



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

**Tuesday, November 7, 2023
MS Teams Teleconference
Minutes produced by Mike Moroney**

Attendees:

April White, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
Cathleen O'Brien, Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN)
Courtney Jackson, Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN)
Donna Blue, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA)
Kim Hughes, Broadwing Biological Consulting (Guest)
Kris Lee, Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) - Joined at 11:22 am
Mike Moroney, RAP Coordinator (SCRCA)
Stephen Marklevitz, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF)
Ted Briggs, Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)
Terry Burrell, City of Sarnia
Theresa Warren, Lambton Public Health

Regrets:

Naomi Williams, Walpole Island First Nation
Jason Vaillant, General Manager, Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment and Sustainability

Actions Arising from Meeting

- a) Ted to keep CRIC updated on the status of the sediment work via email.
- b) Mike to send out a doodle poll for a meeting in the new year and seek input on whether an in-person or virtual meeting is preferred.

Meeting called to order shortly after 10:00 am

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Ted Briggs chaired the meeting and welcomed CRIC members to the November 7, 2023 virtual meeting.

2. Approval of Agenda

The November 7, 2023 draft agenda was approved.

3. Acceptance of Minutes from May 11, 2023 Meeting

The minutes from the May 11, 2023 meeting were approved.

4. Review of Action Items from May 11, 2023 Meeting

- a) April White to share an updated draft Assessment Report for BUI 3 – Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations to CRIC members – **Completed.**
- b) Naomi to submit a request to Chief and Council for time on the agenda on January 24, 2023 for a presentation on BUI 9. – **Completed on July 18, 2023**
- c) Mike to discuss with Donna on what approach has been used in the past to make the community aware of an opportunity to review and provide comments on a draft BUI status assessment report. – **Completed.**

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

BUI 1- Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption (Impaired): Ted explained that the fish consumption survey was conducted in 2021 and 2022 in support of this BUI and reminded members that making progress on both BUI 1 and BUI 6 is tied to the contaminated sediment work. Dow Canada will be leading the implementation phase of the sediment work and they require one more permit to be in place before they can proceed - from MNRF. The consultant was hoping to mobilize to the site this week but that might be delayed due to the need to have this final permit in place. The in-water work is expected to take two weeks to complete. Ted will update the committee when there is new information to share.

BUI 6 - Degradation of Benthos (Impaired): As explained in BUI 1, the ability to redesignate this BUI is also linked to work on the contaminated sediment in the three priority areas of the St. Clair River.

BUI 3 - Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations (RFA): The draft status assessment report has been completed for this BUI and the report findings will be presented by April today under agenda item #6.

BUI 9- Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption, or Taste and Odour Problems (Impaired): Ted explained that since the last CRIC meeting, presentations to redesignate this BUI have been made to Walpole Island First Nation Chief and Council, BPAC and the Four Agency Managers Committee. Walpole Island First Nation acknowledged receipt of the information presented and BPAC confirmed its support with the recommendation. Michigan Environment, Great Lakes and Energy did not have any comments on the recommendation. The US EPA is still reviewing the recommendation and their comments, if any, are expected to be received soon. Once all comments have been received and considered, the recommendation to redesignate this BUI to not impaired will go to the COA Co-Chairs from MECP and ECCC for approval. (Note: The report was also posted to the FOSCR website for review and public comment until December 11, 2023)

BUI 14: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat (Impaired): April advised that a draft status assessment report has been prepared and is with DFO for input. DFO currently has some capacity challenges which is impacting their ability to provide input on the report and the Aquatic Habitat Management Plan. The goal is to have a final draft before the end of December 2023 and to be able to present the report and the recommendation to CRIC in Spring 2024.

6. BUI #3 Status Recommendation Report and Fact Sheet – Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations

- April spoke to a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the findings of the status recommendation report, recommending that this BUI be redesignated from “requires further assessment” to “not impaired”.
- The initial draft report was presented in June 2021. Revisions were made to improve the readability and the quality of the report.
- The report is about 300+ pages in length, which includes the appendices, and forms a strong foundation to support the recommendation that this BUI be redesignated to not impaired.
- Kim did some of the revisions and authored a lot of the reports related to this BUI and also prepared the Fact Sheet summarizing the highlights of the report.
- The presentation outlined the delisting criteria that needed to be met and key findings of the various studies that were completed to support that the criteria has been met.
- There were two components to the assessment; abundance and diversity of wildlife and, secondly, the accumulation of contaminants that may impair the ability of fish and wildlife populations to be self-sustaining.
- The assessment also included incorporating Indigenous ecological knowledge, provided by Walpole Island First Nation.
- With respect to the assessment of the first component, information was provided on: waterfowl abundance between 2009 and 2011; waterfowl trends within the AOC compared to outside the AOC; abundance and diversity temporal trends; spatial trends for marsh birds; and a comparison of marsh birds, amphibians, and mammals within the AOC to areas outside the AOC.
- With respect to the assessment of the second component, information was provided on the outcome of the assessment of Shorthead Redhorse Suckers for heavy metals, mercury burdens, temporal trends for PCBs and Organochlorines, and body measurements. Contaminant burdens for wildlife was assessed using Northern Leopard Frogs, Snapping Turtles, over-wintering waterfowl (Canvasbacks), and Mink.
- The presentation concluded with April explaining that the assessment of the data confirms that the conditions for wildlife diversity and abundance have been met, and contaminant body burdens are not impairing the ability of fish and wildlife populations to be self-sustaining in the AOC. The recommendation is to therefore to redesignate this BUI from “requires further assessment” to “not impaired”.

- **Moved by:** Terry Burrell
Supported by all those in attendance.

That the committee support the recommendation to have this BUI redesignated to not impaired and enter the redesignation process.

CARRIED

7. Funding Updates

7.1. Environment and Climate Change Canada - April White

- GLPI call for proposals for 2024/2025 funding could be in November 2023 or late December 2023.
- The First Nation Indigenous agreements are already in place until 2025.
- Waiting to see what funds will be made available for the Great Lakes AOC program.

7.2. Ministry of the Environment Conservation and Parks - Ted Briggs

- The funding that is in place for the St. Clair River RAP Coordinator will be ending in a few months. Waiting for confirmation of approval for funding for 2024/2025. Once confirmed, Ted will start working on preparing the funding agreement for SCRCA.
- MECP put out a call for proposals under the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program to restore and protect wetlands across the province. The deadline for submissions was October 12, 2023. Proposals received are currently under review.

7.3. Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry- Stephen Marklevitz

- MNRF was able to get the Connecting Channels AOC fish community assessment program in place and will be doing the Detroit River this year. The St. Clair River will be next year. Would like to focus on previous restoration sites if possible.

8. RAP Coordinator Updates

- Held the inaugural SCR AOC Event September 28, 2023
- Drafted spill notification fact sheet plus revised notification flow charts for Ontario and Michigan
- Attended Children's Water Festival – Oct. 3rd and Oct 4th
- Presented Fish Consumption Survey results to BPAC at Oct 26th meeting
- Have completed presentations to Walpole Island First Nation Chief and Council, BPAC and Four Agency Managers Committee on BUI 9 status assessment report
- Continuing to publish the monthly FOSCR E-Newsletters
- Amendments to BPAC By-Laws Approved – will be creating public awareness of future meetings through postings to FOSCR site two weeks in advance

9. Member Updates:

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

- Continuing with efforts to establish educational signs along the St. Clair River. The signs are currently being manufactured.
- Participated in the Chatham-Kent Lambton Children’s Water Festival and provided funding for the event.
- Monthly free e-newsletter continues to be issued and anyone that would like to receive it can register on the FOSCR site: <https://friendsofstclair.ca/about-us/newsletters/>

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

- No updates from BPAC at this time other than those previously provided by Mike.
- WATCH has updated their website and included the presentation that was provided to BPAC on the recommendation to redesignate BUI #9 from impaired to not impaired. Link to website: <https://www.biowatch.ca/>

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

- No updates.

9.4. Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN) – Cathleen O’Brien

- No updates.

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

- No updates. Naomi was not able to attend.

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

- No additional updates.

9.7. Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) – Ted Briggs

- No additional updates.

9.8. Bluewater Association for Safety, Environment, and Sustainability (BASES) – Jason Vaillant

- No updates. Jason was not able to attend.

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

- No updates at this time. Trevor was not able to attend.

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

- No additional updates.

9.11. Lambton Public Health – Theresa Warren

- No updates.

9.12. City of Sarnia – Terry Burrell

- Terry advised that the City of Sarnia is continuing the budgeting process and trying to identify funds to continue with the work to separate combined sewers, thereby reducing impacts on water quality from combined sewer overflows. Sarnia is also considering hiring a staff ecologist to help transform over 1,000 acres of parks into more naturalized areas.

10. Other Business

- No other business

11. Next Meeting

- Ted suggested that the next meeting be held around March or April 2024 and that it be held in-person if possible.
- Possibly incorporate a site visit on the day of the meeting at a project location.
- April suggested that a Spring 2024 meeting might be an opportunity to also celebrate accomplishments.
- **Action:** Mike to send out a doodle poll for a meeting in the new year and seek input on whether an in-person or virtual meeting is preferred.
- **Action:** Ted to keep CRIC updated on the status of the sediment work

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.