

# St. Marys River Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC)

## Meeting Minutes

**Place:** BT 202, Essar Convergence Centre, Algoma University  
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

**When:** January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

### 1. Call to order/introductions

**Present:** Kira Fry, Catherine Taddo, Paula Antunes, Corrina Barrett, Mike Ripley, Klaas Oswald, Greg Zimmerman, Lorelei Premo, Bretton Joldersma (via teleconference), Crystal Bole (via teleconference), Kristina Denison (via teleconference), Amanda Bosak (via teleconference)

**Guests:** Katie Williams (UWM – via teleconference), Chris Graham (CAFC), Chris Tenaglia (Pinchin Environmental), Don Cavan (Pinchin Environmental), Mark Chambers (Environment Canada), Jillian Haaksman (Sault College Placement Student), Jason Bertrim (Q104/EZ Rock), Jennifer Payne

**Regrets:** Don Marles, Barb Keller, Mary Rossiter

### 2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012, adopted.

### 3. Business arising from previous minutes

Continued discussion on the Michigan Aesthetics BUI assessment:

- Everyone looked over the second draft of the BPAC Letter to Mr. Rick Hobrla of the MDEQ regarding the Michigan degradation of aesthetics BUI.
- BPAC is requesting a third year of sampling with data collection including a minimum of two flood or moderate/heavy rainfall events and a dry event.
- Greg put the motion forward to accept the letter as written (after Mr. Riley's name was replaced with Mr. Hobrla's). Lorelei seconded. Majority voted in favour. Motion carried.

Discussion on Little Rapids project

- There was a meeting on Sugar Island in early January, and objections that came up included “how can we use this funding elsewhere” and “this project is a waste of money” as well as people in agreement with it. So it looks like progress is being made.
- There was an EUP Regional Planning Commission meeting today and Jeff Hagan gave an update to the commission about the project. Looks like there is a lot more positive feedback coming in as the public grasps a better understanding of what the project entails.
- Technical group has been discussing issues about depth and flow rate with biologist Neal Godby and people from the DNR and the Aquatic Research Lab, and they are developing a framework for pre and post monitoring.
- Jeff Hagan's group have done a great job of collecting useful comments from people on the island and redesigning to meet those objections (i.e. fishing access, kayaking access, lanes of traffic, etc.).
- **They are requesting a letter of endorsement from the BPAC with preferred options, hoping for the end of February.**
- Mike and Greg volunteered to work on writing a letter on behalf of BPAC suggesting which option is the best with respect to having the most habitat restoration and recreation opportunities at the best price.

### 4. Office Reports

- The Environmental Summit will take place the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, with a Kids Day on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

- Theme is “Connecting Science to the Community”.
- Lorelei, Crystal, and Amanda volunteered to form a subcommittee to plan the Kids Day.

## 5. Agency Updates

- Mark Chambers spoke to the agency updates.
- Bretton Joldersma from the DEQ mentioned that they are done sampling for the Fish Tumour and Other Deformities BUI. They are in the process of analysing the results of the sampling, and they hope to have the final report together for the summer.
- Bretton to send the US Wildlife Study report for upload to the BPAC website.

## 6. Public Comment

- None.

## 7. Memberships

- Chris Tenaglia – Pinchin Environmental, brought in letter of interest for becoming a BPAC member. Unanimous acceptance.
- Chris Graham – Public Outreach Coordinator for CAFC, brought in letter of interest for becoming a BPAC member. Unanimous acceptance.

## 8. New Business

- **Pointe Estates: Brief Overview** – Pointe Estates is at the tip of the AOC right at the end of the runway at the Sault Aiport (CAN). A 91 lot subdivision is being proposed in this area by Avery Construction. It would cover 200 acres of land and 100 acres of wetland. Many are upset due to the potential impact on the groundwater. Frank Breen (U.S. Hydrologist) put out a consulting report saying that he is neither in favor of or opposing of the project, but he does feel there is a serious risk to the areas water supply, and that he is not comfortable with the project moving forward without a thorough hydrogeological study.
- There was a meeting of the Conservation Authority’s Board members yesterday, and the decision (3-2 vote) was made to allow the Pointe Estates project to move forward to City Council’s consideration.
- BPAC has written a letter in the past stating concern about the project. The group feels that it will need to send another. Klaas sent a sample draft letter prior to the meeting, and the new letter will be based off of it.
- **Environment Canada** has called for proposals for the **Great Lakes Sustainability Fund**. Paula, Corrina, and Lorelei worked on submitting a proposal focusing on a project on water quality sampling within the Canada portion of the AOC over two separate years to help put together an information package of water quality data that will help us to assess the status of the Eutrophication and Aesthetics BUIs.
- Paula, Corrina, and Katie Williams are planning a session for the **2013 IAGLR** conference. They will be co-chairing session number 24 entitled “New frontiers of Great Lakes policy: Where science and stakeholders meet”. Looking for an even split between Canadian and U.S. presenters for the session.
- The **Lake Carriers Association** have asked for an extension to the opening and closing of the locks. Beacause of the lack of ice cover though, they are looking for a longer navigation season. Mike to send an electronic copy for everyone.
- **Algoma Sailing Club** chief executive Brian Christie had a meeting with Paula and Corrina regarding problems that the club is having getting larger boats in and out of the water due to the lower water levels. They are looking at the possibility of dredging, and asking questions regarding bathemetry and chemical contamination in the sediments. They currently have a grant approved from the Trillium Foundation to do the bathemetric analysis of the bottom sediments. There are no funds or intentions to go further than that at this time, but are looking for information on permitting and background information on the area.
- **Ashmun Creek** group is continuing and a meeting will be held soon.

## 9. Next Meeting

- Date in February to be determined – will send out **Doodle Poll**.

## 11. Adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

# **Four Agency Report to the St. Marys River BPAC Meeting**

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## **Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

- The Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development Commission (EUP Regional Planning) is continuing to work on the Little Rapids Habitat Restoration Engineering and Design project. Over the past couple of months several meetings have been held with local residences, Sugar Island Township officials, and other stakeholders to discuss the project, potential design options, and to solicit stakeholder input. The process of paring down the design options is underway and stakeholder input is being sought to help identify a preferred engineering design. At this time, the Little Rapids project is still in the feasibility and engineering design phase and no decisions have been made on future phases of the project. Additional information about the project is available on the EUP Regional Planning's webpage: <http://eup-planning.org/current-projects/little-rapids-noaa-project>

## **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

- The Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission is currently working with a number of partners to develop the engineering designs for the Little Rapids project. They have conducted a series of meetings with local community members, township officials and other interested parties to present an array of project ideas and concepts for this project. Nothing has been finalized and it is important to get local agreement on the final design. This project will be important in removing the habitat beneficial use impairment for the American side of this AOC. It is anticipated that fiscal year 2013 funds would be available from the GLRI to construct the project.

## **Ontario Ministry of the Environment**

Funding opportunity:

- The ministry is preparing to launch year two of the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund; any applicants that were not successful in 2012 are encouraged to request a debrief to help inform 2013 applications

Environmental Monitoring and Reporting Branch update

- Tara George, who was working as a scientist on the northern Areas of Concern and Lake Superior on a secondment, has been appointed to the position permanently.
- The sedimentation rate study for the area East of Bellevue Marine Park being undertaken by the Canadian Centre for Inland Waters and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (with funding provided by the MOE) is progressing well. A presentation on the completed work will be made to BPAC on or before August 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.

## **Environment Canada**

Funding opportunity:

- Until January 25, EC is accepting applications to the federal *Great Lakes Sustainability Fund*. The Fund is seeking project proposals that will contribute toward the completion of necessary actions identified in the Remedial Action Plans for the Areas of Concern. Priority will be given to those projects that directly address priority actions outlined in current Stage 2 RAP reports and Implementation Work Plans.

Project updates:

- The contractor (French Planning Services Inc.) hired to review ship-based spills/pollution on the St. Marys River recently produced a first draft of their report. It presents a decade worth of data on the St. Marys River and Great Lakes system overall, based on official incident reports and binational public reports prepared by

Transport Canada, the U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies. The St. Clair River is also included in the scope of work. Revisions are being made before it is shared with U.S. authorities, and ultimately BPAC.

- The 2-year project to assess wildlife deformities and reproductive health in the St. Marys River AOC is nearing completion. All fieldwork is complete, and the project team is analyzing the data. The summary report is expected before Summer 2013, and the project lead will then make a presentation to BPAC. The related assessment of fish tumours within the AOC is nearing completion. With financial support from the Ministry of the Environment, Environment Canada hired Dr. Paul Baumann to run a full analysis on the tumour prevalence rate for fish samples taken from the river. A summary report is expected for mid-2013.
- The 4-year project to assess wildlife populations and habitat is at half-way. However, the project lead has recommended that an additional year be added to the fieldwork component, advocating that the additional information will provide a more robust dataset to assess overall health of wildlife populations and habitat in the AOC; specifically marsh birds and amphibians (as indicator species) and wetlands. If the additional field season is added, a final summary report will not be prepared until 2014-15.
- The Environment-Canada portion of the sedimentation rate study (i.e. the portion led by the Canadian Centre of Inland Waters) has been extended to include one complete water year.