

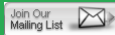
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Donna Strang, St. Clair RAP Coordinator

Ken Hall, FOSCR Webmaster

**Help FOSCR Delist the St. Clair River**

Friends of the St. Clair River is a registered Canadian charitable organization. Your financial support for our programs will help FOSCR progress towards delisting the St. Clair River as an Area of Concern in the Great Lakes.

Contributions can be sent to:

Mr. Terry Burrell  
 Friends of the St. Clair River  
 514 Christina Street North  
 Sarnia, ON N7T 5W4

All donations will receive a tax receipt.

Call Terry at 519-336-5545 for more information.

PLEASE join us.

**Restoration Projects on St. Clair Conservation Agricultural Lands**



purposes. These properties also lie within Area 1-B of the St. Clair River Area of Concern.

In the 1980s, St. Clair Conservation purchased properties as part of the W. Darcy McKeough Dam and Diversion Project. The McKeough Floodway allows water to be diverted from the North Branch of the Sydenham River directly to the St. Clair River to alleviate flooding in the town of Wallaceburg.

Many of the properties lie north of the floodway from Wilkesport to Bridgen Road and are leased by tenants for agricultural

In 2014-15 Property Management Plans were developed for each property with the purpose of implementing environmentally sustainable farming practices and resources. In addition, 24 acres have been converted to wetlands (10 acres), riparian buffers and upland habitat (14 acres).

These projects help to improve St. Clair River tributary water quality, contribute to the target set for riparian buffers in the AOC and improve biological connectivity.

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**St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan: Path Forward 2015**



The Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) Conference was held in Toledo, Ohio March 11 – 12, 2015. "Area of Concern in Recovery" and "Life after Delisting" were two topics important to the work on St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan. The article below will deal with the first topic. Stay tuned to the next newsletter for "Life after Delisting".

In the original plan, work would be completed when the 14 Beneficial Use Impairments (BUI's) were all removed. The site would no longer have an AOC designation and would be "delisted" and considered the same as any other non-impaired site in the Great Lakes regions. Now a new designation has been created called "Area of Concern in Recovery" (AIR).

*St. Clair River BPAC co-chairs, Kris Lee (left) and Patty Troy (right) attended the 2015 Great Lakes AOC Conference in Toledo, Ohio. Photo taken at the National Museum of the Great Lakes.*

The AIR designation can be officially applied under specific circumstances. First, all the management action plans for all BUI's are complete. Secondly, the anticipated timetable for all BUI removals is 5 – 15 years. Ongoing monitoring is in place and supports the improvement outcomes. Multi-stakeholder consultation is consistently applied along the way.



Let's take a practical and "hypothetical AOC" example to illustrate how this works: The hypothetical AOC has removed several BUIs, and only has two remaining. The management actions for these two BUIs have been completed. Time is now required for the area to heal. Monitoring suggests that the BUI delisting criteria will likely be met in a 5 – 15 year timeframe. A monitoring plan is in-place to ensure that the recovery proceeds as anticipated. Stakeholders are in agreement that the plan is satisfactory to achieve BUI removal. The Area of Concern in Recovery (AIR) designation criteria is met, and official AIR designation given by the appropriate agencies.

The area will be monitored during recovery to ensure successful remediation. If monitoring shows that restoration is not occurring as expected, additional actions will be evaluated. Before the AIR designation is finally removed, it must again follow a multi stakeholder consultation process to satisfy the stakeholders.

Conference questions from the participants:

1. If a region is in "Area in Recovery" and it is determined that the management action plan was not complete, new action plans must be added, will the area go back to an "Area of Concern"? It was explained that it will probably not reverse to an AOC but will continue as AIR with the new action plans and new monitoring.

2. How are Binational AOC's managed when one country would be able to delist while the other may be an "Area in Recovery" or remain as AOC?

There was no definitive answer from the EPA. Since we are a Binational group and since our respective countries are at different stages, this question will need to become an agenda item for discussion at the St. Clair River Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC). Once the discussions have occurred at a future BPAC meeting, the information will be shared in this newsletter.

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**Swan Lake Marsh Project – Engaging the Whole Community**



The 171 acre marsh known as Swan Lake was not in very good shape when the Walpole Island Land Trust took responsibility for the lease from the Walpole Island First Nation Council in 2009.

While it may seem small in size when compared to other extensive marshes on Walpole Island 171 acres is still highly significant. The land trust has conducted community consultation on each phase before undertaking improvements to the management of the marsh. Engaging the community is always a big part of any plan. Many people from within the community have become involved in restoring ecological functions and expanding wildlife use. A big goal for this project has been to educate youth and bring them together with Elders and community members to help them to learn about wetlands, ethical hunting practices, survival techniques, language, stories, and cultural teachings.

During 2014, the perimeter dyke was rebuilt along the Snye River repairing decades of damage from weather, erosion, burrowing animals and undesirable tree growth. Efforts to control the invasive phragmites were undertaken and a tractor powered pump was purchased that will be used to manage water levels in the marsh.

Plans are in place for this restoration work to continue in 2015. The water level will be drawn down as low as possible to allow for in marsh excavation to establish greater biodiversity. Ideally a marsh should have 50% open water and 50% emergent aquatic vegetation. The excavations will take the marsh from being a cattail monoculture to having a wide variety of aquatic plant life. Different plants grow at different water depths so using construction equipment wisely to sculpt the bottom of the marsh really promotes renewed marsh health in subsequent years.

An additional feature being planned, because the community had expressed concerns about incorporating more features designed to restore fishery values, is a large deepwater pond with direct connection to the Snye River. Also along this line will be an outflow from the marsh with a series of gates that will allow fish greater access to and from the Swan Lake Marsh.

The Walpole Island Land Trust efforts at the Swan Lake Marsh are a great benefit to the St Clair River Area of Concern and to the Walpole Island community. It has not happened without a great deal of support from many individuals, groups and governments. Friends of St Clair River were involved at the beginning when the land trust first took possession of Swan Lake Marsh and we are pleased to see how the project continues to become more important.

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## Local Divers Committed to Raising Awareness on the Great Lakes



Greg Lashbrook and Kathy Johnson of Burtchville Township, MI have worked with scuba certification classes, on search & rescue operations, for commercial hardhat companies and assisted researchers across the Great Lakes basin. Their work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and SHEDD Aquarium in Chicago, among other organizations, has established them as Great Lakes marine life experts.

Since the publication of their first book "A Diving and Snorkeling Guide to the Great Lakes", Greg and Kathy have committed themselves to raising awareness about the importance of maintaining healthy freshwater ecosystems. Each year they present programs on a wide range of freshwater topics from invasive species and lake sturgeon to shoreline restoration efforts. Whether they are speaking to a classroom of children or working with national broadcasters such as National Geographic TV or the Discovery Network the goal is always to showcase freshwater marine life in a positive light. Greg and Kathy's videos were used by the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission Congressional Delegation as part of their presentation to the United States Congress on the state of the Great Lakes fishery.

2014 was a busy year for film festivals with screenings in Chicago, New York, the US Virgin Islands and Bangalore, India. In addition to their work being featured at the inaugural Reef Renaissance Film Festival in St. Thomas, Greg and Kathy were also jurors for the festival's entries. The lake sturgeon documentary which Kathy and Greg produced with the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians was accepted and screened at the "Voices From the Water's International Traveling Film Festival" in India and is slated for screening in Madrid, Spain during the summer of 2015.

To see more of Greg and Kathy's work visit their website at [www.GregoryAd.com](http://www.GregoryAd.com) and like their Facebook page for weekly video updates.

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<http://www.friendsofstclair.ca/>

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*BPAC is a community-based partnership including governments, industry, first nations, academia, as well as environmental organizations and private citizens that work collectively in helping to improve the health of the St. Clair River. Our key goal is to implement the Canadian Remedial Action Plan (RAP) in order to restore the beneficial uses and remove the River from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern.*



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