

**Meeting Record:**  
**DRCC Steering & Implementation Committee Meeting**

June 19, 2024, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Hybrid – in person @ Essex County Civic Centre, 360 Fairview Ave. W, Essex, ON, N8M 1Y6,  
Committee Room C and online via Microsoft Teams

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**Welcome, introductions, approval of agenda**

Carolyn began the meeting with a land acknowledgement. Once complete, she passed the responsibility of chairing the meeting to Ted, who was at the meeting in person. Ted welcomed everyone to the annual DRCC Steering and Implementation Committee Meeting and started with introductions. Meeting attendance is included in this meeting record as Appendix I. Ted asked the group if there were any additions or changes to the agenda. Hearing none, the agenda was approved by all.

**Approval of Meeting Record from June 14, 2023**

There were no action items from the June 14, 2023 meeting. The meeting record from last June's meeting was approved by all.

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

Kate provided an update on the Four Agency Managers Committee (FAMC). She began by explaining that they had an in-person meeting a couple weeks ago where they got a tour of a project on the Michigan side of Lake St. Clair. Kate mentioned that the FAMC system has been a great model for decisions and that they are looking to adopt a similar structure in the New York Areas of Concern (AOCs) as the Detroit River AOC has come a long way since the establishment of the FAMC. Kate also noted that the body that oversees the implementation of AOCs in general is called the Great Lakes Executive Committee, who is meeting next week in Duluth, MN with a focus on Lake Superior. However, there will also be an opportunity to report out on the priorities for science and action in all AOCs.

Kate wanted to recognize progress in Detroit over the recent years. She mentioned that there has been excellent work on finishing studies and addressing delisting criteria in the AOC. She also wanted to recognize the work of the DRCC's Public Advisory Council (PAC) and their role in the establishment of the proposed National Urban Park in the Windsor Area that was part of the recent Federal budget.

April provided an update on Federal funding for actions to complete the restoration of the remaining beneficial uses in the Detroit River. She updated the group that the Great Lakes

Protection Initiative (GLPI) has changed its name to the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative (GLFEI). This is the money that the federal government uses to fund restoration initiatives in the AOC. April mentioned that ECCC continues to fund Indigenous engagement in AOCs with local Indigenous communities. Last year, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) amended agreements with Caldwell, Aamjiwnaang, and Walpole Island First Nations to double their funding for their involvement in Great Lakes issues over the next two years. This funding enables these communities to have funds to hire a part time person who will be a point person for engagement activities. ECCC has been previously told by these communities that capacity has been an issue and that having a dedicated person to respond to these engagement requests would be helpful. So, ECCC has funding in place with these communities over the next two years for engagement and capacity building within these communities.

April also mentioned that for the Detroit River AOC, two other project funding submissions to GLFEI are under review. The first project is to continue RAP governance, which is the work that has been done by Jackie and Laura. The proposal is to continue funding this work for another two years. This proposal has been reviewed and recommended for funding. April is now waiting for approval and more information regarding approved funding amounts. She informed the group that the second GLFEI project proposal was for two habitat projects on the Detroit River. Due to the high dollar amount associated with these two projects, the application will require approval from the Federal Environment Minister. Currently, these two project applications are making their way through the approval process and a decision should be made within the next several weeks.

Carolyn mentioned that at the provincial level there is possibly an announcement coming for some Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) funds for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Ted mentioned that the Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) entered into an agreement in March 2024 with the Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA) for continued support of Detroit River RAP governance. This is a two-year agreement that runs from March 2024 until February 2026. Ted mentioned that this is great news and will help continue the push towards the eventual delisting of the Detroit River AOC.

Ted also informed the group that there will be a Lake St. Clair binational conference that will be hosted on the American side of Lake St. Clair in November 2024. Since Lake St. Clair has an influence on the Detroit River, we will pass the save the date information for this conference to Committee members.

**ACTION ITEM: Jackie to pass along information about the upcoming Lake St. Clair conference to the group.**

### **BUI Status Updates**

April provided an update on the status of the four remaining impaired beneficial uses in the Detroit River AOC. Her presentation is included in Appendix II. April highlighted that since our meeting last June we haven't redesignated any BUIs but there has been a bunch of work done for the remaining beneficial uses over this time. April highlighted the progress on the remaining

BUIs – #1, #3, #5, and #14. Ted informed the group that for BUI #1, Ken Drouillard has been working on the assessment. The original draft report came in 1-2 years ago and has been reviewed extensively within our various work groups and internally and there has been a lot of effort improve this report. The assessment report identified that this BUI be redesignated to a not impaired status. We were ready to bring the report to the Steering and Implementation Committee (SIC) today but about a month ago, it was identified that there was some updated data available through the MECP fish consumption guideline program that could be incorporated into the report. A decision was made to incorporate the most up-to-date information we have within Ken's assessment report. Ken has taken a quick look at the most recent data and doesn't expect it to change the overall outcome of the report. The Research and Monitoring Work Group thought it would be prudent to use the most recent data in the analysis and therefore Ken is going to update the assessment report. The goal is to have this updated report complete by end of 2024 and then be ready to bring the report to the Steering and Implementation Committee for review next year.

For BUI #3, degradation of fish and wildlife populations, April reported that a not impaired status recommendation report was completed for the fish populations portion of this BUI and presented at last year's SIC meeting. The public and Indigenous engagement processes were then launched once the SIC approved. No comments or concerns have been expressed to date and we are in the process of wrapping up the engagement process over the summer/early fall. The fish report still needs to be reviewed by our U.S. counterparts and coordinated through the FAMC, which is a next step. Once the wildlife component of this BUI has its assessment report complete, we will combine the two reports and submit for official re-designation of this BUI.

As for the wildlife population portion of this BUI, monitoring of the marsh bird community has been on-going since 2011 and IBI scores are low, but consistent. Some preliminary analysis was done by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) to determine whether all large wetlands for monitoring were being captured and sampled. The result of this analysis indicated that all large wetlands were being sampled with the exception of the MMM marsh wetland, which has since been added. Since there hasn't been too much of a change in wetland marsh bird IBI scores, an analysis of the factors that are impacting marsh birds was completed by Birds Canada. The purpose of this analysis was to determine what could potentially be done in the AOC to improve marsh bird populations and IBI scores. The report was received in 2024 and the report recommended more wetlands and better-quality wetlands (e.g., with cattails) are needed.

April briefly described the work that has been done at the Collavino wetland by ERCA including Phragmites control and the installation of pumping infrastructure to control the water levels in this dyked wetland. Baseline habitat and marsh bird surveys will be conducted at Fighting Island and Collavino wetland in 2024 to determine if marsh bird populations are increasing in these wetlands due to management and restoration measures taken.

As for BUI #5, bird or animal deformities or reproduction problems, a recommendation report showing evidence that this beneficial use should be considered no longer impaired was presented to the SIC for concurrence last year. After that meeting, the public and Indigenous

engagement process was launched. The status report was shared and information sessions were conducted over Fall 2023 and no comments or concerns were expressed. The next step is to coordinate review through the FAMC. It is expected, barring setbacks, that the status of this BUI change from impaired to not impaired by the end of the 2024 fiscal year.

For BUI #14, loss of fish and wildlife habitat beneficial use, April informed the group that there are four specific delisting criteria for this BUI and that we've been focused as a working group on activities to evaluate the terrestrial habitat and the aquatic habitat components of this BUI (i.e., deep water spawning and other aquatic habitat). The working group has been determining where we are with the four criteria. April informed everyone that of the four criteria, the working group feels that we have met one, we're close to being complete on a second one, we are doing habitat projects for the third subcriteria, and DFO is doing a lot of mapping and model analysis to evaluate the final criteria. In terms of wetland health, CWS continues to monitor a suite of wetlands and we feel like we have achieved all of the wetland quality criteria, but are looking to improve and expand habitat availability for marsh birds.

April then provided an overview of the two habitat projects for BUI #3 and BUI #14. In January 2024, the DRCC hosted an information session with Indigenous partners regarding these projects. The purpose of this information session was to share the proposed works and solicit traditional ecological knowledge about these two project sites. April started by explaining the River Canard dyke restoration. The project plan is to stabilize the man-made finger dyke to protect the wetland complex behind it. The dyke has been breached by high water levels and is aging (approx. 35 years old). This project intends to stabilize this dyke which protects the largest wetland complex in the DR AOC behind it. This wetland is important marsh bird habitat as it has the largest wild celery bed in the AOC. April highlighted that on the engineering drawings where you see red, the repairs are dire and these will be priority.

The second project is recreating a historical, open water cattail marsh at the south end of Fighting Island. In the 1960s there was a significant cattail marsh to the south of Fighting Island, however it has since been washed away. So, the goal of the project is to create six offshore berms to help mitigate the effects of erosion caused by freighter and the velocity of the river and re-established the historical open water wetland that existed. This project is similar to the Peche Island project as the berms are intended to mitigate the effects of wave action and over time, we are expecting that the native seedbank will have the ability to grow. April mentioned that she is working with another ECCC department to do some emergent vegetation modelling to determine the potential benefits of this project with regards to marsh bird habitat and whether we need to tweak the project design to maximize the benefits.

April provided a summary of her presentation. The DRCC is in the process of finalizing the BUI #1 not impaired status recommendation report, which will include the newest fish consumption data recently released by the province. For BUI #3 (fish) and BUI #5, local and Indigenous engagement will conclude over the early summer and binational engagement is expected to start in Fall 2024. For BUI #14, an assessment of progress on the delisting criteria is well underway as is the planning of two habitat projects. The DRCC also plans to continue engaging

Indigenous communities on these projects as they progress. April informed the group that funding for the implementation of these two habitat projects has been applied for.

Ted reminded the group that we are down to 4 BUIs for the Detroit River AOC and at one point, 13/14 of the BUIs were considered impaired, so great progress has been made. Susan asked a question regarding the erosion of Fighting Island. She asked whether the DRCC is connected with the cumulative effects for marine shipping initiative by ECCC and if not, recommended that we get in touch. Jackie responded that she participated in their webinar a few weeks ago and is keeping up-to-date with their activities. Susan suggested that perhaps there is a way to protect these proposed habitat projects from further erosion through that initiative.

### **Pathway to Delisting and Peche Island Video**

Ted introduced the Pathway to Delisting document, which is an important document for the DRCC as it identifies the path forward to addressing the remaining beneficial uses. Jackie provided an overview of what the DRCC has planned for the next year and beyond. Her presentation is included as Appendix III. Jackie provided a brief overview of Ken's BUI #1 work and walked the group through the four-tiered assessment for this beneficial use. She highlighted that a not impaired status is recommended based on the application of the four tiers. For BUI #3 (fish populations) she highlighted the five sub-criteria and the evidence that was used to make the argument that these sub-criteria have been met. For the wildlife component, Jackie explained the recent Birds Canada report written by Doug Tozer. The purpose of the report was to understand local landscape limitations for marsh birds and associated remedial actions. The results of the analysis found that marsh birds prefer 1) more cattail and native vegetation over Phragmites; 2) more emergent vegetation compared to trees and shrubs in wetlands; 3) more marsh nearby and in the surrounding landscape, and 4) less urban land use nearby and in the surrounding landscape. Jackie mentioned that for BUI #5, the assessment report is complete and currently under review by Indigenous communities. Based on studies performed by ECCC on five indicator species in the Detroit River, there is little evidence of impairment of reproduction associated with contaminant-induced effects within the AOC. As a result, the recommendation for this BUI (#5) is that it no longer be considered impaired.

For BUI #14, Jackie updated the group on the GIS work that ERCA been undertaking. A few years ago, ERCA mapped the terrestrial corridors between the river and its watershed. Last year, they undertook an exercise to determine the function of these corridors. They used element occurrences of species at risk, as well as other data to do this work. The red areas on the map outline areas of high function, areas of green outlined areas of lower function. Jackie directed the group to look at the Ojibway Prairie Complex, which is highlighted in red as high functioning. This is consistent with what we know about the area and its importance. Jackie ended the presentation by providing an overview of the Peche Island project and showing the group this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkOYV2tfY5g>

Ted asked when the first Pathway to Delisting document was created. Jackie stated that it was around 2013, shortly after the Stage II document was developed and it gets updated annually.

Jackie also showed the group some before and after photos of the burn at the Collavino wetland. She highlighted that a biocontrol was released to reduce the spread of Phragmites to allow native vegetation to re-establish. Jackie showed via the photos that the results of these efforts have contributed to more open water in the wetland, improving habitat. Ted asked whether the public had concerns about the burns and whether the public understood what was being done. Kevin mentioned that the main thing you must do when conducting burns is to educate the neighbours about the project. For every burn, ERCA develops a burn plan which contains a communication strategy. The communication strategy includes things like direct mail outs of letters to adjacent land owners, media releases, and direct communication with the people who are affected. These letters and media contain information about the project, including when/where/what is happening and any associated impacts. Jackie also mentioned that for these burns to occur the weather conditions have to be perfect (i.e., the wind has to be going a certain way) so that ash doesn't rain down on people's homes, for example.

Lynn asked Kevin about the efforts to control Phragmites in the Collavino wetland. She asked whether any additional mitigation measures were implemented besides the burn such as seeding. Kevin mentioned that there was additional treatment of the Phragmites (i.e., spraying) but not any placement of additional seeds that were not in the existing seedbank. Kevin mentioned that there are cattails beginning to establish on the outer edges of the wetland from this native seedbank. He highlighted that ongoing management is required as the wetland is surrounded by Phragmites. The area around the wetland is also being seeded with native prairie seeds. Lynn would like the Phragmites management information and education be shared with Aamjiwnaang First Nation. Kevin offered to take Lynn on a tour of the site.

Kate had a question regarding the effort that goes into creating the Pathway document. Jackie mentioned that the DRCC works with their partners to see what their plans are for the upcoming year and with the DRCC work groups to determine what still needs to be done. April does a great job of mobilizing the resources within the federal government to fund and procure services required to get researchers out sampling, for example, or secure other services. The outcomes of various meetings with our stakeholders are also incorporated into this document to ensure we have the resources in place to address remaining beneficial uses.

### **Detroit River Communication & Outreach Update**

Laura provided an update on communication and outreach activities of the DRCC in 2023-24. Her presentation is included as part of Appendix III. She informed the group that the DRCC participated in 10 outreach events between the spring of 2023 and the end of winter 2024. Through these efforts thousands of individuals celebrated ongoing restoration efforts in the Detroit River AOC and learned about Detroit River history, projects, the DRCC program, and more. She informed the group that several cleanups took place in the Detroit River watershed, resulting in the removal of over 1,300 lbs of garbage. She also highlighted that at the Earth Day planting, 800 volunteers planted over 1,500 potted and native seedlings. In addition, plantings in Amherstburg, Ford City, and Sandwich Town resulted in another 250 trees planted.

Laura also highlighted the DRCC's annual Learn to Fish event that took place during licence free fishing week in July 2023. About 30 participants came out to learn to fish and learn more about the fish consumption guidelines within the Detroit River. The DRCC also hosted their annual Detroit River evening in June 2023 at the Windsor Yacht Club. At this event, our partners presented the great work being done on the Detroit River. The DRCC also purchased all tickets on the City of Windsor's boat to Peche Island for the day to provide access to the island for the community and highlight the recent habitat project completed there. Finally, Laura highlighted the DRCC's annual film screening of two Water Brothers documentaries that were shown at the Lakeshore Cinema in February 2024.

Ted asked Laura how many people the DRCC typically engages in a year. Laura estimated about 1,500 people. Jackie mentioned that the DRCC also has a monthly newsletter that has 1,000 subscribers and a strong presence on social media.

Ken mentioned that he is taking over as the Director of the School of Environment at UWindsor and that we would like to find opportunities for environmental studies students to volunteer in outreach activities. Laura offered to put Ken on the e-mail distribution list so that our outreach information can be disseminated to environmental studies students.

**ACTION ITEM: Laura to include Ken on the e-mail distribution list for future outreach events.**

Raj asked whether the DRCC keeps track of the demographics of those who attend their events. Laura responded that they do not. Jackie added that the events take place throughout the watershed, and in many different, diverse communities (i.e., Sandwich Town and Ford City) which offer the opportunity to attract participants from various backgrounds. Raj informed the group the IJC is focused on a project examining the social dimension of Great Lakes revitalization. Raj mentioned he is happy to share more with the group if they are interested. Jackie also mentioned she sits on diversity, equity, and inclusion meetings that the Michigan AOC Public Advisory Councils have to try to learn new things and apply them to our outreach efforts. Ted suggested Raj send over a summary of the IJC social dimension project to include in the minutes.

**ACTION ITEM: Raj to send information about the IJC's social dimension of Great Lakes revitalization project for distribution**

**Update: Raj sent the below description:**

**The goal/objective of this project is to identify and understand the characteristics of coupled ecological and human systems that have and will create the interdisciplinary capacity and social and organizational potential among communities and economies across the Great Lakes region. A focus of this project is to examine the current experience of practitioners (e.g, natural resource managers, city planners, elected officials, and others) whose actions affect ecology and society in Great Lakes communities and link those practices to communities and local decision making (e.g., zoning or land use, infrastructure choices, placement of parks and other amenities).**

**A fundamental premise of this project is to identify and characterize the material and long-lasting human-centric and well-being benefits of water quality from ecological restoration and sediment clean-up. This project will further, identify community resources (e.g., leadership, skills, knowledge, values, relationships, networks, leadership, etc. ) that strengthen and contribute to enhanced leadership, engagement, stewardship, and thus accelerate and support water quality outcomes. The project will identify and deploy community capacity indicators across the six (6) selected communities. As a result, the project will assess leadership, knowledge and skills; culture and values; engagement; networks, social capital and investment; and related ecosystem/water quality outcomes. When built into an analytical framework, this approach could ultimately enhance community capacity, community engagement, and related investment(s).**

Ted asked whether the DRCC does more traditional forms of outreach for promotions and events. Jackie mentioned that they used to put posters in libraries and community centres to advertise events before COVID. However, the DRCC hasn't done this since and will commit to doing so going forward.

### **Update on Indigenous Engagement**

Jackie provided an update on Indigenous engagement over the past year. Her presentation is included as part of Appendix III. Jackie informed the group that ECCC has provided funding for Aamjiwnaang First Nation (AFN), Caldwell First Nation (CFN), and Walpole Island First Nation (WIFN) for community engagement on the restoration of the Detroit River AOC through the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative (GLFEI). This funding is for 2 years and allows the Nations to increase their capacity to participate in community engagement in the restoration of the Detroit and St. Clair River AOCs as well as the LAMPs. In Fall 2023, the DRCC sent out the BUI #3 (fish) and BUI #5 (deformities) assessment reports to seven Indigenous communities and the Métis Nation of Ontario for review and comment. We have followed up since then regarding the proposed status change for these BUIs and continue to engage with the Nations to coordinate engagement. In October, we hosted a public open house on these BUIs and invited Indigenous communities. In January 2024, the DRCC hosted a virtual information session with Caldwell, Aamjiwnaang, and Walpole Island First Nations regarding 2 proposed habitat projects in the Detroit River. In February 2024, April from ECCC attended an in-person meeting with CFN to discuss AOC related activities. Jackie also attended an Open House at the WIFN Heritage Centre to give a presentation and table display on BUI #3 and BUI #5.

Jackie advised the group on upcoming activities which include getting input from the communities on the BUI #1 assessment report, once complete; continuing to provide updates on the planning and implementation of the two proposed habitat projects; and finalizing comments/input on BUI #3 (fish) and BUI #5 reports.

Tom informed the group that he watched Chief Duckworth from CFN's presentation at the Senate hearings for Bill C-248 (the National Urban Park in Windsor Bill). Tom was impressed with her clear, intelligent, and productive presentation and asked that the Caldwell representatives



convey Tom's good wishes and compliments to Chief Duckworth as she was a wonderful representative of CFN.

Zack informed the group that the funding from ECCC has enabled Caldwell to get consent to hire a water specific consultation coordinator, or water guardian. He informed the group that the posting for the position is closed and interviews were planned for the upcoming week. Zack mentioned that this person will also be responsible for developing and implementing a coastal water monitoring program and asked if anyone had input on this to get in touch with him. He informed everyone that there is a large amount of community and youth interest in water related projects. Susan mentioned that the youth are interested in programs, such as those that Raj mentioned earlier. Susan extended an invite for Raj to visit CFN in the Fall. Jackie also mentioned that the Detroit River AOC program and Raj have discussed a potential collaboration on an event with Indigenous communities.

### **Working Group Updates**

April informed the group that the Research and Monitoring Work Group and the Habitat Work Group have been combined due to only four beneficial uses remaining.

### **Deep Learning Neural Network Model to Interpolate PCBs in sediments of the Detroit River**

Ken provided an update on research he has been doing in the Detroit River to interpolate PCB concentrations in sediments. Ken informed the group that the objective of this project was to develop artificial intelligence tools to predict PCB and other priority contaminant concentrations in sediment in the Detroit River and ultimately generate a series of high-resolution maps that can help understand how some of the U.S. sediment restoration activities are going to affect sediment PCB concentrations. This information can help to develop legitimate system wide mass balances for sediment inventories that can figure out how much of the contaminants are going to be removed due to the planned sediment remediation projects on the U.S. side of the river. This will provide insight into what the benefits of the projects will be to the Canadian side of the Detroit River (i.e., reduced fish consumption advisories, etc.).

Ken mentioned that there are many factors that affect sediment contamination in the Detroit River (things like grain size and TOC), and currently, the most common method used for interpolating patterns of pollutants is kriging, but kriging has limitations as it usually only considers longitude and latitude, not physical and chemical factors. Machine learning networks can overcome these limitations. They can produce non-linear models that have high predictive accuracy. These tools are starting to be adopted for applications in water quality and sediment contamination assessments. One of the benefits of the machine learning model is that you are able to have multiple inputs. The model developed by Ken's had 121 inputs to better predict the positions of contaminated sediments within the Detroit River. Model trials, however, indicated that 121 inputs were not necessary and through the model trial process, 18 variables were decided upon (things like distance to nearest U.S. or Canadian shoreline, closest distance to most upstream island, velocity, and flow directionality). This model had a good fit between the predicted and observed PCB concentrations. The results of the kriging using the same data

showed a poor fit. The machine learning model was shown to be twofold more predictive than kriging.

To apply the machine learning model, the Detroit River was divided into 10,000 cells of 10 by 10 m and the predictive algorithm was used to estimate the concentration of PCBs, mercury, and other priority contaminants for each cell. When the machine learning model results were compared to kriging for PCBs, most of the high concentrations were restricted to the nearshore zone of the U.S. side, as opposed to the kriging, where there are larger high concentration zones throughout the river. Many of the high values are found in areas where sediment remediation is planned on the U.S. side of the river. The kriging also shows quite a bit of mixing in the channelized portion of the Detroit River, with higher concentrations being predicted, which becomes exacerbated when looking at mercury. For mercury, most of the concentrations on the Canadian side of the Detroit River are less than probable effect concentrations, whereas on the U.S. side, there are high values, especially in the downstream areas and the Trenton channel areas of the river. When contrasted to kriging, a much larger fraction of the Canadian side of the Detroit River is over predicted.

Using these results, we can look at how much contamination is contained within the proposed U.S. sediment remediation projects. Results show that only 7% of the area of the Detroit River is proposed to have sediment remediation activities, however, these areas account for approximately 44% of the PCB mass in the Detroit River. Only about 2% of the PCB mass of sediment in the Detroit River are found in the Canadian waters of the river, which reinforces some of the conclusions for the assessment for the fish consumption BUI. It is unlikely that fish on the Canadian side of the river are picking up PCBs from the Canadian waters of the river. If fish are picking up PCBs it is likely they are crossing the channel to the U.S. side of the river and picking up the contaminants from there. The next steps include using the model information to determine how Canadian beneficial use impairments might be improved with the completion of the proposed U.S. sediment remediation projects.

Kate reminded Ken that on the Canadian side of the AOC, ECCC and MECP applied their Canada-Ontario Assessment of Sediment Toxicity decision making framework which relies on four lines of evidence including sediment toxicity. These data are publicly available, so if Ken needs additional data, this could be a potential source, although it is not recent (2008-2013). Ken stated he was familiar with the benthos assessment and worked with Lee and Danielle to collect some of the toxicity assay data as part of that assessment report. Kate said that if he worked with Lee and Danielle, Ken likely has the sediment toxicity data. The benthos work found that that PCBs are not a concern in the Detroit River except in Turkey Creek, which have since been cleaned up.

Zack asked to see Ken's presentation in mid-late July once they have their new water guardian hired as some of this information would be beneficial for Ken to explain. Jackie offered to send Zack Ken's presentation in advance of their meeting so that the new water guardian at Caldwell can review beforehand.

**ACTION ITEM: Ken to set meeting with CFN to discuss presentation with new water guardian and Jackie to send Ken's slideshow for review beforehand.**

Lynn asked if this group has ever considered looking at PFAS in the water and sediments. Ken said that there has been a lot more research in the U.S. on PFAS because of their change in water quality standards, which include PFAS in water. There are a few studies that have reported on PFAS in the Detroit River, but they are limited in spatial scope and sampling intensity. Ken is not able to complete an analysis like the machine learning on PFAS in the Detroit River as there is currently not enough data to do so. Kevin added that ERCA put in an application under the chemicals of emerging concern stream of the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative to collect more data on PFAS in water in the Detroit River and its tributaries. Kate informed the group that the Area of Concern program was established to deal with legacy contaminants (mercury, PCBs, etc.) from before environmental regulation. The Area of Concern program does not include PFAS, but the federal and provincial governments are aware of it and are monitoring for these chemicals. There are a number of researchers out of Hamilton who work on PFAS and are actively studying it. ECCC also has a huge sample bank of sediment and tissue samples from wildlife that can be used when newer contaminants come to light. They will take the old samples and try to figure out what has been happening over time. April added that PFAS is a chemical of mutual concern so there is binational coordination in developing a strategy through the chemicals of mutual concern annex under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Jackie also mentioned that as part of the film screening the DRCC hosted in February, a documentary on PFAS was shown. The documentary highlights some of the work ECCC is doing on PFAS. Jackie offered to send the link to the documentary (<https://thewaterbrothers.ca/the-forever-chemicals/>) to the group.

**ACTION ITEM: Jackie to send information regarding PFAS documentary to Lynn.**

### **Public Advisory Council Report**

Tom provided an update on the activities of the PAC over the past year. In November 2023, the PAC sent a letter to the Michigan Department of Transportation in support of Windsor City Council's objection to the Ambassador Bridge's request to transport banned corrosive and flammable materials across the river on the bridge. The Gordie Howe Bridge is designed to carry such materials and once it is open, all corrosive materials will be transported over the river using this bridge. The Michigan Department of Transportation says their decision on this will come down in May 2025, almost the same time the bridge is expected to open.

On December 29, 2023, a spill of contaminants was discovered near the mouth of Little River. Its source was around Tecumseh Road and the contaminants flowed north. Ian Nesbitt of the Little River Enhancement Troup was contacted by the Windsor Star and others to observe the cleanup efforts. The City cleaned it up right away and the spill was contained.

Last year, the PAC supported the Governor of Michigan and environmental groups in their campaign to shut down the seven-year old Enbridge Line 5 pipeline which transports crude and

natural gas beneath the Straits of Mackinac. The Governor and Environmental groups argued that a break in the pipeline would put at risk 700 miles of downstream shoreline and affect drinking water throughout the lower lakes, including the Detroit River. Indigenous communities on both sides of the border have repeatedly called for decommissioning. Tom looked up Enbridge's latest response and they claim to have the technology and know how to build a replacement pipeline under the straits, but there is no indication if this is happening.

Last spring, a PAC member discovered an illegal dumping on the banks of Little River in Little River Dragonfly Park. City officials were contacted and came out to determine if the asphalt dumping was on City property and it turns out that it was. The PAC was later assured that the materials dumped there by the offending party would be cleaned up. This dumping has been in place since July 2023, so almost a year. The Windsor Star was contacted and they published a story on the dumping and its cleanup. The City promises that the dumpage will be removed by the end of June and if it is not done, the city will hire a contractor to do the job and bill the property owner for its removal. Zack offered any assistance from CFN needed to pressure the City to deal with the dumpage appropriately. Susan wondered whether the asphalt will be checked for habitat for snakes or other animals. Kevin recommended that the PAC have a conversation with the city naturalist, Karen Alexander, to ensure that the city and/or proponent appropriately removes this asphalt.

Tom informed the group that the Canadian PAC continues to participate virtually in U.S. PAC meetings put on by Friends of the Detroit River. Jackie also attends and has a recurring spot on the agenda informing them of what is happening on the Canadian side of the river.

### **Other items/ Closing Remarks/ Next Meeting**

Ted remarked that these meetings are held annually, so the next one is expected to take place in June 2025. Ted ended the meeting.

### **Appendix I. Attendance**

Raj Bejankiwar	International Joint Commission
Ted Briggs	Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP)
Zack Hamm	Caldwell First Nation
Tom Henderson	Public Advisory Council, Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Courtney Jackson	Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Laura Neufeld	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Carolyn O'Neill	Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP)
Dennis Plain	Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Lynn Rosales	Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Jackie Serran	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Susan Sullivan	Caldwell First Nation
Kate Taillon	Environment and Climate Change Canada
Kevin Webb	City of Windsor

April White  
Naomi Williams

Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Walpole Island First Nation