

St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

Place: Ontario Room, Cisler Center, LSSU
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

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

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: Jessica Wesolek, Brian Wesolek, Dan Samp, Marilyn Burton, Nancy Griffin, Klaas Oswald, Kristina Denison, Matt Konieczki, Chris Graham, Jim Dukes, Mary Rossiter, Megan Kelly

Agency Reps: Lisa Derickx (Algoma U), John Riley (MDEQ)

Guests: Chris Conn (MDEQ)

Regrets: Don Marles, Mike Ripley, Paula Antunes, Emily Martin, Ron Dorscht (Local OMOECC), Ted Smith (EPA)

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- June 17th, 2015 – approved as presented (motion approved by Chris Graham and Jessica Wesolek).

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- In response to the presentation by Peter Tonazzo (City of SSM Planner) on the draft proposed Natural Heritage Policies within City's new Official Plan, Klaas Oswald has prepared a submission for the City's Planning Division – review and discuss.
 - Klaas Oswald introduced his draft submission pointing out that providing input through municipal official plans and zoning are an easy way to achieve policy benefits for the Remedial Action Plan (such as increased protection for wetlands and fish & wildlife habitat). The draft submission addresses the official plan in detail and section-by-section. It includes specific wording that should help strengthen policy relating to the natural heritage section of the official plan. Klaas has referenced documents such as the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the Canada-Ontario Agreement on the Great Lakes in the hopes that the official plan will adopt some of the standards addressed in these federal and provincial documents. As Klaas would like to submit the comments to the City Planning Department ASAP, a deadline of one week (Oct. 9th) for receiving comments from BPAC members was created (motion carried by Chris Graham and supported by Nancy Griffin).

4. Presentations – There were no presentations scheduled for this meeting

5. Office Reports

- Megan Kelly – Update on BPAC Support Grant Application
 - The BPAC Support Grant Application was awarded and Megan will be hiring a student whose main task will be to update the BPAC website with materials relating to the

Michigan side of the AOC. There will be an Environmental Summit and Megan is hoping to get a guest speaker from a de-listed AOC.

- Didymo/rock snot (*Didymosphenia geminata*) has been reported in the St. Marys River. It is a nuisance algae and an outbreak has been noticed and reported by anglers. Didymo blankets the rocks and could interfere with aquatic insects thereby having potential affects on the food chain.
- BPAC website is now being hosted by Algoma University (<http://bpac.algomau.ca/>). Due to problems with the website migration, the website was re-created. BPAC members can direct any comments or concerns to Lisa Derickx. It was pointed out that the website link was not working. Lisa to look into the problem.
- Carrie Ginou's last day was Friday September 18th and there is currently no replacement.
- RAP Office (Ontario) will be participating in the Latornell Conservation Symposium in November. An information booth will be set-up for people interested in learning more about the St. Marys River and Remedial Action Plans. Here is a link to the conference website: <http://www.latornell.ca/>
- SPAC update
 - Senator Benishek was briefed on the Little Rapids project and given a background on AOCs.
 - PAC grant runs to the end of March after which support grants could be 1 year or longer.
 - Great Lakes Commission is stepping back.
 - Fall meeting will take place from November 16-17th. Matt and Emily will not be attending, however it would be beneficial if someone from the BPAC could attend. Megan is potentially available if Mike cannot make it.
 - The regional AOC meeting (Great Lakes wide AOC conference) will take place at U of M on March 2 & 3, 2016.
 - In the future Emily and Matt would prefer not to be the SPAC representatives – BPAC to sort out with Mike in the next couple of meetings.

6. Agency Updates

i. Environment Canada (EC)

- Fieldwork for EC's new fish tumour survey is complete, which successfully collected 100 White Suckers in the AOC. Visual inspection showed two abnormal livers, but conclusions as to the tumour rate will have to wait until the detailed lab work is done. EC's histology technicians will complete a preliminary analysis by the end of this year, with confirmation and final assessment conducted by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture before mid-2016.
- With financial support from EC and MOECC, AlgomaU completed its third and final year studying water quality in the river. It's an effort to evaluate the current status of the Degradation of Aesthetics BUI and Eutrophication/Undesirable Algae BUI. The results have been positive. The final report and presentation to BPAC will come in Fall 2016 to accommodate Carrie's mat leave.
- In July, EC and AlgomaU finished negotiations for a contribution agreement to continue support for the local RAP Coordinator office for fiscal year 2015-16. MOECC finalized its funding agreement in March.

ii. Ontario Ministry of the Environment & Climate Change (MOECC)

- With support from EC and MOECC, the RAP Coordinator is drafting a Dredging Administrative Controls guidance document on the current regulatory procedures in place within the Canadian part of the St. Marys River. It will help communicate to project proponents and stakeholders the review and permitting requirements for planning and

undertaking dredging activities, including mitigating measures to reduce negative impacts. It is linked to the delisting criteria for the Restrictions on Dredging Activities BUI. The draft will be sent to the Conservation Authority and other agencies for input, and then shared with BPAC.

- The MOECC and City of Sault Ste. Marie recently signed a 2-year funding agreement to support an inflow and infiltration study of a section of the City's sanitary sewer. This is the continuation of a project previously funded by EC and the City to support improvements in municipal stormwater management; and is linked to the Beach Closings BUI.

iii. **United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)**

- Little Rapids Habitat Restoration Project
 - In July, the Chippewa County Road Commission awarded the Little Rapids Habitat Restoration project to Payne and Dolan. Payne and Dolan, will be available for a meet and greet with the community on Wednesday, October 14, on Sugar Island. The times and locations are as follows:
 - Kick-Off meeting Part I: 2:00pm; CCRC Commission Room (Attendees: CCRC, AECOM, Payne&Dolan); Kick-Off meeting Part II: 3:30pm; CCRC Commission Room (All Stakeholders, Contractor); Public meeting: 6:00pm; Sugar Island Township Hall (All stakeholders, Contractor, Public).
- Ashmund Creek Culvert Design
 - In August, the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) completed the survey and the hydraulic engineer began modeling existing conditions along with a few proposed basic designs (bottomless culvert, sunken culvert and a bridge). Preliminary results are expected around middle of October 2015. Once basic design(s) have been identified that do not negatively impact stream flow, USACE will confer with interested parties- EPA, DEQ, local stakeholders, and the railroad. Construction logistics and who/how/if a railroad track section needs to be temporarily removed during construction should be considered and could impact the decision as to which option is most desirable. When a conceptual design is agreed upon, the USACE will move forward with design drawings, with a deadline to complete modeling this fall and design drawings this winter.

7. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- Ron Prickett has applied for membership – postponed to next meeting.

8. New Business

- Current status and next steps for 4 BUIs on Michigan side: Benthos, Beach Closings, Eutrophication and Dredging (Initiated by John Riley).
 - Management actions are being completed on the US side of the St. Marys River with the Little Rapids project being the last major project to be completed before delisting the AOC. The purpose of the discussion is to talk about the current status of the BUIs on the US side and solicit any additional information the BPAC may have.
 - Degradation of Benthos BUI – restoration criteria for the removal of this BUI states that all remedial actions have to be completed involving known contaminated sediment sites in the river. These actions have been completed on the US side but there is an agreement that the US will not remove this BUI unilaterally and will wait until Canada has finished implementing their remedial actions so that the BUI may be delisted

simultaneously. John will provide a letter to BPAC with supporting documentation that the US has finished remedial actions associated with the Degradation of Benthos BUI. John would like a letter of support in response from BPAC.

- Restrictions on Dredging – Criteria for the removal of this BUI states that there can be no unusual handling requirements of the dredged material. In the most recent dredging that occurred in the federally maintained navigation channel, the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) found no contaminants that would require “unusual handling”. This BUI may be removed, however, John is still waiting for the report from USACE to ensure that the information he has been given is accurate. Once they are ready to remove the BUI they will be seeking support from BPAC.
- Eutrophication or undesirable algae – Preliminary information supports the removal of the BUI. Report provided by Carrie Ginou on water quality on the Canadian side gives an overall good rating. John would like to put together a monitoring plan for next year to determine whether there are areas with algal mats and/or nuisance algae conditions. John would like the BPAC to help identify possible locations for this monitoring program. John will send out an email to the BPAC distribution list asking for suggested locations.
- Beach Closings – The beach closings BUI depends on the elimination of combined sewer overflow (CSO). Chris Conn (MDEQ) inspects wastewater treatment plants and discusses the CSO control program. This program started in the 1990s and requires that all communities in the state eliminate partially treated sewage discharge systems by December 31, 2018. This will ultimately help to prevent raw sewage discharges. Good progress has been made in Soo Michigan, however, the treatment plant is old and is nearing the point where it will also need to be upgraded. Concern was raised about the cost of these programs on the local residents.
- There has been a number of beach closings that have occurred this year and John would like ideas on how to stop these beach closings and ultimately remove the BUI. This discussion will be postponed until the next meeting due to time constraints.
- Klaas Oswald has prepared 2 draft submission regarding wetland policy and the Conservation Authority. These submissions will be provided to all BPAC members via email. Members will be given one week to review and provide edits/comments. If no comments are provided by the deadline date of October 9th, the submissions will be considered acceptable by the BPAC for final submission.

9. Public Comments

10. Next Meeting – end of October or beginning of November.