

ST. CLAIR RIVER BINATIONAL PUBLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL
(BPAC)

Minutes - Final
Meeting 2016-6

Wednesday, November 16, 2016
Lambton Public Health
160 Exmouth Street
Point Edward, Ontario

ATTENDEES:

Donna Strang
Terry Burrell
Sheri Faust
April White
Patty Hayman
Lori Eschenburg

Kathy Watts
Patty Troy
Theresa Warren
Melanie Foose
Darrell Randell

Peter Westfall
Kris Lee
Archie Kerr
Marina Plain
Fred Kemp

REGRETS:

Bev Shipley
Ted Briggs

Christine Loeffler

Jim Clatworthy

GUESTS:

Clint Jacobs – Walpole Island Heritage Centre
Kim Hughes – Environment and Climate Change Canada (via telephone)

Call to Order and Introductions – K. Lee

The meeting was called to order by Kris Lee at 6:35 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 Theresa Warren and seconded by Terry Burrell that the draft agenda be accepted with the following additions under “Other Business”: 1) Dunn Paper update by Patty Troy and 2) Drinking Water survey update by Donna Strang.

CARRIED

Approval of September 14, 2016 Draft Minutes and Actions – All

Actions arising from the last meeting on September 14, 2016 were reviewed along with the draft minutes.

- Sheri Faust identified a correction required under the Friends of the St. Clair River – USA committee report. Kirsten Lyons reported on behalf of Sheri Faust who was unable to attend the meeting.

Moved by Fred Kemp and seconded by Darrell Randell that the draft minutes of September 14, 2016 be accepted with the modification identified.

CARRIED

Freighter Traffic Impacts on Shoreline Restoration Projects – C. Jacobs

Clint Jacobs of the Walpole Island Heritage Centre attended the meeting to provide BPAC members with an overview of a shoreline restoration project proposed at Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN). The St. Clair River shoreline at WIFN is impacted by wakes created by passing freighter traffic that has resulted in a pronounced erosion problem. Temporary repairs have been implemented to ensure community safety and reduce the rate of erosion but a more comprehensive response is required. There are 5-6 areas that are in need of immediate repair.

The Walpole Island Heritage Centre is preparing a Shoreline Management Plan with funding support by Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and design expertise by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA). The plan will identify restoration options and estimated costs to restore the shoreline. Once completed, the results will be presented to the community for input and feedback. Depending on funding, construction could begin in 2017.

Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) Status Assessment and Recommendation – A. White and K. Hughes (via telephone)

April White and Kim Hughes, an ecotoxicologist contracted by ECCC presented the “Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems” BUI status assessment and recommendation. The status assessment examined contaminant levels, reproductive success and deformity rates in northern leopard frogs (*Rana pipiens*) and common snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*) in the St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC). These species were chosen as sentinel species to assess this BUI for numerous reasons including their sensitivity to poor water quality, wide geographic distribution and their semi-aquatic characteristics.

Between 2006 and 2014, 18 surveys were conducted to assess reproduction (hatching success) and deformities (growth) in northern leopard frogs. Hatching success of frog embryos exposed to St. Clair River AOC water and sediment was 98%. In addition, frog deformity rates were lower than the average 5% rate in the wild. Contaminants measured in leopard frogs were low and exhibited no evidence of impeding reproduction or causing deformities.

Results from the common snapping turtle studies also yielded positive results. In 2011, turtle eggs were collected from multiple sites within the WIFN delta to assess hatching success, hatching deformities and contaminant levels in eggs. Hatching success was above 90% and the hatching deformity rate was approximately 7%, lower than the deformity rate observed at the reference site on Lake Huron. Contaminant levels in turtles for organochlorines (including Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)) were low overall and below concentrations associated with reduced survivability. Mercury levels varied but even the highest concentrations measured were below those that would influence hatching success.

As a result of these studies, the status assessment recommends re-designating the “Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems” BUI from “Requires Further Assessment” to “Not Impaired”

Questions and Comments from BPAC Members:

- Do we know what the expected frog population at WIFN would be considering the habitat available there?

Information on northern leopard frog populations provided by community members varies and whether or not the population has increased or decreased is dependent on who you speak with. Some community members report that the populations are flourishing while others will state the opposite. If you are asking whether we had difficulty finding frogs or turtles for the purposes of this project, no we did not although we didn't always catch 100 frogs per location.

- What would be the source of mercury measured in common snapping turtles from Algonquin Park?

Mercury measured in common snapping turtles at Algonquin Park would likely originate from natural sources and/or atmospheric deposition.

Moved by Patty Troy and seconded by Terry Burrell that the recommendation to re-designate the “Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems” BUI to “Not Impaired” on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River AOC be accepted.

CARRIED

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

OMOECC Update:

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

ECCC Update:

April White updated BPAC members on the current status of BUIs on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River AOC. Currently there are 5 BUIs remaining with an “Impaired” status and 3 identified as “Requiring Further Assessment”.

- *Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems - Impaired*
 - Open houses for the draft “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” BUI draft discussion paper have concluded and feedback is currently being summarized. A question and answer document is expected by the end of December 2016.
 - The survey circulated to local industries in support of the discussion paper has resulted in five completed surveys returned, however, the Canadian Remedial Action Plan Implementation Committee (CRIC) is aware that other industries expect to submit theirs soon.
- *Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption - Impaired*
 - Scientists are currently investigating alternative methods to assess the status of this BUI.
- *Degradation of Benthos - Impaired*
 - Assessment of the “Degradation of Benthos” BUI is awaiting completion of the sediment remediation project.
- *Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat - Impaired*
 - Major progress has been made in achieving the delisting criteria for the “Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat” BUI. The last major criteria that is awaiting completion is the development of a Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan. The SCRCA is currently preparing this document.
- *Beach Closings - Impaired*
 - The draft assessment for the “Beach Closings” BUI that recommends re-designation to “Not Impaired” has been approved by the CRIC and is currently undergoing First Nation consultation.

- *Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations – Requires Further Assessment*
 - A draft report summarizing wildlife populations is currently being reviewed by the CRIC Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Populations Subcommittee.
- *Fish Tumours or Other Deformities – Requires Further Assessment*
 - Preliminary results on tumour prevalence in Brown Bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*) fish caught throughout the Walpole Island delta are currently being reviewed. It is anticipated that a status assessment for the “Fish Tumours or Other Deformities” BUI will be completed in 2017.
- *Bird or Animal Deformities or Other Reproductive Problems – Requires Further Assessment*
 - Discussed previously in the meeting.

April also updated BPAC members on numerous studies and projects being undertaken in support of the AOC program:

- In collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the Walpole Island Heritage Centre, an intensive survey was completed that will assess the quality and quantity of fish habitat in the Walpole Island delta.
- ECCC continues to conduct monitoring in the St. Clair River including:
 - Water quality monitoring (Head and Mouth survey)
 - Suspended sediment monitoring
 - Wetland health assessments
- The body burden analysis of fish caught in 2015 from the St. Clair River is underway. Results will be compared to body burden levels reported in 2004 and 2008.
- The City of Sarnia is investing \$5 million in 2017 to continue their sewer separation project.

MDEQ Update:

Melanie Foose reported that monitoring at the completed habitat projects along the St. Clair River has been completed. Melanie will be drafting the removal document for the “Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat” BUI soon. A Drinking Water subcommittee meeting will be organized shortly so the removal document for the “Restrictions on Drinking Water or Taste and Odour Problems” BUI can be prepared.

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

Patty Troy advised that the last SPAC meeting was held in Kalamazoo, Michigan on October 27th and 28th. The meeting included a tour of on-going remediation work along the Kalamazoo River as well as information pertaining to: 1) the Michigan Water Strategy, 2) the future of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and Public Advisory Council (PAC) support grants and 3) staffing changes at the USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office. Lastly, Patty reported that the annual AOC conference is scheduled for March 29-30th in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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

Darrell Randell reported that the FOSCR (Canada) have been continuing their outreach efforts by developing education materials, delivering presentations to interested community groups and submitting articles to local newspapers. FOSCR continued to support the Chatham-Kent and

Lambton Children's Water Festival in 2016 and continues to work with the SCRCA in implementing projects and other activities supported by the Ontario Trillium Fund grant received earlier this year. Lastly, the FOSCR AGM will be held on December 6, 2016 at the Enbridge Western Research Park office in Sarnia, Ontario. If interested in attending, please advise Darrell by November 24, 2016.

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) – USA – S. Faust

Sheri Faust advised BPAC members that the St. Clair County Health Department (Michigan) and Lambton Public Health (Ontario) are meeting on November 17, 2016 to discuss and identify common issues that both departments are experiencing. Sheri will be providing an update on the St. Clair River AOC. FOSCR (USA) participated in a meeting with the managers of local habitat projects to discuss how to manage and maintain these sites in the future.

BPAC Membership Subcommittee – A. Kerr and F. Kemp

No new updates identified.

ACTION – Sheri Faust will send Donna Strang the updated email address for Kathy at Gregory A.D.

Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC) – TBD

Kris Lee advised BPAC that the next CRIC meeting is scheduled for December 1, 2016.

Four Agency Managers Work Group – T. Briggs

No new updates identified.

Other Business:

- Patty Troy reported that Dunn Paper will be unable to provide a tour of their facility to BPAC members. She also advised that local fishermen continue to report filamentous discharges originating from the facility. Matt Goddard at the MDEQ has been contacted regarding these reports.
ACTION – Patty Troy will contact Matt Goddard at the MDEQ to discuss the recent complaints surrounding the Dunn Paper facility and enquire as to what actions are being taken to address the issue.
- The Drinking Water survey was discussed previously in the meeting. Donna Strang provided no further updates.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 19, 2016 in Port Huron, Michigan.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Kris Lee at 9:05 pm.