

# St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

**Place:** Webex Meeting  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario & Michigan

**When:** Monday December 6, 2021  
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

## Call to order/introductions

**Members:** Peter Greve, Aubrey Maccoux-Leduc, Ron Prickett, Al Wright, Don Marles, Klaas Oswald, Paula Antunes

**Agency Reps:** John Riley (EGLE), Heather Williams (USEPA), Mark Chambers (ECCC), Gurpreet Mangat (ECCC), Roger Santiago (ECCC), Ted Briggs (MECP), Tara George (MECP), Chris Glibota (APH), Meagan Sutherland (Algoma U), Lisa Derickx (Algoma U)

**Guests:** Miranda Henning (Integral Consulting Inc.), Allison Glessner (Ramboll)

## Approval of Minutes

- September 27, 2021 – Approved as presented

## Presentations

- Draft Sediment Management Strategy – Ramboll & Integral Consulting Inc
  - Last met on March 2, 2020, to present the updated Conceptual Site Model (CSM). Feedback from BPAC showed that members were concerned regarding contaminants at depth in the buried sediment. This led to greater focus on sediment stability and on the risk of buried sediment including updates to the Administrative Controls Guidance document. Feedback was used while preparing the public-friendly Sediment Management Strategy.
  - The Sediment Management Strategy summarizes history, current status and future actions required for managing contaminated sediments, answering questions like:
    - How do Canada and Ontario make decisions about managing contaminated sediment?
    - What technologies and tools are used to manage contaminated sediments?
    - What is the status of investigation and decision-making in different parts of the St. Marys River (SMR)?
  - Evaluating the *Degradation of Benthos* BUI requires assessments of St. Marys River sediment using multiple lines of evidence (sediment chemistry, benthic community alteration, toxicity, and biomagnification potential) using the *Canada-Ontario Decision Making Framework for Assessment of Great Lakes Contaminated Sediment*. The Framework provides process for making decisions about studying and cleaning up polluted sediment, and depending on the resulting data, the framework recommends either no further action, further study, or management action.
  - The Administrative Controls Guidance document was updated in 2021 and is appended to the Sediment Management Strategy. It describes best management practices, required regulatory permits and process for obtaining approval for in-water activities that could potentially disturb or expose buried sediments within the St. Marys River AOC.

- There are a number of depositional areas in the St. Marys River that have been the focus of the Sediment Management Strategy including the Algoma Boat Slip, Federal Water Lot, Bellevue Marine Park, East of Bellevue Marine Park, and Lake George Channel, Little Lake George and Lake George. The following is a summary of assessment outcomes for the five depositional sites:
  - Algoma Boat Slip – Dredging and Administrative Controls, to be informed by Golder 2020 study results
  - Federal Water Lot – Monitored Natural Recovery (9 stations every 5 years) and Administrative Controls
  - Bellevue Marine Park – No further action beyond Administrative Controls
  - East of Bellevue Marine Park - No further action beyond Administrative Controls
  - Lake George Channel, Little Lake George, and Lake George - No further action beyond Administrative Controls
- In 2021, Algoma University began a two-year fish consumption survey for the AOC. The AOC-wide assessment of the Restrictions on Fish Consumption BUI will consider survey responses, as well as concentrations of contaminants in fish and consumption advice issued by Ontario.
- BPAC questions:
  - Buried sediment has always been a concern for BPAC members, the Administrative Controls Guidance document pertains to those sediments. Climate change, dredging, boating, change in weather patterns, and anything that could disrupts those deeper sediments is a concern. We hope that the controls are sensitive to those issues.
    - Response: In addition to the Administrative Controls, there is considerable research that has gone into the stability of the sediments. Sediment fate and transport modelling shows what impacts there would be in different flow regimes. Modelling suggests that deeper sediment will not be disturbed. In addition, the flow of water is highly regulated through compensating works.
  - Is there a correlation between field studies and toxicity?
    - Response: They can tell you different types of information. Field studies look at the benthic community in their natural setting so they don't have the ability to control what the benthos are exposed to. Toxicity studies can help you to understand what concentrations are safe. The means in addressing uncertainty in any single line of evidence is to collect information from multiple lines of evidence.
    - Sometimes contaminants can partition out, so the organisms are not confined to a particular space and can live in areas that aren't as high in contaminants. Helps to determine cause and effect relationships.
  - Will the data/results from the Algoma Boat slip studies be shared with BPAC?
    - A formal request will be sent to Algoma Steel for a presentation regarding survey results.
  - Administrative Controls are mentioned for depositional areas but does that mean that those are the only places on the river that there will be controls?
    - No, it applies to the whole river.
  - Private landowner often do work without getting the appropriate permissions. Should the strategy include outreach to the public to show what these controls are and why they are in place?
    - This idea will be added to the feedback provided by BPAC. It could be something that is accomplished through the local RAP Coordinator office.

## Agency Updates

- Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)
  - In August 2021, ECCC collected 100 white suckers throughout the AOC to update the fish tumour assessment. ECCC labs will conduct a preliminary analysis this winter and then send samples to a third-party lab to confirm the results. Target for a summary technical report is end of 2022.
  - Whitefish Island Habitat Restoration Project has been delayed due to COVID restrictions. ECCC has partnered with Batchewana First Nation and a presentation to update BPAC is anticipated for the Spring/summer.
- Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)
  - Still waiting for data from fish collection for fish consumption study. Hoping for the results soon, however, there are delays due to COVID restrictions.
- Algoma Public Health (APH)
  - Update on PFAS at the airport/Pointe des Chenes area – water sampling took place in the summer. APH involvement has been drinking water related. In 2006-08 sampling for benzene commenced. In 2019 & 2021, Transport Canada hired an engineering company (Arcadis) to do well water testing for PFAS and benzene.
  - BPAC comments:
    - Can the study be shared? Was PFAS found? Chris to look into finding additional information.
    - PFAS was found in wells around the airport and there is public concern about it. We need more information to look into migration and the potential for the contaminants to migrate into the river.
    - Request to add this as a standing action item on the agenda.
    - In Michigan, there is a system of drinking water wells that has a PFAS contamination issue. The waste water treatment plant has been discharging into the Waishkey (Waiska) river. Have found levels of PFAS near that outflow site and in areas where biosolids are spread.

## New Business

- Official Plan for City of SSM Ontario
  - background report has been released and there should be opportunity for public comment. The plan is important to help prevent the housing development going into the Pointe Louise Wetlands. Klaas is reviewing the background report and will take notes. Request to add as a standing action item.
- Request for a presentation in the future from MECP & Algoma Steel regarding air pollution.

## Standing Items

- Ferrochrome plant
  - Noront Resources is actively trying to sell stock to one of two Australian multi-national mining companies. These companies are interested in nickel and copper for batteries production (used in electric vehicles). They could change their minds quickly but at this time it doesn't seem like they are interested in the chromium aspect.

