

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

**Monday, March 21, 2016**  
**Maawn Doosh Gumig Community Centre, Aamjiwnaang First Nation**  
**1972 Virgil Avenue**

**Participants:**

April White	Dean Edwardson	Paul Buttery
Trevor Robak	Donna Strang	Brian McDougall
Ted Briggs	Jenn Richards	Jake Lozon
Darrell Randell	Naomi Williams	Courtney Jackson

**Regrets:**

Phil Vallance	Dave Richards	Kristen Diemer
Cindy Scholten	Kris Lee	

**ITEMS:**

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Ted Briggs chaired the meeting and welcomed committee members.

**Review and Acceptance of the Agenda and Minutes:**

The draft agenda and minutes from the November 26, 2015 meeting were accepted as prepared.

**Actions from the meeting of November 26, 2015:**

Action items from the previous meeting were discussed:

1. **Action:** April White and Ted Briggs will draft a response letter acknowledging the recommendations provided by WATCH on the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” draft discussion paper.

***Deferred***

2. **Action:** Donna Strang will circulate the shoreline restoration chart [by Melanie Foose and Brian McDougall] to CRIC members.

***Completed***

3. **Action:** April white will follow-up with the City of Sarnia for confirmation on the dollar amount invested for CSO reduction projects.

***Completed*** – April White reported that the City of Sarnia has invested over \$65 million since 2006 on sewer separation work that has resulted in a substantial reduction in the volume of CSO and plant bypasses. She recommended putting together a chart that records the investments made by local municipalities to improve infrastructure.

**ACTION** – April White will prepare a chart that records investments made by local municipalities to improve infrastructure (e.g., sewer separation, water pollution control plant upgrades, etc.) and provide to Donna Strang.

4. **Action:** Donna Strang will arrange a December teleconference with a smaller group of CRIC members to discuss next steps in addressing the WATCH recommendations/questions and whether this activity will be included in the contract prepared for Claude Lafrance.

**Completed** – A teleconference occurred in December 2015 and questions for the survey are currently being formalized. Information from local industry will be added into the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” draft discussion paper as it is received. A new draft of the report will be available in the next week from Claude Lafrance.

**ACTION** – Donna Strang will circulate the revised draft of the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” discussion paper to CRIC members once received. CRIC members will review and provide any additional feedback.

5. **Action:** Donna Strang will consolidate all comments received for the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” draft discussion paper and circulate to CRIC members.

**Completed**

#### **Beach Closings BUI – Assessment and Recommendation – Donna Strang:**

Donna Strang provided CRIC members with an overview of the “Beach Closings” Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) status assessment and recommendations. The initial draft report was circulated prior to the meeting.

The “Beach Closings” BUI was identified as “Impaired” in the St. Clair River Area of Concern (AOC) due to frequent closures of beaches due to high levels of *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) originating from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and Water Pollution Control Plants (WPCPs). The delisting criteria for the “Beach Closings” BUI states that re-designation can occur when “less than 20% of the geometric means of water samples collected over the swimming season, at identified beaches within the St. Clair River AOC exceed the Provincial Water Quality Objective (PWQO) for *E. coli* OR is similar to a suitable non-AOC reference site, when assessed over a period of at least three to five years”. Re-designation could also be considered when the major source of *E. coli* is not from an anthropogenic source (e.g., CSO, WPCP).

The status assessment reported on municipal initiatives to reduce and/or eliminate untreated or partially treated discharges to the St. Clair River and also assessed *E. coli* data from beaches monitored by local Health Departments (2009-2013) and other local swimming areas (2011-2013). Results are positive with improvements to municipal infrastructure substantially decreasing discharges to the St. Clair River. *E.coli* levels at beaches and local swimming areas are generally low with elevated levels attributed to non-anthropogenic sources (e.g., geese and ducks, precipitation, etc.) rather than anthropogenic. Comparisons to upstream Lake Huron reference sites provided comparable results. The status assessment recommendation was that the delisting criteria has been achieved and the “Beach Closings” BUI should be re-designated to “Not Impaired”.

Discussion and comments from CRIC members included:

- The 2014 and 2015 data available for Canatara Park, Centennial Beach and Mitchell’s Bay should be incorporated into the draft of the “Beach Closings” report.
- Mitchell’s Bay Beach is impacted more significantly by cormorants than by seagulls or geese.
- The City of Sarnia is currently conducting a water infiltration study that will identify leaks in their sewer system so they can be mitigated.

- At Walpole Island First Nation, it was noted that there were a number of beaches sampled in the past as part of their community beach monitoring program. Because levels were significantly high, sampling was discontinued. It would be interesting to see if further investigation would identify a source.

**Decision** – CRIC members did not oppose the recommendation to re-designate the “Beach Closings” BUI from “Impaired” to “Not Impaired”. The recommendation was approved by the committee.

**ACTION** – Donna Strang will revise the draft report based on CRIC feedback (e.g., incorporate 2014 and 2015 results) and re-circulate to the committee.

**Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems BUI – Assessment and Recommendation – April White:**

This agenda item was deferred to a future CRIC meeting.

**Status of Work Plan Deliverables – April White, Ted Briggs and Donna Strang:**

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

Highlights included:

Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption

- Sport fish sampling was conducted in the St. Clair River in 2015. Results are pending and will be incorporated into the next edition of the “Guide to Eating Ontario Fish” published by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (OMOEC).
- Sediment traps continue to be placed in the St. Clair River by the OMOEC and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Additional sites are being considered for the upcoming monitoring season.

Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations

- A draft report has been prepared by ECCC on the wildlife component of this BUI. It assesses population dynamics as well as wildlife body burdens. The report compares results from the St. Clair River AOC to areas outside of the AOC. The report is currently being reviewed.

Fish Tumours and Other Deformities

- Brown bullhead livers have been analyzed for tumour prevalence. Additional biological data is being compiled to complete the analysis which will augment the existing assessment report for this BUI.

Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems

- Snapping turtle eggs have been reanalyzed to measure methylmercury concentrations as recommended by the Science and Monitoring Subcommittee.
- ECCC scientists have questions regarding the yardsticks outlined in the Stage 2 RAP report. The Science and Monitoring Subcommittee will be discussing how to best to move forward (i.e., continue to use yardsticks or use alternative targets).

Restrictions on Dredging Activities

- Consultation with Walpole Island First Nation continued with a display at a “Soups-On” event and a lunch time community presentation.
- The status assessment and recommendation will be presented to the Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) at their March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016 meeting.

Degradation of Aesthetics

- On January 25, 2016 the re-designation of the “Degradation of Aesthetics” BUI to “Not Impaired” was officially approved by the Regional Director General at ECCC.

**ACTION** – Donna Strang will circulate the letter received by the Regional Director General approving the “Degradation of Aesthetics” re-designation to CRIC members.

- The final BUI status assessment has been posted on the Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) website and has also been received by the International Joint Commission.

Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

- Additional wetlands in the AOC will be evaluated in 2016 which may afford some protection under the Planning Act and increase wetland coverage.
- The draft “Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan” will be completed and the end of March 2016. The plan will be finalized in 2017, addressing delisting criteria #7 for this BUI.

Public Outreach and Education

- Advertisements for the St. Clair River AOC have been submitted to local newspapers, the Bluewater Anglers “tabloid” (4000 copies) and in the First Monday magazine Earth Day edition. An online advertisement linking to the FOSCR website will also be available on the web versions of the local newspapers.
- A shoreline clean-up at Canatara Park has been scheduled for Saturday, October 15, 2016.

Because the CRIC is reaching the final year of the work plan developed in 2012, it was suggested that a 2012-2017 accomplishments report be prepared similar to that prepared for the 2007-2010 work plan. In addition, it would be beneficial for subcommittees to discuss next steps (e.g., new work plan) and identify any additional actions that may be required to delist the St. Clair River AOC.

**ACTION** – Donna Strang will circulate the member list for each of the CRIC subcommittees.

**ACTION** – Chairs will discuss next steps and additional actions with subcommittee members.

**Updates:**

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

Darrell Randell reported that the next FOSCR meeting is being held on March 22, 2016. Education sessions continue to be conducted by Kim Gledhill at the Dow Wetlands.

Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) – Jake Lozon:

Jake Lozon reported that the restoration of Connor Wetland was completed. The project included a prescribed burn and removal of vegetation around the wetland. A portion of the Corsini site has been burned but funding is needed to complete the rest. Riparian buffer mail outs have been completed and RLSN is considering an “Alternative Land Use” program that will pay landowners to implement stewardship projects.

Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF) – April White:

Proposals for the 2016-17 Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF) have been received. Outside of the RAP Governance proposal, four applications were submitted:

1. Shoreline restoration at Aamjiwnaang First Nation – St. Clair Region Conservation Authority
2. Shoreline management plan – Walpole Island First Nation
3. Riparian buffers – RLSN
4. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan – St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

All four applications were recommended for funding.

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

Ted Briggs advised the committee that the SCDRSI is a group of over 30 organizations from Canada and the United States. The objective of the program is to promote science-based management that will restore the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. Donna Strang reported that she attended the SCDRSI Annual Meeting in February 2016 and provided a brief update on the St. Clair River AOC to SCDRSI members.

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

Brian McDougall reported that the SCRCA has applied for grants that will support shoreline restoration in St. Clair Township. In addition, the SCRCA is looking for funding to initiate Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the AOC on the north branch of the Sydenham River. Lastly, Brian McDougall is sitting on two phosphorus reduction committees for the Thames River.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation – Sharilyn Johnston:

Courtney Jackson reported on behalf of Sharilyn Johnston who was unable to attend the meeting. Progress is being made on the shoreline project proposed for the Aamjiwnaang First Nation shoreline along the St. Clair River. Concepts will be presented to the Environment Committee. The Environment Department organized an AOC day on March 5<sup>th</sup> for community members. Topics highlighted during the day included: 1) the cultural connection Aamjiwnaang First Nation community members have with water, 2) the “Beach Closings” BUI, 3) the St. Clair River shoreline project and 3) the “Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems” draft discussion paper. Lastly, an Earth Day event is being planned for April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Walpole Island First Nation – Naomi Williams:

Naomi Williams advised CRIC members that a Science Symposium in Wallaceburg is scheduled for March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 at the Baldoon Golf Club. The symposium will provide an opportunity for scientists to report back to the community on a number of projects conducted on Walpole Island over the last couple of years. The Walpole Island Heritage Centre is considering a habitat offset project in the Chematogen Channel for a Species at Risk fish and improve water flow in the area. Initial feedback from the community suggests support for this project. The Heritage Centre has also been approached by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regarding a proposed bathymetry survey of Walpole Island channels. The results could benefit spill monitoring.

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

Dean Edwardson reported that the SLEA triad study is nearing completion. Results may be available for the next CRIC meeting.

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

Trevor Robak informed CRIC members that currently the main focus of OMAFRA is phosphorus reduction.

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

The OMNRF is providing in-kind and cash contributions to support the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.

**Next Meeting and Adjournment:**

The next CRIC meeting will be held at 10 am on June 14, 2016 (Location – TBD).