



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

**Tuesday, June 8, 2021
Zoom Teleconference
Minutes produced by Natasha Pozega**

Attendees:

April White (ECCC)	Kris Lee (BPAC)	Stephen Marklevitz (MNRF)
Ted Briggs (MECP)	Vince Gagner (SLEA)	Terry Burrell (City of Sarnia)
Donna Blue (SCRCA)	Trevor Robak (OMAFRA)	Sharilyn Johnston (AFN)
Courtney Jackson (AFN)	Natasha Pozega (RAP Coordinator)	

Guests:

Mike Moroney (SCRCA)	Betsy Henry (Anchor QEA)	Roger Santiago (ECCC)
Edward Glaza (Parsons)	Rupert Joyner (ECCC)	

Regrets:

Theresa Warren (LPH)

Actions Arising from Meeting:

- Comments requested on the draft assessment report for BUI 9- *Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems* by **July 9, 2021**. Please forward comments to Natasha Pozega.
- Comments requested on the draft assessment report for BUI 3- *Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations* by **July 30, 2021**. Please forward comments to April White.

Meeting called to order at 1:06pm

1. Welcome and Introductions:

April White chaired the meeting and welcomed CRIC members to the Zoom teleconference.

2. Review and Acceptance of the Agenda and Previous Minutes:

The June 8, 2021 draft agenda and minutes from the October 27, 2020 meeting were accepted.

3. Update on the Sediment Management Project – Mike Moroney, Betsy Henry, and Edward Glaza

This presentation provided an update on the engineering and design plan designed to manage mercury-contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River. The last update to the CRIC was in October 2020. This presentation highlighted some background information on the efforts completed to address mercury-contaminated sediment in the river, activities completed to date, sediment management objectives, sampling results, as well as the recommended remedial approach.

There are three remaining priority areas of mercury contaminated sediment, as well as two buried deposits in the St. Clair River. Priority areas are located at the Suncor Docks, Shell Docks, and Guthrie Park. The Buried deposits are located north and south of Guthrie Park. In 2019 and 2020, extensive data was collected as part of a pre-design investigation, leading to the development of the recommended approach. This data includes water velocity measurements, sediment collection from various depths, and a bathymetry survey to measure surface sediment elevations in targeted areas. The goals of this project are to promote local risk reduction, limit downstream transport of contaminated sediment, and mass removal/isolation of mercury contamination where feasible. A goal of less than 3mg/kg of mercury in the top 15cm of the sediment has been identified. Collected data indicates that this target has already been achieved and that there are no measurable risks presented to fish by mercury in the sediment. The recommended action is to apply an Erosion Resistant Cover in focused areas, within the three priority areas, to further reduce the mercury concentrations within the surface sediments in those areas, and to enhance erosion protection.

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority is scheduled to present these findings and the summary of the recommended management approach to the Aamjiwnaang Environment Committee (June 15), Walpole Island Heritage Centre (TBD), key stakeholders (June 22), and the greater community (June 22).

The first draft of the engineering and design plan for this project will be provided to the projects oversight committee in August and final draft to be completed by December 2021.

4. Status of Beneficial Use Impairments – April White, Ted Briggs

BUI 4- Fish Tumours and Other Deformities: This final assessment report was circulated to the COA AOC Annex leads with a recommendation from the CRIC to redesignate this BUI from *requires further assessment* to *not impaired*. Both Annex leads from MECP and ECCC have agreed with this recommendation. The formal memo is being drafted. Once received, this BUI will be officially redesignated to *not impaired*.

UPDATE: This memo was received after this meeting on June 14, 2021 and circulated to the CRIC. BUI 4- *Fish Tumours and Other Deformities* is officially deemed *not impaired*. -NP

BUI 9- *Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption, or Taste and Odour Problems:* A virtual presentation was held for the community on April 21st, which was well attended. A recording has been posted online at friendsofstclair.ca/symposium The initial draft of the assessment report has been circulated to the CRIC for comment. Further details have been included under Item 6.

BUI 1- *Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption & BUI 6: *Degradation of Benthos:** These are dependent on the progress of the sediment management project which was updated under Item 3.

BUI 3- *Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations:* The initial draft of the assessment report has been circulated to the CRIC for comment. Further details have been included under Item 7.

BUI 14: *Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat:* Field work has been completed. A draft assessment report is expected to be written this year.

5. Drinking Water BUI Assessment Report – Natasha Pozega, RAP Coordinator, SCRCA

A short presentation was provided to briefly summarize the details of the initial draft report. The presentation touched on the history of BUI 9, the delisting criteria, spill prevention and notification and spills frequency over time.

This BUI was designated as impaired under the 1991 Stage 1 RAP report due to frequent industrial and municipal spills to the St. Clair River causing closures of downstream water intakes as well taste and odour issues. Wallaceburg and Walpole Island First Nation source their drinking water from the St. Clair River. Other communities along the river are serviced by the Lambton Area Water Supply System (LAWSS), which draws water from Lake Huron upstream of the Sarnia industrialized zone. The delisting criteria for this BUI are that there will not be any treatment plant shutdowns due to exceedances of drinking water guideline for a two-year period. However, an assessment of the strength of spills prevention measures, and the effectiveness of downstream notification systems is also included in the report. The frequency of spills to the St. Clair River has greatly reduced since the 1990's and there has not been an intake closure at the Wallaceburg Water Treatment Plant since 2013. Given that the delisting criteria has been achieved, the assessment report recommends that the status of this BUI be redesignated from *impaired* to *not impaired*.

Some additional information has been requested to supplement the report. Members are kindly asked to review the initial report as written and provide comments to Natasha by July 9th, 2021. The report will be updated and presented again to the CRIC at the next meeting.

6. Fish and Wildlife Populations BUI Assessment Report – April White, ECCC

A presentation was delivered to provide a summary of the findings of the initial draft assessment report for BUI 3- *Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations*. In the 1991 Stage 1 RAP Report, fish populations were deemed to be diverse and well balance, but there was concern about the accumulation of industrial contaminants in some juvenile fish and other aquatic species. In addition, the decline of four waterfowl species between 1968 and 1982 raised concern that conditions within the AOC could have been contributing to species decline and there was also concern surrounding the accumulation of contaminants in waterfowl tissue. This BUI was therefore designated as *requires further assessment (RFA)*. The 1995 Stage 2 RAP Report identified actions to restore the BUI and some of the recommendations included compiling the long-term data on waterfowl and marsh birds and conducting body burden contaminant analysis on overwintering waterfowl and fish. The report highlights a decline in fish body burdens and a comprehensive fish health study indicates that the grown and reproductive organs in fish collected from the river are comparable to fish collected from a reference site in Lake Huron. On the wildlife side, there the report summarizes the analysis of long-term data sets on waterfowl and marshbirds as well as available data on amphibians and aquatic mammals to assess whether the diversity and abundance of these taxa within the AOC is better, worse or similar to the diversity and abundance of these taxa outside the AOC. The data indicates that wildlife populations are similar to or better than, populations found outside the AOC sites across. Using data from BUI 5 and studies conducted on fish health, the report indicates that while body burdens persist in fish and aquatic wildlife, there is no evidence that growth or reproduction is adversely impacted and therefore, local populations should be self-sustaining. The report is a summary of several fish and wildlife related studies and data analysis. The report recommends that the status of this BUI be redesignated from *requires further assessment to not impaired*.

Members are kindly asked to review the initial report as written and provide comments to April by July 30th, 2021. The report will be discussed further at the next meeting of the CRIC.

7. RAP Coordination Update – Natasha Pozega, RAP Coordinator, SCRC

A brief presentation was provided to summarize some of the initiatives that are underway and the progress that has been made.

Virtual Series- the decision was made to hold a 3-part virtual series in lieu of an AOC Symposium for 2021. The first session was held on April 21st with the theme of drinking water. The session included an introduction to the St. Clair AOC, an update on the drinking water BUI, as well as a panelist Q&A with local experts. We had 42 attendees and positive feedback was received on the delivery of the event. The next session is planned for early September.

Fish Consumption Survey- A community fish consumption survey was launched earlier this year. This was a deliverable identified in the 2017-2022 Workplan to support BUI 1. To date, 68 responses have been received. There is currently no end date for the survey, but there will be a draw in September for 3 \$100 Gift Cards for those that have completed the survey up to that date. Some preliminary survey results were presented. Anyone interested in completing the survey may do so by visiting friendsofstclair.ca/fishsurvey.

St. Clair River News- The RAP Team and the Friends of St. Clair River have partnered on a monthly E-Newsletter. The first newsletter was released in February 2021 to a list of 45 subscribers. Since that time, subscribership has doubled, and open rates average approximately 80%. Past newsletters are archived on the Friends website, and individuals can subscribe directly to the newsletter by entering their name and email at friendsofstclair.ca.

AOC Story Map- A Story Map has been launched for the St. Clair River AOC. Anyone who wishes to access the Story Map can do so by visiting friendsofstclair.ca. There is a direct link to the Story Map on the website homepage.

Binational Poster Project- A binational poster has been created to highlight some of the key habitat projects that have been completed on both sides of the river. This will be used to drive additional traffic to the website and the Story Map.

AOC Video- A video has been prepared for the St. Clair River AOC. Comments were received by the CRIC and BPAC. Those revisions have been completed and the AOC video will be released in the very near future. The videographer did a fantastic job.

8. Funding Updates – April White, Ted Briggs, Stephen Marklevitz, Trevor Robak

Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks- Ted Briggs

- A funding agreement is in place with the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority to support RAP coordination until the end of March 2022.
- Ongoing funding is also being provided to the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority to support additional shoreline rehabilitation work along the St. Clair River.
- A funding agreement is in place to support the Friends of St. Clair River to support education and outreach.
- Calls for proposals are open under the Ontario Community Environment Fund. More information can be found at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-community-environment-fund>

Environment and Climate Change Canada- April White

- A 3-year contract is being developed to support report writing and RAP coordination in the St. Clair River AOC. This will be released for a competitive bid and will hopefully be moving forward soon.
- A new Canada-Ontario Agreement was released in June 2021.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry- Stephen Marklevitz

- There is nothing on the books for the St Clair Region for this year.
- MNRF is working on a habitat sustainability index for some of the tributaries along Lake Erie. This is likely to start in the next few years.

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs- Trevor Robak

- No funding commitments related to the St. Clair River AOC.

9. Member Updates:

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

- FOSCR is working on a signage renewal project to update existing signs across the AOC. Currently, the goal is to replace 5 existing signs.
- The Water Festival organized by the Lower Thames Conservation Authority has been postponed again due to COVID.

9.2. Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) – Jake Lozon

No Update.

9.3. Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) – Kris Lee

- A meeting was chaired by the U.S. on May 4th.
- The next meeting will be hosted by the Canadian Chair, but the meeting date is to be determined.
- Discussions have been held around life after delisting. Friends of St. Clair River- U.S. will be taking the lead and have completed some strategic planning to determine what this might look like.
- A Drinking Water survey was launched in the U.S. to gather community perception on drinking water and distributions systems. Preliminary results were shared at the last meeting, but a formal report is underway.

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

- SCRCA is developing an application for the Ontario Community Environment Fund related to stewardship, habitat and water quality projects.
- The Conservation Education team was contracted by MECP to develop a virtual field trip from the Lake Huron- Erie corridor. This is a great educational resource that includes some information on the St. Clair River AOC. Anyone who is interested in viewing or sharing the field trip can do so using this link: <https://www.scrca.on.ca/free-sponsored-virtual-programs/>
- 2021 is SCRCA's 60th anniversary. A virtual fundraiser will be launched in July and any support to help spread the work on social media or by other means would be greatly appreciated.

9.5. Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN) – Sharilyn Johnston

No Update.

9.6. Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) – Naomi Williams

No Update.

9.7. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) – April White

No further updates.

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

No further updates.

9.9. Sarnia-Lambton Environmental Association (SLEA) – Vince Gagner

No Update.

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

No further updates.

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

No further updates.

9.12. Lambton Public Health – Theresa Warren

No Update.

9.13. City of Sarnia – Terry Burrell

The City of Sarnia is developing a new master plan for the Sarnia Waterfront to guide its future development and redevelopment, and the public is invited to share their input. For more information visit <https://www.sarnia.ca/media-releases/waterfront-master-plan-launch-of-public-engagement/>

10. Other Business

None.

11. Next Meeting

The next CRIC meeting will be scheduled by the Co-Chairs. It is anticipated that the next meeting will be held in the Fall.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50pm