

St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

Place: Cisler Center, Lake Superior State University
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

When: January 31, 2018
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: Mike Ripley, Klaas Oswald, Brian Wesolek, Jessica Wesolek, Paula Antunes, Don Marles, Aubrey Maccoux-Leduc, Mary Rossiter, Jim Dukes

Agency Reps: Lisa Derickx (Algoma U),

Guests: John Paskus (MNFI), Bretton Joldersma (OGL), Jim Luke (USACE)

Regrets: Ron Prickett

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- November 1, 2017 – Approved as presented

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- Updated Implementation Annex – Lisa Derickx
 - The 3 main changes made to the RAP Implementation Annex include:
 - Addition of Appendix C: References to sub-actions found within the Stage 2 RAP report are frequently made in this document. A suggestion from BPAC last year was to include a description of these sub-actions in the document to prevent the need to refer back and forth between the two documents. These sub-actions have been included in Appendix C (pages 51-54).
 - Changes to Table #1: Summary of BUI status
 - Changes to the status of Actions (specifically Actions PS-2, PS-5, NPS-6, NPSM-8, and FFM-4).
 - Here is a link to the updated Implementation Annex: http://bpac.algomau.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Implementation-Annex_2017.pdf

4. Presentations

- U.S. Army Corps Operations in the St. Marys River – James Luke, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - The Corps last dredged the St. Marys River in 2015. Dredged material was placed at the northeast pier by the Sault locks. That placement location is now full. Dredging is due to occur again in 2020 or 2021. The problem is that placement locations are all full. The Corps would like to come up with some beneficial uses for the dredged material. In other locations they have placed dredged material in open/shallow water habitat to create coastal wetland areas. They have also created islands to protect certain features from waves. The material that is dredged can be a valuable resource but the problem is making sure that the material is environmentally friendly and the associated monitoring that needs to take place. The Federal government does not fund for monitoring at disposal locations. In the past the Corps has partnered with local universities, state agencies, and tribes to ensure that monitoring is done.
 - Sediment samples are done mainly in areas where dredging has not been done before. As a group BPAC is in favour of always testing before dredging (i.e. not just at new sites).

- Bretton Joldersma – Office of the Great Lakes
 - Seeking partnerships and networking within Lake Huron communities – linked to the Lake Huron LAMP. The Lake Huron LAMP is almost finalized and focus is shifting towards the implementation phase. It is important to connect people to potential sources of funding so that priorities and projects within the LAMP can be accomplished. BPAC should keep in mind that there are opportunities for the LAMP to be the next phase of getting projects done after the AOC has been delisted.

- Biodiversity Atlas for the St. Marys River AOC – John Paskus, Michigan Natural Features Inventory
 - The project goal is to develop a web-based Biodiversity Atlas for the St. Marys River that will engage local decision-makers and the general public in future conservation actions.
 - Some of the key objectives for Phase 1 include gathering and synthesizing the most current information about 3-4 significant coastal sites within the SMR AOC boundary, build a prototype of the SMR Biodiversity Atlas, and gather input from BPAC.
 - The timeline for Phase I is fast with the completed prototype expected by June 2018.
 - There may be a Phase II
 - BPAC can help by providing data and information (or directing to others who may have data), providing input on important places.
 - Contact Information: John Paskus, (517) 284-6208, paskusjr@msu.edu
 - BPAC comments:
 - Sault Naturalists have a bird checklist, a checklist of rare and vascular plants, and an amphibian survey
 - Canadian Wildlife Federation did a study for BPAC on coastal wetlands
 - Marshes along Munuscong Bay are important areas for waterfowl as well as hunting
 - Open water of the river is very important for bird species during the winter (open water winter habitat for birds)
 - Christmas bird count done on both sides of the river (the bridge is the centre of the survey circle)
 - DNR fisheries did an extensive creel survey this year – the St. Marys River is a very important recreational fishery
 - Breeding bird atlas' (both in Ontario and Michigan)
 - Another group to connect with would be the St. Marys River Fisheries Task Group
 - A rich and long cultural history with Native Americans and First Nations – the river is used for subsistence fishing
 - Restoration of Little Rapids site on Sugar Island – lots of post monitoring aquatic data that should be ready to report out on soon.
 - Another location on the river is Drummond Island with unique natural communities and well established rice beds (unique in this area).
 - The atlas is for the whole system but because of the tight timeline the focus for now is on the Michigan side. However, John reached out to the Ontario Information Data Centre (Ontario equivalent to the Michigan Natural Features Inventory) who are willing to share information.

5. Office Reports

- Outreach updates – The RAP Coordinator will be hosting Open Houses at Sault College and Algoma University as well as an information table at the Big Sport and Outdoor Expo in March.
- Annual AOC Conference (May 16-17, Sheboygan, Wisconsin) – travel funding available for BPAC members to attend.

6. Agency Updates

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

ECCC will soon issue a call for proposals for funding applications under its new *Great Lakes Protection Initiative*, which is an investment of \$44.84 million to protect and restore the Great Lakes. As part of this, ECCC will be seeking project ideas to help restore Areas of Concern, including the St. Marys River.

ECCC has completed its draft report on the fish tumours survey conducted in Summer 2015. The lead investigator (Mark McMaster) has offered to present and discuss the study methods and results at the next BPAC meeting (tentative for late February). As previously reported to BPAC, the survey found 6 out of 100 White Suckers had liver tumours. This 6% tumour rate is down from 10.6% detected in a 2009 survey, and is lower than the 9.2% tumour rate from the 1985-90 survey that led to BUI designation. It is just above the delisting criteria target of <5% for the Canadian side of the AOC.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

As stated below, EPA concurred with the MDEQ (now MDNR) in removing the Restrictions on Dredging BUI. Nothing else to report.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

The Restrictions on Dredging Activities BUI removal became official on November 14. If you're interested in seeing a list of all Michigan BUIs, including all BUI removals since the beginning of the AOC program, see this website:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/deq-ogl-aoc-RestoringBeneficialUses_377630_7.pdf

On December 28, Michigan's Office of the Great Lakes, along with AOC program staff, became part of the Department of Natural Resources.

7. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- Membership policy – at some point should review membership list/attendance issues

8. New Business

- BPAC Executive was contacted by MPP, Ross Romano, regarding SSM as a potential site for a Chromium smelter. Ross was invited to this BPAC meeting but was unable to attend. Mr. Romano will be invited to attend the next meeting.

9. Public Comments

- NA

10. Next Meeting

- Next meeting to be scheduled for late February or early March