

St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

Place: Anchor Room, Cisler Centre, LSSU
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

When: December 16th, 2015
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: Don Marles, Brian Wesolek, Jessica Wesolek, Emily Martin, James Dukes, Mary Rossiter, Mike Ripley, Matt Konieczki, Megan Kelly

Agency Reps: Catherine Taddo (City), Ron Dorscht (OMOECC), John Riley (MDEQ), Ted Smith (EPA)

Guests: Dan Motz

Regrets: Kristina Denison, Chris Graham, Klaas Oswald, Gary Leith, Ron Prickett

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- November 12th, 2015 – Approved as presented

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- Beaches, Dredging and Benthos – Continue discussion on the status of the beach closings, dredging and benthos BUIs on the American side of the AOC (discussion led by John Riley).
- Beach Closures:
 - John Riley reviewed the beach closings that occurred on the Michigan side of the AOC in 2015. Some closings were attributed to wildlife sources and some sources were unknown. At this time there does not seem to be any point sources that are causing the beach closings.
 - John shares that concern has been raised by Christine Daley of CCHD (not in attendance) relating to Brimley State Park. The Park replaced the sewer lines that were releasing raw sewage into the lake but concern remains relating to non-point source runoff traveling through the storm drains at the Park. Christine is putting together a Green Infrastructure project that would help deal with these concerns, however, it is unknown at this time whether funding will be granted.
 - The last known point source of bacterial contaminants that we are aware of is being dealt with by the City of SSM Michigan in the form of a combined sewer separation project that is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2018.
 - John points out that all point sources of bacterial contaminants on the Michigan side seem to have been, or are currently being, addressed. What's left is a combination of non-point source runoff, wildlife sources and perhaps failing septic, putting us at a point where there is not much more that we are able to do.
 - John suggests that the Use Impairment is ready to be removed. He suggests that he begin to write up a removal document for the use impairment, highlighting that concerns do still remain and that, if possible, these concerns should be addressed in some way.
 - BPAC is supportive of taking the step to start these documents.

- Dredging:
 - John provided the BPAC with the report by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) that will be available on the BPAC website. USACE must take sediment samples when dredging to determine whether the sediments are contaminated and, if so, how they should be disposed of. The data collected last year from the southern side of the Federal Navigation channel (south half of Sugar Island) revealed clean sediments that could be disposed of in an unregulated upland site.
 - Dredging done downstream of the locks in 2001 revealed one spot where there were higher levels of PAHs. USACE has agreed to take some additional samples. A total of 7 samples at 2 or 3 locations will be taken to determine whether contaminants are still elevated. Results are anticipated for mid-January.
 - If the sample results show clean sediments, then John would propose to move forward in removing the dredging BUI on the Michigan side of the AOC.
- Benthos:
 - At the last BPAC meeting in November, discussion surrounded a letter provided by John Riley concerning memorializing the Degradation of Benthos BUI. Concern was raised about the north shore of Sugar Island.
 - Delisting criteria revolved around the remediation of 2 sites (Tannery & manufactured gas plant) with mention of a number of other places that were of concern (Lake George channel between Sugar Island and SSM Ontario).
 - Sediment maps provided by Environment Canada show low levels of PAH's on the Canadian side of the Lake George channel but no samples have been taken on the American side.
 - A study by Barb Keller (2003-2005) found that concentrations of sediment contaminants were trending downward.
 - John provided the study and sediment maps to the Water Resources Division Contaminated Sediment Manager to inquire whether additional samples should be taken on the American side. The Manager relayed that levels indicated on the sediment maps were not actionable and that the levels of PAHs would have to be over 20ppm before action would be considered.
 - Although concern remains, John Riley believes that the delisting criteria have been met. He has requested a response to his original letter.

4. Presentations

- N/A

5. Office Reports

- RAP Office (Ontario) participated in the State of Lake Huron Meeting and the Latornell Conservation Symposium in November.
- Annual AOC Conference, March 2-3 in Dearborn, Michigan – Megan Kelly & Matt Konieczki are interested in attending.
- SPAC update – next meeting is March 1 in Dearborn, Michigan.

6. Agency Updates

- Environment Canada is accepting applications to the Great Lakes Sustainability Fund until January 8, 2016. Questions should be directed to Mark Chambers:
mark.chambers@canada.ca

- Agency update from Ted Smith (EPA):

Ashmun Creek Culvert Replacement Design, Sault Ste. Marie, MI Update, 11 Dec 2015

Introduction- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was requested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to evaluate two side-by-side culverts on Ashmun Creek for ecological restoration designs. Improvement of these culverts will support overall goals and activities to remove the habitat Beneficial Use Impairment and delist the St. Mary's River Area of Concern (AOC). The final product of the USACE efforts will be plans and specs to replace the existing culverts.

Work Completed- The USACE collected cross-section survey data along Ashmun Creek between the river mouth at Ashmun Bay and the I-75 bridge (approx. 1 river mile). Survey data and flow data provided by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) has been used to create a HRC-RAS hydraulic model for this river segment. The model provides velocities and water surface elevations under current conditions for various rainfall events (i.e., spring low flows and flood flows such as the 1% annual chance event).

We've had discussions with stakeholders (local Tribe, Sault Area Watershed Association, and MDEQ) to identify target fish species for this site (white suckers) and discuss conceptual designs. The proposed design will be 1 box culvert to replace the 2 existing circular culverts. The box culvert will be set below grade to allow for a low-flow stone channel within the culvert.

Upcoming Activities- Alternatives will be run in the hydraulic model to determine the optimal opening size, culvert slope, low-flow channel design through the culvert, and some bank stabilization/reshaping in the vicinity of the crossing. Modeling is being conducted to verify that the proposed design can accommodate flood flows and will not negatively impact flood conditions. Inter-Tribal Fisheries and Assessment Program, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority will be providing soil boring data from a nearby site. After review of the data, it will be determined whether additional soil borings are required for the design. Once a culvert shape and orientation is selected, plans and specs will be developed.

Other Items- Based on the conceptual design the railroad will require, and will conduct themselves, a structural review of the design. The duration of the review is TBD. The railroad was supportive of the proposed culvert replacement during initial discussions, but their continued support and cooperation will be required in order to implement the project. Additional discussions with the railroad are anticipated over the next couple months.

Prepared by Bridget Rohn, USACE

7. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.

8. New Business

- The Draft Dredging Administrative Controls Document for the Canadian side of the AOC will be provided to the BPAC for comment and review. This document outlines the approvals process and requirements for proponents of dredging projects, the roles and responsibilities of various parties involved in reviewing and approving dredging projects.
- The document was introduced and circulated to BPAC members for comment and review.