

St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

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

When: June 7, 2018
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: Dave Samp, Ron Prickett, Klaas Oswald, Brian Wesolek, Aubrey Maccoux-Leduc, Mary Rossiter, Jim Dukes, Mike Ripley, Paula Antunes, Kristen Sherlock

Agency Reps: Nicole Lindahl (APH)

Guests: Brian Streichert (USCG)

Regrets: Don Marles, Jessica Wesolek

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- March 7, 2018 – Approved as presented

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- St. Marys River Biodiversity Atlas – update from John Paskus
 - The Biodiversity Atlas will consist of three major components;
 1. Web-based map viewer with key data layers related to biodiversity within the river system (ecologically significant sites: 6-8).
 2. Key narratives of SMR system with an overview and highlights of key topics and species within those topics (i.e. migratory fish and birds, marsh breeding birds, public access points, high quality natural communities and key threats).
 3. Library of downloadable information
 - Site visits will be made to assess key threats, collect pictures and videos, etc. Two sites will be in Canada. Echo Bay and Hay Point Marsh on St. Joseph's Island
 - Michigan State University Extension Public and Government Policy Team's annual retreat will be in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on July 11-13. They have requested a presentation on the AOC and the role of the BPAC.
 - The intention is to have the atlas consistently maintained and updated (i.e. not become archived).
 - Information provided by BPAC has been integrated into the project.
 - Species at Risk have two options. 1) Key Sites and which species occur at these sites or 2) Create a "Biorarity Index". Grid option to highlight places that have rare species without naming species. Open to other suggestions.

4. Presentations

- Response and Preparedness in the St. Marys River – Brian Streichert, USCG
 - Average of ~5 groundings a year both on the Canadian and the U.S. side of the St. Marys River.
 - Monitor railroad, trucking, industry and pleasure craft incidences for potential derailments/spills.

- Within the last year there have been ~75 National Response Centre (NRC) calls with ~655 gallons total in spills.
- The incident in the Straits is the result of this section legally becoming a “No Anchor Zone”.
- Many incidences will go unreported. Mainly due to private owners not reporting what is assumed to be minor spills. These become non-recoverable.
- Focused on improving the St. Marys Geographic Response Strategy to improve Coast Guard response around different ecological habitats and events.
- Northern Michigan Area Committee (NMAC) decides where next exercise should be held. Organized of different Federal, State, Local, and Tribal representatives.
- Factors of recovery include weather, wave action and water patterns (currents), responder safety, time and accessibility.
- In-situ burn recovery rate is 90%. This method requires materials that are not permitted in the Great Lakes and therefore cannot be used. More studies need to be completed on fresh water to understand the effects this method would have.
- Can help by:
 - Contacting NRC if you see a sheen
 - Partake in local training
 - Continue to be active within the community. Become a member of Northern Michigan Area Committee

BPAC Questions and Comments

- Concern about flame retardant materials used for Fire booms being highly toxic.
- Recovered spills are not stored but are dealt with right away.
- Within the St. Marys River the response time is estimated to be 15-20 minutes when all recovery factors have been assessed.
- Lake Superior State University is developing their Fresh Water Research Centre, which has the potential for future fresh water studies regarding in-situ burning.
- Ontario has the Experimental Lakes Area for research on fresh water lakes and how they respond, which also has the potential for future fresh water studies regarding in-situ burning.

5. Office Reports

- Ontario: The yearly Sustain Algoma Expo occurred on June 2, 2018, and the RAP was involved with hosting the event just as previous years. Located at the Johnson Township Community Centre this expo promotes living sustainably in Algoma. Approximately 500 guests attended the event.
- Michigan: The annual AOC Conference in Green Bay was well attended by AOC representatives in the United States. The focus was on PACs and what they will do after delisting. There were many presentations on habitat improvement and contaminated sediments. Canadian side was not well represented which is frustrating coming from a bi-national AOC.

6. Agency Updates

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

In May and June 2018, ECCC's contractor (Riggs Engineering) is working with staff with the Batchewana Natural Resources Department and Parks Canada to collect field data to advance the Whitefish Island fish habitat restoration project. Work completed in mid-May included flying an aerial drone to take HD images of the physical landscape and recording water flow within the culverts and Whitefish channel to better understand the area's geomorphology and hydrology. Work planned for the week of June 11 will include soundings and collection of bathymetry data off the eastern end of Whitefish Island. This is all in an effort to produce engineered designs for potentially naturalizing the channel bed and bank areas of Whitefish Channel and constructing

islands and shoals east of Whitefish Island to benefit native fish species, including Brook Trout, Whitefish and Walleye. A presentation on the work will be delivered to BPAC in Fall 2018.

As a reminder, on May 23, Lisa Derickx sent BPAC the draft report on ECCC's fish tumours study. Comments and questions on the report are welcomed. This follows the presentation by the lead investigator (Mark McMaster) at the March 7 BAPC meeting. The tumour rate recorded in the 2015 survey is 6% tumour rate, which is down from 10.6% detected in the 2009 survey, and it is lower than the 9.2% tumour rate from the 1985-90 survey that led to BUI designation.

Related next steps include ECCC and MOECC furthering the development of a multi-agency contaminated sediment management strategy for the Canadian side of the AOC. The process will involve BPAC and community consultation, which will begin in late 2018/early 2019.

Ontario Ministry of the Environment & Climate Change (OMOECC)

In late May, Dawn Talarico was appointed A/Great Lakes Advisor with the MOECC, and will serve as the provincial co-lead of the St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan during Curniss McGoldrick's 1-year leave of absence. Dawn is based out of the Thunder Bay office.

Dawn Talarico will be acting as the Great Lakes Advisor in MOECC's Northern Region while Curniss is away. Dawn has held several positions within the MOECC as well as the Ministry of Transportation and the Town of Marathon where she developed strong project management, stakeholder relations, issues management and communication skills together with extensive knowledge of various compliance portfolios related to the protection of the environment. This included working with municipal steering committees, conducting inspections of various facilities (drinking water treatment plants, landfills, industrial facilities, etc.), and managing various environmental programs. Dawn's home position is as a Program Specialist where she was leading the MOECC's private, commercial and institutional sewage program.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

Link to short video submission from the past AOC conference showcasing Little Rapids Restoration Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YifUVceLRIU>

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)

Office of the Great Lakes staff are beginning to draft a removal recommendation for the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations Beneficial Use Impairments for the US side of the Area of Concern. However, significant portions of monitoring data collected following the construction of the Little Rapids are not yet available. We anticipate moving ahead with these BUI removal recommendations later this year.

7. Memberships

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

8. New Business

- Draft letter to City of SSM (Review of Official Plan)
 - Asking for their considerations of varying particular aspects related to their official plan.
 - Paula Antunes will distribute the draft letter to BPAC members for review

- In the news: Possibility of alternative port facility for Algoma. Update provided by Algoma:
 - Algoma investigated the feasibility, conducted preliminary engineering, and developed a cost estimate of an alternate port and the associated material handling and storage.
 - Further to an endorsement of the CCAA Court, Algoma has ceased all activities related to the construction of a new port at its facility pending further order of the CCAA Court.
 - The CCAA Court has ordered a mediation between the relevant stakeholders to negotiate port arrangements for a reorganized Algoma following its emergence from the CCAA Proceedings. While the mediation is ongoing the CCAA Court has ordered that Algoma and anyone on its behalf shall not take any steps directly or indirectly to advance a new port or other shipping methods which are alternative to the current port which Algoma uses.
 - Pending further order of the CCAA Court, the review of Algoma's outstanding applications and requests related to the construction of the new port are postponed.

9. Public Comments

- None

11. Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be scheduled for the early Fall