

St. Clair River Canadian Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Implementation Committee (CRIC)
Meeting Minutes
Final

Thursday, December 1, 2016
Lambton Public Health
160 Exmouth Street, Point Edward, Ontario

Participants:

April White	Ted Briggs	Dean Edwardson
Trevor Robak	Mike Kelch	Donna Strang
Paul Buttery	Brian McDougall	Jake Lozon
Sharilyn Johnston	Naomi Williams	

Regrets:

Kris Lee
Kristen Diemer

ITEMS:

Welcome and Introductions:

Ted Briggs chaired the meeting and welcomed committee members.

Review and Acceptance of the Agenda and Previous Minutes:

The draft agenda and minutes from the September 20, 2016 meeting were accepted as prepared.

Actions from the Meeting of September 20, 2016:

Action items from the previous meeting were discussed:

1. **Action:** Naomi Williams will provide Donna Strang with Walpole Island Beach Closings data for 2014 and 2015.

Carried Over

2. **Action:** Dean Edwardson will follow up with local industries regarding the status of the [drinking water BUI] survey.

Completed – Dean Edwardson advised CRIC members that he has met with industry representatives numerous times since the survey was distributed. Some industries have communicated that they are in the process of completing the survey. Industries have also been engaged through the Bluewater Community Advisory Panel (BCAP).

Open houses for the “*Restrictions on Drinking Water or Taste and Odour Problems*” Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) draft discussion paper were completed in October. Comments and feedback received during these sessions are currently being summarized.

ACTION – Donna Strang will follow-up with Claude Lafrance regarding the open house summaries for the “*Restrictions on Drinking Water or Taste and Odour Problems*” BUI draft discussion paper.

Habitat and Wildlife Beneficial Use Impairment Update – April White:

April White provided CRIC members with an update on current Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Populations Subcommittee activities. The subcommittee is responsible for two BUIs: 1) “*Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations*” (currently identified as “Requiring Further Assessment (RFA)”) and 2) “*Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat*” (currently identified as “Impaired”).

Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations:

- A draft report on the wildlife populations’ component of this BUI has been completed and is currently being reviewed at the subcommittee level.
- The analysis of fish body burdens was significantly delayed but will assess whether contaminant levels in fish are having reproductive impacts.
 - Proposed project components include:
 1. Body Burdens – compare burdens from fish caught in 2004 with those caught in 2014
 2. Exposures Experiments - to assess bioaccumulation
 3. Fish Survival – expose 21-day fertilized fish eggs to water collected from discharge plumes in the river. Fish will be hatched out and assessed for survivability, growth and deformities (same done for frogs and turtles).

CRIC Comments:

- Unsure of how representative a 21-day study would compare to real life. Fish likely travel through discharge plumes but it seems unlikely spawning beds would be located there.
- Will the study consider municipal discharges and endocrine disruptors?
- Will the study design include different types of discharge outfalls (e.g., shore-based, submerged, etc.)
- April advised that the exposure study will likely follow the standard scientific protocols similar to those undertaken for wildlife.

Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat:

- 4 of the 7 delisting criteria have been achieved and two are approaching completion.
- The last remaining criteria that still requires work is related to riparian buffers along St. Clair River tributaries in Area 1-A.

Delisting Criteria Review for the “Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat” BUI:

- The Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) Annex 1 Co-chairs have requested that delisting criteria be reviewed to ensure the targets are measurable, realistic and achievable. In addition, the review should also ensure that delisting criteria account for local conditions and align with the issues identified in the Stage 1 Remedial Action Plan.
- The Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Populations Subcommittee recently reviewed the delisting criteria for the “*Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat*” BUI. Revisions and or clarifications were recommended for delisting criteria #1, #2, #3 and #4, while no revisions were recommended for delisting criteria #5, #6 and #7.

CRIC Comments:

- Some discussion occurred surrounding delisting criteria #4 regarding riparian buffers. There are numerous definitions for what constitutes a riparian buffer (e.g., beginning at top of bank, middle of channel, etc.). Since using GIS is a common method of determining the status of riparian buffers in the AOC, it was recommended that an attempt to “ground-truth” the results be made.

April also advised that the Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Populations Subcommittee was reviewing a draft 2017-2020 work plan and beginning to work on the 2012-2017 accomplishments report.

Status of Work Plan Deliverables, Post 2017 Work Plan and Accomplishments Report – April White, Ted Briggs and Donna Strang:

April White discussed the work plan activities previously in the meeting. The Science and Monitoring Subcommittee will be meeting on December 7, 2016 to discuss among other things, the updated work plan and accomplishments report.

Ted Briggs advised that he has circulated work plans to both the Sediment Subcommittee and the Point Source Subcommittee. He plans to organize a teleconference with both shortly.

Donna Strang has circulated a draft work plan to the Public Outreach and Education Subcommittee along with a list of potential projects and events that should be highlighted in the accomplishments report.

ACTION – The new work plan will be an agenda item for additional discussion and comment at the next CRIC meeting.

A Year in Review – 2016:

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) – Darrell Randell:

Darrell Randell was unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) – Jake Lozon:

Jake Lozon provided an overview of projects undertaken by RLSN in 2016:

- RLSN has been active in the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program that provides financial compensation to farmers who retire their land and convert it into an environmentally sustainable form (e.g., wetland, riparian buffer, etc.). Through this program, RLSN successfully contributed 5.7 kms and 14 acres (5.7 hectares) of wildlife habitat in the AOC in 2016.
- RLSN also focused 2016 efforts on pollinator strips. Pollinator friendly species were planted over 30 acres (12 hectares) in St. Clair Township, 75 acres (30 hectares) along Highway 40 and at three provincial parks (78 acres (31.5 hectares)). An education component was also implemented.
- Phragmites control projects were completed at the Walpole Island Rod and Gun and along the Chanel Ecarte.
- Thirty-five acres (14 hectares) of tall grass prairie was planted at the Dow Wetlands.

Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) – Kris Lee:

Kris Lee was unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) – Brian McDougall:

Brian McDougall advised that the SCRCA is participating on the Agriculture Working Group that assists the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) implement actions to reduce phosphorus levels as part of the Lake Erie Domestic Action Plan.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN) – Sharilyn Johnston:

Sharilyn Johnston reported that the AFN Environment Department held numerous community outreach events in 2016. In particular, a “River Day” was organized in March that focused on St. Clair River AOC issues. Numerous stations were set-up for community members to visit and learn about the AOC program and work being done to restore the river. The event was well received and another one will be organized in early 2017.

AFN Environment Department staff attended the St. Clair River AOC symposium in Wallaceburg and the “*Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems*” BUI community presentation at Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN). Staff continue to regularly update AFN Chief and Council on the AOC through seminars. The community is kept informed via the AFN Environment Department website and Facebook page.

Sharilyn also advised that the Antler River Group continues to look for letters of support to fund a full-time coordinator position.

ACTION – A letter will be prepared on behalf of the CRIC and provided to Sharilyn Johnston expressing support for a full-time coordinator position for the Antler River Group.

Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) – Naomi Williams:

Naomi Williams updated CRIC members on activities undertaken at WIFN over the 2016 year. A health study is on-going to measure and speciate levels of arsenic and mercury in the hair and urine of WIFN community members. Currently, 20 people have volunteered. In addition to the hair and urine samples, local fisherman are collecting fish for analysis along with sediment and water samples.

Community consultation for the “*Beach Closings*”, “*Restrictions on Dredging Activities*” and “*Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems*” BUIs have been completed and a motion will be solicited by the Heritage Centre Committee at the next meeting.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) – Canadian Coast Guard is working with WIFN to restore a federally recognized contaminated site which will involve the removal and replacement of a tower and clean-up of contaminated soil. The community is currently being engaged on proposed restoration options for the site.

Lastly, the Heritage Centre is undertaking *E. coli* assessments, including a DNA Track-down study, to determine the need and feasibility of constructing a Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) on Walpole Island.

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) – April White:

April White reported that research for fish and wildlife related BUIs has been completed. ECCC continues to support AFN and WIFN with Remedial Action Plan (RAP) related matters and the AOC continues to receive a sizeable amount of funding through the Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF). A data portal that will consolidate all the research and data collected as part of the AOC program is under development by the University of Windsor.

Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (OMOECC) – Ted Briggs:

Ted Briggs advised that the OMOECC contributed COA funding to support 1) shoreline restoration work along the St. Clair River, 2) the RAP Coordinator position and 3) the Friends of the St. Clair River.

Discussions continue with ECCC and other interested parties regarding the sediment management project.

Sediment trap monitoring continues in collaboration with ECCC both upstream and downstream of the industrial complex. The OMOECC Environmental Monitoring and Reporting branch is currently undertaking a study to speciate mercury collected in the sediment traps to determine the source (if possible).

Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA) – Dean Edwardson:

Dean Edwardson reported that results from the most recent triad study undertaken by SLEA should be available shortly and will help determine whether additional work or studies are warranted. SLEA continues to support the St. Clair River Bottom Critters education program implemented by the SCRCA.

ACTION – Dean Edwardson will forward the SLEA triad study to Donna Strang once completed. Donna will circulate to CRIC members.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs – Trevor Robak:

OMAFRA continues to develop a Domestic Action Plan for Lake Erie and promote the 4R Fertilizer program adopted in Ontario (Right nutrient source, Right rate, Right place and Right time). OMAFRA has also posted a discussion paper on developing soil health regulations that is on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry for comment.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF) – Jenn Richards:

Jenn Richards was unable to attend the meeting. No update was available.

Lambton Public Health – Paul Buttery:

Paul Buttery reported that after five years of data collection, the predictive model for beach closings in Lambton County is almost complete. He also advised that he would be transitioning to a new position at Lambton Public Health and would no longer be a member of CRIC. Theresa Warren will be filling in during the interim. CRIC members congratulated Paul and wished him well in his new position.

City of Sarnia – Mike Kelch:

Mike Kelch advised CRIC members that the City of Sarnia continues to move forward in restoring Centennial Park. The project has taken longer and cost more than initially expected. He also reported that the City continues to work towards increasing the reliability of the Sarnia WPCP during heavy rain events. Lastly, the Devine Street sewer separation project is slated for completion in 2018.

Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Governance – Donna Strang:

Donna Strang updated CRIC members on general 2016 RAP initiatives. St. Clair River AOC information was presented or displayed at a number of local events including: 1) Go Wild Grow Wild Expo, 2) AFN Earth Day celebration, 3) Bluewater Anglers Kids Training Day, 4) Sarnia ArtWalk, 5) Walpole Island Solidarity Day, 6) Walpole Island Heritage Centre Open House (on December 8, 2016), 7) St. Clair-Detroit River Systems Initiative Annual General Meeting and 8) St. Clair Region Conservation Authority Annual Bus Tour. The St. Clair River Bottom Critters and River RAP programs reached over 2500 students in the local community and a successful “River Day” was held at Riverview Central Public School in Port Lambton. Other outreach initiatives included:

1. Advertisements in local newspapers
2. Article published in the annual earth day edition of the First Monday magazine
3. Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) Phragmites brochure

Donna also updated CRIC members on the status of numerous BUIs in the St. Clair River AOC:

- *Restrictions on Dredging Activities*
 - Concluded consultation with WIFN with community presentation in February
 - Endorsement for re-designation to “Not Impaired” received by the BPAC
 - Next step involves review by the Four Agency Managers Work Group
- *Beach Closings*
 - Endorsement for re-designation to “Not Impaired” received by CRIC
 - Update presentation delivered at March BPAC meeting
 - First Nation consultation is on-going
- *Restrictions on Drinking Water Or Taste and Odour Problems*
 - Draft discussion paper finalized and open houses held in Sarnia, Wallaceburg, Aamjiwnaang First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation.
 - Comments and feedback currently being summarized and will be presented to CRIC in 2017
 - Surveys circulated to local industry to solicit information on spill prevention initiatives – 5 received to date
- *Bird and Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems*
 - Endorsement for re-designation to “Not Impaired” received by CRIC
 - First Nation consultation concluded
 - Update presentation delivered to BPAC in July and endorsement for re-designation to “Not Impaired” received in November

Next Meeting and Adjournment:

The next CRIC meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 at Aamjiwnaang First Nation.