

DRAFT Meeting Record
DRCC Public Advisory Council & EPI Work Group
September 6, 2023 – 4:30-7:00pm
WFCU Centre, 8787 McHugh St, Windsor ON
In Person & Virtual via Teams Meeting

1. Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Agenda, Land Acknowledgement

Sarah began the meeting at 4:37pm with a land acknowledgement and a round table of introductions. She introduced new DRCC revealing that she will be covering for Jackie Serran's maternity leave until December 2023, and Laura Neufeld will be stepping into the RAP assistant position to cover for Gina Pannunzio's maternity leave. She welcomed Stephen Marklevitz, Canada-Ontario Agreement Lake Erie Basin, Ministry of Natural Resources, and Shane De Solla, Ecotoxicologist, from Environment and Climate Change to the meeting. Sarah highlighted their significant involvement with the work towards the redesignation of BUI 3 and 5 and will be outlining their reports to members of the PAC in the second half of the meeting: 1.) BUI 3 Report Detroit River Area of Concern: Fish Population Assessment Report 2022 Update (Draft), and 2.) Status Recommendation Report for BUI 5: Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproduction Problems.

2. Review of March 14, 2023, Meeting Record and Action Items

There were no action items recorded from the DRCC EPI/PAC March 14, 2023 meeting. The meeting record from March 2023 was approved with no revisions.

3. PAC Update Since March 14, 2023

3.1. *Illegal Dumping in The Little River Watershed - Dragonfly Park (Ian Naisbitt)*

Ian shared updates on the infilling and dumping reported along the Little River in the Summer of 2023. Pictures of infilling (mounds of clay, chunks of asphalt and concrete) were shown, and further investigation revealed encroachment on both the Little River riparian zone and City of Windsor owned property. Members of the Little River Enhancement Group have since been working with the City of Windsor and are satisfied with the actions undertaken at this time. Negotiations between the legal department and adjacent property owner(s) to remove the infill and restore the riparian area remain in progress. Tom Henderson explained that it has been a joint effort by members of the Little River Enhancement Group and staff from the City of Windsor. He predicts that there will be a resolution to removing the fill and restoring this section of shoreline in the future, but it will take time.

3.2. Update on Urban National Park Signs (T. Henderson)

Tom shared a brief information update pertaining to the proposed National Urban Park (NUP) in Windsor. Signs were installed by Parks Canada around the perimeter of the proposed NUP notifying visitors and residents that the trails are not maintained. Unfortunately, the signs were defaced not soon after their installment. He explains that the NUP proposal appears to be progressing and is hopeful for more progress in the future.

Pearl asked that if there was government funding available to create and extend a green corridor over the Essex Terminal railway in Windsor where the NUP is proposed. A discussion continued and Sarah mentioned that it is unknown if this project is being considered as part of the NUP. Information will be circulated to the group when made available, however, there is nothing to report at this time.

4. DRCC Updates (S. Lanoue)

4.1. Updates on DRCC Projects and Research and Monitoring

Sarah was happy to report on the Family Fishing Day event that took place at the beginning of July 2023. Gina Pannunzio successfully coordinated the event, and it was a great experience to all that were in attendance.

The next upcoming event hosted by DRCC is public consultation for BUI (Beneficial Use Impairment) 3 and 5 on October 5 at Ojibway Nature Centre. Invitations will be sent directly to the PAC members in advance and shared to DRCC social media platforms. Sarah explained that this public consultation is taking place to change the status of BUI 3 fish populations and BUI 5 wildlife reproduction and deformities from impaired to non-impaired. Sarah explained that Shane will be presenting BUI 5 report today virtually via Microsoft Teams and Stephen is here to present BUI 3 report in person. Together, Shane and Stephen will explain the findings and the research done for each BUI (Beneficial Use Impairment) to members of the PAC in preparation for public consultation. Sarah closed her updates by encouraging members of PAC to engage and provide feedback through the public consultation period.

5. EPI Project Update since March 14, 2023 (L. Neufeld)

Laura Neufeld provided updates on the outreach activities planned in the City of Windsor for the remainder of 2023. The outreach activities include one clean up at Teedie Park along the Little River in partnership with a local business, the Festival of Hawks will take place on September 16 to 17 at Holiday Beach Conservation Area, and two community tree plantings will take place in October. In total, 40 large stock trees will be planted by community volunteers along the College Avenue Bikeway. The funding for this project is provided by the Gordie Howe International Bridge Community Benefits Plan and will take place on October 14th. Thanks to funding provided by the TD Green Spaces and the Arbor Day Foundation Program, 80 large stock trees will be planted in three public parks within the Ford City community on October 25th. Staff are looking forward to working with teachers and students

from Herman Academy who will be planting 60 trees at Polonia and AKO park during the school hours, and the community members who will be planting 20 trees at Pykes Park in the later afternoon.

Members of the Little River Enhancement group were pleased to hear about the community tree plantings taking place in Ford City. Laura added that slow-release watering gator bags will be purchased with available funding for the projects to assist with long term care of the trees. Laura closed the discussions by sharing that the City of Windsor will be incorporating the trees planted through these projects into their watering program.

6. DRCC Roundtable Updates

6.1. Little River Enhancement Group (*M. Shafer*)

Mark shared updates on the tree cutting/alteration of natural heritage by-law that was anonymously approved and sent to the Planning Department at the County of Essex. Mark followed up with the planning department, members of council and was able to confirm that the review remains in progress. The group was hopeful that this is recirculated to council in the coming months.

7. Guest Speaker – BUI #5 Wildlife Reproduction Assessment Report (S. De Solla, Environment and Climate Change Canada)

April White, Great Lakes Program Officer for Environment and Climate Change Canada, set the stage for the presentations and provided a brief history of the Detroit River AOCs, redesignations, and the remaining impairments. Reports were presented to the DRCC in May of 2023 and supported the recommendation based on the scientific findings that the fish components of BUI 3 and BUI 5 wildlife reproduction problems should no longer be deemed impaired. She further explains that the DRCC program has thus far designated 10 as not impaired and is on a good trajectory in redesignating the 4 remaining BUIs (Beneficial Use Impairments) based on sound scientific rationale.

Shane De Solla will explain the assessment completed for BUI 5 to determine whether there are issues associated with reproduction and development in aquatic wildlife. Stephen Marklevitz's will outline the status of fish populations in BUI 3. He will explain how we have met the delisting criteria by measuring very specific metrics that were established to determine impairment.

Shane De Solla began his presentation outlining the data and criterion used to assess reproductive impairments in aquatic wildlife resulting from elevated exposure to contaminants in the Detroit River AOC. In the lab, eggs of aquatic birds were incubated and hatching success was evaluated. The eggs of frogs and turtles were exposed to water and sediment collected within the AOC, and hatching success following these exposures was also evaluated. Field studies included measuring contaminant levels and comparing hatching success of birds within the AOC to sites outside the AOC. The study was focused on species feeding from the aquatic environment, in different parts of the freshwater

ecosystem, and compared them to those outside the AOC in the Great Lakes basin. The results of the study confirmed that the contaminant levels in aquatic life are not impairing reproduction in the Detroit River AOC and recommends changing the status from *impaired* to *not impaired*.

April emphasized the indicator species that provided scientific data used in evaluating the contaminate effects on reproduction for BUI 5 (Northern Leopard Frog, Black Crowned Night Heron, Snapping Turtles, Colonial Waterbirds, Tree Swallows). She explained that there is not a “unique” situation in the Detroit River AOC where we are seeing reproductive effects of contaminants and that the studies completed over the years did not suggest there was. She closed comments by encouraging support from PAC members on the recommendation for change in status. April assured members that the science will not end, and monitoring will continue through other programs.

8. Guest Speaker – BUI #3 Fish Populations Assessment Report (S. Marklevitz, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry)

Stephen began his presentation with a timeline dating back over a century of heavy development and industrialization on the Detroit River before it was named 1 of 43 Areas of Concern in 1987. Heavy development (i.e. shoreline hardening and channelization) in the late 1800s to 1900s had theoretically devastating effects on fishing populations (i.e. reports that Sturgeon populations were 1% of historic levels) and the concerns around fish contamination eventually led to population impairment status in the early 2000s.

Upon further investigation of BUI 3 it was determined by DRCC that there wasn't a tool to properly evaluate the health of the river nearly 30+ years of improvements later. In 2021 a technical team established five sub-criteria (below) using *SMART framework* and a re-assessment was successfully completed for the fish populations component of BUI 3. Sub Criteria:

1. Fish community in wetland coastal areas are comparable to fish communities in unimpaired coastal wetlands
2. The number of *adult* Lake Sturgeon is greater than 750 (note: this number may only go up as more data is collected)
3. There is no evidence of benthification of the fish community in the Detroit River (note: benthification is an overabundance of benthic and benthivorous fish species, which would be an indicator of a degraded ecosystem)
4. Creel and CPUE surveys of Walleye and Bass indicate angler catch and efforts are at or above the long-term average
5. There is evidence of ongoing and/or increased spawning activity for fishes since 2006

Stephen presented a weigh-of-evidence supporting that all five sub criteria were met. Strong evidence in the assessment supports that fish populations in the Detroit River AOC are not impaired and recommends changing the status from *impaired* to *not impaired*.

Appendices

A1. Appendix I. Meeting Attendance and Land Acknowledgment

A1.1 Land Acknowledgement

The Essex region is the traditional territory of the Caldwell First Nation, members of the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all the Original Peoples of Turtle Island - North America who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

A1.2 Meeting Attendance

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| Sarah Lanoue | Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, RAP Coordinator |
| Laura Neufeld | Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, RAP Assistant, Community Outreach Coordinator |
| Stephen Marklevitz | Canada-Ontario Agreement Lake Erie Basin, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry |
| Shane DeSolla (Virtually via Teams) | Ecotoxicologist, Environment and Climate Change Canada |
| Tom Henderson | Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, PAC Chair |
| Ian Naisbitt | Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, PAC, Little River Enhancement Group |
| Pearl Bradd | Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, PAC, Little River Enhancement Group |
| Mark Shafer | Detroit River Canadian Cleanup, PAC, Little River Enhancement Group |
| April White (Virtually via Teams) | Great Lakes Program Officer, Environment and Climate Change Canada |

Kevin Money
(Virtually via Teams)

Director of Conservation Services, Essex Region Conservation
Authority

A2 Appendix II. Action Items from March 14, 2023, Meeting

There were no action items recorded from the DRCC EPI/PAC March 14, 2023, meeting.

A3 BUI #5: Wildlife Reproduction & Deformities Status Recommendation and A4 BUI #3: Fish Population Assessment Report