

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

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

When: October 22nd, 2014
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

1. Call to order/introductions

- Members:** Don Marles, Mike Ripley, Klaas Oswald, Emily Martin, Alexis Schefka, Megan Kelly
- Agency Reps:** Corrina Barrett (AU), Catherine Taddo (City), Carrie Ginou (AU), John Riley (MDEQ), Kristina Denison (Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation District), Ted Smith (EPA), Kira Fry (MOECC)
- Guests:** Terry Heatlie (NOAA), Brian Wesolek (Bay Mills Indian Community), Jessica Wesolek (LSSU), Jason Bertrim (Rogers Radio)
- Regrets:** Barb Keller, Paula Antunes, Chris Graham, Crystal Bole, Lorelei Premo, Gary Leith (APH)

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- September 17, 2014 - minutes approved and adopted.

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- The Canadian Delisting Criteria have made it through the last round of edits. Corrina shared the updated criteria with the BPAC on September 8, 2014 and asked for comments. No comments were received, and therefore a Survey Monkey was sent to the group on October 9 asking for final feedback on the criteria. If BPAC members could fill in the survey, it would be greatly appreciated, and help move everything forward.
 - Corrina to resend the Survey this week for the remaining members to participate.
- The Michigan Delisting Criteria for Fish & Wildlife related BUIs need to be revised to reflect previous discussions on how the Little Rapids Restoration Project would be sufficient to delist the 1) Loss of Fish & Wildlife Habitat, and the 2) Degradation of Fish & Wildlife Populations BUIs. John Riley and Ted Smith will be present tonight to discuss this with the group.
 - Terry gave an update on the Little Rapids Project: There was a call for proposals and qualifications, 3 teams submitted proposals, and from those submissions it became evident that the money allocated for the project would not be enough to construct with the box culverts as planned. It is more cost effective to build a bridge (with a 400 foot minimum opening), and a proposal that consists of less than 2 lanes of traffic during the construction phase could also save money. Terry also mentioned that they are trying to find more money for the project if possible/needed. Submissions will be in for the end of October.
 - John discussed the creation of the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan finalized in December 2008. It listed 2 projects to complete the restoration criteria in order to delist the above 2 BUIs: 1) Neebish Rock Cut, and 2) Little Rapids Project. After that Plan was released, the Neebish Rock Cut was deemed not feasible as the cost heavily outweighed the benefit. Other projects were identified as potential alternatives, but all have been deemed unfeasible. Which means the restoration criteria outlined in the Restoration Plan are out of date and unattainable. In order to ensure that the money will be available for the Little Rapids project, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative have to have validation that the Little Rapids Project will be sufficient in meeting the restoration criteria

(ultimately leading to BUI removal). There needs to be a clear path to delisting. Therefore, the criteria need to be changed to reflect this. The BPAC needs to ask itself if the Little Rapids Project alone is enough to remove these two BUIs.

- Ted mentioned that the EPA's budgets are being cut. The demand for money from other AOCs is high, and therefore the money will go to those projects that are seen as the most important and have the most direct path forward i.e. lead to BUI removal and delisting. The SMR is on the US short list for completion of all management actions in the next 2 years. There is a higher likelihood of receiving the additional funds if the Little Rapids is deemed sufficient to remove these two BUIs.
- John mentioned that the SMR is also competing for money with many other AOCs that are much more worse off and polluted, and these AOCs will ultimately need much more work/money to reach the current level of restoration seen in the SMR (the SMR is actually in better condition than many areas that aren't AOCs).
- To address the outdated BUI restoration targets, the BPAC decided to have the DEQ present a new proposal, recognizing the Little Rapids as the main project to address these two BUIs. BPAC will review the proposal and approve it if the group agrees. John volunteered to write a letter to the BPAC, which would include proposing changes to the restoration plan and the rationale for why it is being changed.
- Ted also mentioned that if there was a small 6 figure project that could be completed by the end of 2015, that the BPAC was able to bring to the table, the EPA can probably find a way to fund it, in addition to the Little Rapids project.
- Mike mentioned that when the Ashmun Creek Perch Culvert was deemed unfeasible, there was no basic work done in the area. If seed money were available to get shovel ready, the BPAC could probably find the funding to complete that project. The railroad company (owns the Ashmun Creek Property) said they are willing to work with the BPAC to replace the culverts there. Ted asked Mike to send him a write up on this, and he will look into allocating that seed money.

4. Office Reports

- Alexis mentioned that they are moving ahead with the plans for the Environmental Summit. They have the two days booked, March 27 & 28, and a speaker is booked for the Saturday morning.
- Mike mentioned having an update on the Little Rapids project at the Summit would be a great opportunity.

5. Agency Updates

- EC update attached. No update from MOECC.
- Ted and John provided the EPA and DEQ updates in the previous discussion.
- Carrie also mentioned that Corrina and herself travelled to Ottawa at the beginning of October to present on the Water Quality Study at the Aquatic Toxicity Workshop.
- Corrina also mentioned that they have hired a new RAP Research Assistant through Algoma U. Her name is Angela Belleau, and she will be helping to move RAP related projects/outreach forward.
- The Conservation District, the Ashmun Creek Watershed Group, and the Sault Tribe will be conducting some tree plantings tomorrow and Friday along Ashmun Creek and I75, BPAC members are welcome to join in.

6. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- Brian Wesolek - Everyone was in favor, and Brian was officially accepted as a member.
- Megan Kelly - Everyone was in favor, and Megan was officially accepted as a member.
- Jessica Wesolek is interested in becoming a member, Corrina will send her the information for applying.

7. New Business

- Klaas wanted to share this with the group: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/invasive-species-experts-want-more-involvement-from-public-1.2797365>. Resulted in a brief discussion of current efforts within the

AOC dealing with invasive species. Kristina mentioned that on the Michigan side they deal a lot with terrestrial invasive species such as phragmites (on the East end) and the European Frogbit. She can provide information and resources to anyone interested.

- Deep water port: <http://www.sootoday.com/content/news/details.asp?c=79064>. Resulted in members bringing up concerns with the development moving ahead too quickly. BPAC feels that a full scale Federal Environmental Assessment is needed as the project is being proposed within the AOC boundaries. Corrina offered to share any direct questions or concerns with Fred Post (Essar Environmental Manager).
- Klaas mentioned seeing if Peter Tonazzo, City Planner, would like to come and present on the new Official Plan for the City at a future Ontario based BPAC meeting. Catherine mentioned that Corrina has also been added to Peter's OP review list so that she can keep the BPAC informed on new developments.
- Emily mentioned that she attended the last SPAC meeting in July, and that a lot of discussion was based on "what happens to an AOC after delisting". She will share the minutes of that meeting with BPAC once she receives them. Mike mentioned that the SPAC requires PACs to vote on SPAC representatives for 1 to 2 year terms. The BPAC needs to designate a new SPAC rep. soon. Don mentioned that a general notice to the public needs to go out before a vote can be done, so at the next meeting the SPAC rep. elections will take place. (Emily is up for the rep. position, with Mike as her alternative).

8. Public Comments

- None.

9. Next Meeting

- Date in November / December to be determined. Corrina will send out a Doodle Poll.

10. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Four Agency Report to the St. Marys River BPAC Meeting
October 22, 2014
Algoma University - Essar Convergence Centre (room BT 202)

Environment Canada (EC)

- EC will be drafting a BUI redesignation report to present the rationale for changing 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 this Fall. The change in status is consistent with the decision by the MDEQ and USEPA earlier this year, which had BPAC endorsement.
- EC’s commissioned study on the physical, ecological and economic feasibility of creating new or augmenting existing rapids on the Canadian side of the river is progressing. In July and October, the contractors (Morrison Hershfield and Parish Geomorphic) completed geomorphic, hydrologic and fisheries-related fieldwork.
 - the study team will present their approach and results at a future BPAC meeting (i.e., Feb/March), which will begin discussions regarding the prospect of taking specific remedial actions to restore the Loss of Fish & Wildlife Habitat BUI.
- This summer, Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) collected data for its nearshore fish community survey, which will use an index of biotic integrity approach to assess the overall health of the river’s fish community. If needed, data collection may also take place in 2015, with a final report anticipated in 2016.
 - data analysis is underway, and the lead DFO scientist is happy to present the study approach and preliminary findings at a future BPAC meeting (i.e., March/April).
- Since 2012, EC has been collecting data on the sedimentation rate, transport and stability of sediment within the east of Bellevue Marine Park study area. A summary report is expected this Winter. This and other information will help EC and MOECC identify sediment management options.
- With financial support from EC and MOECC, Algoma University is almost finished its second year studying water quality in the river, as part of an effort to evaluate the current status of the Degradation of Aesthetics and Eutrophication/Undesirable Algae BUIs. Results so far are generally positive. One more year of fieldwork is planned for 2015, with a final report expected in March 2016.