



**Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**August 7, 2024 at 6:30 pm**

**Hybrid Meeting - Zoom and Thumb Coast Watershed Centre**

**301 N. Ninth St., Suite 15, St. Clair, Michigan**

Minutes Prepared by Mike Moroney

**Attending Members:**

Paulette Duhaime	U.S. Co-Chair, Citizen at Large	Terry Burrell	CAN Co-Vice Chair, City of Sarnia
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	Mike Moroney	St. Clair River RAP Coordinator, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority
John Jackson	CAN Env. Sector	Ted Briggs	Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
Naomi Williams	Walpole Island First Nation	Sheri Faust	Friends of the St. Clair River (U.S.)
Fred Kemp	City of Port Huron	Susan MacFarlane	Citizen at Large
Judy Ogden	Bluewater Sportfishing Association	Melanie Foose	Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Satyendra Bhavsar	Guest Presenter – Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks	Weston Hillier	Areas of Concern Coordinator, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Dennis Plain	Aamjiwnaang First Nation	Amber Falkner	U.S. EPA National Program Office
Ken Phillips	St. Clair Region Conservation Authority		

**Actions Arising from the Minutes**

- a) Satyendra to provide the article referenced in his presentation to Ted to share with BPAC members.
- b) Satyendra to share a copy of his presentation with Ted for distribution to BPAC members

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- c) Mike to share BUI removal criteria on the Canadian side for Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption with BPAC members.
- d) John to reach out to Jane Elder to confirm if she is available to be a keynote speaker for the September 25, 2025 symposium that is being planned.
- e) BPAC Chairs and Vice-Chairs to discuss timing for celebrating the redesignation of BUI 9 – Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems - separate celebrations or combined.
- f) Mike to share electronic versions of the FOSCR sign boards with the Sheri and Paulette.
- g) Kris to have a discussion with Mike on whether to amend the Spill Notification Fact Sheet Flow Chart based on Ontario Spills Action Centre agreeing to include St. Clair County Homeland Security on the spill notification list, pending completion of a more formal review of the spill notification agreement between Ontario and Michigan.

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

Meeting called to order by Paulette at 6:38 p.m. and a land acknowledgement statement was read.

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

**Moved by:** Kris Lee

**Seconded by:** Fred Kemp

That the agenda be approved.

**CARRIED**

**3.0 Approval of May 2, 2024 Meeting Minutes and Review of Action Items**

- **Moved by:** Fred Kemp  
**Seconded by:** Terry Burrell

That the May 2, 2024 Meeting Minutes be approved.

**CARRIED**

**Review of Action Items from Previous Meeting**

- a) Carla to provide a copy of her presentation to Mike for distribution to BPAC members.  
**Completed**
- b) Anyone with suggestions for a keynote speaker at the symposium that is planned for 2025 is to contact either Paulette or Kris. **Completed**

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- c) Any BPAC members that are aware of other groups that may have an interest in applying to MECP for funding for Great Lakes related work should inform Ted. **Completed.** No requests were submitted.
- d) Kris and Paulette to update the BPAC membership roster and bring it back to BPAC for review and approval. **In process.**
- e) Mike to send out a doodle poll to BPAC members to see which date works for most for the next BPAC meeting - Wednesday August 7, 2024, or Thursday August 8, 2024. **Completed.**

**4.0 Fish Consumption Advisories – Michigan – Lisa Fischer**

- Lisa was unable to attend the meeting so will be invited to a subsequent BPAC meeting.

**5.0 Fish Consumption Advisories – Ontario – Satyendra Bhavsar**

- Satyendra provided an overview of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Fish Contaminant Monitoring Program for the St. Clair River.
- Key Points:
  - The program, initiated in 1976, aims to track contaminant levels in fish and provide advice on safe fish consumption in Ontario.
  - 17 types of fish from the St. Clair River have been monitored for contaminants such as Mercury, PCBs, Dioxins/Furans, and PFAS.
  - Mercury and PCBs are the major drivers of fish consumption advisories for the St. Clair River, with levels showing a substantial decline over the last 40+ years.
  - PFAS have also led to some advisories in the region.
  - Ontario and Michigan have slightly different approaches to calculating fish consumption advisories, with some variations in advisory benchmarks.
  - Efforts are underway to harmonize fish consumption advisories among the Province of Ontario and the 8 U.S. Great Lakes States.
  - For more detailed information, you can refer to the presentation (attached) or visit [Ontario.ca/fishguide](https://ontario.ca/fishguide) for Ontario's fish consumption advisories.
- John Jackson inquired about cumulative effects from consuming several different chemicals. Satyendra explained that they do consider that when analyzing for different forms of PCBs, Dioxins and PFAS. The science is still not clear, however, on how to analyze all chemical mixtures together. Satyendra referred to an article published in 2016 titled “Are Fish Consumption Advisories for the Great Lakes Adequately Protective Against Chemical Mixtures”. The article explains the work that he did with the University of Windsor. If it was assumed that each chemical would have the same effect, fish consumption advisories would be one more level more restrictive in terms of consumption. However, existing fish consumption advisories already have conservatism incorporated into the existing fish consumption benchmarks.
- Kris Lee inquired about contaminant levels in fish purchased from grocery stores and implications in terms of the fish consumption guidelines. Satyendra explained that grocery stores fall under the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. They generally should have less contaminants than fish caught from the St. Clair River. For every 2 to 3 meals

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of grocery store fish consumed, it is recommended that you reduce the recommended Ontario Fish Consumption level by one meal.

- Naomi Williams commented on the fish sampling points not being in the St. Clair River delta and that consuming fish with contaminants is a concern to the community. The community does not find the Ontario guide user friendly, plus it is the community's practice to eat whatever is caught, regardless of the size. Would like to know if there has been or will be efforts to sample fish from within the Walpole Island First Nation delta in the future. Satyendra advised that MECP would be interested in working with the community in addressing their concerns.
- **Action:** Satyendra to provide a copy of the article to Ted to share with BPAC members.
- **Action:** Satyendra to share a copy of his presentation with Ted for distribution to BPAC members
- **Action:** Mike to share BUI removal criteria on the Canadian side for Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption with BPAC members.

### **6.0 Friends of the St. Clair River (U.S.) and Life After Delisting – S. Faust**

- Sheri proposed postponing her presentation to a future BPAC meeting because of time limitations.

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

- Tentatively scheduled for September 25, 2025 at the Doubletree Hilton, Port Huron. Proposing a start time of 8:30 am and ending at 3:30 pm. Several topics are under consideration. Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption, and Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption are expected to be included as topics since they are the two BUIs that remain on the U.S. side. They would like to have a total of 6 topics (speakers) for the event, along with a keynote speaker.
- Sheri explained that there is a local film maker (Lindsey Haskins) that works to produce Great Lakes themed documentaries. His latest film is about sea lamprey in the Great Lakes. He would like to have the film shown locally if possible. Might be able to incorporate it into the symposium, possibly the evening before the symposium.
- Attendance goal is 150 people for the symposium.
- Potential keynote speakers under consideration include: Jane Elder, author of "Wilderness, Water, and Rust: A Journey toward Great Lakes Resilience"; Julie Simmons, Great Lakes Restoration Program Manager; Dave Dempsey, author of books related to the Great Lakes; and Theresa Sidal, with the U.S. EPA.
- **Action:** John Jackson to reach out to Jane Elder to confirm if she is available for September 25, 2025.

### **8.0 Agency Updates**

#### **Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks – T. Briggs**

- Dow has obtained the required permits for applying the erosion resistant cover material to targeted areas of the contaminated sediment in the St. Clair River. They

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have a consulting firm and contractor in place to perform the work. MECP is waiting for an update from Dow on when the work is expected to begin.

### **Environment and Climate Change Canada – A. White**

- The federal government is still moving ahead with the new agency that will be dedicated to freshwater issues.
- In terms of funding, ECCC completed its review of an application from the SCRCA for funding for the RAP program for another two years. The funding request was approved.
- ECCC has increased the amount of funding provided to both Walpole Island First Nation and Aamjiwnaang First Nation. The additional funds should enable the communities to have sufficient resources to support the RAP related work. The agreements are in place until the end of 2026.

### **Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) – W. Hillier, M. Foose**

- Melanie has been familiarizing Weston with area habitat sites and discussing next steps for addressing the two remaining BUIs on the U.S. side – Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption and Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems.
- BUI 9 - Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste and Odour Problems has been officially redesignated on the Canadian side. **Action:** BPAC Chairs and Vice-Chairs to discuss timing for celebrating the redesignation of this BUI, whether separate celebrations or combined after BUI 9 has been redesignated on the U.S. side.

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – C. Rosenfeld**

- Carla was not available to attend. Amber advised that they are going through some organizational changes at present and expect things to be in place by October 2024.

## **9.0 Committee Reports**

### **i. Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) – P. Duhaime**

- The last SPAC meeting was on June 5, 2024, as a virtual meeting. The Habitat Subcommittee is developing a repository for shared information so that all the AOCs have access to the information. The Environmental Justice Subcommittee is developing metrics for the DEIJ components that AOCs can use to evaluate the work they are doing. SPAC is taking nominations at present for a new Vice-Chair. The next SPAC meeting is October 8 and 9, 2024 in the Clinton River AOC.

### **ii. Friends of the St. Clair River (Canada) – T. Burrell**

- FOSCR is working on having the municipalities install the signs that the FOSCR created to inform the community of progress in restoring the St. Clair River.

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- The FOSCR will be holding a photo contest starting in September 2024 that will be open to individuals on both sides of the river. There will be cash prizes available for the winning photos.
- **Action:** Mike to share electronic versions of the sign boards with the Sheri and Paulette.

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

- A reminder that everyone is invited to the 10-year celebration of the Bluewater River Walk. One of the more significant fish and wildlife habitat projects completed on the U.S. side. It will be 10 years old in June 2024. Celebration is on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at 5:30 pm. For additional details about the event: <https://scriver.org/events/>

### **iv. Canadian RAP Implementation Committee (CRIC) – K. Lee**

- Mike explained that the last meeting was held on June 18, 2024. The primary purpose of the meeting was to review the status assessment report for BUI 14 Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat. The committee endorsed the recommendation of the report to redesignate the BUI to not impaired. The next step is to start community engagement and seek feedback on the report findings and the recommendation.
- With respect to the CRIC Public Outreach Subcommittee, meetings are underway to start planning for the annual St. Clair River event to update the community on progress in restoring the St. Clair River. Potential dates are September 25 and 26, 2024. Once details for the event are finalized, the details will be shared with BPAC members.

### **v. Four Agency Managers Work Group – A. Falkner**

- A meeting was held on June 6, 2024 at Grosse Pointe Shores. The main focus was on the Ford House Shoreline Habitat Restoration Project. The meeting included a tour of the site.
- The next meeting will be led by ECCC, likely in the Fall 2024.

## **10.0 Other Business**

- Spill Notification Flow Chart – Kris expressed an interest in having the Spill Notification Flow Chart updated to reflect the response that was received from the Ontario Spills Action Centre (SAC). SAC agreed to add St. Clair County Homeland Security for now, while they explore the need to update the formal agreement between Ontario and Michigan.
- **Action:** Kris to have a follow-up discussion with Mike on whether to amend the Spill Notification Fact Sheet Flow Chart.

## **11.0 Next Meeting Date and Adjournment**

- The next meeting will be a virtual meeting and will likely be scheduled in October 2024. A doodle poll will be sent out for dates later in that month. On the agenda

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will be a presentation by FOSCR (US), possibly a presentation on Fish Consumption Advisories for Michigan, and possibly an update on the St. Clair River sediment management work.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.