



**Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**January 31, 2024 - Virtual Meeting Via Zoom**

Minutes Prepared by Mike Moroney

**Attending Members:**

Paulette Duhaime	U.S. Co-Chair, Citizen at Large	Mike Moroney	St. Clair River RAP Coordinator
Kris Lee	CAN Co-Chair, Wallaceburg Advisory Team for Cleaner Habitat	Patty Troy	U.S. Co-Vice Chair, Citizen at large
April White	Environment and Climate Change Canada	Ken Phillips	St. Clair Region Conservation Authority
Amber Falkner	U.S. EPA Task Force Lead	Sheri Faust	Friends of the St. Clair River (U.S.)
Jason Vaillant	BASES	Janelle Nahmabin	Aamjiwnaang First Nation
John Jackson	CAN Env. Sector	Dan Collins	Citizen at Large

**Actions Arising from the Minutes**

- a) Naomi to seek input from the Heritage Committee on ways to capture additional members of the community in the Fish Consumption Survey.
- b) Mike to amend the BPAC By-Laws to reflect that the two-year time frame for election of officers starts when the last elections were held on February 16, 2023.
- c) Mike to make amendments to the spill notification flow charts as per the items listed in the meeting minutes.
- d) Mike to contact MECP Sarnia District Office to make them aware of the discussion held at BPAC and the request of Aamjiwnaang First Nation to be included on MECP's spill notification list for spills to the St. Clair River.
- e) Janelle to arrange for a discussion with their Emergency Planner to confirm how their community is notified of spills to the St. Clair River, and will include Jason in that discussion.
- f) Kris and Paulette to prepare a letter to the Ontario Spills Action Centre, St. Clair County Homeland Security, Michigan State Police, and copy Michigan EGLE, recommending that whenever SAC initiates a notification to Michigan State Police of a spill to the St. Clair River, they also notify St. Clair County Homeland Security as part of their routine notification process.

**1.0 Call to Order, Introductions and Land Acknowledgment**

Meeting called to order by Paulette Duhaime at 6:32 p.m.

**2.0 Adoption, Additions or Corrections to Draft Agenda**

**Moved by:** Patty Troy

**Seconded by:** Kris Lee

That the agenda be approved.

**CARRIED**

**3.0 Review of Action Items and Approval of October 26, 2023 Minutes**

- **Moved by:** John Jackson  
**Seconded by:** Patty Troy

That the October 26, 2023 Meeting Minutes be approved.

**CARRIED**

**Review of Action Items from Previous Meeting**

- a) Mike to review postal codes in the Fish Consumption Survey results to determine if the number of surveys completed by Walpole Island First Nation members can be determined, and the number completed by individuals from the State of Michigan. **Completed.** Only collected partial postal code information during survey so could not identify how many surveys completed by the Walpole Island First Nation community. Twenty eight of the 172 surveys were completed by residents from Michigan.
- b) Naomi to seek input from the Heritage Committee on ways to capture additional members in the community in the Fish Consumption Survey. The next meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2023. **Pending.**
- c) Ted Briggs and April White to look into whether the federal or provincial governments have any programs that would be relevant to providing internet access to the underserved areas of Walpole Island First Nation. **Completed.** Mike shared information on a joint federal and provincial initiative to provide high speed internet to underserved communities.
- d) Mike to share the draft Spill Notification Fact Sheet with Melanie for Michigan EGLE input
- e) Mike to confirm who the Emergency Responders are for Canada/U.S. as per the box shown in one of the flow charts in the Spill Notification Fact Sheet. **Completed.**
- f) Mike to finalize the amended BPAC By-Laws, indicating that they were amended on October 26, 2023. **Completed.**
- g) Mike to post a copy of the amended BPAC By-Laws to the FOSCR website. **Completed.**
- h) Mike to send an email to those that attended the recent event at Bogey's Inn on September 28, 2023 to determine if any are interested in being added to the BPAC meeting distribution list. **Completed.**
- i) Paulette will follow-up with Melanie to determine if someone from Michigan EGLE can come and speak to BPAC about lead in drinking water. Aim for it to be held at an in-person meeting at some point in the future. **Postponed.** Will instead focus on getting a speaker on fish consumption advisories.

**4.0 Approval of New Member – Bela Trebics – Education Sector CDN**

- Paulette explained that Bela Trebics was previously a member of BPAC and would like to be recognized as a member again.
- Mike explained that the Terms of Reference indicate that new members can be approved by way of two thirds of BPAC members voting in favour of adding the new member.
- Paulette put it to a vote and all members verbally indicated being in favour.
- **Paulette acknowledged Bela Trebics as being a member of BPAC again.**

**5.0 Update on Draft Spill Notification Fact Sheet – M. Moroney**

- Mike provided an overview of the draft Fact Sheet and accompanying spill notification flow charts for Ontario and Michigan
- Paulette noted that the version of the Fact Sheet being presented was identified as Draft #4 and she had a version marked as Draft #5. (Note: Following the meeting, it was confirmed that the content of Draft #4 appeared to be the same as Draft #5, any revisions would have been very minor or related to formatting.)
- **Action:** Mike to make the following amendments to the notification flow charts:
  - amend the Michigan flow chart to reflect that County Emergency Managers should instead be “St. Clair County Homeland Security/Emergency Manager”
  - amend title of flow charts to remove the word “industry”
  - include qualifier statement on each flow chart to reflect that it is intended to provide a high-level overview, and that there is the potential for spills to occur from a wide range of potential sources.
  - the acronym for the US Coast Guard is to be spelled out
  - add the spill reporting contact phone numbers to the respective spill charts
  - on the Michigan spill chart, add a link from St. Clair County Homeland Security to Downriver Water Treatment Plants as they also do notifications.
- Janelle asked if Aamjiwnaang First Nation could be included in the notifications that Ontario Spills Action Centre makes when a spill occurs to the St. Clair River.
- **Action:** Mike to contact MECP Sarnia District Office to make them aware of the discussion held at BPAC and the request for Aamjiwnaang First Nation to be included, as a courtesy, with the understanding that their community is serviced by the Lambton Area Water Supply System.
- **Action:** Janelle will arrange for a discussion with their Emergency Planner to confirm how their community is notified of incidents and will include Jason in that discussion.

**6.0 Letter to Ontario Spills Action Centre from BPAC – P. Duhaime/K. Lee**

- The purpose of the letter is to request that Ontario Spills Action Centre include St. Clair County Homeland Security on their spill notification list, and if necessary, to also request that Aamjiwnaang First Nation be included.
- **Action:** Kris and Paulette are to work together on preparing a letter to the Ontario Spills Action Centre, St. Clair County Homeland Security, Michigan State Police, and copy Michigan EGLE, recommending that whenever SAC initiates a notification to Michigan State Police of a spill to the St. Clair River, they also notify St. Clair County Homeland Security as part of their routine notification process.
- Before drafting the letter, they are to wait to hear back from Janelle on whether there is a need to have the letter also reference Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

## **BPAC Meeting Minutes - January 31, 2024**

### **7.0 Planning In-Person BPAC Meetings for Spring and Summer 2024 – P. Duhaime, K. Lee**

- Jason offered the BASES facility for the next BPAC meeting on the Ontario side in Spring 2024. Their facility can accommodate hybrid meetings so if there are some individuals that are not able to attend in-person they can still participate in the meeting.
- The meeting in the Summer 2024 could be held at the Friends of the St. Clair River (U.S.) office, they could host a dinner before the meeting and do have hybrid capability as well.
- Anyone with suggestions for agenda items can contact either Paulette, Kris or Mike.

### **8.0 Planning for a Technical Symposium in 2025 – P. Duhaime, K. Lee**

- Paulette advised that grant money has been received to hold a symposium. Would like to schedule it for late summer or fall 2025. Focus on remaining BUIs – Drinking Water and Fish Consumption in the U.S. Can also discuss the status of the Drinking Water BUI in Canada and the Spill Notification flow charts.
- Potential speakers – Brandon Armstrong from EGLE and Lisa Fisher Dept of Health and Human Services could be asked to speak about fish contamination and fish advisories
- Will be looking for a subcommittee. Kris and Paulette on the subcommittee plus anyone else that is interested.
- Other topics proposed for guest speakers included Renewable Energy (e.g. solar farms, hydro turbines), Pipelines, Sturgeon Research, Mussel Research, the Wild Rice Restoration/Protection, and Environmental Justice

### **9.0 Agency Updates**

#### **Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks – Ted Briggs**

- No updates. Not able to participate.

#### **Environment and Climate Change Canada - April White**

- The Canada Water Agency has been created within Environment and Climate Change Canada. It is the federal focal point for fresh water of national significance, such as the Great Lakes, Lake Winnipeg, Lake of the Woods, Lake Simcoe, the St. Lawrence, Fraser, McKenzie and Saint John Rivers. The Agency will work in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, provinces, territories, and stakeholders to strengthen collaboration on fresh water.
- There is currently a call for proposals for science and research projects. For the St. Clair River, the focus is primarily on report writing as planned research activities to support the assessment of the BUIs has been completed.

#### **Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)**

- Melanie was not able to attend but provided information to Paulette to share with BPAC.
- Michigan EGLE has posted the positions for the AOC coordinators. One for Melanie's former position. Melanie anticipates being able to get back to working on the BUI 9 status assessment document in the next few months.
- Former Director of Water Division in EGLE has gone to USEPA and is now Director of the Great Lakes National Program Office. Michigan EGLE is working on filling the vacancy as a result.

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

- Mike spoke to information provided by Carla Rosenfeld by way of an email prior to the meeting. US EPA Action Plan 4 - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative process is still on-going. A draft is with the State agencies for review. It may go out for public comment in the next month or two.

**10.0 Committee Reports**

**i. Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) - Paulette**

- New Habitat Subcommittee Chair appointed, from the Clinton River AOC.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Environmental Justice (DEIEJ) Subcommittee will be meeting Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> and will have a guest speaker talking about Environmental Justice screening tools. Anyone interested in participating in the virtual meeting should contact Melanie Foose.
- SPAC Subcommittee is working on updating SPAC bylaws
- Michigan EGLE is developing plans to make certain databases more accessible (e.g. groundwater)
- Looking at Watershed Councils as being the focus after AOC delisting achieved.
- Work is underway in the Great Lakes for sampling for PFAS in water and in fish.
- The fall SPAC meeting will be in the Clinton River AOC which might be a good opportunity for someone from BPAC to attend.
- Patty has retired from SPAC. Paulette is the alternate and is willing to step in to replace her, with BPAC's support. Sheri Faust has volunteered to be the alternate.

**Moved by:** Kris Lee

**Seconded by:** Patty Troy

That Paulette Duhaime take over the role as the BPAC representative on SPAC and that Sheri Faust take over the role as the alternate.

**CARRIED**

**ii. Friends of the St. Clair River (Canada)**

- Mike provided an update in Terry's absence.
- The FOSCR have completed their educational sign project that involved designing signs on 5 topics related to the restoration of the St. Clair River. The manufacturing of the posts for the signs was also completed and the signs have been delivered to the City of Sarnia, Village of Point Edward and St. Clair Township for placement had select locations along the river in Spring 2024.
- FOSCR was invited by Climate Action Sarnia-Lambton to make a presentation at the Sarnia Library as part of the group's speaker series. Brenda Lorenz and Ken Hall presented. The presentation was well received.
- Brenda also recently made presentations to two Lambton College classes on behalf of FOSCR.

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

- Sheri is now the Executive Director of FOSCR (U.S.). First Executive Director in the 16-year history of the organization. She is no longer with St. Clair County Health Department so BPAC might want to consider looking into having a new contact person from the Health Department participate on BPAC.

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- Their annual fund-raising event, called [River Bash](#), is being held on Thursday April 11<sup>th</sup> at the Port Huron Yacht Club. Their annual [Sturgeon Festival](#) fund raising event is planned for June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- They will be celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of completion of the Bluewater River Walk – a one-mile shoreline restoration project along the Port Huron shoreline. More details to come closer to the event date.

### **iv. Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC)**

- Mike explained that a draft status assessment report for BUI 3 - Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations has been prepared and was presented to the CRIC at the last meeting in November 2023.
- The CRIC supported the report's recommendation that it be redesignated from "Requires Further Assessment" to "Not Impaired".
- The redesignation process will now begin, starting with engaging the Aamjiwnaang First Nation and Walpole Island First Nation communities, followed by the Binational Public Advisory Council.
- The next CRIC meeting is expected to occur in April 2024.

### **v. Four Agency Managers Work Group**

- April advised that the next meeting is being held on February 1<sup>st</sup>, virtually, with the Four Agency Managers to discuss progress in addressing planned activities in each of the AOCs.

### **11.0 Other Business**

- Dan Collins explained that when in Florida, he is also active in addressing local environmental issues. He volunteers at a non-profit environmental lab for sampling and research, called ORCA's Center for Citizen Science – focused on preserving the Indian River Lagoon. They have a large number of citizen scientists supporting the organization. Anyone interested in learning more about ORCA can visit their website at: <https://www.teamorca.org/>

### **12.0 Next Meeting Date and Adjournment**

- The next meeting will be at the call of the Canadian Chair – Kris Lee. Likely April 2024.
- The meeting location will be at the BASES office in Sarnia.

**Moved by:** Sheri Faust

**Seconded by:** Janelle Nahmabin

That the meeting be adjourned.

**CARRIED**

Meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.