



Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)

Meeting Minutes

March 24, 2022- Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

Minutes Prepared by Natasha Pozega and Donna Blue

Attending Members:

Paulette Duhaime	U.S. Co-Chair, Citizen at Large	Natasha Pozega	St. Clair River RAP Coordinator
John Timar	City of Sarnia	Sheri Faust	Friends of the St. Clair River (U.S)
Patty Troy	US Co-Vice Chair, Env. Sector	Melanie Foose	Michigan EGLE
Donna Blue	St. Clair Region Conservation Authority	Ted Briggs	Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Kris Lee	CAN Co-Chair, Wallaceburg Advisory Team for Cleaner Habitat	Naomi Williams	Walpole Island First Nation
John Jackson	CAN Env. Sector	Susan MacFarlane	Citizen at large
Dennis Plain	Aamjiwnaang First Nation	April White	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Terry Burrell	City of Sarnia, Friends of St. Clair River (CAN)	Kristen Lyons	Friends of the St. Clair River (U.S.)
Ken Phillips	St. Clair Region Conservation Authority	Janelle Nahmabin	Aamjiwnaang First Nation

Guests:

Michelle Seltzer – Michigan EGLE

Regrets:

Teresa Warren – Lambton Public Health

Rose Ellison – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1.0 Call to Order, Introductions and Land Acknowledgement

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm.

Housekeeping:

- Notice to committee that the meeting would be recorded to assist with minutes production.
- Chair will ask for opposition to motions only.

2.0 Adoption, Additions or Corrections to Draft Agenda

Additions:

- An acknowledgement of Natasha Pozega, St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan Coordinator as she leaves her current role for a new employment opportunity – New Business.
- An update to BPAC on the issues associated with the drinking water intake monitoring program in Michigan – Committee Updates.

MOTION to approve the agenda as revised.

Moved by Terry Burrell and seconded by Paulette Duhaime.

CARRIED

3.0 Approval of January 27, 2022, Draft Minutes

Corrections:

- Statewide Public Advisory Committee Report – The date for the SPAC meeting should be revised from “January 20, 2021” to “January 20, 2022”.

MOTION to approve the minutes of the last meeting of the BPAC on January 27, 2022, as amended.

Moved by John Jackson and seconded by Terry Burrell.

CARRIED

4.0 Letter to BPAC – RE: Sediment Management Project – Kris Lee

A letter was sent to BPAC by Mike Moroney, Project Manager at the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority who has managed and overseen the development of the Detailed Engineering and Design Plan for contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River. In the letter, he advised BPAC that the design plan had been approved and that the final report has been posted online at www.stclairsediment.ca. The next step in the overall project will be the implementation phase, however, the roles and responsibilities of the various parties have not been determined.

Questions and discussion:

- Kris Lee inquired as to whether industries such as Suncor and Shell had been consulted on the final engineering and design plan and if they were in support of the project. She also inquired as to whether they were aware of how the process of any future maintenance activities (e.g., dock repairs) may be impacted by the remedial efforts to address the contaminated sediment.
 - Ted Briggs (MECP) advised that industry had been consulted throughout the development of the engineering and design plan. During the implementation phase, agreements will need to be put in place between the industries and the contractor hired to do the remedial work. In addition, a guidance document will be developed that will outline what procedures, etc. need to be followed when working in and around the docks where the erosion resistant cap is located.

ACTION – Kris Lee will draft a letter to both Shell and Suncor asking if they have any concerns with the engineering and design plan for the contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River and how it may impact future work required at their docks, etc.

5.0 Lake Erie LAMP and Life After Delisting – Michelle Selzer

Michelle Selzer, St. Clair River/Detroit River System and Lake Erie Coordinator with Michigan EGLE attended the BPAC meeting to provide members with information on the Lake Erie Lakewide Action Management Plan (LAMP) program and the St. Clair – Detroit River Systems Initiative.

St. Clair – Detroit River Systems Initiative:

The St. Clair – Detroit River Systems Initiative (SCDSI) was created in 2013/2014 and initially involved the gathering of a small group of federal, state, provincial, and other natural resource management agencies to share information to better coordinate and collaborate on monitoring and assessment initiatives within the Huron to Erie corridor. Over time, a steering committee was established to help create a formal framework and structure to provide a platform upon which a common vision and strategic vision could be established between all the unique agencies and organizations involved in the initiative.

SCDRSI's is guided by nine priority objectives that are based on biological and ecosystem impacts, one of which is habitat projects in the St. Clair River and Detroit River AOCs. The group has developed report cards, objectives, indicators, and timelines to gauge the progress made through the collective efforts of the agencies involved in the initiative.

The group is nearing their 10-year end point and discussions will be held regarding the future of the initiative and how it will look moving forward.

There has been very little formal engagement between public advisory councils and the SCDRSI group. Michelle suggested this may be a role the BPAC could play in the future to allow the SCDRSI Steering Committee to better bridge the public vision and satisfaction with the system with the science and monitoring work being conducted throughout the corridor.

The St. Clair-Detroit River Systems Initiative website can be accessed at <https://scdrs.org/>.

ACTION – Michelle Selzer (Michigan EGLE) will organize a meeting with representatives from the provincial, state, and federal governments and a sub-set of BPAC members to discuss Life After Delisting the St. Clair River AOC with particular focus on how BPAC could integrate and collaborate under the SCDRSI's initiative.

6.0 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) 50th Anniversary – John Jackson and Kris Lee

The year 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the GLWQA. This milestone is being celebrated by both the American and Canadian governments with an official celebration event being held in September. More information should be available in April regarding the event, the venue, and dates, etc.

In response, a binational citizen's group was formed called the Great Lakes Ecoregion Network (GLEN). The network is composed of individuals and environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) who have been part of the ongoing international cooperation within the Great Lakes Basin. The goal of GLEN is to generate momentum to strengthen the protection of water quality in the Great Lakes.

The current focus, goals, and objectives of GLEN are:

1. A citizen assessment of the effectiveness of the GLWQA and progress made in the environmental health of the Great Lakes system over the past 50 years and an agenda for future action in the basin;
2. Areas of Concern (including ZIPS located along the St. Lawrence River in Quebec);
3. Integrating visual arts into outreach activities;
4. Organizing community meetings leading up to the September GLWQA 50th Anniversary celebration;
5. Lake Erie nutrients issues; and
6. Great Lakes nuclear issues.

The GLEN website can be accessed at <https://greatlakesecoregionnetwork.weebly.com/>. The group is currently holding a logo contest that closes on April 20th, 2022. The GLEN website also provides an opportunity for further promotion of AOC events and outreach activities.

7.0 Delisting Celebration – Kris Lee

Kris Lee expressed interest in holding an event to celebrate a number of BUIs that have been re-designated on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River (e.g., river cruise). The BUIs that have yet to be officially celebrated for their redesignation are Beach Closings, Restrictions on Dredging Activities, Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems, and Fish Tumours or Other Deformities.

ACTION – Kris and Paulette will meet to discuss a celebration event to be held this summer.

8.0 Heavy Storms Predicting Risk of Germs in Drinking Water – Paulette Duhaime

Paulette Duhaime advised BPAC of a recent report published by the International Joint Commission (IJC) that looked at the frequency of gastrointestinal illness after rain events in cities that draw their drinking water from the Great Lakes. The study reported an increase in protozoa (e.g., cryptosporidium) in the drinking water of four cities (Green Bay, Milwaukee, Toronto, and Hamilton) after rain events, with an associated increase in the number of reported gastrointestinal infections and illnesses. The IJC also offered several recommendations in the report. Although this issue isn't specific to the St. Clair River AOC, Paulette recommended that BPAC remain informed on issues associated with drinking water in the Great Lakes in the future.

Discussion:

- Patty Troy expressed that it was not surprising that bacterial levels increase after a rain event as issues associated with combined sewers and combined sewer overflows remain throughout the Great Lakes. Another significant source would be overland runoff that can carry bacteria originating from geese, waterfowl, and other animals. This phenomenon is not only a drinking water issue, but also a bathing issue (e.g., beach closings).
- Naomi Williams reported on an ongoing issue that is increasing in frequency among community members of Walpole Island First Nation. Many community members have been becoming ill with a bacterial infection that can among others, be spread through fecal matter. Naomi has been asked as to whether a contributing factor to the increases in these infections could be bacteria entering the water system through runoff and combined sewer overflows and feels that this is something that should be investigated further.

ACTION – Ted Briggs will contact his colleagues at the Drinking Water Branch of the MECP to get more information on what bacteria the ministry tests for in drinking water systems.

ACTION – BPAC members will forward any university/research contacts they feel might be interested in investigating the increase in bacterial infections at Walpole Island to Naomi Williams.

9.0 Agency Updates

- Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks- Ted Briggs**
No major updates since last BPAC meeting.

ii. Environment and Climate Change Canada- April White

No major updates since last BPAC meeting.

iii. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy- Melanie Foose

- Drinking Water BUI – Melanie is still waiting on the facility response plan for DTE so it can be incorporated into the draft report. She has been advised that an update on its status should be available in approximately 60 days.
- The inaugural Michigan All-PAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 26th. All are welcome but registration is required. It is hoped that this meeting will continue as an annual meeting for all PAC members in Michigan to attend.
- The upcoming AOC conference still being planned as an in-person event between May 24th and 26th in Muskegon, Michigan.
- Melanie hasn't been provided with an update on the status of PAC support grant extensions

iv. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency- Rose Ellison

No report.

10.0 Committee Reports

i. Statewide Public Advisory Council- Patty Troy, Paulette Duhaime

- The next SPAC meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2022.

ii. Friends of the St. Clair River (Canada)- Terry Burrell

- Continue to work with MECP on finalizing the funding agreement for 2022-2023.

iii. Friends of the St. Clair River (USA) - Sheri Faust

- Sheri Faust advised BPAC that Kirsten Lyons, Stewardship Director for Friends of the St. Clair River has accepted a new position at Six Rivers Land Conservancy as their Lake St. Clair Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) Director. Kirsten has been with FOSCR for over seven years. Sheri thanked Kirsten for all her hard work and wished her the best on her new position.
- Kirsten Lyons and Paulette Duhaime recently visited the completed wildlife habitat projects along the U.S. side of St. Clair River as part of their annual review on the status of these projects. They have developed score cards for each project that will be available publicly soon.
- The annual Sturgeon Festival will be returning to its in-person format and will be held on Saturday, June 4th in Port Huron.

iv. Canadian RAP Implementation Committee – Kris Lee

- There has been no CRIC meeting held since the last BPAC meeting.

v. Four Agency Managers Work Group – April White

- The next Four Agency Managers Work Group meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2022. Life after Delisting has been added an agenda item for discussion.

11.0 Other Business

- Paulette Duhaime advised BPAC members that she was made aware that the surface water monitoring equipment at the drinking water intake facility in East China Township had not been working since December. In order to keep on top of the water quality monitoring system, Paulette has requested quarterly reports on the status of the program.
- Patty Troy expressed her continued concern with the length of time NPDES permits are reviewed and renewed for direct dischargers to the river.
ACTION – Paulette Duhaime will reach out to Melanie Foose to discuss the issues surrounding the timeliness of NPDES permit renewal and review.
- Natasha Pozega is leaving her position as the St. Clair River Canadian RAP Coordinator as of tomorrow March 25, 2022. Donna Blue will be the main contact for the BPAC until a replacement is hired. On behalf of BPAC, Kris Lee thanked Natasha for all her work during her tenure as RAP Coordinator.
- Natasha Pozega reminded BPAC members about the third Virtual Information Session that will highlight habitat projects on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River. It will be held on April 21, 2022. Registration will be open soon through the Friends of the St. Clair River website (www.friendsofstclair.ca).

12.0 Next Meeting Date and Adjournment

The next BPAC meeting will be at the call of the U.S. Chair and will likely take place during the last two weeks of June.

MOTION to adjourn.

Kris Lee called for the meeting to be adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.