

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

**Wednesday, July 22, 2015
Mitchell's Bay Marine Park
3 Allan Road, Mitchell's Bay, Ontario**

Participants:

Donna Strang	Brian McDougall	Darrell Randell
Dean Edwardson	Christine Rogers	Courtney Jackson
Sandra Kok	Ted Briggs	Kris Lee
Phil Vallance	Annette Verhagen	Naomi Williams
Jake Lozon		

Regrets:

Kristen Diemer	Dave Richards	Jenn Richards
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ITEMS:

Welcome and Introductions:

Sandra Kok chaired the meeting and welcomed committee members.

Review and Acceptance of the Agenda and Minutes:

The draft agenda and minutes from the March 10, 2015 meeting were accepted as prepared.

Action Items from the Meeting of March 10, 2015:

The minutes from the previous meeting were provided and action items discussed:

1. **Action:** Donna Strang will re-circulate the CRIC Sharepoint Site information with the March 10, 2015 draft CRIC meeting minutes.
Completed
2. **Action:** CRIC members will review the WATCH proposal and provide comments to Kris Lee prior to April 8, 2015.
Completed – Kris Lee advised that comments were received from Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (OMOECC) on the draft WATCH proposal. Additional discussion regarding the recommendations and the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” discussion document would occur later in the meeting.
3. **Action:** Donna Strang will circulate the draft “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) discussion paper once it has been reviewed and comments incorporated.
Completed
4. **Action:** Naomi Williams will follow-up with Ken Drouillard of the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research (GLIER) to organize a community presentation on the sediment assessment [Contaminants of Concern in Sediment from the Walpole Island Delta].

Deferred – Naomi Williams reported that the GLIER presentation hasn't occurred however the Walpole Island Heritage Center is considering holding an environmental symposium in the next year that would facilitate numerous presentations to community members on the many projects and studies recently conducted on Walpole Island.

5. **Action:** Naomi Williams will inquire as to whether environmental best management practices can be incorporated into the lease agreements [for agricultural land on Walpole Island]. There is uncertainty whether the lease agreement is between the tenant and Walpole Island First Nation or the tenant and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Completed – Naomi Williams advised that the lease agreements are administered through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada with the consent of the Walpole Island First Nation. Further discussions with the Ministry would be required regarding agricultural best management practices and how they are applied through the leases. Naomi informed CRIC members that this Fall, through a proposal with Environment Canada, an agricultural ditch assessment on pesticides and nutrients will occur. As part of this assessment, a survey will be sent to agricultural operations inquiring about agricultural best management practices.

Drinking Water BUI Discussion – Draft Discussion Paper and WATCH Response – Ted Briggs:

Ted Briggs provided an overview of the draft discussion paper for the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” BUI that was provided to CRIC members prior to the meeting. The purpose of the document is to provide relevant information regarding this BUI to initiate a discussion on its status (no re-designation recommendations are provided). After approval by CRIC, consultation activities with the local community will be organized.

At the last CRIC meeting, Kris Lee provided the committee with a draft proposal from the Wallaceburg Advisory Council for a Cleaner Habitat (WATCH) that outlined recommendations on moving forward with the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” assessment. The draft discussion report provides an overview of industrial initiatives implemented to reduce connections to the St. Clair River. The recommendations by WATCH suggest a more detailed survey of the industries is required, requesting specific information on what measures are in place to prevent and contain spills along with future plans to reduce their connection to the river. The proposal was approved by WATCH members at the April 8, 2015 Annual Meeting.

Discussions between committee members surrounding the two documents were as follows:

- The WATCH recommendations are meant to help CRIC in their assessment by providing them the questions the public will want to know.
- The focus of the discussion paper has to remain on the improvements that have been made since the river was listed as an Area of Concern (AOC).
- The Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA) is willing to look further into the questions proposed by WATCH with their member industries however, concerns regarding confidentiality have been raised.
- It is felt that the WATCH recommendations serve as comments to the draft discussion paper and will be considered after the draft document is finalized and community outreach had occurred.
 - Suggestions on how best to distribute and consult with local communities included:
 - Instead of having one-on-one discussions or meetings with individual groups, it would be better to bring more variation and expertise together all at once (e.g., work shop, etc.).

- Separate sessions should be held with First Nation communities. Avenues to have one-on-one conversations and for community members to submit comments and feedback after an information session should be available.

The committee determined next steps regarding the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” discussion paper.

1. CRIC members will thoroughly read through the discussion paper and provide comments to Donna Strang by September 1, 2015.
2. The draft discussion paper will be revised and the draft will be re-circulated to CRIC members for their final comments and approval (by September 30th).
3. Sessions with the local community and First Nations will be planned for October.

ACTION – Donna Strang will re-circulate the current draft of the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” discussion paper to CRIC members with the meeting minutes.

ACTION – CRIC members will review the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” document and provide comments to Donna Strang (dstrang@scrca.on.ca) by September 1, 2015.

ACTION – Ted Briggs and Sandra Kok will draft a letter to WATCH on behalf of CRIC, acknowledging the receipt of their proposal and advising the group on next steps with the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problem” draft discussion paper.

St. Clair River AOC Video – Donna Strang:

Donna Strang advised CRIC members that the Public Outreach and Education Subcommittee has had two meetings since the beginning of the year and are focusing on events and outreach materials that will connect with those in the general public who are not familiar with the AOC program. Currently, a Request for Quotation is being prepared for the production of a 2-3 minutes video and 30 second Public Service Announcement (PSA). The Detroit River RAP team developed a video and PSA that has successfully reach audiences outside of the AOC program. Donna advised CRIC members that they may be approached for information or participation in the production. CRIC members expressed their support for the video and advised that the video should focus on the positive work that has and continues to be conducted along the St. Clair River.

Status of Work Plan Deliverables – Sandra Kok, Ted Briggs and Donna Strang:

Sandra Kok, Ted Briggs and Donna Strang provided updates on the status of work plan deliverables.

ACTION – In future work plan updates, Donna Strang will include for each BUI the number of actions listed in the 2012-2017 Work Plan along with how many have been completed.

ACTION – In future work plan activity updates, milestones and anticipated completion dates will be provided (when possible) for the individual actions.

Highlights included:

Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption

- A 2015-16 sportfish consumption guide has been published by the OMOECC and is available online. A request remains with the OMOECC to have sport fish collected from the St. Clair River in 2015 as part of this program.
 - Ted advised that the OMOECC has developed generic signs that promote fishing and the safe consumption of fish. The signs are available free of charge to anyone wishing to install them.

- Discussions have continued with Dow Chemical Canada regarding their involvement in the sediment management project. The company has agreed to participate, but their level of participation has yet to be determined.

Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations

- Body burden analysis on wild fish collected from the Walpole Island delta will be conducted shortly.
- A draft report has been completed that assesses the wildlife population dynamics component of this BUI.

Fish Tumours and Other Deformities

- The analysis of Brown Bullheads for liver tumours will be carried out in 2015.
- Results from the sediment study conducted with the Walpole Island delta did not reveal any elevated levels of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), a contaminant attributed to the development of cancerous tumours. Research is currently being conducted at GLIER to determine if PAH levels in sediment can be used a surrogate for risk of tumour development in fish when fish sample sizes are minimal. This should be a topic discussed at the next Science and Monitoring Subcommittee meeting.

Restrictions on Dredging Activities

- Consultation activities with Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) will begin shortly. The next step recommended by WIFN is to have a pre-consultation meeting with the Walpole Island Heritage Committee and the Internal Joint Dredging Committee. Naomi Williams advised that a council appointment to the Internal Joint Dredging Committee is still required. She will inquire further to see if the pre-consultation meeting can be held with only the Heritage Centre Committee present.

Beach Closings

- The City of Sarnia is receiving funding from Environment Canada through the Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF) to conduct video inspection of their sewers to identify any leaks and prioritize repairs.

Degradation of Aesthetics

- The COA Annex 1 lead for Environment Canada has agreed with the recommendation to re-designate the “Degradation of Aesthetics” BUI to “Not Impaired”. The approval has been forwarded to the COA Annex 1 lead for the OMOECC for concurrence.

ACTION – Ted Briggs will follow-up with at the OMOECC as to whether the re-designation recommendation for the “Degradation of Aesthetics” has been approved.

ACTION – Sandra Kok will clarify the BUI re-designation process at the federal level at the next CRIC meeting.

Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

- Darrell Randell noted that Lambton County does not have a mechanism by which funding is available for the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Questions rose regarding whether BMP funding was identified in the Natural Heritage Study currently being prepared for the County and whether CRIC would be able to review the final draft and provide comments. Brian McDougall advised that the planning department at the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is involved in the review of the document.

ACTION – Brian McDougall will speak with SCRCA staff regarding whether best management practice implementation funding is identified in the Lambton County Natural Heritage Study.

- The SCRCA has completed a shoreline softening project along the Lambton Area Water Supply System (LAWSS) property and is working with Aamjiwnaang First Nation on a proposed shoreline softening project along the St. Clair River.
- The SCRCA received GLSF funding to begin writing a Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan for the St. Clair River AOC.

Public Outreach and Education

- St. Clair River AOC information has been displayed at a number of events since March including the Aamjiwnaang Earth Day and Envirofest celebrations, Sarnia Artwalk and the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence Cities Initiative conference.
- A number of updated and new display materials have been created.

Updates:

FOSCR Activities – Darrell Randell

The Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) last met in April and is supporting a number of habitat projects in the AOC including wetland restoration along Lake St. Clair and the Swan Lake restoration project on Walpole Island. Darrell Randell advised that submissions from Melanie Foose, the St. Clair River RAP Coordinator at the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality have been received for submission to the FOSCR E-Newsletter and encouraged CRIC members to submit articles as well.

Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) – Jake Lozon

The Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) is working on a number of projects including:

1. Creating a wetland at the Enbridge Solar Farm property
2. Phragmites eradication at the CF Industries property, and
3. Working with the Township of St. Clair to naturalize roadsides with pollinator plants.

The RLSN has also developed riparian buffer brochures that they are distributing widely.

Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF) – Sandra Kok

Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF) funding has been awarded to a number of projects in the St. Clair River AOC including:

1. RAP Governance
2. RLSN for Riparian Buffer Initiative and Stewardship Initiative
3. SCRCA for the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan, and the
4. City of Sarnia for Colborne Sewer Area Condition Inspection Project.

St. Clair – Detroit River System Initiative (SCDRSI) – Ted Briggs

The St. Clair – Detroit River System Initiative (SCDRSI) promotes the restoration of the Huron-Erie Corridor through science based management. They have approached the St. Clair and Detroit River AOCs regarding science required to move the rivers closer to “delisting”.

ACTION – Ted Briggs will send Donna Strang the SCDRSI list of objectives. Donna will circulate the objectives to CRIC members.

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

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) is participating in the organization of the Lake St. Clair conference scheduled for October 21, 2015 in Chatham-Kent. A save-the-date email has been sent and more information regarding the agenda, etc. will be available in the coming months.

ACTION – Ted Briggs will send Donna Strang the Lake St. Clair save-the-date. Donna will circulate to CRIC members.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation – Sharilyn Johnston

Christine Rogers and Courtney Jackson reported on behalf of Sharilyn Johnston who was unable to attend the meeting. Current projects being conducted at Aamjiwnaang First Nation include the construction of a greenhouse that will hold native plants and serve as an education tool for the community and the Traditional Land-use Study. In addition, a youth group at Aamjiwnaang First Nation is looking for opportunities to help with local wetland restoration projects (particularly along the Thames River). Jake Lozon will work with Christine and Courtney to organize a day for the youth program to participate in a RLSN project.

Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) – Naomi Williams

Eleven community members attended a work shop put on by Environment Canada scientists on how to conduct frog deformity surveys. The hands-on work shop provided community members with the training required to continue conducting these survey in the future. At present, 120 frogs have been surveyed with only three having deformities. In addition, sessions have been held by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to train community members in assessing fish habitat.

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA)/Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) – Sandra Kok and Ted Briggs

Sandra Kok reported that the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) Task Team is currently finalizing draft documents on topics such as the Areas of Concern in Recovery (AiR) designation. Once finalized they will be posted on binational.net.

Ted Briggs advised CRIC members that the Lake Erie Nutrient Team has developed phosphorus targets for Lake Erie in order to reduce algal blooms. The targets are currently posted for public comment and information sessions are being held by Environment Canada. Proposed targets recommend a 20% decrease in phosphorus loadings to Lake Erie by 2020 and a 40% decrease by 2025.

Other:

- Sandra Kok informed CRIC members that the State of the Straight conference was being planned for December 2015.
- Annette Verhagen updated the committee on a report prepared by the OMOECC on sediment quality in Talfourd Creek. The report suggests that there is no risk associated with the recreational use of the creek due to sediment contamination.

ACTION – Annette Verhagen will send Donna Strang a copy of the report. Donna will circulate to CRIC members.

Next Meeting:

The next CRIC meeting will be at 10 am on Thursday, September 24, 2015 at the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority, 205 Millpond Crescent, Strathroy, Ontario.

Bear Creek Tour:

Darrell Randell led the committee on a tour of the Snye Segment of the Bear Creek wetland. Through funding obtained by Ducks Unlimited structure maintenance will occur at the site to repair damaged dykes and install water pumps. The committee participated in a social media initiative by Ducks Unlimited call “Dip Your Paddle”. The initiative involves Ducks Unlimited staff from all over Canada documenting their favourite wetland projects and posting pictures on twitter.