortage.

Judy informed BPAC members of the pros and cons of such a facility being developed in Michigan waters:

Pros:

- creation of local jobs and revenue
- more fish globally

Cons:

- potential for “farmed” fish to escape and join the wild population
- floating pens are frequently vandalized
- build-up of fish waste at the bottom of floating pen
- introduction and spread of diseases

Fish raised in an aquaculture environment would be sterilized and genetically modified so they could not reproduce. A number of permits would be required to move development of an aquaculture facility forward including permits from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. In addition, a fish food mill and fish processing plant would be required as there are no such facilities in proximity to the two proposed aquaculture locations. BPAC members were encouraged to keep informed of any developments pertaining to this proposal.

Lake Erie & St. Clair Binational Public Forum – “Lake Perspectives” Articles – K. Lee

Kris Lee provided BPAC members with an overview of “Lake Erie & St. Clair Binational Forum” website. The forum and website is administered by the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) who have been receptive to receiving information on the St. Clair River AOC from BPAC. The website houses information such as current research and analysis, information on environmental stressors impacting the Lake Erie system and updates on the development and implementation of the Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) which as of 2012, includes the St. Clair River.

There is limited information on the St. Clair River included on the website. Kris Lee recommended that BPAC become more involved. BPAC members suggested that a subcommittee be established to discuss how best BPAC may be integrated into the Lake Erie LaMP. It was also suggested that the Lake Erie Binational Forum facilitators be invited to a future BPAC meeting to provide an overview of how the forum works, etc. The facilitators are Adam Rissien of the OEC and Teresa Hollingsworth of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

Areas of Concern in Recovery (AiR) Guidance Document – April White

Melanie Foose led the discussion surrounding the Area of Concern in Recovery (AOCiR) Guidance document on behalf of April White who was unable to attend the meeting. The AOCiR designation was identified in the most recent Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) in 2012. The designation is a temporary status prior to delisting an AOC where all restoration activities are completed, but the chemical, biological or physical conditions of the ecosystem require additional time to recover. A guidance document was drafted by a Task Team formed under the auspices of the GLWQA consisting of federal, provincial and state representatives to help determine what conditions must be met to designate an AOC as an

AOCiR along with challenges and other considerations. The Task Team solicited feedback from interested parties by November 20th on the guidance document, however any comments or feedback from BPAC members at the current meeting would be forwarded to the Task Team for consideration.

Major questions surrounded the benefits of being designated as AOCiR and how the designation would be applied to binational AOCs. BPAC members requested a more detailed presentation on the AOCiR designation.

ACTION – Donna Strang will forward the questions/comments received from BPAC members to April White, who will forward to the appropriate AOCiR Task Team member for consideration.

Beach Closings BUI – MDEQ – M. Foose

At the last BPAC meeting, Melanie Foose presented information and analysis that supports the removal of the “Beach Closings” BUI. She solicited additional comments and feedback from BPAC members. Comments included:

- *Port Huron Waste Water Treatment Plant a Significant Source of Pathogens* – Fred Kemp advised that the waste water treatment plant was never out of compliance and met all permits. Rather, problems in the collection system contributed pathogens to the St. Clair River.
- *City of Port Huron Water Filtration Plant, Not supporting Full or Partial Body Contact Designated Use* – Patty Troy questioned whether this was true and asked for additional information.

ACTION – Melanie Foose will send Patty Troy and Fred Kemp the report that describes the *E.coli* levels that led to the water filtration plant not supporting full or partial body contact designated use.

- *Algonac State Park* – Questions surfaced regarding why this beach area was not included and/or sampled in the BUI removal document. The Algonac State Beach is not monitored by the St. Clair County Health Department. Only public beaches that are monitored were included in the removal document.

Melanie expects that by the next BPAC meeting, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) will provide concurrence on the revised “Beach Closings” BUI and a vote can be conducted by BPAC members.

OMOECC, EC, MDEQ and USEPA Updates on Canadian and American Projects – T. Briggs, A. White, M. Foose, R. Ellison

OMOECC Update:

Ted Briggs was unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

EC Update:

April White was unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

MDEQ Update:

Melanie Foose Provided an update on MDEQ activities to BPAC.

- The majority of habitat work at Cuttle Creek is completed.
- The Krispin Drain project on Harsens Island is nearing completion.

Melanie and Brian McDougall of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority put together a list of all shoreline projects conducted on both sides of the St. Clair River.

ACTION – Melanie Foose will revise the table based on feedback received from BPAC members and send to Donna Strang who will circulate to BPAC members.

ACTION – Kris Lee will send Donna Strang the map highlighting all habitat projects. Donna will circulate to BPAC members.

USEPA Update:

Rose Ellison was unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

Committee Reports:

Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) – P. Troy and P. Duhaime

Paulette Duhaime reported that the last SPAC meeting was held on November 16th and 17th in Lansing, Michigan. The major topic was the transition from the Great Lakes Commission to MDEQ in administering support grants to Public Advisory Councils (PACs) and how the future of the Great Lakes Commission may look. Discussions also surrounded transitional planning for PACs.

ACTION – Melanie Foose will provide Paulette Duhaime information from a “strategic planning” workshop currently being organized for the River Raisin AOC.

ACTION – Patty Troy and Paulette Duhaime will draft a letter to Chris Koreleski, Director of the Great Lakes National Program Office at the USEPA expressing BPACs support for the continued funding of state capacity grants for the AOC program.

Patty Troy advised BPAC members that the 2016 AOC Conference will be held on March 2-3 in Dearborn, Michigan.

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) – D. Randell and T. Burrell

Darrell Randell reported on recent FOSCR activities. Nine wetland rebuild projects were funded in 2015, 7 of which are located in the AOC. Most are complete, with two projects beginning in early January 2016. FOSCR has also partnered with the SCRCA and submitted an application to the Ontario Trillium Fund Grant, that if approved will support monitoring, education and habitat restoration in the AOC over three years. Lastly, an updated PowerPoint is available for the Canadian side of the St. Clair River AOC for anyone interested in receiving a copy.

The FOSCR Annual General Meeting is being on December 2, 2015.

Friends of the St. Clair River Watershed (FOSCRW) – S. Faust

Sheri Faust advised that the Friends of the St. Clair River Watershed (FOSCRW) have officially dropped “watershed” from their name. The groups has put together a new brochure and have updated their website. Upcoming events include “A Freshwater Mussel Showcase” talk as part of the monthly speaker series and a winter bird blast event where participants will learn about winter birding and be taken on a tour of the St. Clair River shoreline. Lastly, Sheri highlighted that a number of people have contacted FOSCR to inquire about becoming a steward as a result of local media coverage.

BPAC Membership Subcommittee – A. Kerr and F. Kemp

This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting.

Canadian RAP Implementation Committee – P. Vallance

Kris Lee reported on recent Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC) activities on behalf of Phil Vallance. The last CRIC meeting was held on November 26th. The meeting included a presentation by Clint Jacobs of the Walpole Island Land Trust. He provided an

overview of the multi-year Swan Lake Marsh restoration project being conducted on Anne Island. The meeting also included a discussion on the AOCiR guidance document and a “Year in Review” slideshow put together by committee members.

Four Agency Managers Work Group – T. Briggs

Melanie Foose reported on behalf of Ted Briggs who was unable to make it to the meeting. On November 3, a “face-to-face” Four Agency Managers Work Group meeting was held in Port Huron and included tours of the Blue River Walk, wetland at the south end of the Blue River Walk, and the Cuttle Creek habitat restoration project in Marysville.

Other Business:

- Patty Troy was contacted by Larry Mavis of St. Clair County Community College who has presented to BPAC in the past about the student run water quality program at the college. He advised that currently he has five students conducting the sampling and laboratory work. Local waters will be sampled and analyzed using Gas Chromatography – Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) with a focus on oil and grease. As always, the program would always benefit from additional funding.

Next Meeting Date:

The next BPAC meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 26, 2016 in Port Huron, Michigan at the St. Clair County Building, Conference Room A (2nd Floor), 200 Grand River Avenue.

Adjournment:

Moved by Sheri Faust and seconded by Terry Burrell that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned by Kris Lee at 9 pm.