

# St. Marys River AOC BPAC Meeting Minutes

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

**When:** Thursday January 30, 2020  
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

## Call to order/introductions

<b>BPAC Members</b>	Aubrey Maccoux-Leduc, Klaas Oswald, Jess Wesolek, Brian Wesolek, Mary Rossiter, James Dukes, Don Marles
<b>Agency Reps</b>	John Riley (EGLE)
<b>Guests</b>	Andrei Sawruk (USACE)
<b>Regrets</b>	Mike Ripley, Paula Antunes, Kristen Sherlock

## Approval of Last Meetings Minutes

- November 13, 2019 – Approved as presented

## Business Arising from Previous Minutes

- *Status of Restrictions on Dredging Activities* BUI on the Canadian side of the AOC – update  
Comments and questions were received and will be incorporated in the BUI assessment report. Further discussion of the *Restrictions on Dredging Activities* BUI will occur after the Sediment Management Strategy is drafted (as per the delisting criteria). Updates on the Conceptual Site Model as it relates to the Sediment Management Strategy will be presented to BPAC at the next meeting.
- Whitefish Township Clean-Up Site update  
Mike discussed the situation with the dump site in Whitefish Township with the Lake Superior LAMP Partnership and there is interest in learning more about the site and the possibility of getting funding to prevent further contamination. Liz LaPlante from EPA thinks there may be some funding available through GLRI.

## Presentations

- New Lock at the Soo Project Update - Andrei Sawruk, USACE (slides provided)
  - Importance of the locks: 10% of the nation's waterborne domestic traffic is transported on the Great Lakes navigation system, half of which goes through the Soo Locks. Currently there are 2 operational locks (i) MacArthur lock build in 1943 and (ii) Poe Lock build in 1968. The Poe lock is the only lock that can currently transport the larger vessels. 90% of tonnage transported through the system must go through the Poe lock. This lock has a 50-year design lock. If there was an issue with the Poe lock we would see almost an immediate economic impact in the U.S.
  - Maintaining the existing facility is costly and time consuming.
  - USACE is moving forward with the construction of a new lock.
  - Upgraded downstream deepening (completed in the late 2000's), Phase 1 (upstream channel deepening), Phase 2 (upstream approach wall – pier walls need to be reinforced/replaced) Phase 3 (new chamber construction).

- Materials from upstream channel deepening will be placed on the Northwest pier. The Northwest pier will grow by ~ 80 ft. Some reasoning behind this is that it creates a windbreak for some of the bigger ships and doesn't put the spoils back in the water.
- How wide is the new lock going to be? The new lock chamber will be 1200ft long, 110ft wide, 32ft deep. It will be 8 inches deeper than the existing Poe lock.
- Is that clearance really enough? All cargo vessels rub the wall as they come in. Less space actually means less momentum. Lock will be identical to existing Poe Lock. If the lock doesn't get bigger than the boats won't get bigger. Having the 2 locks be identical sisters means that they have spare parts for each other. We need 2 of the same so that we can operate for the next 50 years.
- How long will it take to complete? 7-10 years of construction.
- The Poe lock will not be retired – it will be kept in operation.
- Will year round shipping occur? Ports and harbours get ice-locked so it seems unlikely.
- Upstream channel deepening – the material placed on the pier is a permanent placement. Much concern for aesthetics or how wildlife may use it differently? The wildlife that uses it now is mostly geese. State historical office has approved of the placement with no issues.
- Do the spoils need to be tested for contaminants – core sampling was conducted but unsure as to whether they were testing for contaminants. Questions can be addressed to Penelope Carroll in Public Affairs (Penelope.T.Carroll@usaced.army.mil) Likely the State of Michigan would have some process for review especially since the dredged spoils will be deposited beside the water.

## Agency Updates

### Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

- On January 21, ECCC launched a call for applications to its various environmental funding programs, including funding under the Great Lakes Protection Initiative. ECCC is welcoming project applications that involve action at the local level to restore water quality and ecosystem health in AOCs. Applications are now being accepted until March 3, 2020. Help get the word out, and let Lisa Derickx know if you're aware of a possible project that will be appropriate for the St. Marys River. More info: [www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/great-lakes-protection/funding](http://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/great-lakes-protection/funding)
- ECCC, MECP and the local RAP Coordinator have been working to draft delisting criteria for the Degradation of Benthos BUI for the Canadian side of the AOC. Proposed options will be discussed with BPAC at the March meeting, with materials sent out in advance.

### Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP)

- The MECP and Algoma University now have a funding agreement in place that accounts for RAP Coordination Services from November 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020. This will help supplement funding already secured from ECCC to coordinate stakeholder involvement and the implementation of priority actions for Stage Two of the St. Marys River RAP and conduct associated stakeholder involvement and communication activities to raise local and regional awareness.

### United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)

- No updates at this time.

## Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)

- On September 16, the State of Michigan sent a request to EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office for concurrence on the removal of the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat and Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations Beneficial Use Impairments from the US side of the St. Marys River Area of Concern. There was a public comment period on the proposed BUI removals August 2-30. No comments were received. On September 23, the request was approved. These two beneficial uses have been restored!
- Just 3 BUIs remain on the US side: Restrictions on Fish Consumption, Fish Tumors or other Deformities, and Degradation of Benthos. Additional fish were collected in 2019 to re-assess the status of the fish consumption impairment. Data from that effort are expected in the Spring of 2020.
- A sampling plan is under development for the former Cannelton Industries Tannery site to verify that remediation is complete. This monitoring effort is expected to occur in 2020. That work will inform next steps related to the Benthos BUI on the US side.

### **New Business**

- Landfill expansion project for City SSM – Soo Today article (<https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/city-to-spend-215-million-on-five-year-landfill-expansion-project-1763644>) - To request a presentation by the City for an upcoming meeting.
- Center for Freshwater Research and Education update – Jess to provide information via email. Here is a link to CFRE's website (<https://www.lssu.edu/cfre/>)

### **Standing Action Items**

- Ferrochrome smelter – There is still a lot that is unknown. This topic will remain as a standing action item.

### **Memberships**

- For new members, applications must be received & prospective members present for confirmation – standard procedure.

### **Public Comments**

### **Next Meeting**

- Next meeting will be in late February or early March