

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

**Place:** CC 202, Essar Convergence Centre, Algoma University  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

**When:** January 22, 2015  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

## 1. Call to order/introductions

**Members:** Don Marles, Paula Antunes, Alexis Shefka, Emily Martin, Jessica Wesolek, Brian Wesolek, Klaas Oswald

**Agency Reps:** Corrina Barrett (AU), Mark Chambers (EC), Hans Biberhofer (EC), Catherine Taddo (City), Kira Fry (MOECC), Michelle McChristie (MOECC)

**Regrets:** Kristina Dension (Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation District), Gary Leith (APH), Carrie Ginou (AU), John Riley (MDEQ), Mike Ripley, Marilyn Burton, Nancy Griffin, Barb Keller, Chris Graham

## 2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- December 2, 2014 – approved as presented.

## 3. Business arising from previous minutes

- The Canadian Delisting Criteria have made it through the last round of edits. Corrina has compiled the BPACs feedback on the Survey Monkey Poll, and is currently working with the Implementation Committee to answer all of the proposed questions / revisions. The document will be shared with the BPAC at the February meeting.

## 4. Presentations

- Hans Biberhofer (EC) made 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.
- ⇒ 3 main questions being asked / metrics being measured:
- Is there material coming in? If there is, how fast?
  - What is the quality of that “new” material?
  - Is it stable?
- ⇒ The first question was answered by Dr. K’s work, with some validation from our work.
- ⇒ Evidence shows that material tends to accumulate (in volume) behind East of Topsail Island.
- ⇒ Sediment trap data was used to calculate PAHs in new material. Most levels measured were within range of the LEL (lowest effect level, which is a level of sediment contamination that can be tolerated by the majority of benthic organisms), with all below the SEL (severe effect level, that at which pronounced disturbance of the sediment-dwelling community can be expected. This is the concentration that would be detrimental to the majority of the benthic community). This shows to be of a better quality than of historically contaminated sediments.
- ⇒ Same story for metals, we are seeing LEL or less. Iron is still a bit high. Only one set of metals has been assessed at this point, still awaiting results from second set.
- ⇒ Every core showed an improvement in sediment quality as we get closer to the surface.
- ⇒ Total PAHs become less concentrated closer to the surface in cores.
- ⇒ Overall, looks like the system is improving.

- ⇒ Unfortunately, stability data has not yet been fully analysed. What we do know is that there doesn't seem to be any perturbations to the system. Looks as though stability is good, but needs to be verified.
- ⇒ Summary: There is new material accumulating, Dr. K's model showed this, and Hans' team supported it with physical measurements in the river. The chemistry data in cores and traps are showing a trend towards improved sediment quality closer to the surface. Analysis for stability is in progress, but to date there does not seem to be any major issues (perturbations).

#### **Mark provided updates for EC on sediment related next steps here:**

- ⇒ The multi agency Sediment Technical Team (who are in charge of creating the Sediment Management Plan) have next steps which include waiting to develop the plan until after the fish tumour work has been completed. PAHs are what cause the fish tumours. Dr. Baumann has suggested that EC resample at the Essar Slip (where PAHs are highest). EC is supporting Essar in conducting that assessment currently, with results due by March. This survey will show how the PAH levels are now compared to historical levels (such as 2006). The fish tumour survey will also be repeated in the SMR this summer (2015).
- ⇒ All of this information will need to be collected and analysed before the Sediment Tech Team sits down again to discuss the Management Plan. This will probably take at least a year (sometime in 2016) before the discussion can begin. Options include (but are not limited to): Monitored Natural Recovery, Capping, Dredging, or a combination of all three.
- ⇒ EC is commissioning the production of a map in the near future that will provide a visual summary of all sediment sampling done by Canada and Ontario over the past decade for the AOC. The map will be produced by early April.

#### **5. Office Reports**

- Carrie and Corrina applied for additional year of GLSF funding to keep RAP Office open at Algoma U. Thank you to the BPAC Executive for providing a Letter of Support!
- Corrina, Carrie, and Angela will be hosting a **St. Marys Night** at Algoma University on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. The night will include a showing of the 2009 documentary "WATERLIFE – The Epic Journey of Our Water", some updates on current RAP initiatives, and some rounds of 'Dripiat Pursuit'. The event is free to attend, includes prizes and snacks, and starts at 7:00 pm. We encourage everyone to come on out. Corrina to send an email to the BPAC with registration information.
- Environmental Summit will be taking place on the 27<sup>th</sup> (for kids) and 28<sup>th</sup> of March. Corrina to send an email to the BPAC with information.

#### **6. Agency Updates**

- EC asking for BPAC endorsement of Bird and Animals Deformities / Reproductive BUI (on the Canadian Side) redesignation from "Requires Further Assessment" to "Not impaired".
- ⇒ Klaas motioned to accept the redesignation. Paula seconded. Motion carried.
- ⇒ The Executive will provide a letter to EC to that effect.
- MDEQ asking for confirmation that the amended Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan is to BPACs satisfaction and can be finalized as worded.
- ⇒ All in favour. Motion carried.
- ⇒ The Executive will provide a letter to the MDEQ to that effect.

#### **7. Memberships**

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- ⇒ No new membership applications.

#### **8. New Business**

- ⇒ Klaas provided an update: OMB hearings are over. Looks like a decision won't be available until closer to March at the earliest. But as a follow up to this, Klaas has shared a letter to the MNRF regarding the Pointe Louise wetland and whether or not it is provincially significant. When the Black Crowned Night Heron was

confirmed in the wetland it raised the point score; in the same re-evaluation of 2010 the Moose Aquatic Feeding Area and Summer Ungulate portions were reduced to zero points; had the MAFA and ungulate sections remained the same, the wetland would have scored high enough to become a Provincially Significant Wetland. The letter is an attempt to bring this to the attention of MNRF. The Snapping Turtle would have the same effect if accepted by MNRF. Don will read through the letter in detail and get back to Klaas / the group ASAP.

⇒ BPAC members send a huge THANK YOU to Klaas and Mike for taking the time and devoting so heavily to the workload involved in participating in the OMB.

## **9. Public Comments**

⇒ None.

## **10. Next Meeting**

- Date in February to be determined. Doodle Poll has been shared with the BPAC, results expected soon.

## **11. Adjourned @ 8:30 pm**

**Four Agency Report to the St. Marys River BPAC Meeting**  
January 22, 2015  
Algoma University - Essar Convergence Centre (room CC 202)

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Little Rapids Update:

An additional \$3.5 million is being added to the NOAA IA for the Little Rapids project, expected by late March/early April. Additional geotechnical borings are being taken and results are expected by mid March, at which point the Road Commission and AECOM-URS will release a request for proposal. A contractor could be selected in mid May but a Road Commission will need 2-4 weeks to approve and modify subrecipient agreement budget with the Great Lakes Commission. A final contract to be in place by mid June.

**Michigan Department of Environmental Quality**

At the December 2, 2014 BPAC meeting, the BPAC agreed by consensus that the Neebish Rock Cut would be removed from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Restoration Criteria, with the Little Rapids Project being the key project to address the restoration criteria for the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan. A two-week window (December 2 – 16) was given for BPAC members to review the Addendum to the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan and provide comments via a Survey Monkey Poll. The Survey results were as follows:

8 BPAC members provided feedback;

1 member voted 'Yes with Comment': "As the mission is impossible = beyond government funding - I agree, provided we add the Ashmun addition".

1 member voted 'No with Comment': "As the river is an international body, all delisting should be coordinated with the Canadian side of the river."

6 members voted 'Yes without Comment'.

John Riley asks that the BPAC please verify by vote tonight that the Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Populations BUI criteria have been amended such that restoration will be achieved upon completion of the Little Rapids project and subsequent monitoring.

Secondly, the Annual Areas of Concern Conference is scheduled for March 11 and 12 in Toledo, Ohio. This will be a great opportunity to network with AOC partners from across the Great Lakes Basin. BPAC members are encouraged to attend. The official announcement with logistical details will be released very soon.