

St. Marys River Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) Meeting Minutes

Place: Erie Room, Cisler Center, LSSU
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

When: December 2nd, 2014
6:30 – 8:30 pm

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: Don Marles, Alexis Schefka, Emily Martin, Nancy Griffin, Sheri Glowinski, Chris Graham, Brian Wesolek, Marilyn Burton, Barb Keller, Paula Antunes, Dave Samp, Crystal Bole

Agency Reps: Corrina Barrett (AU), Carrie Ginou (AU), Kristina Denison (Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation District), Kira Fry (MOE), Ted Smith (U.S. EPA), John Riley (MDEQ), Bridget Rohn (U.S. Army Corps)

Guests: Jessica Wesolek (LSSU), Abraham Mclarahmore (Sault Tribe), Tesha Zimmerman (Sault Tribe)

Regrets: Lorelei Premo, Mike Ripley, Klaas Oswald, Megan Kelly

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- October 22nd, 2014 - minutes approved as amended and adopted.

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- The Canadian Delisting Criteria have made it through the last round of edits. Corrina has compiled the Survey Monkey feedback on the criteria and will share this with the group today.
 - Deferred to the next meeting.
- Discussion on Michigan Delisting Criteria for Fish & Wildlife related BUIs Letter Of Support from BPAC.
 - The Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan was finalized back in 2008. The Neebish Rock Cut project was originally included in that plan as one of two action items. A feasibility study has proven that the Rock Cut project is not feasible (cost outweighs the benefit). The Little Rapids Project is moving ahead as scheduled, but the US agencies would like to change the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan to recognize that the Neebish Rock Cut is no longer on the table, and that the Little Rapids Project will be the action item to address the restoration criteria for the two related BUIs.
 - Ted Smith mentioned that last month the BPAC talked about the possibility of replacing the Rock Cut with the Ashmun Creek Perch Culvert Project, which needs funds to run a feasibility study. The work is underway (with help from the Army Corps) with money being used to mobilize the feasibility study.
 - The **BPAC agreed by consensus** that the Neebish Rock Cut will be removed from the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Criteria, and that the Little Rapids Project would be enough to address the restoration criteria for the Fish & Wildlife Restoration Plan and the two related BUIs (note: the Addendum still needs to be reviewed and commented on by the BPAC before wording can be finalized). A side agreement in writing will also be provided for the Ashmun Creek Perch Culvert Project by the U.S. Agencies, and draft documents will be shared with the BPAC.
 - John Riley shared a Draft Addendum for the Restoration Plan with the BPAC three weeks ago. The BPAC have not had a chance to look at the Addendum to date, so Corrina will create a

Survey Monkey for members to fill out once they have read the Addendum. The **deadline** for filling in the survey and providing feedback on the Addendum will be **December 16, 2014**.

- Regarding the discussion on invasives at the last meeting: the Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation District have a Coastal Weed Map on their website: <http://www.clmcd.org/weedmap.asp>

4. Office Reports

- BPAC Office Report (LSSU): Environmental Summit is confirmed for March 27 and 28. Friday will be the day with school kids and Saturday will have the tables for exhibitors and the Guest Speaker.
- Literature in the BPAC office will also be organized.

5. Agency Updates

- DEQ update on SMR Water Quality Watch project:
 - Greg Zimmerman & LSSU headed this project, and it deals specifically with the Fish Tumours BUI.
 - Funded by the MDEQ starting in 2010.
 - The State wide Criteria for this BUI reads that: “This BUI will be considered restored when: No reports of fish tumors or deformities due to chemical contaminants which have been verified through observation and analysis by the MDNR or MDEQ for a period of five years.”
 - Greg shared a report with John recently explaining that the project involved soliciting comments / reports from the public which included a media release, sharing flyers and posters at Marinas, river front parks, tourist operators and boats, chartered boats, tackle shops, etc. There have been no reports about fish tumours or deformities since the summer of 2010.
 - John feels that the criteria have been met, and is asking for BPAC endorsement on removing this BUI on the Michigan side.
 - Corrina shared information on how the Canadian criteria for this BUI are currently not being met. The threshold for signs of contamination is set at 5% liver tumour prevalence, and as of the latest study done (2009), liver tumour rates in the St. Marys River were sitting closer to 10% in white suckers. Another study is being planned by Environment Canada for the summer of 2015 to re-assess the current liver tumour rate in white suckers in the St. Marys.
 - Crystal suggested checking with the U.S. agencies as well to see what recent fish sampling in Munuscong Bay may show.
 - Don suggested holding off on making a decision on removing this BUI on the Michigan side until results come back from Environment Canada on the most recent tumour study taking place this coming summer.
 - Corrina will resend out the Powerpoint Presentation to members that Dr. Paul Baumann presented to BPAC in March of 2014. The presentation shows a correlation between PAH levels and tumour prevalence.
- The 4 Agency update is attached.
 - Corrina mentioned that the Algoma U RAP Office will be reapplying for an additional year of Great Lakes Sustainability Funding to keep the office going. The current contract with Algoma University ends in March of 2015.
 - Kira shared the MOECC Spills Action Centre information for anyone who may be interested: Report spills of pollutants (e.g. oil, chemicals) to the Spills Action Centre by calling 416-325-3000 (out of Province/Country), 1-800-268-6060 (Ontario toll-free), or 1-855-889-5775 (TTY). You can also find more information at: <https://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/report-spill>
 - Emily Martin will share the most recent SPAC minutes with the BPAC.

6. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- Jessica Wesolek - Everyone was in favor, and Jessica was officially accepted as a member.

7. New Business

- Approval for Letter of Support regarding invasive species control work being done by the Conservation District.
 - The grant being applied for is for \$300,000 over a two-year period. Includes \$100,000 local match. 5 priority species will be targeted, 2 of which are aquatic.
 - The Motion to approve the BPAC Letter of Support was made by Marilyn. Motion seconded by Dave. All in favour. Motion accepted.
 - Corrina to scan the Letter of Support and share it with Kristina.
- Corrina and Carrie have updated the 2014-2015 Communications Strategy. If anyone is interested in viewing is, please email Corrina. An update will be included in the BPAC Annual Report, available at a future meeting.
 - Corrina to share copies with Don and Sheri as requested.
- Wild Atlantic Salmon have been found in the St. Marys: <http://www.saultthisweek.com/2014/11/11/wild-atlantic-salmon-fry-found-in-st-marys>
- Nancy Griffin shared an article with the BPAC on acid rain pollution in the Great Lakes: <http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/acid-rain-has-turned-canadian-lakes-into-a-kind-of-jelly/ar-BBeEChx>. Don mentioned that the Acid Rain Monitoring Station is located near Tilley Lakes, by Batchawana Bay. The Turkey Lake Watershed Study takes place in that same area, more information available at: <https://www.ec.gc.ca/rs-mn/default.asp?lang=En&n=53D8F869-1>

8. Public Comments

- None.

9. SPAC Elections

- Emily Martin would like to be the BPAC representative for the SPAC - Everyone was in favor, and Emily was officially accepted as the SPAC representative.
- Mike Ripley would like to be the Alternate BPAC representative for the SPAC - Everyone was in favor, and Mike was officially accepted as the Alternate SPAC representative.

10. Next Meeting

- Taking place Thursday January 22nd @ 6:30 pm, in Sault Ste. Marie, ON.

10. Adjourned @ 8:00 pm

Four Agency Report to the St. Marys River BPAC Meeting

December 2nd, 2014

Erie Room, Cisler Center – Lake Superior State University, Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

Environment Canada (EC)

- In November 2014, EC issued a call for proposals for its *Great Lakes Sustainability Fund*, which may provide up to 1/3 funding for projects that contribute to the completion of necessary actions identified in the AOC's Remedial Action Plan or Work Plan/Implementation Annex. The deadline is January 9, 2015.
- In November 2014, EC completed an addendum to its report on bird deformities and reproductive health, which had been shared with BPAC in March. The addendum provides the results of further assessment of embryonic deformities in herring gull and common tern eggs collected from within the AOC and from outside reference colonies in 2013 and 2014, concluding deformities cannot be linked to either geographical area, or to contaminant burdens. No deformities within chicks or adult birds have been found. The additional results reinforce conclusions from the earlier assessment report, and based on 4 years of study, it is clear there is *no evidence to suggest there are differences in developmental effects in herring gulls and common terns that could be associated with influences specific to the St. Marys River AOC*.
 - Accordingly, EC is drafting a redesignation report to change the status of the Bird/Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems BUI from "Requires Further Assessment" to Not Impaired. It will be circulated to BPAC for review and endorsement in December. The change in BUI status is consistent with the decision by the MDEQ and USEPA earlier this year, which BPAC endorsed.
- In January 2015, EC's Hans Biberhofer will be making a presentation to BPAC that summarizes the results from a 2-year study on sedimentation rate, transport and stability of sediment within the east of Bellevue Marine Park study area. The study results and other information will help EC and MOECC identify sediment management options, which will be assessed with BPAC and community input.
- There are three more presentations/discussions EC would like to coordinate with BPAC in the New Year:
 - results from DFO's recent nearshore fish community survey; its application of the index of biotic integrity approach to assess overall health of the river's fish community, and potential next steps [FEBRUARY];
 - results from the rapids habitat feasibility study, with Morrison Hershfield and Parish Geomorphic leading the discussion on what they believe to be physically and ecologically-sound options for creating new or augmenting existing rapids on the Canadian side of the river [MARCH]; and
 - preliminary results from EC's 5-year assessment of wildlife populations and habitat conditions within the AOC (specifically marsh birds and amphibians as indicator species, coastal wetlands, and water quality) and comparison to non-AOC reference sites [APRIL].

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

The US Army corp of Engirneers has assigned Bridget Rohn, Project Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers--Detroit District, to serve as the point of contact on the Ashmund Creek Culvert feasibility study. Her phone is 313-226-2222, and email address is Bridget.G.Rohn@usace.army.mil.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)

The DEQ's Office of the Great Lakes is in the process of revising some of the BUI restoration criteria, including those for Beach Closings, Eutrophication, and Dredging. The proposed changes were shared with SPAC members on 10/28 via email from Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission.

OGI also recently shared a proposed revision to the Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Populations restoration criteria, following the in-depth discussion held at the last BPAC meeting in ON.