

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

Place: Michigan Room, Cisler Center, LSSU
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

When: February 25th, 2015
6:30 – 8:30 pm

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: David Samp, Marilyn Burton, Nancy Griffin, Megan Kelly, Brian Wesolek, Jessica Wesolek, Emily Martin, Sheri Glowinski, Klaas Oswald, Mike Ripley, Don Marles

Agency Reps: Kristina Denison (Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Conservation District), Mark Chambers (EC)

Guests: Tom Pratt (DFO), Lisa O'Connor (DFO), Juliana Ley (LSSU)

Regrets: Chris Graham, Corrina Barrett, Paula Antunes, John Riley, Crystal Bole

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- January 22nd, 2015 – deferred to next meeting.

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- The Canadian Delisting Criteria have made it through the last round of edits. Corrina compiled the BPACs feedback on the Survey Monkey Poll, and worked with the Implementation Committee to answer all of the proposed questions / revisions. Corrina emailed the document to BPAC members on Tuesday, and has brought additional copies tonight.
- The RAP Implementation Committee asks BPAC to formally vote on the delisting criteria as worded.
 - ⇒ Mike motioned to formally endorse the Ontario Updated Delisting Criteria. Sherri seconded. Motion carried.
 - ⇒ The Executive will provide a letter of endorsement to EC and MOECC to that effect [which was subsequently provided to Mark Chambers on March 17, 2015].

4. Presentations

- Tom Pratt from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans presented the results from year 1 of DFO's nearshore fish community survey; its application of the index of biotic integrity (IBI) approach to assess overall health of the river's fish community, and potential next steps. Lisa O'Connor was also on hand to help answer questions.
 - ⇒ The BUI that is being targeted by this work is the *Degradation of Fish Populations*. The newly updated criteria include wording looking specifically at assessing fish population health using the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) Approach, and comparing the IBI score for the SMR to that of a suitable reference site.
 - ⇒ A similar study took place between 2006 and 2009, with positive results outlined in a published paper. The delisting criteria requires two studies to be completed, hence this 2014-15 study.
 - ⇒ An IBI is a scientific tool used to identify and classify model communities. Concepts go back to the U.S. Clean Water Act of 1972 and revolve around "biological integrity" which is defined as "the capability of supporting and maintaining a balanced, integrated, adaptive community of organisms

having a species composition, diversity, and functional organization comparable to that of the natural habitat of the region". Biotic integrity is based on the premise that the status of living systems provides the most direct and effective measure of integrity of the water. At the time under the Clean Water Act, there were definitions of harm based on levels of contaminants or nutrients. In this index the baseline biological integrity (its function before human influence) and the current functions of an ecosystem are measured against one another to evaluate how much of ecosystem's function has been preserved.

- ⇒ Fish are used as toll for this as fish communities span a wide variety of trophic levels (e.g. algae eaters, plankton eaters, piscivores). Therefore human activity can affect the fish communities at any one of the trophic levels. Fish are also at the top of the aquatic food web, and are sensitive to a wide variety of stressors. At acute levels of disturbance, species can disappear. At lower levels of disturbance, lower growth or missing year classes may be present.
- ⇒ 12 metrics are in the Great Lakes Nearshore IBI (established in 1984). 5 deal with species richness measures, 3 with trophic structure, and the other 4 deal with the abundance and condition of the fish. Relies on biomass more than richness / diversity. On a scale of 1 (extremely poor) to 100 (excellent) percent; anything over 80 percent is considered excellent, 60 - 80 is very good, and 40 - 60 is considered average.
- ⇒ Overall, the IBI score for SMR is 56.6, and is 65.9 for the Mississagi River (reference site). The IBI number for the SMR is lower than the reference site due to a relative lack of biomass. But the number of indigenous species vs. non brings the number back up again (SMR fish community is dominated by native species).
- ⇒ Compared to other AOCs, the fish species list for the SMR is really good. Very few are considered non-native.

Mark posed this question to the group:

- ⇒ *Would the BPAC like to see another year of the survey?* So far, all years have shown a similar trend.
- ⇒ The group decided that yes, another year of the survey would be beneficial to the SMR.
- ⇒ DFO will therefore conduct fieldwork in June 2015, and target report completion in early/mid-2016.

5. Office Reports

- BPAC Annual Report is available
- ⇒ BPAC asked that the title be changed to reflect that the report is Ontario RAP Office based.

6. Agency Updates

7. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- ⇒ No new membership requests.

8. New Business

- New Great Lakes Protection Act has been proposed, comments are being accepted until April 19th, 2015 <http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTI0NDM5&statusId=MTg3Mzc5&language=en>;
See this link on the Act as well: <http://www.news.ontario.ca/ene/en/2015/02/ontario-to-introduce-legislation-to-protect-the-great-lakes.html>
- Is BPAC interested in writing letters to consultants for the Port of Algoma, informing of AOC?
⇒ DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING

9. Public Comments

⇒ None.

10. 2015 Executive Elections

⇒ DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING

10. Next Meeting

- Date for March 17th was determined.

11. Adjourned @ 8:00 pm.