

ST. CLAIR RIVER BINATIONAL PUBLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL
(BPAC)

Minutes - Final
Meeting 2016-3

Tuesday, May 10, 2016
St. Clair County Building Auditorium
200 Grand River Avenue
Port Huron, Michigan

ATTENDEES:

Donna Strang
Patty Troy
Fred Kemp
Terry Burrell
James Clatworthy

Kathy Watts
Judy Ogden
Lori Eschenburg
Paulette Duhaime
Frank Frisk

Kris Lee
Archie Kerr
Kirsten Lyons
Sheri Faust
Marina Plain

REGRETS:

Darrell Randell
April White

Melanie Foose

Theresa Warren

GUESTS:

Helen Niles
Lana Mayes
Andrew McIntyre

Call to Order and Introductions – P. Troy

The meeting was called to order by Patty Troy at 6:30 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 Fred Kemp and seconded by Judy Ogden that the draft agenda be accepted as prepared.

CARRIED

Approval of March 30, 2016 Draft Minutes and Actions – All

Actions arising from the last meeting on March 30, 2016 were reviewed along with the draft minutes. A correction was noted on page 7 regarding the Dunn Paper facility discussion. A violation of permit letter *will be issued* by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to Dunn Paper regarding fiber discharges to the St. Clair River.

Moved by Fred Kemp and seconded by Jim Clatworthy that the draft minutes of March 30, 2016 be accepted with the modification identified.

CARRIED

ACTION – Patty Troy will follow-up with the MDEQ regarding the status of the Dunn Paper permit violation notification letter and update at the next BPAC meeting.

Microplastics in the Great Lakes Workshop (IJC) – K. Lyons

Kirsten Lyons provided an overview of the “Microplastics in the Great Lakes” workshop held at the University of Windsor on April 26, 2016. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for the public to hear about: 1) the latest science on microplastics in the Great Lakes, 2) local organizations tackling the issue, and 3) how individuals can get involved.

Four panelists presented their research and initiatives to better understand and combat microplastics in the Great Lakes to the over 35 people who attended the work shop. Presenters included: 1) Hans Durr from the University of Waterloo, 2) Susan Debrececi of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, 3) Mark Bartlett from the Canadian Auto Workers Windsor Regional Environmental Council and 4) Keith Christman of the American Chemistry Council.

Issues and topics discussed included the development of “plastic islands” in the Great Lakes and the accumulation of plastic pollution along shoreline beaches. Microplastics are defined as plastic particles that are smaller than 5 mm and originate from, among others, industry and residential households (e.g., cosmetic products containing ‘microbeads’). The plastics are also entering aquatic food chains. The United States has banned the use of microbeads in some products (e.g., soap, toothpaste) and their production will be phased out over the next few years. The government of Canada recently identified them as a toxic substance.

ACTION – Kirsten Lyons will send Donna Strang links to the microbead information websites referenced during the work shop. Donna Strang will circulate to BPAC members.

Sarnia Harbour – Sediment Quality – A. White and D. Strang

Donna Strang updated BPAC members on efforts to obtain more recent information on the sediment quality in Sarnia Harbour. She reported that April White followed up with the City of Sarnia and spoke with Peter Hungerford, the City’s economic development director. He confirmed that Sarnia Harbour was a former federal property owned by Transport Canada but was transferred to the City of Sarnia in 2014. With changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act in 2012, federal environmental assessments are no longer required when the federal government transfers ownership. Therefore, a formal federal environmental assessment was not completed.

Nonetheless, sediment samples were collected from Sarnia Harbour in 2013, prior to the completion of the divesture in 2014. Samples were also collected in 2015 as the City intends to dredge the Harbour in 2016. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) has sent the City of Sarnia sediment chemistry data from 2007. Information from the City regarding the 2013 and 2014 sediment samples is expected shortly.

BPAC members discussed potential mercury sources that could have been discharged into Sarnia Harbour from the Exmouth combined sewer system prior to it being separated in 2009. This included dental offices and historical land uses (ie. soft coal storage, coke plant operation).

ACTION –April White and Donna Strang will provide an update on the sediment chemistry at Sarnia Harbour at the next BPAC meeting.

Lake Erie – St. Clair Binational Forum – K. Lee

The Lake Erie Binational Forum is a public forum administered by the Ohio Environmental Council to promote and achieve the implementation of the Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan (LAMP). Due to funding cuts, the forum is no longer being supported and the website is currently housed on the University of Michigan website until the future of the group is determined.

ACTION – Kris Lee will send Donna Strang the link the University of Michigan where the Lake Erie Binational Forum website is currently located. Donna will circulate to BPAC members.

Kris Lee was contacted by a Lake Erie Forum blogger who was interested in including St. Clair River articles on the blog. Kris Lee solicited BPAC members for articles.

ACTION – Lori Eschenburg and Fred Kemp will prepare articles and provide to Kris Lee who will forward to the Lake Erie Forum blog.

ACTION – Kris Lee will send the Lake Erie Forum blog link to Donna Strang who will circulate the BPAC members.

September Celebration Event – P. Troy

With a number of Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) removed in the United States (US) and the expected re-designation of BUIs on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC), a celebration event will be planned for the fall. The suggested date for this event is Wednesday, September 7, 2016. The event will celebrate the removal of the following BUIs on the American side: “Degradation of Benthos,” “Beach closings” and completion of all management actions for the “Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat” BUI. It is hopeful that the “Restrictions on Dredging Activities” and “Beach Closings” BUIs will be re-designated on the Canadian side.

BPAC members discussed potential locations in both countries as well as the times. Venues considered on the US side are the Marysville golf course, Chrysler Beach and the Great Lakes Maritime Center in Port Huron. The Great Lakes Maritime Center has been used for several events in the past and some members felt that it would be good to change venues. Chrysler Beach has recently held a grand re-opening. The Marysville golf course looks directly on to the River and carts could likely be provided to tour the Cuttle Creek restoration project. Possible venues for the Canadian event include Walpole Island and the Sombra Marine Museum.

It was agreed that the Canadian event will take place in the morning and the US event would occur in the afternoon. The Sombra Ferry could be used to cross the River. It is estimated that there will be approximately 30 attendees, based on previous re-designation events. The Planning Subcommittee will consist of Patty Troy, Paulette Duhaime, Kris Lee, Terry Burrell, Kirsten Lyons, Sheri Faust, Kathy Watts and Donna Strang.

ACTION – Patty Troy will contact Randy Fernandez at the City of Marysville about hosting the BUI removal event on the American side of the St. Clair River.

ACTION – Kris Lee will follow-up with Naomi Williams at the Walpole Island Heritage Centre about hosting the BUI re-designation event on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River.

ACTION – Donna Strang will pull together invitation lists, speeches, etc. from past re-designation events for the Planning Subcommittee.

Spills Notification Discussion – P. Troy

Since the last BPAC meeting, local and binational notifications have been required due to a hydrochloric acid spill to the St. Clair River and the release of benzene to air from two Canadian industrial facilities (Imperial Oil and Shell). Issues with notification were highlighted during the events.

Notification issues were particularly highlighted during the benzene release by Shell. There was a reported delay in contacting Aamjiwnaang First Nation of the leak and notification procedures did not effectively alert residents in Corunna. It was reported that only two of four sirens installed in the area to alert residents of threats were properly functioning. The sirens that did sound did not do so for very long. There was also lag time between the incident and when information and instructions to residents were broadcast over local radio stations.

Jon Hardy from Imperial Oil has agreed to attend a future meeting to speak to BPAC members about the hydrochloric acid spill.

ACTION – BPAC member will forward any questions regarding the Imperial Oil hydrochloric acid spill to Kris Lee, who will provide to Jon Hardy.

ACTION – Kris Lee will contact Dean Edwardson of the Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA) for a debriefing of the Shell benzene release incident.

On May 25th, Kris Lee and Patty Troy will be observing the spill exercise that will simulate a pipeline rupture underneath the St. Clair River. The purpose of the exercise is to evaluate the effectiveness of response, recovery and notification procedures currently in place for such an event.

BPAC members expressed their concern over the potential impacts a spill such as the one being simulated could have on the habitat projects along the St. Clair River shoreline. They strongly recommended that agencies be made aware of the location of each of these projects.

ACTION – Donna Strang will circulate to BPAC a recent article that summarized a similar binational exercise that tested communications between Canada and the United States in response to a tornado event.

ACTION – Kris Lee will invite Tanya Tamilio from the Canadian Coast Guard to a future BPAC meeting to provide a debrief of the spill exercise.

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

Ted Briggs, April White, Melanie Foose and Rose Ellison were unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

Donna Strang advised BPAC members that proceedings from the Science Symposium held at the end of March, 2016 were recently circulated.

Paulette Duhaime advised that she has contacted Melanie Foose at the MDEQ regarding the phragmites remaining along the Marine City Drain. She also reported that monitoring crews are out every few days to assess the success of the habitat restoration projects.

Committee Reports

Statewide Public Advisory Council – P. Troy and P. Duhaime

Patty Troy advised that there had not been a Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) meeting since the last BPAC meeting. Patty also reported that the current Public Advisory Council (PAC) support grant had expired and they were awaiting the start of the new grant by the MDEQ.

Friends of the St. Clair River – Canada – D. Randell and T. Burrell

Terry Burrell reported that Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) partnered with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority on an application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The application was approved. The grant will support work over three years that includes aquatic inventories of AOC tributaries, habitat restoration and education.

Friends of the St. Clair River – USA – S. Faust

Sheri Faust reported that the FOSCR received a \$7500 grant from Freshwater Future to assess the feasibility of “daylighting” a local stream in Marysville. The six month grant will support research and data collection, water quality testing and proposal writing for future funding opportunities. Sheri also reminded members that the Sturgeon Festival will be held in Port Huron, Michigan on Saturday, June 4, 2016.

BPAC Membership Subcommittee – A. Kerr and F. Kemp

Archie Kerr advised BPAC members that a teleconference was recently held to discuss the membership list. It was decided that it would not be feasible to fill the vacant positions. The membership list has been updated for both Canada and the US. BPAC members approved to formally add Kirsten Lyons of the US FOSCR as a member.

Canadian RAP Implementation Committee – TBD

There has not be a meeting of the Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC) since the last BPAC meeting. The next CRIC meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2016.

Four Agency Managers Work Group – T. Briggs

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

Other Business

- Patty Troy updated BPAC members on the status of the Vortex Hydroenergy project. She was contacted by Dr. Michael Bernitsas who advised that deployment of the Vivace Converter into the St. Clair River would occur in mid-June.
- Patty Troy reported that she reviewed the assessment report for the “Bird and Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems” BUI for Michigan Great Lakes AOCs that was discussed at the January BPAC meeting. The report was highly technical and she has asked for clarification in interpreting the results. Patty and Paulette Duhaime will attend a meeting with the authors on May 26th or 27th in Lansing, Michigan. Any BPAC members interested in attending should contact Patty, although the meeting is being limited to a small number of people.
- Patty Troy advised that Plains LPG has withdrawn their permit application that would authorize the company to transport crude oil and other hydrocarbons through two pipelines under the St. Clair River. BPAC submitted a letter expressing their concerns and expectations regarding the application. The pipelines will remain capped.

- Lori Eschenburg was invited to sit on the Southeast Michigan Water Task Force. The group will produce a vision and management plan for water resources in southeast Michigan over the next 18-months.
- Maps of no-wake zones produced by Lori Eschenburg will be distributed to Michigan boat permit buyers and customers at local marinas. Lori also advised BPAC members that the St. Clair River and Port Huron have been highlighted in widely distributed publications including the official inflight magazine for Southwest Airlines (May edition). Each edition of the magazine is read by over 5 million travelers.
- Archie Kerr advised that FOSCR (Canada) was approached by the Sierra Club of Canada to meet and discuss water levels in the Great Lakes. Archie will be meeting with Sierra Club of Canada representatives to hear their perspectives and concerns on May 11, 2016.
- A Green Drinks event is being held in Sarnia on May 11, 2016 to commemorate the winners and nominees of the City of Sarnia Go Green Environmental Awards.

Next BPAC Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, July 13, 2016 in Sarnia, Ontario.

Adjournment

Moved by Kris Lee and seconded by Paulette Duhaime that the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned by Patty Troy at 8:45 pm.