



St. Clair River RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC)
Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 27, 2020
Zoom Teleconference

Participants:

April White (ECCC)	Norman Joseph (AFN)	Kris Lee (BPAC)
Stephen Marklevitz (MNRF)	Ted Briggs (MECP)	Vince Gagner (SLEA)
Terry Burrell (City of Sarnia)	Donna Blue (SCRCA)	Natasha Pozega (RAP Coordinator)
Trevor Robak (OMAFRA)	Theresa Warren (LHU)	Annette Verhagen (MECP)
Naomi Williams (WIFN)		

Regrets:

Dave Richards (MNRF)	Jake Lozon (RLSN)	Sharilyn Johnston (AFN)
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Meeting called to order at 1:00pm

Welcome and Introduction:

Ted Briggs chaired the meeting and welcomed CRIC members to the Zoom teleconference.

Review and Acceptance of the Agenda and Previous Minutes:

The draft agenda and minutes from the December 9, 2019 meeting were accepted.

Actions from Previous Meeting

- **ACTION** – the RAP Coordinator will explore low-cost options for a re-designation celebration and begin planning an event. **Carry Forward**
- **ACTION** – The RAP Coordinator, along with April White, will work to develop a fact sheet to address some of the concerns and questions surrounding the [Fish Tumours or Other Deformities] BUI (e.g., internal vs. external lesions). **COMPLETED. ACTION: Fact sheets to be posted on FOSCR website.**
- Stephen Marklevitz reported the when the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) captures fish that have external lesions, the fish are sent to the University of Guelph for analysis. **ACTION** – Stephen Marklevitz will look into whether studies have been conducted internally by the MNRF regarding external skin lesions on fish. **COMPLETED.**
 - MNFR sends all samples to University of Guelph directly and their pathology lab inspects them. None of this work happens internally at MNRF. MNRF does not have any active monitoring programs for skin lesion. These are on a pop-up basis.
- Ted Briggs suggested having the Conservation Authority deliver a presentation regarding the [Sydenham River Phosphorus Management] Plan at the next CRIC meeting. **COMPLETED**
- **ACTION** – Kris Lee will look into her files to find the “Life After Delisting” document developed for the St. Clair River. **COMPLETED**

- CRIC members inquired about the status of the triad studies (e.g., benthic, water quality, etc.) that have been administered by SLEA in the past. **ACTION** – Vince Gagner will refer to past minutes and discuss with the SLEA board the status and potential continuation of this program. **COMPLETED**
 - These studies were discontinued because it was felt they were no longer needed. If there is a study that the committee would like to see happen to answer a specific question and this is the appropriate avenue, Vince will advocate to the SLEA board on our behalf.
- MNR staff are working to develop programs that will look at fish populations throughout all connecting channels in the Great Lakes. **ACTION** – Stephen Marklevitz will share the results of this streamlined programming once it becomes available.
 - Implemented a project designing phase for Connecting Waterways in 2019 (St. Clair, Detroit, and Niagara rivers). Additional work needs to be done in Niagara, but St. Clair and Detroit were successful. Data is still being analyzed to look at successes and errors, but the plan is to have a rotating program. Will return to St. Clair River once in the next 3 years. This project will be specifically look at fish communities in the connecting waterways.

Status of the RAP by Natasha Pozega, St. Clair River RAP Coordinator

This presentation highlighted the history of the Areas of Concern and provided an introduction to the St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) and the key projects that have contributed to the remediation of the AOC. It also provided a status update of beneficial use impairments and the current priority actions to advance the recovery of BUIs. The following BUIs remain “impaired” or “requires further assessment” in the Canadian portion of the St. Clair River AOC:

BUI 1: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption (impaired)- Additional sediment remediation, and a public fish consumption survey remain to be completed before this BUI can be formally assessed.

BUI 3: Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations (RFA)- The draft assessment report is being updated and is anticipated to be circulated to the CRIC in the coming months.

BUI 4: Fish Tumours and Other Deformities (RFA)- The draft assessment report has been supported to enter the public engagement period by the CRIC. The document is currently under review by our First Nation’s partners.

BUI 6: Degradation of Benthos (Impaired)- Additional sediment remediation remains to be completed before this BUI can be formally assessed.

BUI 9: Restrictions on Drinking Water and Taste and Odour Problems (impaired)- the draft assessment report is being written. Efforts are being made to coordinate timing of redesignation of this BUI with our U.S. counterparts.

BUI 14- Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat (impaired)- WIFN will be completing a wetland restoration project to improve connectivity between coastal wetlands and the St. Clair River in the river delta.

Those seeking more information are asked to visit friendsofstclair.ca.

GLPI/COA Updates – April White, Ted Briggs

Great Lakes Protection Initiative (GLPI) Funding:

The Great Lakes Protection Initiative (GLPI) funds AOCs throughout Ontario (formerly called the Great Lakes Sustainability Fund (GLSF)). There are eight different funding streams, one of which is dedicated to Great Lakes AOCs. April White advised that GLPI funding is being provided to Aamjiwnaang First Nation

and Walpole Island First Nation for the next three years to support AOC engagement. GLPI funds were also awarded last to the SCR CA to support the sediment remediation project and a habitat restoration project at Walpole Island. These are two-year projects and each are in their second and final year. The next round of GLPI applications is anticipated in early 2021.

In addition to GLPI funding, ECCC has also signed contracts with the SCRCA to support RAP coordination and GIS work that will update data relevant to the assessment of BUI 14.

Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) Funding:

Ted Briggs reported that MECP has awarded COA funds to the SCRCA to support RAP governance until March 2022. Additional funds have been requested by the SCRCA to support shoreline restoration projects and by FOSCR for ongoing outreach and education funding.

MECP has announced the Great Lakes Local Action Fund available for community groups to submit proposals to do community-focused projects along the Great Lakes. The deadline for submissions is November 6, 2020. Projects can be awarded up to \$50,000 and should receive notice of awards in early 2021.

The most recent Canada-Ontario Agreement ended in 2019. Ongoing negotiations are taking place between the federal and provincial government to prepare and finalize a new agreement. Ted is hopeful that this agreement will be finalized before the end of the calendar year and that it will provide direction on priority projects for the next 5 years.

Status of Beneficial Use Impairments – April White, Ted Briggs

Update provided during *Status of the RAP* Presentation and added that Indigenous engagement was impacted by COVID-19 and while presentations were made to the respective community Committee's, the respective Chief and Councils have not yet been briefed. Walpole Island has a new Chief so awaiting guidance on next steps

Guest Presentations:

St. Clair River Upstream/ Downstream Monitoring by Brad Hill, ECCC

Ongoing monitoring of water quality in the Huron-Erie Corridor is needed by Great Lakes managers to assess current status and trends, and to assess the need for, and ultimately the efficacy of, remedial actions. As part of its Freshwater Quality Monitoring and Surveillance Program, ECCC's St. Clair River Upstream/Downstream (U/D) monitoring measures the concentrations of chemicals in both whole water and suspended sediment at the head (Pt. Edward) and mouth (Port Lambton) of the St. Clair River. The intent of the monitoring is to track organic pollutants in the industrialized Canadian region near Sarnia, Ontario. Results for OCS, HCB, HCB, PCBs, Hg and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in suspended solids along with Hg in whole water have been reported in the *Concentrations and trends of trace metals and organic contaminants in the St. Clair River: 1987 – 2017* report by Debbie Burniston and Brad Hill, Water Quality Monitoring and Surveillance Science and Technology Branch, Environment and Climate Change Canada. This presentation summarized the findings of this report and what they mean for the St. Clair River AOC.

St. Clair River Sediment Project Update by Mike Moroney, SCRCA

There are three priority zones in the St. Clair River where mercury contaminated sediment remains. Mike Moroney, Project Manager with the SCRCA, is leading the development of an engineering and design plan for the St. Clair River sediment management to address the contaminated sediment in these zones. Concentrations exceeding 10mg/kg of mercury in the top 15cm of the sediment are believed to pose the greatest risk of biomagnification through the food chain, potentially leading to concentrations in bottom-feeding fish species (specifically Redhorse sucker) exceeding recommended guidelines. An engineering and design plan is being developed to identify detailed methods and logistics for removing/remediating areas where concentrations exceed 10mg/kg in the top 15cm, and to identify the overall project costs to undertake the remediation work. Community engagement in this process identified that hydraulic dredging and backfill is the preferred method for remediating the contaminated sediment. For areas that cannot be hydraulically dredged, mechanical dredging or capping options are being explored. Spring field work in 2020 was delayed due to COVID-19, but the desired work was able to be completed in the summer months. At this time, a contractor is collecting additional sediment samples so that more current data is available on mercury concentrations in some areas. An updated project schedule has been requested from the contractor to assess the impacts of 2020 COVID-19 delays on the completion of the design plan, which is currently projected to be complete by May 2021. At this time, there are no funds committed to undertake the implementation of the sediment management plan, however, this plan will identify exactly what work needs to be done and provide a more accurate estimate of the overall project cost. This presentation is a shortened version of a more in-depth presentation available to the public at <https://www.stclairsediment.ca/>.

Sydenham River Phosphorus Management Plan Update by Nicole Drumm, SCRCA

Through funding provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada, the SCRCA is coordinating the development of a Phosphorus Management Plan for the Sydenham River watershed to reduce the loading of this nutrient to local waterways, which is contributing to algal blooms in Lake Erie. The objective of the project is to work with the local community and stakeholders to identify sources of phosphorus, determine best-value solutions, and implement an outreach strategy. Feedback from the project's committees have directed on-going research and are being incorporated into the draft Management Plan. The full plan is expected to be finalized by March 2022.

Life After Delisting- April White

As the RAPs progress, it raises questions about what to expect for the St. Clair River and other AOCs after they are delisted. While the transition plan for AOCs has not yet been developed, early discussions have been held within the agencies regarding what this transition might look like. The St. Clair River falls under the jurisdiction of the Lake Erie Lakewide Action and Management Plan as it is part of the water system entering into Lake Erie. The Lake Erie LAMP is interested in building on the existing AOC partnerships (BPAC and CRIC) to bring regional history, continuity, and a pre-existing communication channel to the LAMP after the AOC program is complete.

Kris Lee circulated the following two documents to the CRIC:

- Great Lakes Areas of Concern: Life After Delisting- An Investigation Conducted at the International Joint Commission Great Lakes Regional Office by Ankita Mandelia (2016)
- DRAFT Area of Concern in Recovery (AOCiR) Guidance Document

Updates:

Friends of the St. Clair River (FOSCR) – Terry Burrell:

- FOSCR has recently ended their third amateur photo contest. Winners will be awarded their prizes later this week. 1 of the 6 winners is a U.S. resident and will be awarded with their prize by FOSCR-U.S. 187 entries were received.
- FOSCR has agreed to continue supporting the SCRCAs River RAP education program.

Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) – Jake Lozon:

Jake Lozon was unable to attend the teleconference. No report was available.

Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) – Kris Lee:

- BPAC had a virtual Zoom meeting on September 24, 2020.
- A presentation was made to BPAC by Enbridge regarding the Line 5 development.

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) – Donna Blue:

- Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, camping at the SCRCAs three regional campgrounds moved forward with modifications. The Authority rolled out a new online reservation system that was well received.
- Field crews were able to successfully complete field work (e.g., tree-planting, fish monitoring, etc.) with COVID-19 precautions in place.
- SCRCA Conservation Education staff created “Virtual Field Trips” this spring in response to school closures resulting from the pandemic. The resource was offered free-of-charge and was viewed by over 20,000 students, teachers and/or parents. New programs have been developed to abide by COVID-19 guidelines and school restrictions including school yard Nature in Your Neighbourhood program and live-streaming.
- Shoreline protection work continues to move forward along the Lake Huron shoreline.

Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN) – Sharilyn Johnston:

Norman Plain attended the CRIC meeting on behalf of Sharilyn Johnston. No updates to report.

Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) – Naomi Williams:

No updates to report.

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

- ECCC is finalizing the GLPI Agreements, contracts and starting to coordinate updates with our internal and external AOC science partners such as the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Several reports from these partners have been finalized over the summer and have been circulated to the CRIC and/or subcommittees. One report is the one Brad Hill presented on today.

Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) – Ted Briggs, Annette Verhagen:

- The MECP will be hosting a virtual community engagement meeting on the Sarnia Area Environmental Health Project (SAEHP), for Aamjiwnaang First Nation and for the broader Sarnia community, on November 4th and 5th, respectively. These meeting will focus on progress updates and discussion of the project.
- The Aamjiwnaang community presentation and discussion will be held on Wednesday November 4th, between 6-8 p.m. This meeting is intended for the Aamjiwnaang community only.

- The public broader Sarnia area community presentation and discussion will be held on the evening of Thursday, November 5th, between 6 and 8 p.m. Community members may participate in the meeting through video conference or by phone.

Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA) – Vince Gagner:

Since the last CRIC meeting, the SLEA office has moved from Lambton College Suncor Sustainability Centre to the Western Research Park. Vince extended an open invitation to CRIC members to tour the facility.

SLEA has been working collaboratively through CASA (Clean Air Sarnia and Area) to procure, install and commission three new air monitoring stations for SO₂. The first will go live in the coming days and the second will follow soon after. Work on this project should be finalized by end of 2020 and is a great example of working together with community, government and industry through CASA.

For years, SLEA has maintained a regional guideline that all members have followed for making downriver notifications in the event of a spill. This SLEA guideline is being connected to CAER (Community Awareness and Emergency Response) processes that includes the introduction of a new dedicated “CAER Code 10” for spills to the river and use of a more modern auto notification tool called Everbridge.

A new website under the brand ‘Bluewater Association for Safety Environment and Sustainability’ or BASES is almost complete. This website will provide updated information for regional safety (IEC), environmental protection (SLEA) and emergency preparedness (CAER). To strengthen community awareness, it will also provide a real time posting or ‘ticker’ of information shared by industrial sites regarding any abnormal activity such as training exercise, flaring, high traffic, and/or emergency event updates.

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

- OMAFRA has been busy addressing impacts of COVID-19 on farming practices.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) – Stephen Marklevitz:

MNRF programming has been severely impacted by the COVID pandemic. One project was able to move forward in 2020, but the rest were postponed to 2021.

Lambton Public Health – Theresa Warren:

COVID continues to be the priority. No further updates.

City of Sarnia – Terry Burrell:

The northern shoreline continues to be beaten up by harsh weather conditions. Restoring the shoreline has been challenging due to weather and fish spawning schedules.

Budget season is just starting. Terry will update on any future environmental projects to be funded by the City of Sarnia.

Other Business:

The Chairs thanked everyone for the ongoing participation with the CRIC.

Next Meeting:

The next CRIC meeting will be scheduled in the new year on a date selected by the Chairs.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50pm