

DRAFT Meeting Agenda
DRCC Public Advisory Council & EPI Work Group

February 24 2025 – 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre, 3277 Sandwich Street Windsor ON
In Person & Virtual via Microsoft Teams
[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Welcome, introductions, approval of agenda, land acknowledgement

Tom began the meeting at 4:32pm. He thanked everyone for coming and shared there are special guests in attendance including Peter Berry, Harbourmaster with the Windsor Port Authority, Mike Fisher from the Friends of Ojibway Prairie, and Tim Byrne, with the Essex Region Conservation Authority. The meeting attendance is listed as Appendix III. The land acknowledgement was shared by Jackie and included as Appendix I. Jackie changed the Little River Enhancement Group agenda item regarding Candidate Natural Heritage Site # 39 aka Windsor Airport Woodlands from the round table updates to 4 (d) as part of the PAC update.

Review of October 16, 2024, Meeting Report and Action Items

The meeting record from October 16, 2024, was approved, no changes were brought forward. There were no action items from the October 16, 2024, meeting.

Guest speaker, Peter Berry, Windsor Port Authority

Peter Berry provided a presentation on behalf of the Windsor Port Authority (WPA) sharing some of the current work being done in their jurisdiction on the Detroit River. Currently, WPA is working on establishing Morterm Terminal to receive shipping containers locally. This site is used for industrial storage, and the slip that is there is infilled with unfortunate material. To prepare the site for shipping containers, WPA applied to funding to infill the slip. WPA is working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to support any fish habitat considerations required for the project. Fish habitat offsetting for the Morterm Terminal is being considered at Ojibway Shores. Parks Canada requires multiple studies and impact assessments, including an archaeological one starting in June this year. Terrawild Solutions is helping develop species at risk projects in partnership with GLIER to support cost savings and document project success for spawning and shoreline protection. The new administration in the United States is impacting much of the work Peter oversees in his role. American environmental agencies and their oversight is eroding, and tariffs are impacting the trades of goods and services that come through the Detroit River. Last, he mentioned that the Windsor Detroit Bridge Authority (WDBA) will be announcing this week that they are supporting funding towards a fishing pier at the end of Mill Street. This provides accessible fishing for people in Sandwich. The pier design represents collaboration between a variety of stakeholders including Indigenous groups. Peter ended his presentation by thanking everyone for attending the PAC meeting and caring about the Detroit River.

PAC Update since October 16 2024

Ambassador Bridge hazardous materials

Tom shared that since October, approvals for the transportation of hazardous materials have gone through by authorities. So far, there have been no accidents, and we can assume this is being managed appropriately and hope this doesn't change.

Opposition to the Enbridge Line 5 Pipeline Under the Straits of Mackinac

This pipeline runs from Wisconsin, and the concern is that if it fails, the Detroit River would be compromised. Governor Whitmer is opposed to the plan to upgrade the infrastructure. In February, the Army Corps of Engineers identified over 600 energy and other infrastructure projects that could be fast-tracked under President Trump's declaration of a national energy emergency, including Line 5.

Friends of Ojibway Prairie (FOOP): ONUP Update: Bill C-248 and Prorogation

Mike Fisher provided an update on ONUP since the last meeting together. His presentation is Appendix IV. In the last few months, partners and stakeholders involved in ONUP have been busy. In the fall of 2024, a stakeholder meeting took place with Indigenous partners through Parks Canada. In addition, discussions regarding pursuing a hybrid model with both legislation and policy have been brought to the table. There is ongoing patrol of Ojibway Shores with Indigenous groups to ensure nothing is compromising the environmental integrity of the site. Parks Canada is involved in environmental assessment work as well as new sign installation. The hope is that the park will be established in fall 2025, and this year, the UWindsor National Urban Park Hub is closing, and partners are wondering what comes next. Regarding Bill C248 brought forward by MP Brian Masse, he promises to continue to advocate for the ONUP in the new parliament. The intent is to amend the bill and revisit for a spring Senate review after parliament resumes. Prorogation of Parliament partially kills the bill. He concluded his update by saying there is still lots of work to do on policy, partnerships, advocacy, municipal engagement, management, funding etc.

Candidate Natural Heritage Site # 39 aka Windsor Airport Woodlands

On behalf of Ian, Gina shared that the Lil' Reg continues to monitor and advocate for the forested lands at the Airport. Tim Byrne shared that ERCA was approached in 2022, about the development of the battery plant. This proposal included removing the westerly forest system, a 20-acre parcel of PSW. ERCA had suggested to the City Mayor's office (while being restrained to comment on planning documents due to recent Conservation Authority Act changes), that while ERCA cannot comment or regulate from a natural heritage perspective, staff can oversee regulation from a hazard feature perspective. The only mechanism that you can develop is through a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO), which is not an easy process. Should the province issue an MZO and eradicate natural heritage features, ERCA would issue a permit to develop. This is not going to be economical or easy as compensation would be required. ERCA uses guidance developed by the Toronto Conservation Authority, and would have to argue a 2:1 or 40 acres compensation on site, or recommend an offsite compensation of 3:1 or 4:1. ERCA says this site is regulated, it should not be touched, and avoidance is the recommended course of action.

DRCC Updates

Jackie provided an overview of the BUIs and their status on the Canadian side of the Detroit River Area of Concern. Her slides are included as Appendix V. She confirmed that four BUIs remain impaired, and they will be the focus over the next few years to complete the AOC project.

1. **BUI # 1 - Restrictions on Fish Consumption:** Jackie mentioned that an assessment has been completed by Dr. Ken Drouillard at the University of Windsor for this BUI. Ken is currently in the process of incorporating 2024 data into the assessment, but the initial assessment results indicate that there are no local actions that can be completed to improve advisories for indicator species in the Detroit River and therefore, this BUI is recommended to have a status change to not impaired. Over the next year or so, the DRCC will begin public engagement on this beneficial use.
2. **BUI # 3 (fish component Under Review) – Degraded Fish & Wildlife Populations:** Jackie reminded the group that wildlife populations are still impaired, but the public review of the fish populations report is complete and that the DRCC is waiting for the wildlife component to be completed before sending to government agencies for a not impaired status. Jackie informed the group that remaining actions for the wildlife component of this beneficial use include implementing the two planned habitat projects in the river – one at Fighting Island and one at the Canard marshes – to re-establish cattails and improve marsh bird populations.
3. **BUI # 5 (Under Review) - Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproduction Problems:** This beneficial use report was presented to the Four Agency Managers Committee (FAMC) this Fall. This begins the process of engaging our U.S. colleagues on the recommendation that the status of this beneficial use be changed from impaired to not impaired. Beneficial use re-designation reports are reviewed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Michigan Department of Energy, Great Lakes and the Environment (EGLE). Experts from these two agencies provide input on the report. These comments will be incorporated and concerns addressed. The report will then be sent to the Federal and Provincial governments for official status change from impaired to not impaired, likely this year at some point.
4. **BUI # 14 – Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat:** Jackie provided an overview of the two anticipated habitat projects on the Detroit River. Funding of \$5.3 million has been secured for the implementation from the federal government through the Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative (GLFEI). Six sheltering islands will be constructed on the south end of Fighting Island with the goal to create a calm water area and restore submerged and immersed native aquatic vegetation previously abundant in the area prior to erosion of the marsh. Also, the Canard River Dyke Repair will take place to restore and stabilize the finger dyke that has eroded away. The wetland cell protected by this feature supports some of the most abundant wild celery beds in the river, which is an important food source for many species of waterfowl. The plan is to implement the Canard River Dyke project in 2025, with the implementation of the Fighting Island project in 2026.

EPI Project Update since October 2024

Gina shared a summary of community stewardship efforts in the City of Windsor from 1990 to 2025 undertaken by many partners and groups. The collective efforts resulted in 55 litter cleanups, 19 native plant gardens, 173 community tree plantings and close to 49,000 native trees and shrubs planted, primarily through Lil'Reg initiatives in Little River. Also, more than 750 pounds of garbage was removed from local watersheds. Volunteers from ADM Cares cleaned up along Belle River, Pike Creek, Little River, Turkey Creek and Canard River in 2024 as part of the ADM Cares stewardship partnership with ERCA. In October, the Gordie Howe Community Benefits provided funding support for ERCA to plant 50 large native hardwood trees along the Ojibway Parkway walking trail, fall 2024. The City of Windsor continued planting additional trees, connecting Morton to Broadway along the trail. She wrapped up her update by sharing outreach plans for 2025 including Earth Day celebrations, four litter cleanups, tree plantings, an environmental walking tour of Sandwich, the Detroit River Evening, Learn to Fish, Peche Island Day and outreach events for BUI #1 and BUI #5. Her presentation is part of Appendix V.

Roundtable updates from partners, questions, and discussion

Derek explained the Windsor Essex Environmental Priorities (WEEP) is a coalition established early last year, made up of local groups. Focusing on climate action. Mark mentioned that a tree cutting by-law is still stuck in limbo at the County and municipal levels. Jonathan mentioned that the snakes that were zoo-reared are in hibernation sites in the Ojibway Prairie. His team will do counts in the spring to determine if their techniques were successful.

Wrap up and next meeting

Tom ended the meeting at 6:25pm and said that the next one would be called by the Chair based on the need. Perhaps it could be in the fall, and the DRCC team would continue to communicate with the PAC on all projects mentioned today via e-mail until we meet again.

Appendix I. 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.

Appendix II. Action Items from October 16, 2024, Meeting:

There was no action items recorded from the DRCC EPI/PAC October 16, 2024, meeting.

Appendix III. Meeting Attendance

Gina Pannunzio	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Jackie Serran	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Tom Henderson	Public Advisory Council - Chair
Peter Berry	Windsor Port Authority
Pearl Bradd	Public Advisory Council
Tim Byrne	Essex Region Conservation Authority
Derek Coronado	Citizens Environment Alliance
Frank Butler	Citizens Environment Alliance
Philippa von Ziegenweidt	Citizens Environment Alliance
Mark Shafer	Little River Enhancement Group
Elaine Price	Public Advisory Council
Kathy O'Brien	Member of the public
Amanda Lim	Member of the public
Chris Hodare	Unifor Local 200/Joint Workplace Environment Committee
Mike Fisher	Friends of Ojibway Prairie
Tania Jobin	Town Councilor Ward 5, Town of Tecumseh
Joe Bachetti	Deputy Mayor, Town of Tecumseh
Jonathan Choquette	Wildlife Preservation Canada
Cheryl Hardcastle	Member of the public
Ryan Graham	Member of the public
Mike Walsh	Member of the public
Patricia McGorman	Member of the public
Elsie Smith	Member of the public
Rosella D'Agostini	Member of the public

