

Four Agency Report to the St. Marys River BPAC Meeting
July 31, 2012
Cisler Center – LSSU, Sault Ste. Marie, MI

All agencies

- The Four Agency Managers and Workgroup held a conference call on July 11.
- Concerns were raised by a BPAC member about the mechanism for binational response to oilspills in boundary waters such as the one that occurred on Thursday July 19th when fuel leaked from a commercial dredge and tugboat sinking in lower Lake Huron.
In accordance with the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, Canada and the U.S. prepare for events like this under the Canada - U.S. Joint Marine Contingency Plan. The part of this plan that applies to the Great Lakes is commonly known as CANUSLAK. Under this agreement, the Coast Guards of Canada and the U.S. conduct joint practice exercises with public and private stakeholders to prepare for these events. Such a practice exercise was held in Sault Ste Marie in September 2011. An event like the one on Lake Huron activates the CANUSLAK plan. The US Coast Guard and Canadian Coast Guard are the two federal responsible authorities; both responded to this incident to ensure it was cleaned up.
ECRC is the acronym for a private Canadian company which is often retained by the Canadian Coast Guard in situations like this. In this case, ECRC was retained by the Canadian Coast Guard in the early stage of the incident. A site assessment was conducted by ECRC but they were not involved in the containment response, nor were they involved with the on-going recovery operation. There was no request for them to provide further service because there was no impact to the Canadian side and an American company was dealing with the response on the American side

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

- John Riley with the DEQ AOC Program will be giving a presentation on the Aesthetic BUI assessment at the BPAC's 7/31/12 meeting.
- Public meeting to discuss the St. Marys tributary *E. coli* TMDL work will be held on July 31st at 2 P.M. at the Cisler Center. Molly Rippke with DEQ's Water Resources Division will be presenting on that project and will be taking written comments on the TMDLs until August 16, 2012.
- The Little Rapids Restoration team recently held a call to discuss target species, modeling and other next steps in the feasibility project.

Ontario Ministry of the Environment

- MOE and the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre have finalized an agreement for sediment modelling. The objective of this work is to determine the sedimentation rate in the St. Marys River, with emphasis on the area that requires sediment management action.
- MOE and Algoma University have signed a grant funding agreement for RAP Coordination in the St. Marys River. The agreement ends on March 31, 2013. EC's agreement with Algoma for this purpose continues until March 2015.

Environment Canada

- **Assessment of wildlife deformities and reproduction BUI in St. Marys River AOC River (Environment Canada):**

Two top predator fish-eating colonial waterbird species, the herring gull and the common tern, were selected to assess the status of aquatic wildlife in the Canadian section of the St. Marys River Area of Concern (AOC). Health effects associated with contaminants in the aquatic environment were examined in these species in 2011 and 2012. To discern between local effects specific to the AOC, comparisons were made between colonies of birds nesting within the AOC boundary with those outside of the AOC. Population trends in colonial waterbirds nesting within the AOC were assessed using nest count data collected as part of the CWS Great Lakes decadal survey initiated in the late 1970s. The projected completion period for the St. Mary River AOC wildlife report which summarizes the results of this work is summer of 2013.

- **Assessment of wildlife populations and habitat BUI in St. Marys River AOC River (Environment Canada):**

This work will advance the understanding of the condition of wildlife habitat and selected wildlife communities and provide guidance on the status (impaired/not impaired) in the AOC. In the first year of this 3-4 year project Ecological Land Classification mapping was completed in priority areas in the AOC and a background report identified relevant studies, conditions and issues in the AOC. The final report will include a description of breeding bird survey sites and habitat sites (submerged aquatic vegetation and water quality indices), survey results and indices of biotic integrity as well as refined delisting criteria (if required) and assessment against the criteria. Work underway for 2012 includes a site reconnaissance survey. In July/August, a crew of 2 will be visiting 8-9 wetlands within the AOC and 4 outside the AOC. Preliminary data on water quality and submerged aquatic vegetation will be collected. A report will be prepared describing the sites surveyed and will be available in 2013.