



Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
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Meeting Record: DRCC Steering & Implementation Committee

August 17, 2020, 1:30 – 3:00 pm
Zoom Meeting

Welcome, introductions, approval of agenda

Review of Action Items; Approval of Meeting Record from January 27, 2020

Welcome Mark Pellow, BASF

Carolyn began the meeting at 1:35pm. Jackie went through attendance for the meeting. Attendance is listed in Appendix I. The agenda for this meeting and meeting record from January 27, 2020 were approved by consensus. The action items from the January 27 2020 meeting were reviewed and their updates are included in Appendix II. Jackie welcomed Jean Michael and Mark Pellow from BASF to the Steering and Implementation Committee.

Canada Ontario Agreement (COA) update and Updates from COA Executive / GLWQA or Great Lakes Protection Initiative (GLPI); Four Agency Management Committee

Canada Ontario Agreement (COA) update and Updates from COA Executive

Carolyn explained that the new COA agreement is currently being negotiated after expiration of the previous one at the end of 2019. The negotiations are currently on a hiatus, but the goal is to resume negotiations in the fall. She emphasized that regardless of the lapse between agreements, there are still actions taking place to protect the Great Lakes. Next year, 2021, will mark 50 years of the Canada-Ontario Agreement. Once the Agreement is signed, the province will focus on renewing the Great Lakes Strategy.

Ted mentioned the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (OMECPP) was given permission to begin developing new agreements for RAP governance for a two year period at \$95K per year. The governance grant will provide funds for RAP coordination (70K/year) as well as outreach and education (\$25K/year). Ted is working with Jackie to develop the agreement.

GLWQA or Great Lakes Protection Initiative (GLPI)

April shared that the GLPI (formerly GLSF) applicants have been notified of the outcome of the funding call. The Detroit River AOC secured funding to support RAP Governance and habitat restoration projects. For RAP Governance, \$160K was approved and for habitat restoration, \$326.5K was approved for the next 2 years. The funding for habitat restoration will support the Collavino and Peche Island projects. The agreements still need to be negotiated between ERCA and ECCC, a process which is currently in progress. In addition, April was able to secure funding for engagement opportunities with Caldwell First Nation for follow up activities after the first engagement with Caldwell FN in 2018. April and Jackie had a call with Caldwell FN last week to begin the process of planning the engagement activities.

April reminded the group that RAP coordination, habitat restoration, and First Nations engagement funds are separate from research and monitoring efforts conducted by Environment and Climate Change

Canada (ECCC) on the Detroit River. The research and monitoring work plan over the next 3 years has been established with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), the Science and Technology Branch, Wildlife Ecotoxicology Branch, and the Canadian Wildlife Service, who are instrumental in conducting monitoring on wetland health, birds, deformity prevalence, etc.

Four Agency Management Committee (FAMC)

The FAMC met virtually in July. The focus of this meeting was to share information and review BUI assessment reports and restoration projects in the Detroit River. April shared that this meeting was helpful to learn more about the Revere Copper shoreline collapse on the American side of the river and how Michigan EGLE and USEPA responded to facilitate the cleanup of the property. They also discussed the barge that was stuck in sand near Peche Island on the U.S. side of the river in the early winter. The FAMC is scheduled to meet again virtually in October 2020.

Zooplankton and Phytoplankton Assessment Report

Carolyn introduced Mark Fitzpatrick from DFO and the phytoplankton and zooplankton assessment report. Carolyn explained that the purpose of Mark's presentation to the group was to receive the SIC's endorsement of the recommendation to re-designate this BUI from 'requires further assessment' (RFA) to 'not impaired' status. Mark's presentation is included as Appendix III.

Mark explained that his team took a food web approach to addressing this BUI as both phytoplankton and zooplankton support many organisms in the Detroit River. In 2010, this BUI was listed as RFA. Mark reminded the group of the delisting criteria for this BUI. Mark noted that there are some concerns with the delisting criteria including there is no reason to expect planktonic communities to resemble source waters about 100km downstream, and the criteria does not account for impacts in other tributaries on phytoplankton and zooplankton.

In 2019, DFO studied the Detroit River to examine the phytoplankton and zooplankton communities of the Detroit River including phytoplankton taxonomy, the microbial food web, primary and bacterial productivity, and physical and chemical measures (e.g., temperature, flow, etc.). The study also investigated potential differences in planktonic communities along nearshore / offshore and upstream / downstream gradients. The results of the study revealed few differences in planktonic/zooplanktonic communities at the sites that could not be explained by riverine ecology (i.e., there was no evidence of anthropogenic stress within the AOC). Additionally, the researchers found the planktonic food web was dominated by autotrophs, unlike other impaired AOC sites. Overall, the researchers concluded that, based on their studies, there was no evidence of anthropogenic impairment of phytoplankton and zooplankton communities in the Detroit River AOC.

Key Discussion Points

Mohi reminded the group that these conclusions are based on just one study in the Detroit River. Warren explained the 2019 study is comprehensive, and that DFO made every effort to collect data thoroughly. The DFO researchers directly addressed issues identified in previous studies and made sure the sampling protocol was consistent with that of other AOCs for this BUI.

Carolyn asked Jackie what the next steps are if the Steering and Implementation Committee were to approve the recommendation and move the report forward. She explained that the phytoplankton and zooplankton assessment report has already been provided to the Monitoring and Research Work Group. Any comments received from that Work Group were included in the draft report sent to SIC. If the SIC decides to proceed, the BUI assessment report would go out for public comment, Public Advisory Council

(PAC) consideration, Indigenous engagement, and to the FAMC for comment. Eventually all these comments will be incorporated in the report, and the final BUI assessment report will be sent to COA leads for consideration to change the status to 'not impaired'.

April pointed out to the group that past studies have been conducted to examine the status of phytoplankton and zooplankton in the Detroit River. She mentioned that DFO's 2019 study is the most comprehensive, and that these previous efforts are outlined within the BUI assessment report sent out to the SIC. In combination, these studies build a compelling argument for the BUI to be considered not impaired. Ted also reminded everyone that this BUI has never been considered impaired, only requires further assessment.

Phil cautioned that the subject matter is very comprehensive and that care needs to be used when disseminating results to the public. He suggested that when this BUI is explained to the community that it is emphasized that phytoplankton and zooplankton communities in the river are exactly as they should be and all analyses indicate no impairment. Carolyn agreed and suggested that caution and care be used in translating this BUI history and results for public consideration. Mark explained that for the Detroit River Evening public presentation he included some comparisons of the phytoplankton and zooplankton communities in the Detroit River to other AOCs that can be used when communicating to the public. Warren also suggested including a plankton primer for background information, such as the one that was created for the Niagara River RAP. Jackie mentioned that she has been working on a fact sheet in preparation for public engagement regarding this BUI.

Carolyn asked the committee if they are comfortable with endorsement of the current recommendation to change the status of this BUI to not impaired and to continue on with the re-designation process for the zooplankton and phytoplankton BUI. All agreed.

ACTION ITEM: DRCC continue with re-designation process for this BUI. .

Indigenous Engagement Strategy

Jackie provided an update on the DRCC Indigenous Engagement Strategy. Her presentation is included as Appendix IV. She explained that the DRCC developed the strategy to support and facilitate engagement of local First Nations and Metis in the restoration of the Detroit River Area of Concern. Some ways the DRCC plans to facilitate engagement includes attending and participating in events hosted by Indigenous communities, plan and coordinate an Indigenous tour of Detroit River AOC projects, and provide BUI status reports for comments/input. The strategy is a living document, and inventories all actions the DRCC has taken since 2018 to engage Indigenous and Metis groups. It also provides an outline for future activities and needs based on RAP milestones.

Key Discussion Points

Sharilyn suggested that Jackie should reach out to the Aamjiwnaang FN Environment Committee to provide an update on the RAP at their next meeting. She suggested that Jackie contact Norm Joseph through e-mail to request to be placed on an upcoming meeting agenda.

ACTION ITEM: Jackie to reach out to Aamjiwnaang FN Environment Committee to get on the agenda for an upcoming Committee meeting.

Carolyn mentioned that Upper Thames River CA have worked with some of the same Indigenous communities the DRCC plans to engage through the Thames River Shared Waters Approach. She suggested it might be helpful to reach out and inquire about their recommendations to help inform the DRCC strategy. Sharilyn mentioned that the Shared Waters Approach established a committee between the CA and Indigenous groups and had funding support. She also explained that youth engagement and capacity building took place through this initiative. She also recommended the DRCC should reflect on COVID-19 public health guidelines and how the pandemic has changed some of the ways engagement takes place, especially in future identified actions and events identified in the strategy.

ACTION ITEM: Jackie to update Indigenous Engagement Strategy based on comments from the group.

Detroit River Habitat Projects (Collavino & Peche Island)

Kevin mentioned that there are 2 large habitat projects taking place in the Detroit River AOC at the moment.

Peche Island

The DFO and Transport Canada permits have been approved and the tender for the project is in the process of being finalized. The project team is working with the university and lowest bid tender to secure cost savings for the project as it came in over budget. Kevin is hopeful that everything can move forward soon and that contracts will be established for construction work to begin as soon as possible.

Collavino Wetland

This project involves undertaking habitat management actions at the Collavino wetland site in River Canard. These management actions include a drawdown of the wetland water levels, initiating Phragmites control with herbicides, and a prescribed burn. It is too early to know when these actions will take place as the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) is working on DFO permits for the water drawdown at this time.

BUI Status Updates, Other Working Group, and Pathway to Delisting Updates

April explained that there are 3 BUIs currently under re-designation consideration, Fish Tumours and other Deformities (#4), Degradation of Benthos (#6) and Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations (#13), while 4 BUIs are in the process of being addressed (Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption (#1), Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations (#3), Bird and Animal Deformities (#5) and Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat (#14). April's presentation is provided in Appendix V. She reminded the group that the Degradation of Benthos and Fish Tumour BUI reports are currently under review by COA Leads at both agencies (ECCC and MECP). Following this review, the reports will be provided to the GLEC Chairs for review and consideration.

BUI #1 – Restrictions on Fish Consumption: ECCC and OMECP have a contract with Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research (GLIER) to compile and analyze data collected, however, they are currently waiting for OMECP to provide the most current sport fish data. The DRCC is also currently undertaking an angler survey to identify if the indicator species are correct.

BUI #3 – Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations: sub-criteria is being developed by the Habitat and Monitoring and Research Work Groups to assess this BUI. There are two reports in progress from DFO – one addressing nearshore fish communities and wetlands, and one addressing fish community assessments related to the Detroit River delisting criteria. April reminded the SIC about the comment

made in Stage 2 regarding the benthivoric or bottom feeding community shift in the Detroit River and one of these reports will directly address this concern. University of Windsor (UW) is also undertaking work to calibrate Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) scores to be more suitable for the Detroit River and address land uses that are reflective of the landscape.

BUI #5 – Bird or Animal Deformities or Other Reproductive Problems – both bird and animal deformity data are being assessed while a final year of tree swallow monitoring is scheduled for 2020. There is a report being circulated for review at ECCC, and it is possible a draft assessment report will be completed by Christmas.

BUI #13 – Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations - DFO completed sampling of the river in summer of 2019, and results show no impairment in phyto and zooplankton populations in the river. With approval by the SIC to continue with the re-designation process at this meeting, public consultation is planned for the coming months.

BUI #14 – Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat – Both the Habitat and Monitoring and Research Work Groups are working hard to develop sub criteria and measurable benchmarks to know when delisting criteria for this BUI are met. There will be a workshop with ECCC, DRCC, DFO, UW, ERCA, and other partners this Fall to recommend some sub criteria that can be used in the Detroit River to begin the assessment.

April mentioned that all monitoring plans for each of the remaining BUIs are outlined in the Pathway to Delisting document. Jackie reminded the group that the Pathway document was sent out to the SIC as part of the meeting package. Jackie mentioned that this year, the BUIs that are no longer considered impaired have been removed from the Pathway document. The Pathway document explains the long-term work plan for achieving RAP objectives.

Public Advisory Council Report

Tom reminded everyone the PAC is the voice of the public and actively participates on the RAP. Tom told the group that he and Jackie have been attending U.S. PAC meetings, virtually, and in person, to stay informed of American efforts. He mentioned the following items briefly to the SIC:

1. He reminded everyone about how the Windsor Star broke the news about the Revere Copper Dock Collapse and that the restoration plan for the dock is available for review on Michigans Environment, Great Lakes and Energy's (EGLE) website.
2. The Hennepin Marsh habitat restoration project has begun in the Trenton Channel on the U.S. side of the river. This island is on a former industrial site, and the construction of the project will include habitat shoals, emergent wetlands, stone spawning beds, and other habitat features along Grosse Isle.
3. Tom is hopeful an announcement will be made in September regarding the Ojibway Shores property in west Windsor addressing the land swap. The local environmental community would like Ojibway Shores to be transferred to the City of Windsor park system as part of the Ojibway Prairie Complex.

Round Table Updates

Paul mentioned he is retiring soon on August 31, 2020, and suggested Jackie reach out to determine a new replacement for the City of Windsor's position on the SIC. He recommended reaching out to Karina

if there are any issues or questions before Paul's replacement is in place. Jackie, April, and Tom thanked Paul for all of his dedication to the RAP and representing the City of Windsor on multiple work groups.

ACTION ITEM: Jackie to follow up with the City of Windsor for a replacement for the Steering and Implementation Committee.

Phil briefly mentioned that there is an opportunity to create significant habitat at Ranta Park in Amherstburg and would like to move forward on exploring funding options.

Stephen mentioned that Ontario Ministry of Natural resources and Forestry (OMNRF) is still significantly impacted by COVID-19 with a reduction of programs, mainly focusing on fishing assessments in Lake Erie.

Jackie mentioned that the DRCC's annual report is available online and was attached to the e-mail sent to the SIC. She also mentioned that the Detroit River evening, held in June, can be watched online and the link is on the DRCC's website.

Other items/ Closing Remarks/ Next Meeting

Carolyn adjourned the meeting and mentioned that the next SIC meeting will take place early next year.

Appendix I. Attendance

Jean Michael	BASF Chemical
Phil Roberts	Town of Amherstburg
Andy Paling	DRCC Public Advisory Council Co-Chair
Kevin Money	Essex Region Conservation Authority
Jackie Serran	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Carolyn O'Neill	Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks
Stephen Marklevitz	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Tom Henderson	Public Advisory Council Chair
Mark Fitzpatrick	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Ted Briggs	Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks
Neil Finnerty	Brighton Beach Power
Paul Drca	City of Windsor
Rich Drouin	Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
Gina Pannunzio	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
April White	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Warren Currie	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Mouhiuddin Munawar	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Sharilyn Johnston	Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Mark Winterton	City of Windsor

Appendix II. Action Items from January 27, 2020 and their Updates

ACTION ITEM: Reach out to Teri to determine the fate of the Loadings and P/NPS Work Group. **Complete.**

– Response:

"I will defer that decision to the steering committee.

The point/non-point work group was co-chaired by MECP and ERCA. I believe the discussion was MECP regulates the point sources and will continue to do so. The non-point portion was headed by ERCA

Happy to assist should it be determined there is a need."

Update: Kevin recalls there may have only been 1 meeting in the last few years. As OMECP manages the point source issues, ERCA will continue addressing non-point issues. He said he will follow up with Terry to determine if there is a plan going forward, and to suggest some agenda items for a new meeting. April mentioned it would be important to identify if there are any commitments for point and non-point actions that are required to meet delisting criteria in order to determine whether a meeting would be needed.

ACTION ITEM: Kevin to reach out to Terry at OMECP to discuss revising the Point and Non-Point Source Pollution Work Group and discuss commitments and actions to meet delisting criteria.

ACTION ITEM: Ted to provide contact name for DU for the Habitat WG. Complete.

Update: Jackie is still trying to reach out to see if there is any interest to sit on Habitat WG.

ACTION ITEM: Update the Habitat WG to include Stephen Marklevitz and remove Dave Richards. Complete.

ACTION ITEM: April to reach out to Ruwe Marsh manager. Not complete.

Update: April suggested the Ruwe Marsh manager could be a great alternate if Ducks Unlimited is unable to attend. She would prefer to have him attend a meeting in person rather than virtually.

ACTION ITEM: Jackie to draft a letter to the Town of LaSalle and industries along the Detroit River to seek representation for the SIC. Complete.

Update: She did hear back from BASF, and Jean Michael is attending today, representing Mark Pellow, who manages waterfront properties in LaSalle, Wyandotte MI, and on Fighting Island.

ACTION ITEM: Jackie to update all DRCC Work Group members and their affiliations before next SIC meeting. Complete.

ACTION ITEM: Create an Indigenous Engagement Strategy for the DRCC. Complete.

ACTION ITEM: Jackie to prepare and send letters by mail and e-mail to Chiefs and consultation persons to Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Caldwell First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Delaware First Nation to introduce the DRCC, RAP, and welcome their participation in the program. Delayed due to COVID-19.

ACTION ITEM: April to send more information regarding the Generic Delisting Criteria for BUI #1 to the group. Not complete.

Update: April said that she has the information available. This was a joint paper between ECCC and MECP to come up with generic delisting criteria due to multiple AOCs struggling with the same issues. She will circulate.

ACTION ITEM: Gina to share outreach/social media content with April. **Complete.**