



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

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Zoom Teleconference

Minutes produced by Natasha Pozega

Attendees:

April White, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Stephen Marklevitz, Ministry of Northern Development, Mining, Natural Resources and Forestry (MNDMNR)
Annette Verhagen, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP- Sarnia)
Ted Briggs, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)
Vince Gagner, Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment and Sustainability (BASES)
Terry Burrell, City of Sarnia
Donna Blue, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA)
Cathleen O'Brien, Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN)
Dennis Plain, Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN)
Courtney Jackson, Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN)
Kyle Williams, Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN)
Naomi Williams, Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN)
Sara Varty, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Joe Boothe, City of Sarnia
Natasha Pozega, RAP Coordinator (SCRCA)

Guests:

Mike Moroney, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA)
Ken Phillips, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA)
Pratt Rawat, City of Sarnia

Regrets:

Kris Lee, Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)
Trevor Robak, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)

Actions Arising from Meeting:

- Natasha Pozega to recirculate the Redesignation Process document to the committee.
- April White to share updated draft *Assessment Report for BUI 3- Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations*. To be reviewed by committee members in advance of next meeting.

Meeting called to order at 1:03pm

1. Welcome and Introductions:

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

2. Approval of Agenda and Previous Minutes:

The January 20, 2022 draft agenda was accepted.

3. Review and Acceptance of Minutes from June 8, 2021

The minutes from the June 8, 2021 meeting were accepted.

4. City of Sarnia Infrastructure Update- presentation by Pratt Rawat

Pratt provided a brief presentation on the City of Sarnia Infrastructure updates. A copy of the presentation was circulated to the committee members. Pratt's last presentation to the CRIC was in 2014. His presentation touched on the following topics:

- Quick facts on combined sewers in the City
- Benefits of Combined Sewer separation
- How sewer separation works in the city,
- Impacts of lake/river water levels and climate change
- Basement flooding
- Funding and budget
- Previous/ongoing works (WW Treatment Plants)
- Future plans
- Infrastructure Asset management Plan

In 2004, there were approximately 40km of combined sewers in the City. Over the past 15 years, 20 km were separated, and work is ongoing to separate an additional 6km by 2027. The separation of the remaining combined sewers has been identified as a top priority moving forward under the Infrastructure Asset Management Plan. Benefits of this work include improved receiving water quality, increased spare capacity at WWTPs, mitigation of basement floods, renewed infrastructure, and inflow and infiltration mitigation (there is a lot of river/groundwater entering old infrastructure). To date, 1 of 4 CSO outlets have been removed and replaced with dedicated storm outlet, an additional two are scheduled for removal and conversion to storm outlets by 2027/2028. The fourth will be removed and replaced with storm when all remaining combined sewers have been removed. Between 2009 and 2012, a 40% reduction in CSO flows was recorded following sewer separation projects. Since 2015/16,

increases in CSO flows have occurred due to the rise in river water levels, and the increases in frequency and intensity of precipitation events due to climate change.

Over \$100M has been invested in infrastructure updates since 2004. Capital costs continue to rise so costs to separate remaining combined sewers will incur higher costs.

The City of Sarnia has updated their Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (IAMP), which highlights about \$300M in renewal and replacement needs for water, wastewater, roads, and bridges. At this time, expansions of wastewater treatment is not required. The IAMP can be viewed here <https://www.sarnia.ca/living-here/municipal-services/asset-management-planning/>.

5. Update on the Sediment Management Project – Mike Moroney

Mike Moroney has been the Project Manager (SCRCA) on the Sediment Management Project since February 2019, with oversight from ECCC, MECP, and Dow Canada. The last update to this committee was in June 2021 and included support from the project consultants (Anchor QEA and Parsons) that reviewed the results of the sample collection and developed the recommendations. At that time, it was announced that an erosion resistant cover (ERC) in targeted areas was the recommended approach for managing the mercury-contaminated sediment in the three priority areas.

Follow-up sessions were also delivered in 2021 to Aamjiwnaang First Nation's Environment Committee, the Walpole Island Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, industrial representatives, municipalities, the Binational Public Advisory Council, and the public through a virtual information session. All questions and answers were documented and made available on the project website and considered in the development of the finalized report.

The plan is now complete and includes the remediation strategy, details on how the ERC is to be constructed, the type of fine gravel material to be used as a cover, where it is to be placed, how it is to be placed, and the minimum thickness. It also discusses the sampling methods that were conducted and the analysis of the findings that provide the basis for the recommended remedial approach. Letters will be sent to all stakeholders and will include a summary of what is contained in the engineering and design plan as well as a link to the final report at stclairsediment.ca. There are 9 appendices to the plan that will be available upon request.

The Conservation Authority's role in this stage of the project was to focus on the development of the sediment management and remedial design report. Now that the report is finalized, it will support discussions around implementation. The roles and responsibilities of the various parties during the implementation phase have not yet been determined.

A letter was shared with the CRIC on January 28, 2022, announcing the completion of the Final Sediment Management and Remedial Design Report. The letter included a brief summary of the report contents and a link to the report.

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

Four BUIs remain impaired, and one Requires further assessment in the St. Clair River AOC.

BUI 1- Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption (impaired) & BUI 6: Degradation of Benthos (impaired): These are dependent on the progress of the sediment management project which was updated under Item 5.

BUI 3- Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations (RFA): Updated under Item 8.

BUI 9- Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption, or Taste and Odour Problems (impaired): Updated under Item 7.

BUI 14: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Impaired): The Fish and Wildlife Populations and Habitat Subcommittee met in November 2021, and again in January 2022. For this BUI, there are 7 specific delisting criteria. Field work has been completed and the committee is starting to develop a draft Assessment Report. The goal is to have the draft completed by the end of this year.

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

The first draft of the Assessment Report for BUI 9- *Restriction on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems* was presented to this committee in June 2021. Additional presentations were also made to the Binational Public Advisory Council, Aamjiwnaang First Nation’s Environment Committee, and the public as part of the AOC Virtual Information Series (modified). Comments were collected and used to update the draft report but were mostly editorial in nature and did not change the spirit of the document. The delisting criterion for this BUI is that it “will be considered restored when there are no treatment plant shutdowns due to exceedances of drinking water guidelines over a two-year period”. There has not been an intake closure at the Wallaceburg Water Treatment Plan since 2013. The report also identifies the multi-barrier approach in effect to protect the drinking water supply, and discusses the spill prevention, response, and notification systems that are in place.

Natasha proposed that the committee accepts the report as written to begin the redesignation process. The next step in the redesignation process is to engage with and gain support from Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Walpole Island First Nation, and the Binational Public Advisory Committee.

The approved redesignation process was recirculated to the group following the meeting.

MOTION to accept the Assessment Report for BUI 9- *Restriction on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems* and begin the process to redesignate this BUI as not impaired.

Moved by Terry Burrell, seconded by Annette Verhagen.

Motion Carried

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

The initial draft assessment for BUI 3- degraded fish and wildlife populations was presented to this committee in June 2021. This BUI is currently deemed “requires further assessment (RFA)” so there are no delisting criteria. Available data has been reviewed to assess the diversity and abundance of marsh birds and waterfowl within the AOC compared to other non-AOC Great Lakes locations. In addition, body burdens in fish and wildlife have been reviewed. While fish and wildlife still have body burdens in the AOC, they have dramatically declined and do not appear to be impairing the ability of species to grow in reproduce and have self-sustaining populations within the AOC.

Comments collected on the initial draft are being included in an updated draft. The comments received do not change the message of the initial draft. April will share the updated draft with the committee in advance of the next meeting. Committee members are asked to review the document in advance of the meeting so the recommendation to enter the redesignation process may be considered.

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

9.1. Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks- Ted Briggs

- Recently got approval for targeted COA agreements.
- 3 agreements for next fiscal: one with FOSCR (1 year), 2 with SCRCA (one shoreline rehabilitation project (1 year), one AOC governance/RAP Coordination (2 years). Agreements should be in place by March.

9.2. Environment and Climate Change Canada- April White

- Great Lakes Protection Initiative (GLPI) call for proposals remains open until January 31, 2022. Project ideas should align with current COA goals for the St. Clair River AOC.
- In year 2 of 3 of GLPI agreements with Aamjiwnaang and Walpole Island First Nations.
- Entered into a contract with SCRCA for AOC Coordination until March 2024.

9.3. Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry- Stephen Marklevitz

- Rotating Connecting Waterway AOC Fisheries Assessment Program starting next year in Niagara. Detroit and St. Clair River will be completed in the next two years. Will be recurring every 3-5 years.

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

- No update.

10. Member Updates:

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

- Funding has been committed for another year from MECP.
- Friends sponsored the Theodore TOO Tugboat in Lambton County promoting the marine industry and water conservation.
- FOSCR continues to sponsor the SCRCA education program. Because the programs are being delivered virtually, they can deliver to up to 1000 students per day. There is increased interest from schools outside of the region.
- Working to build a program for 2022.
- FOSCR is working to update and replace signs along the river. The goal is to have the new signs installed in spring 2022.

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

No Update.

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

Last meeting was chaired by Canada in August 2021. Next meeting January 27th.

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

- New General Manager for SCRCA- Ken Phillips.
- Ken joined the call and introduced himself. He has vast experience working with other conservation authorities as well as other AOCs.
- SCRCA is hosting the 2022 Soil Health Conference on January 26th. This is a free virtual conference welcome to all. Learn more here:
<https://www.scrca.on.ca/soilhealthconference/>

10.5. Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN) – Cathleen O'Brien

- Sharilyn Johnston has retired. The Environmental Coordinator position has been filled by Cathleen O'Brien.

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

- The Canadian government has launched consultation for Indigenous people on the Canada Water Agency. The Agency promotes freshwater management and there is funding available to support projects.

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

No further updates.

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

No further updates.

10.9. Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (BASES) – Vince Gagner

- Participated in the Friends of St. Clair- U.S. community event on drinking water in September 2021.
- Second Emergency Preparedness (EP) week coming in first week of May. Will include a regional emergency simulation (tank fire), commissioning of air monitoring stations, and communications strategy. Opportunity to include AOC communications in EP week.

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

No update.

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

No further updates.

10.12. Lambton Public Health – Theresa Warren

No Update.

10.13. City of Sarnia – Terry Burrell

- The AOC video was played at council and was well received. The meetings are also broadcasted through a local television station to reach community members in their homes.

11. Other Business

11.1. RAP Coordination Update- Natasha Pozega

- A 2021 Annual Report has been produced for the St. Clair River Area of Concern to highlight the progress made over the 2021 calendar year. A digital copy was shared with the committee and is also available on the web here: https://friendsofstclair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Brochures_ST.-CLAIR-RIVER.pdf
- Natasha has scheduled presentations with local municipalities to share the Annual Report and provide a verbal update on the progress of the AOC.
- Natasha has been creating short videos to celebrate BUI redesignations.
- Fish Consumption survey is still underway. To date, approximately 120 responses have been received. Opportunities for in-person promotions are being identified for summer 2022.

11.2. IAGLR State of Lake Erie (SOLE) Conference- Natasha Pozega

The St. Clair Detroit River Systems Initiative (SCDRS) is partnering with the IAGLR State of Lake Erie conference to deliver their AGM in 2022. This is a hybrid event with in-person sessions in Michigan as well as virtual attendance. The conference dates are March 16-18 and Natasha will be providing an update on the St. Clair River Area of Concern. Natasha will share a copy of the presentation with this committee following the conference.

12. Next Meeting

The next CRIC meeting will be scheduled by the Co-Chairs. It is anticipated that the next meeting will be held late May/early June.

Meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm