

St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

Place: LSSU, Erie Room
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

When: February 1st, 2017
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

1. Call to order/introductions

Members: Paula Antunes, Kristen Sherlock, Kristina Denison, Greg Zimmerman, Dave Samp, Ron Pricket, Klaas Oswald, Don Marles, Mike Ripley

Agency Reps: Lisa Derickx (Algoma U), Aubrey Maccoux-LeDuc (Bay Mills, SPAC rep), Rebecca Bolen (EUPRPD), Corrina Barrett (City)

Guests: Alexia Whisler (LSSU)

2. Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- December 6th, 2016 – approved as presented

3. Business arising from previous minutes

- Degradation of Aesthetics BUI (Canada): Draft support letter
 - A draft letter written by Paula Antunes was presented. There were no comments or suggestions from BPAC members in attendance, however, Paula will circulate the draft letter via email to provide all members with an opportunity to comment before submission.
 - A request was made for an update on which BUIs have been listed as “not impaired” on both sides of the river.

4. Presentations

- There were no presentations scheduled for this meeting.

5. Office Reports

- RAP Office (Ontario)
 - Beach Closures Re-designation report is being drafted and will be sent to BPAC for review.
 - International Joint Commission public meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario – March 2, 2017. There will be an opportunity to provide comments on the draft Triennial Assessment of Progress Report.
- There were no SPAC updates at this time.
- There will be no environmental summit this year due to funding constraints.

6. Agency Updates

Environment & Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

Fish Tumours BUI

- ECCC has received preliminary results from the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture's analysis of liver samples taken from 100 White Suckers collected in August 2015. It is preliminary, because the diagnosis is done blind (i.e., the lab techs do not know anything other than the species). The lab has been sent the fish data (age, gender, etc.), which will be factors to consider in their final report expected before end of March.

Loss of Fish Habitat BUI

- The delisting criteria for the fish habitat component of the BUI is to, "*enhance rapids/aquatic habitat conditions through feasible conservation and restoration measures identified in the Stage 2 RAP*". ECCC and the Batchewana First Nation have signed a contract to advance a proposed aquatic habitat restoration on Whitefish Island, starting with project planning and design, community consultation and approvals, construction logistics and material sourcing, and pre-construction data collection/monitoring. BPAC will be engaged and kept informed throughout the process, expected to ramp-up in February and March.

Ontario Ministry of the Environment & Climate Change (MOECC)

- Curniss McGoldrick has started in her new role as Great Lakes Advisor. She hopes to attend a BPAC meeting in the near future so that she can meet everyone.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

- Ted Smith was recently promoted to a new position within US EPA, so he will no longer be working with the St. Marys River Area of Concern. John Perrecone will fill that role until a permanent replacement is identified.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)

- With the completion of the Little Rapids Project last fall, Ashley Moerke is leading a team from LSSU to complete post-construction monitoring in the area in 2017, primarily looking at aquatic biota.
- Rebecca Bolen from Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development mentions that public outreach events are being planned. The BPAC will be notified when more details are available and dates have been chosen. There was a suggestion for organizing one or two larger events as opposed to a few small events.
- A question was raised concerning monitoring of aquatic biota – is less than one year post construction enough for this ecological niche to be filled with new species? There was discussion that there may actually be almost 2 seasons of monitoring. Limited funding also plays a significant role.

7. Memberships

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.
- There was a suggestion that we update the membership list and ensure that agency contacts are up-to-date.

8. New Business

- Grass carp in the Great Lakes
 - A CBC radio broadcast suggested that grass carp were discovered in the Great Lakes (Lake Erie), and were believed to have come through the Chicago canal. This is an invasive species that is a major threat to the Great Lakes and it may just be a matter of time before they move into suitable habitat within the Great Lakes basin. As such, grass carp should be something the BPAC is aware of. It would be extremely difficult to prevent their spread if fertile grass carp have been introduced.

- Microplastics in the Great Lakes
 - Microplastics are a big concern globally and an emerging issue. It was suggested that the BPAC should encourage microplastic studies within the AOC.
 - Microplastics have even been found in snow!
 - Microplastics are not just found in the digestive system of fish but in the actual tissues.
 - AOCs are an ideal location for microplastic studies because study areas are delineated and habitat/species have been documented and studied (i.e. lots of background information exists).
 - There is a Bay Mills student currently looking at microplastics in fish within the AOC. It would have also been interesting to look at microplastics in macroinvertebrates but the cost of enzymes needed for such a project were prohibitive.

9. Public Comments

- There were no public comments received.

10. Next Meeting

- Doodle Poll to be set-up for an early March meeting.