

**Meeting Record**  
**DRCC Public Advisory Council & EPI Work Group**  
Thursday October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 4:30-6:30pm  
Zoom

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**Welcome, introductions, approval of agenda**

Jackie began the meeting at 4:32pm with a land acknowledgement. A round table of introductions took place and attendees are listed in Appendix I. The agenda was approved by all with no changes.

**Review of January 28 2020 Meeting Record and Action Items**

Tom mentioned that the January 2020 meeting record was very well done. The meeting record was approved. Action items from the January 28 2020 meeting and their updates are included in Appendix II.

**PAC Update since January 2020**

Tom provided an update on several environmental efforts/issues the PAC has been involved in over the past year and a half.

Ojibway Shores/Urban National Park

After the election on September 20, Tom sent a congratulatory e-mail to both Brian Masse, M.P., and Irek Kusmierczyk, M.P. after they were re-elected. The e-mail also expressed PAC support to move forward with the Urban National Park and Ojibway Shores acquisition. Tom mentioned that Brian is hoping to introduce legislation into the House of Commons to support the potential of an Ojibway Urban National Park. Tom's e-mails were copied to Mayor Drew Dilkens and he has not received a response back yet.

Patricia asked whether Brian might have a time frame on putting forward the legislation. Tom said no, Parliament won't meet for several weeks due to the election. Jonathan wondered if the PAC was in a position to make recommendations about land acquisition for the urban park that could potentially support the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat beneficial use impairment. He mentioned that Wildlife Preservation Canada has been working on a proposal to connect key properties in the Ojibway Prairie Complex and the LaSalle natural heritage sites for snake and amphibian habitat. The corridors between would go a long way to support BUI 14. Jackie asked if Jonathan has any maps that show these sites, and he said he has one that highlights property boundaries and potential properties that could be purchased. Jackie explained that the DRCC is unable to purchase properties but the PAC is in a position to advocate in support of the Urban National Park. Tom said that if the PAC supported the inclusion of properties Jonathan's analysis has identified in the National Urban Park, he would be happy to send in letters/e-mails or other communications to support. Derek liked this idea, but mentioned the new Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada has not been appointed yet, so this would likely have to occur in the future.

Tom mentioned that last spring he e-mailed Mayor Drew Dilkens and Steve Salmons from the Windsor Port Authority about the proposed land swap. Around the end of July, Tom reached out to Steve again, but has not heard anything since.

Pearl encouraged the PAC to continue to advocate and communicate our support for the Urban Park to secure critical properties. When the government reforms, the PAC will be in a position to send letters.

**ACTION ITEM: Jonathan to send Ojibway Prairie and surrounding land property maps to Jackie created by Wildlife Preservation Canada as well as to Patricia and the Canada South Land Trust.**

#### Update on Ecopassage

As far as Tom knows, part two of the Environmental Assessment is still taking place with another public comment period taking place soon. Pearl asked if the preferred design is still focusing on ending the crossing at the Essex Terminal Railway. Tom mentioned that the design received some critique, and if the crossing were to span from Joy Woods to Black Oak Heritage Park, it would cost 20 million dollars. Jackie mentioned that the City is in the process of compiling comments into a final solution. Jonathan mentioned that Wildlife Preservation Canada has nominated the Ojibway Prairie Complex as a key biodiversity area (KBA) based on its ecological significance. He mentions that this designation will hopefully help provide further evidence in support of the National Urban Park. Jackie asked about the KBA process and Jonathan said the program does not provide protection, but rather provides an objective way to identify a national area of significance based on the local keystone species.

#### Revere Copper Sill Aftermath, September 2021

In November 2019, the Revere Copper spill occurred and since then the Detroit River Protection Ordinance came into effect. This protection requires riverfront properties to notify proper channels if/when a spill occurs on the riverfront with hefty fines. If the Revere Copper spill had not happened, this protection may not be in place.

#### Federal Election (September 20, 2021) results

Tied into the Urban Park conversation Brian Masse and Irek Kusmierczyk included the Ojibway National Urban Park in their platforms. Both Brian and Irek were re-elected in their ridings.

#### Thank you letter to COA Leads

Once Tom heard that the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) was extended for five years, he reached out to share thanks on behalf of the PAC to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Premier Doug Ford and appropriate Ministers and COA leads at the federal and provincial governments. Tom mentioned that this is great news for the DRCC program.

#### **DRCC Updates**

Jackie provided an update on the Remedial Action Plan, found in Appendix III. She started by reminding the group of the status of BUIs in 2010. She mentioned that since the PAC met last, the Fish Tumours and other Deformities BUI status changed from impaired to not impaired in December 2020, Degradation of Benthos BUI status changed from impaired to not impaired in December 2020 and Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations BUI status changed from needs further assessment to not impaired in October 2021, just as of last week. She also shared the science and monitoring that went into determining these BUIs are no longer impaired. Today, there are only four BUIs that are still considered impaired for the Canadian side of the Detroit River. She also shared some of the future plans to address

remaining impaired BUIs including: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption, Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations, Bird or Animal Deformities or Other Reproductive Problems and Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat BUIs.

Jackie informed the group that for BUI #1, Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption, a fish consumption survey was initiated in fall 2019 and has been collecting information about consumption patterns of Detroit River anglers on the Canadian side. The assessment for this beneficial use impairment has been completed and the DRCC is going through the data to determine what next steps should be taken.

For BUI #3 (Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations) and BUI #14 (Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat), she updated the group that a habitat project on Peche Island just resumed construction. The project creates sheltering islands in the waters near the island to help to reduce impacts of erosion while providing shallow and calm back water areas for fish nurseries and species at risk. She mentioned that they expect construction will complete at the end of the year, and more funding is needed to install further islands. Post-construction monitoring took place in the summer to assess submerged aquatic vegetation cover and to identify if the created fish habitat area is being used by native fish species. Jackie also highlighted that another habitat project is taking place at the Collavino wetland at the mouth of the River Canard. Pumping infrastructure was installed to control the water levels in the wetland to help control invasive *Phragmites* and create new opportunities for native seed. A prescribed burn may take place over the next couple of weeks as a management technique. She also mentioned that ERCA completed a terrestrial assessment of habitat restoration projects taken place between 2000 and 2020 using GIS analysis. A total of 207 projects took place during the 20 years, with tree planting projects being the most common. A total of 3.8 million m<sup>2</sup> of trees were planted during this time frame. This report just came out a couple months ago, and the DRCC Habitat Work Group will be reviewing over the coming months to determine next steps.

Regarding the Bird or Animal Deformities BUI (BUI #5), Jackie mentioned that surveying was sidetracked due to Covid-19. Researchers from Environment and Climate Change Canada have been reviewing deformities from snapping turtles, herring gulls and cormorants, and their results indicate there are no deformities and no impairment. The researchers have two years of tree swallow data showing no impairment, and the DRCC Research and Monitoring Work Group are meeting to determine if that is sufficient. The assessment for this BUI could take place as early as next year.

Jackie also informed the PAC that the DRCC has begun engaging Indigenous communities whose traditional territory is the Detroit River. So far, the DRCC has engaged: Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Walpole Island First Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Delaware Nation and Caldwell First Nation. Each community has identified their own preference on how they would like to be engaged in the RAP.

Jackie also informed the group that the new Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) was signed in 2021 and ends in 2026. Result 9 identifies commitments of Canada and Ontario to move towards delisting the Detroit River from the Area of Concern list. Jackie mentioned that the Detroit River was not identified as AOCs that will have all of their actions completed by 2026, so the DRCC anticipates the Detroit River will be identified as having their actions completed by the end of the next COA agreement. The DRCC funding expires in March 2022, and discussions are taking place currently to arrange further funding.

#### Discussion

Ian mentioned that there is a lot of habitat restoration along the Canard and Turkey Creek watersheds and is concerned that there isn't as many projects in the Little River watershed. He is concerned that the

government will delist the river based on the BUI #14 without considering the terrestrial opportunities in the Little River. He also asked how the Habitat Work Group will know when everything is complete. Jackie explained that the work group will have a clearer picture in the coming months as this is one of the main discussions we have been working towards, by developing a 'checklist' of sub-criteria to help identify how far we have come and whether actions to delist BUI #14 are complete. Referring to the Environment and Climate Change Canada How Much Habitat is Enough report, Jackie mentioned it is difficult to meet those targets in the entire Detroit River watershed due to the land uses. Jonathan shared his concern with the delisting habitat through the RAP as well, as there are difficult challenges with meeting habitat requirements, especially in the Windsor-Essex region. Jackie reminded the group that the goal of the AOC program is not to become pristine, but to be similar to other areas in the Great Lakes.

### **EPI Project Update since October 2019**

Gina shared some education and outreach project updates with everyone and her presentation is Appendix IV of this meeting record. She introduced the Detroit River Coalition and the initiatives the group has accomplished since spring 2020 and shared some ideas of how the coalition may support future opportunities to continue partnerships and advocacy for the Detroit River past delisting. She also shared some of the events the DRCC has been able to host and attend in person including the Windsor Sportsmen's Club annual fishing derby, a Sandwich Litter Cleanup and a tree planting event this weekend. She also shared some information about the 20 year anniversary of the Canadian Heritage River Designation for the Detroit River. A conversation took place about the Conservation Authority Act regulatory changes. Jackie assured the group that while the DRCC works very closely with ERCA and is situated in the organization's structure and office, the funding is separate and the DRCC is not in jeopardy due to Conservation Authority Act changes.

**ACTION ITEM – Gina to share any updates about the Conservation Authority Act regulatory changes and any future comment periods with the PAC when they become available.**

### **Questions and discussion**

Jackie was approached by a PAC member who suggested changing the DRCC logo from the current Ambassador Bridge logo to a Lake Sturgeon. Jackie mentioned that in 2012 a logo change was brought to the Steering and Implementation Committee and they decided to table it until the Detroit River is undergoing delisting. Since the recent PAC member's request, Jackie discussed a potential logo change with the DRCC federal and provincial supervisors, and they gave support but wanted to determine if this is what the majority of the PAC would like. She explained this is not considered a high priority to initiate a rebranding exercise and may take some time, given there are some other priorities at the moment. She opened it up to the PAC for discussion.

Ian and Pearl were both in support of changing the logo and feel we have come a long way since the bridge symbolism to show binational collaboration to protect and restore the Detroit River. A Lake Sturgeon represents Canadian restoration efforts and they would like to see Indigenous artists involved in support of Truth and Reconciliation. Jackie anticipates there could be several options that may come out as a result of this exercise when we engage in a rebranding exercise. From the DRCC perspective, both Tom and Jackie prefer to engage with the Indigenous communities the DRCC has been working with to get their feedback on starting this process, and then potentially reach out to artists afterwards. Jackie emphasized the importance of making sure we go about this logo change process correctly. Pearl and Ian offered to help with this work during the engagement process. Jackie asked the group if anyone objected to the logo

being changed, and no response was received, so she told the group that she would proceed with initiating the process to change the logo and be in touch with Ian and Pearl with more instructions.

Ian mentioned that he has been working to establish a Climate Change Resilience Park at Candidate Natural Heritage Site # 39 (CNHS 39), also known as the Airport Woodlands. He has not had much luck in hearing back from the City of Windsor, Councillors and others about interests or intentions to support this effort.

Jonathan was curious about the Habitat Work Group meeting and how to stay updated on any discussion that take place. Jackie offered to share some of the more recent meeting records with him.

**ACTION ITEM: Jackie to share a few of the most recent and approved DRCC Habitat Work Group meeting records with Jonathan.**

The meeting was adjourned and the next meeting will be at the call of the chair.

#### **Appendix I. Meeting Attendance**

Tom Henderson	Chair of the Public Advisory Council
Gina Pannunzio	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup/Essex Region Conservation Authority
Jackie Serran	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Mike Walsh	Public Advisory Council
Pearl Bradd	Public Advisory Council (PAC)
Mark Shafer	Little River Enhancement Group
Patricia McGorman	Canada South Land Trust
Ian Naisbitt	Little River Enhancement Group
Hilary Payne	Public Advisory Council
Derek Coronado	Citizen's Environment Alliance
Jonathan Choquette	Wildlife Preservation Canada

#### **Appendix II. Action Items from January 28 2020 and their updates.**

ACTION ITEM: Tom and Derek to work on sending a letter to the Four Agency Managers Committee regarding an implementation plan to prevent a situation like Revere Copper from happening on the Canadian side of the river. **This action was not completed, and was discussed in Tom's PAC update.**