

ST. MARYS RIVER BPAC MEETING

July 21, 1994

Minutes

In Attendance:

BPAC Members/Alternates

Roman Aikens	Member, Elected Officials
John Bain	Alternate, Municipal Representatives
Kathleen Brosemer	Member, Environmental
Marilyn Burton	Member, Citizens, Chair
Kara Flanigan	Member, Public Health
Verna Lawrence	Member, Elected Officials
Donald Marles	Member, Environmental
Arnett Maurer	Member, Environmental
Martin McPherson	Member, Environmental

Agency Representatives

Jake Vander Wal	Acting RAP Coordinator - OMOEE
Rod Stewart	Sault Ste. Marie District Office - OMOEE
Jerry LaHaye	Sault Ste. Marie District Office - OMOEE
Ken Cullis	Coordinator, Nipigon Bay RAP - OMNR
Bud Wildman	Minister of the Environment and Energy

Other Stakeholder Representatives

Joan Aikens	Applicant for Citizens category
Blaine Belleau	Former BPAC Member - Garden River First Nation
Jim Gormley	Councillor, MacDonald Township
Linda Vaughn	Councillor, MacDonald Township
Jean Robbins	Staff, MacDonald Township
Tammy Springett	Inspector-in-Training, Algoma Health Unit

The evening commenced at 6:00 pm with a social hour. Pipers and drummers from St. Joseph Island entertained those who came early.

1. Marilyn Burton opened the meeting at 7:05 pm welcoming everyone in attendance to the meeting. She offered condolences to the Aikens family on the recent loss of their son.

Roman Aikens welcomed everyone to St. Joseph Island and distributed St. Joseph Island commemorative pins.

2. Minutes of May 18, 1994

Several members advised they did not recall reviewing the minutes.

MOTION: Defer review of May 18, 1994 Minutes until the next meeting.

MOVED BY: Donald Marles

SECONDED BY: Verna Lawrence

-CARRIED-

3. Discussion of Proposed Georgia Pacific Plant

Marilyn Burton read a letter to Donald Redmond, City Engineer for Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, from the City of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. This letter expressed their concerns about potential effects of discharges from this plant to the West End Treatment Plant and the St Marys River.

Marilyn feels it is important to know what chemicals are used in the company's process and how they will be removed. She also felt that after two years of discussion it is time to get some information.

Don Redmond has responded with a letter of acknowledgement, but no answers.

Rod Stewart advised he was already prepared to provide information during the MoEE District report later in the agenda.

4. Discussion of Echo Bay Sewer and Water Problems

Jim Gormley; Councillor, MacDonald Township, stressed concern that their municipal council only became aware of BPAC's intention to discuss their water issues after receiving a faxed copy of the agenda.

Mr. Wildman did not feel the problem was in finding water. He advised that there has been difficulty for several years in identifying the best system for the community of Echo Bay. There is funding available for communal water and sewers. Consultation with affected properties is ongoing due to concerns about where the intake might be located.

Mr. Wildman continued that BPAC has met largely in Sault, Ontario and Sault, Michigan and is currently meeting at other communities where they can become more aware of local concerns.

Linda Vaughn, Councillor, MacDonald Township, said that she assumes since the OMoEE has approved Lake George as a source of water, the water will be safe to drink after treatment.

Rod Stewart responded that Stage 1 RAP states clearly that the water from St. Mary's River is safe to drink with treatment. Any cleanup upstream will have beneficial effects on downstream communities.

Linda Vaughn said she was not fully aware of BPAC's meeting focus.

Don Marles responded that there are concerns about water quality in the Echo Bay area and that testing should be done for toxic chemicals such as PAHs, Phenols, Arsenic, etc. that may require looking at during any assessment of a water source.

Rod Stewart commented that a source is not technically approved at this time.

Jerry LaHaye added that the consultants will look at all areas. OMoEE does not recommend the use of untreated surface water at any time. PAHs adhere to particles and should be removed through filtration.

Marilyn Burton asked how the East End Treatment Plant affects Echo Bay's water source.

Rod Stewart answered that it has no effect.

Kara Flanigan commented that BPAC was interested in problems relating to the river and that they welcomed input and did not summon people to participate.

Blaine Belleau advised that the RAP has identified some hot spots in the St. Marys River. Garden River First Nation has collected water samples between Bell's Point and Echo Bay. There are identified hot spots, such as in the area between Partridge Point and Bell's Point as a result of the East End Sewage Plant. Due to expense, Garden River has limited its surveys to bacteria sampling.

Jean Robbins advised that during their public meetings, statements were made that taking water out of Lake George is dangerous because of Algoma Steel.

Mr. Wildman responded that there will be a problem if there is disturbance of sediments during installation of the intake pipe. If treatment is possible there is not a problem. Testing for chemicals is required.

Don Marles said Stage 1 identified a hot spot in Lake George and it should be monitored carefully for chemicals and not just bacteria.

Blaine Belleau said that both Lake George and Little Lake George are shallow and rough weather will disturb sediments.

Jarl Hiltunen added that the water depth in parts of Lake George are about 50 feet deep and these are settling basins for sediments.

John Bain commented that there is a lack of data for the river based on few sampling locations providing skimpy information for the whole river.

Rod Stewart advised that the consultant has all available data from OMOEE to work with.

Martin McPherson said that BPAC was assured Lake Superior was clean, but 90% of toxic input is airborne. Treatment for city water does not remove many toxins. He felt that a baseline health study should be done.

Bud Wildman advised that the RAP process is the planning for clean up of polluted areas around the Great Lakes.

5. Request to Invite IJC Chair Tom Baldini to a BPAC Meeting.

MOTION: IJC Chair Tom Baldini is to be sent an invitation to attend a future BPAC meeting.

MOVED BY: Donald Marles
-CARRIED-

SECONDED BY: Roman Aikens

6. RAP Report

Jake Vander Wal provided the RAP Report as:

1. Copies of 2 letters written under the Chairs' signature were distributed:
 - Letter of appreciation to Louis Quinlan as former Chair
 - Letter of appreciation to Algoma Steel Inc. for advancements in controlling discharges
2. Questionnaires were distributed to BPAC members
3. The new St. Marys River RAP Coordinator has been selected: Ms. Lou -Ann Cornacchio (M.Sc.), a former resident of Sault Ste. Marie, currently with OMoEE in Hamilton will commence duties in mid-August. Her Masters Thesis was on pulp waste sediment remediation.
4. 22 copies of the Canada-Ontario Agreement were available for members

Mr. Wildman commented that he was glad to attend the BPAC meeting, emphasizing the importance BPAC has to the Ministry and stating his commitment to the St. Marys River RAP. He advised that the COA document was long awaited and that he was pleased to sign it. The Agreement highlights RAPs and provides objectives.

- * \$2.5 billion total is committed by all governments
- * \$1.6 billion is available for federal and provincial
- * \$.9 billion is available for municipal governments for upgrading water and sewers
- * Delisting by IJC at least 9 Areas of Concern by the year 2000
- * The other 8 will be restored to 60% of their beneficial uses
- * Virtual elimination of 13 toxic substances and reduction at source of another 26

5. The passage of the Environmental Bill of Rights provides the residents of Ontario the right to be informed of decisions affecting them. Individuals have the right to investigate violations of regulations. Fifteen Ministries must file statements of environmental values about everything they do as it relates to the environment. Access to information is open to everyone through computers. The legislation ensures individuals have the right to have reasons given and a right to go to court for class action.

Marilyn Burton advised how BPAC, being Binational, is very unique with insurmountable difficulties due to no funds being identified for the governments to work together. Without operating funds there are terrible obstacles in dealing with layers of bureaucracy.

Mr. Wildman responded that it took considerable time in developing the Canada-Ontario Agreement. He agreed to raise the issue with Ms. Sheila Copps, federal Environment Minister.

Rita Valiquette asked if part of the funding from the Canada-Ontario Agreement is to be used for the East End Treatment Plant.

Mr. Wildman answered that the requests for upgrading treatment plants are initiated by municipal levels of government. A joint letter went out to municipalities advising them they can apply to upper levels of government for funding assistance.

Marilyn Burton added her concerns that the East End Sewage Treatment Plant is a problem.

Jerry LaHaye responded that studies are being conducted on the city's sewer system to reduce stormwater input which causes the system to overflow.

Marilyn Burton advised that Sault, Michigan had to install new infrastructure to replace their combined sewer outfalls, resulting in high water and sewer rates.

Mr. Wildman explained that Ontario and Michigan have different concepts for assessing effluent as: Ontario requires the levels of contaminants to be good in the effluent while Michigan requires that effluent should not have overall effects on the river.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

i Martin McPherson commented that judges should be sensitized to recognize the impact of modern environmental issues so that they can make responsible judgements.

Mr. Wildman advised that OMOEE recently published a document listing the results of court actions by the Ministry. The document outlines by name, those charged, the number and type of charges and the court's decision.

Some decisions have required that the company designate funds matching the fines to a public environmental group.

ii Don Marles wished to address outstanding membership issues and would like to have it on the agenda for the next BPAC meeting.

iii Don Marles raised his concern about the planning process for Megasin Lake area and distributed a petition for signatures.

iv Kathy Brosemer updated the members on the success of the Yellowfish Road Project. This project has painted yellow fish on sewer covers in the community to attract the public's attention to the issue of disposing hazardous chemicals. Through this project they distributed 10,000 information handouts and responded to inquiries about disposal options.

v Kathy Brosemer, on behalf of the St. Marys River Celebration '94 sponsors, presented a Race T-Shirt to Mr. Wildman in recognition of the Ministry's support in providing the funding for coordination of this successful river focused event. The Minister attended the event, and awarded the prizes to the winners in the Paddling Spectacular.

vi Jarl Hiltunen alerted members to the recent approval for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct a new lock in the river.

vii Jarl Hiltunen advised that sport fishermen were complaining that catches of yellow perch were declining in recent years in the Sugar Island area.

viii Rita Valiquette advised that there were still no muskrats in Root River. Blaine Belleau agreed with her.

ix Marilyn Burton advised that U.S. EPA was conducting a hearing regarding the Cannelton Site, August 9, 1994 (Technical Meeting, 4-6 p.m.; General Public 7-9 p.m.).

x John Bain requested support to attend the OPAC meeting to be held September 16-18, in Sarnia.

MOTION: John Bain is authorized to represent St. Marys River BPAC at the OPAC meeting in Sarnia, September 16-18.

MOVED BY: Verna Lawrence

SECONDED BY: Roman Aikens

-CARRIED-

Note: Both OPAC (Ontario) and SPAC (Michigan) will meet on the same weekend with OPAC meeting in Sarnia and SPAC meeting in Port Huron.

8. MDNR Report - unavailable

9. OMoEE District Report

i Rod Stewart thanked Bob Collins for another successful St. Marys River Celebration event.

ii Information available under the Environmental Bill of Rights can be accessed by computer at the OMoEE District Office.

iii The Air Quality Study at Algoma Steel Inc is on schedule.

iv Brian Leask of the OMoEE is willing to make a presentation at a BPAC meeting about Health and Air Quality.

v MDNR discharge permit for Sault, Michigan is due for review. Draft amendments concern separate systems for sewage and stormwater to control overflows.

Rita Valiquette, raised her concern about statements by members relating to costs of clean up. She stated that tourist operators already paid through the nose when they lost their livelihood due to pollution.

vi Georgia Pacific has selected a 'Prime' site, west of the ASI slag site. Soil testing and preliminary studies are required. Other potential sites have been investigated.

Problems being dealt with are ground survey, rezoning and cottager concerns. All information to date indicates no requirement for water in the manufacturing process. OMoEE is expecting an application for a Certificate of Approval. A buffer zone along the river is part of negotiations for site.

Don Marles asked that a map of the site and a list of required certificates be included in the minutes package.

Martin McPherson commentese industries to Canada.

10. Report on Health Conference in Thunder Bay

Flight difficulties prevented Kara Flanigan and Michelle Ribant from attending the conference.

Rod Stewart attended and will provide information. A copy is available for the Algoma Health Unit.

MOTION: BPAC extends thanks to Roman Aikens and the community of St. Joseph Island for their hospitality and commemorative pins.

MOVED BY: Don Marles

SECONDED BY: Martin McPherson

-CARRIED-

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS

1. Task Team progress reports

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday October 5, 1994

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. Official Plan for the city of Sault Ste. Marie Ontario will be available September 29, 1994.
2. Sugar Island Old Tyme Festival is August 13 and 14.