

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

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

**When:** November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

## 1. Call to order/introductions

**Present:** Don Elliot, Greg Zimmerman, Mike Ripley, Bretton Joldersma, Don Marles, H. Max Cox, Nancy Griffin, Marilyn Burton, Kristina Denison, Amanda Bosak, Haley Tasiemski, Corrina Barrett, Paula Antunes

**Guests:** Shane Albrecht (CCHD), Rob Hollinger (USCG), Katie Williams (UWM), Chris Graham (CAFC), Troy Naperala (URS Corporation), Jeff Hagen (Eastern UP Regional Planning), Steve Kick (USCG), Mike Thompson (USCG)

**Regrets:** Klaas Oswald, Crystal Bole, Barbara Keller, Lorelei Premo

## 2. Presentation

Little Rapids Project:

- Introduction to the Little Rapids project was given by Dr. Greg Zimmerman: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations is one of the main BUIs addressed by this project. Back in the 80's when the AOC was defined, the IJC recognized that "near total loss of rapids habitat" was a major stressor on fish populations. As a result, the BPAC hosted many community meetings, and with the help of the public and fisheries scientists, the Fish and Wildlife Restoration Plan was created. The main target of the plan was to restore lost rapids habitat. One of the projects recognized under this plan was the restoration of flow under the Sugar Island causeway. The feasibility of this project is being discussed tonight with various options being presented. BPAC and the agencies involved have agreed that of deemed "feasible and cost-effective", this project will result in enhanced fish populations, improved fishing opportunities, increased economic returns, and will bring us one step closer to removing the St. Marys River from the list of Areas of Concern.
- Troy Naperala (Project Manager and Water Resource Engineer at URS Corporation) presented on the habitat restoration study work being completed at this time: Our job is the engineering and design related to restoring flow under the causeway, as well as a look at the environmental impacts. Steps involved in the project to date include:
  - Identify the Study Area – what are the areas involved where impacts may be assessed on.
  - Identified measurable metrics – characteristics that need to be met in order to consider the habitat "restored".
  - Developed a mathematical model to simulate flow, velocity, and depth for each alternative. This helped to determine how each alternative would impact the physical characteristics of the area.
  - Once there were several alternatives evaluated, they started to look at what structures they could install to pass flow through the causeway.
  - Developed conceptual ideas for each structure and put cost to them (where they currently stand).
  - Next steps of the project include selecting the preferred alternative, and developing detailed design plans moving forward.
- Study area extended from the Soo Locks down to the North Channel area.
- The project is expected to change the velocity of the Little Rapids. They used 0.8 feet/sec as their optimal velocity. If the scenarios they ran were above 0.8 feet/sec then the area was considered good habitat, if it was below then it wasn't considered adequate.

- When looking at alternative, used no action as first option, then 6 action alternatives:
  - Alternative A: 600 foot bridge
  - Alternative B: 400 foot bridge
  - Alternative C: 400 and a 400 foot bridge
  - Alternative D: 600 and a 400 foot bridge
  - Alternative E: 400 and a 200 foot bridge
  - Alternative F: 600 and a 200 foot bridge
- Range of options run from \$2.8 million in cost up to \$15 million.
- They calculated percent restored, which looks at an alternative option and compares it to a hypothetical scenario where there is no causeway at all. When looking at the alternative and flow, percentages of potential habitat resorted range from 30% to 96%.
- They also looked at how to maintain traffic flow throughout the construction.
- Looked at different scenarios for adding fishing access.
- Scenarios show that only a small percentage of the flow from the shipping channel and Lake George would be diverted to the Little Rapids. This would have no negative impact on the shipping channel, Lake George Channel, Lake George, and beyond.
- The project will not affect the water surface elevation at all.
- Summary: modifying the causeway will increase the velocity and flow of water through the Little Rapids area, but will not have an impact anywhere else. The velocities in the lower rapids have the potential to reduce ice formation because of the increased velocities. There will be temporary impacts during the construction (such as noise, air quality, etc.). The goals of the project can be met in large part by implementing one of the alternative options. They will be able to restore a lot of the habitat that is available in the area by implementing one of the alternatives. Covered a range of options, costs, and benefits.
- The next steps: will finish the analysis process that looks at the variety of alternatives (2012), they will select a preferred alternative to move forward with a detailed design (2013), then the environmental assessment (2013), then permitting and construction activities (in the future, dependent on funding).

#### CANUSLAK Presentation:

- LT Rob Hollinger of the U.S. Coast Guard discussed last year's CANUSLAK exercise, current pollution response initiatives, and answer related questions.
- Conduct exercises every few years under the Joint Plan (between Canada and the US). Local Emergency Managers, Fisheries, Tribes, Local Stakeholders were all involved in the last exercise.
- Last exercise involved simulating a motor tanker that had 200,000 Gallons of diesel spill into the river. Try to simulate a worse case scenario. Liaised frequently with Canada during simulation. Please note: Canada and US cannot have a joint incident command post (cannot be in the same place at the same time), therefore ensure that there are liaison officers, situational knowledge is known by both sides. Enhance communications between both sides.
- The CG job is to help contain the situation until the polluter is able to get the appropriate equipment to clean up the pollution. Help to identify potential resources etc. (i.e. who has booms, equipment needed)
- The United Way / Salvation Army is invited and used for volunteers in order to better manage the surrounding people who would like to help.
- Create Area Strategies, Booming Strategies (with the Army Corp), develop a geographic St. Marys River Response Plan, Risk Assessment, Marine Pollution Controls (most come out of Detroit)
- Current zone that they cover ranges all the way down to Traverse City and Alpena, up to Marquette and the Sault.
- Next big step is to determine the Coast Guard and EPA boundaries, and who is responsible for what (even though they often overlap in jurisdiction).

### 3. Agency Updates

1. Attached.
2. Package on Michigan Aesthetics discussion, attached.

#### **4. Office Reports**

- Haley was introduced as the new BPAC student.

#### **5. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes**

- September 26, 2012, approved.

#### **6. Business arising from previous minutes**

- None.

#### **7. Memberships**

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- Two people interested, they were asked to submit a letter to Paula outlining their interest.

#### **8. New Business**

- Sault Area Watershed Group – met again last month and the Army Corp participated via conference call. They are interested in helping the group to look at the parameters of the urban streams in Sault Mighican, and help to get a plan together to remediate those areas (improve water quality, habitat, etc.). Have a meeting in the first two weeks of December.

#### **9. Public Comments**

- None.

#### **10. Next Meeting**

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

#### **11. Adjourned at 8:35 p.m.**

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

November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Cisler Centre, LSSU, Sault Ste. Marie Michigan

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

- The fall SPAC workshop and business meetings were held on October 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> in Kalamazoo at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel. The workshop focused on the idea of “re-branding” and encouraged AOC communities and PACs to begin thinking about the future as they begin to delist and move away from the AOC designation.
- The statewide assessment of the Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems BUI was finalized on August 6<sup>th</sup>. The report states that “Little scientific support was available for the retention of the Wildlife BUI for the St. Marys River AOC. However, since the Wildlife BUI for the St. Marys River AOC was originally based on effects of TEQs on terns, it is recommended that the Wildlife BUI be retained until the completion of a planned study of terns by the Canadian Wildlife Service.”
- The assessment of the fish tumors or other deformities BUI is moving forward. Sample collection is complete however the samples still need to be processed and the data will need to be analyzed. A final report is expected to be complete in the summer of 2013.

## **Ontario Ministry of the Environment**

- The deadline for the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund was October 12 and hundreds of applications are under review. There was excellent uptake on the program, including several submissions from northern Ontario.
- The current contract for the Great Lakes scientist assigned to the northern Areas of Concern and Lake Superior, Tara George, is scheduled to end on November 30; the Ministry of the Environment is pursuing options to extend the contract. Tara has been very helpful in terms of identifying monitoring needs and providing input to delisting criteria.
- The Ministry of the Environment will be completing an analysis of sport fish contaminant data for the St. Marys River; this work is expected to be completed in early 2013 and shared with BPAC at a subsequent meeting.
- Application deadlines for both the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund (GLGCF) and the Ontario Community Environment Fund (OCEF) have passed and submitted projects are now under review. A number of grant applications were received for projects within Sault Ste. Marie Ontario.

## **Environment Canada**

### **Review of ship-based spills/pollution on the St. Marys River**

- This summer Environment Canada hired a contractor to assist with the delivery of a specific *action* identified in the St. Marys River Stage 2 RAP: *Assess the potential hazards to the river associated with spills from shipping vessels*. Using binational public reports prepared by Transport Canada, the U.S. Coast Guard and other agencies that identify incidences of spills/pollution from shipping vessels on the Great Lakes system – as required by the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement – the contractor will assess and summarize spills affecting the St. Marys River (the St. Clair River is also included in the scope of work). This will be complemented by additional information sources if available.