

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

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

**When:** March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

## 1. Call to order/introductions

**Members:** Mike Ripley, Mary Rossiter, James Dukes, Don Marles, Paula Antunes, Klaas Oswald, Chris Graham, Crystal Bole

**Agency Reps:** Corrina Barrett (AU), Martha Scott (AU), Gary Leith (APH), Catherine Taddo (City), Kira Fry (MOE), Mark Chambers (EC), Carrie Ginou (AU), Bretton Joldersma (MDEQ), Michelle Bruneau (MDCH)

**Guests:** Sara Varty (EC), Paul Baumann (Consultant through EC), Jason Bertrim (Country 104.3/KISS 100.5), Robert Rattle, Peter Gagnon (PPA), Kathie Brosemer (Sault Tribe), Tesha Zimmerman (Sault Tribe), Bryan Dumanski

**Regrets:** Kristina Denison, Max Cox, Lorelei Premo

## 2. Presentations

Dr. Paul Baumann (Fish Tumour Expert and Consultant hired by EC) presented on the fish tumour study results for Ontario:

- Presentation is available on the BPAC website. <http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/St.-Marys-White-Suckers-P-Baumann-Feb-19-2014.pdf>
- PAHs are produced when certain substances are burned under low oxygen (i.e. cigarette tars).
- Note that on slide number 12, a key word that the IJC left out was “statistically”. You also cannot “confirm the absence” of anything. So the wording here made it very hard for impaired AOCs to reach the goal.
- Slide 13 shows the proposed updated delisting criteria for the SMR using what has been learned from the previous criteria (Please note this criteria is not final and that EC/MOE will be bringing the newly proposed delisting criteria for all BUIs to a future BPAC meeting for discussion).
- The map on slide 16 shows the 5 sites where tumour surveys were done in the 1990s and in the 2000s. Of the 5 sites, 4 had elevated tumour levels. The only one that didn't was Mountain Bay.
- Slide 17 shows background levels for different parts of the Great Lakes in the 1980s-1990s.
- Slide 18 shows the prevalence of tumours around the SMR, where even the reference site (Batchewana Bay) is quite high.
- Slide 19 shows how levels have dropped in most areas, but SMR has gone up, and even Batchewana Bay remains quite high.
- Slide 20 is showing the percentage of fish in each age group at each site. The older the fish, the more likely they are to have tumours, but this graph is showing that this is not the case in the SMR. Therefore, the tumours present are not due to an excessively old population in the SMR.
- On Slide 21, a thing to note is that the dredging in the Algoma Slip (done around 95 and again in 2006) would have caused any fish older than 14 or 15 years to have been exposed to those original PAH concentrations. There is a chance that once that generation of the population passes through, we may see some improvement.
- Slide 23 is showing some other sites in the US, and a thing to note is that once levels dropped to 10 ppm or less, tumour rates start dropping quite quickly to the background range. So even though levels in the SMR have dropped to between 20-40 ppm, it is still high enough to be causing cancers and tumours in the fish.

- Dr. Baumann's recommendation is to try and get PAH levels below the 10 ppm range.
- On Slide 24, point 2, Mark mentioned that this year EC will be returning (last sampling done in 2009) to do a repeat survey to find the information that is needed. This year a private lab will be hired to analyze the data for spring of next year.
- Dr. Baumann mentioned that our sediment data is old. A targeted study looking at Bellevue Marine Park and the Algoma Slip would be the best bet moving forward. One that looks at the slacker area water where fish get into and where sedimentation is most likely to occur.
- Brown bullheads tend to stay in the same area more than white suckers, where past studies have shown that they are extremely mobile throughout the Great Lakes.
- Please feel free to email Dr. Baumann with any questions: [pbaumann@columbus.rr.com](mailto:pbaumann@columbus.rr.com)

Michelle Bruneau (Michigan Department of Community Health) presented on the results of the MDCH/MDEQ chemical fish analysis, tumor analysis, and the new Eat Safe Fish Guide that MDCH put out.

- Presentation is available on the BPAC website. <http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/2014-03-05-ST-MARYS-FINAL-RESULTS.pdf>
- Michelle had draft copies with her of the two reports listed, but will send the final reports to Corrina for uploading to the BPAC website.
- Mark mentioned that he feels it is a good thing that there are different indicator species being used by Canada (white suckers) vs. the USA (brown bullheads), as it is bringing in two different ways of looking at the same BUI (similar to the bird and animal deformities BUI).
- Small mouth bass became the surrogate for Pike as they weren't able to find Pike during the study.
- Members of the BPAC mentioned that they'd like to see larger Walleye and large Pike used as those were the species originally designated as being impaired in the Stage 1 document.
- It was also noted that the sample sizes were quite small.
- Bretton mentioned that if there is a need to do more monitoring, they might be able to look into including those species/larger sizes.
- Dr. Baumann emphasized the benefit of having a large enough sample on both sides of the river for appropriate histopathology.
- Note that they stopped making assumption in the new Eat Safe Fish campaign. They are trying to teach how to eat and cook the fish properly, and show people which fish are best for consumption.
- Bretton mentioned that questions can be sent to him and he will forward them to the appropriate person.

Carrie Ginou (Algoma U) will be providing a brief overview in the form of a presentation on the water quality-sampling project being done through Algoma University.

- Presentation is available on the BPAC website. [http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/BPAC-Presentation-CG\\_March-5-2014.pdf](http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/BPAC-Presentation-CG_March-5-2014.pdf)
- Just a quick introduction on the work done so far. Year 1 work was funded by EC with in kind support from Algoma U.
- Final First Year Report will be posted to BPAC website. <http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Water-Quality-Project-Year-1-Report-March-2014.pdf>
- All site measurements taken were within acceptable limits, with Echo Bay being the highest in Nitrogen, Phosphorus, DOC, and turbidity. Topsail noted a faint odour as well.
- Year 2 field work, which should begin in April 2014 (weather conditions permitting) with 12 sampling periods occurring bi-weekly from mid April – mid October. 3 replicates will be taken at each of the five sites. Both EC and MOE will fund this year, with in kind support from Algoma University.
- Year 3 field work, to begin in April 2015 will have 12 sampling periods from mid April – mid October again. 3 replicates will be taken at 1 of 5 sampling sites. MOE will be providing funding, with Algoma U providing in kind support.

### 3. Agency Updates

- 4 Agency Update

- EC (Mark Chambers) – A presentation was made by EC and MDEQ to BPAC last June on bird and animal deformities BUI, and at the time, the assumption was that there were no impairments directly attributed to the AOC. Since that time another year of chemical analysis has been completed and a final report written (available at: <http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/EC-Assessment-of-Wildlife-Deformities-and-Reproduction-BUI-in-St.-Marys-River-AOC-Ontario-Feb-2014.pdf>) which reaffirms the conclusion that chemical contamination is not driving deformities, reproductive issues, or body burdens within the wildlife.
- EC has commissioned a feasibility study on the rapids habitat within the SMR (inspired by what Michigan and the US is doing on the Little Rapids Project). The Stage 2 RAP Report has 3 pages dedicated to ideas on enhancing rapids habitat, and this project could cover some of those actions. Year one of a two year study is being completed. Morrison Hershfield Inc. were the contractors hired, and they have partnered with another company – Parish Geomorphic (who specializes in bathymetric and geomorphic data collection) – to help with this Spring’s fieldwork (which will include looking at Fort Creek, Whitefish Island, and Garden River). We are also working with the Batchewana First Nations to look at augmenting existing rapids habitat near Whitefish Island, as well as working with the Garden River First Nations to look into work with existing tributaries (i.e. Root River, Echo River or Garden River). This will all lead to a presentation to BPAC this time next year to discuss the results of the feasibility study.
- EC has also hired a contractor to look at to what extent Ontario based agriculture is having an impact on the St. Marys River. This is to address a long standing action in the Stage 2 Report which is to determine what are the non-point sources of pollution that are having an impact on the river. We have a fair idea of what the urban stormwater issues are but still needed to address what the agricultural sources are. The same company that was used for the spills report was hired to do this report, and are working with support from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Will include Bar River, Echo River, as well as others. They will be comparing current data with historical data (early 2000s). They are going to compare the results to that of data from outside of an AOC, and will be using the South Huron as a control site (Goderich, south of Sarnia). Report should be drafted by the end of this month, and will be shared with BPAC as soon as possible.
- MDEQ (Bretton Joldersma) – The Aesthetics BUI removal recommendation was submitted to the EPA this past fall, and 2-3 weeks ago they received a letter from the EPA with concurrence to remove it. Currently still waiting on the EPA to respond regarding the removal of the Bird and Animal Deformities BUI. Once both concurrences are received, a press release will be made announcing the removal (and why) of the two BUIs on the Michigan side.
- In late October NOAA announced the award of a \$5.9 million GLRI grant for the implementation of the Little Rapids Habitat Restoration project. The grant was awarded to the Great Lakes Commission and sub-contracts are now in place with the Chippewa County Road Commission, Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development, and Lake Superior State University. The DEQ has issued Part 301 (inland lakes and streams) and Part 31 (floodplain/water resources protection) permits for the project. Permits from the U.S. Army Corp are still pending. Additional baseline monitoring is planned for the for this field season. At this time the project team is anticipating that construction will begin, and be completed, during the 2015 construction season. Monitoring should occur starting in fall of 2015 to fall of 2016.

#### **4. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes**

- October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 (deferred to next meeting)

#### **5. Business arising from previous minutes**

- Update from Klaas on work he has done and the BPACs participation in OMB hearing regarding the Pointes Estates Proposal (placeholder)
  - Please see overview in previous minutes.

- On March 11 there will be a “pre-hearing” where the people who are interested in appearing at the hearing itself get screened and find out if they have “party” status or “presentation” status, or whatever is applicable. It will also cover what issues will be dealt with, witnesses lists, etc.
- At the last BPAC meeting, we decided as a group that we would try to become a party and appear in front of the OMB to oppose this development. We feel that the wetland should remain intact, and this fits our mandate of protecting and restoring habitat within the AOC (covered under the loss of habitat BUI).
- The pre-hearing is open to the public, and located at City Hall (in the Council Chambers).
- Klaas also clarified that as BPAC is not funded and non-incorporated, it is therefore not actually able to be a Party at the OMB Hearing, so he himself is becoming a Party and representing on BPACs behalf.

## 6. Office Reports

- Update on LSSU BPAC Resource Office activities
  - A grant application is coming up, and Greg has contacted Sheri Glowinski (LSSU Prof of Conservation Biology) to head up the writing of the grant application. It is a PAC support grant that is due March 28.
  - Also, the BPAC Environmental Summit is coming up on April 12.

## 7. Memberships

## 8. New Business

- Brief discussion on Implementation Annex Comments (deferred to email discussion) – the document is finalized as a living document, and Corrina is always accepting comments.
- Coal pile in Sault, Michigan – Chris Graham talked to the Coal Pile located on the Carbide Docks in Soo, Michigan. The Sault Locks closed on January 15<sup>th</sup>, and Essar had 4 freighters of coal that hadn’t made it through the ice yet, causing them to be delayed by 5-6 days. As the Locks were closed, the freighters had nowhere to go (note: 15-20 years ago they used to dump the piles at the Carbide Docks) so they found out after the fact that this is what the freighters had done. A contractor was hired to move the coal to Essar. Should be completely moved by mid to end of March. This was done without any permits or approvals from Soo, Michigan, and without Essar having knowledge until after the fact. A stormwater management plan is now being put into place, any emergency permit from the DEQ, and created a contingency plan. Street sweepers are onsite to clean the roads and parking lot as well.
- Transporting Tar Sands Crude through the Great Lakes <http://www.greatlakes.org/tarsands>
  - The Alliance for the Great Lakes created a report that is accessible through the above link. Take a look at the report please. A link has been added to the website, see <http://www.lssu.edu/bpac/bpac-library>
- Sault Tribe funding for SMR Tree Plantings
  - The Sault Tribe received a grant to plant trees with the AOC. They are looking for sites on the US side of the river. Any suggestions (within 10 miles of the river) can be sent to Tesha Zimmerman.
- The RAP Coordinator and RAP Supervisor at Algoma University have created a draft “Annual Report to BPAC” available for BPAC comment. Ms. Barrett will email the report to BPAC members.

## 9. Public Comments

- None.

## 10. 2014 Executive Elections

Chairman – Canada: Don Marles. 1<sup>st</sup>: Klaas Oswald; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mary Rossiter; Passed by consensus.

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair – USA: Crystal Bole. 1<sup>st</sup>: Don Marles; 2<sup>nd</sup>: James Dukes; Passed by consensus.

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair – Canada: Chris Graham. 1<sup>st</sup>: Mike Ripley; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Klaas Oswald; Passed by consensus.

Past Chair – USA – auto: Mike Ripley

## **11. Next Meeting**

- Date to be determined for April. Will send out Doodle Poll.

## **12. Meeting Adjourned @ 8:25 pm.**