Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
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Final Meeting Record
DRCC Public Advisory Council & EPI Work Group
October 1 2025 – 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre, 3277 Sandwich Street Windsor ON

Welcome, introductions, approval of agenda, land acknowledgement
Tom began the meeting at 4:35pm, welcoming everyone. A round table of introductions followed, with the meeting attendance listed as Appendix I. Present at the meeting is Madison Dugdale, who is the newly appointed DRCC RAP Coordinator. Everyone gave her a warm welcome and she shared her contact information. Her first official day is October 15 2025.

Review of February 24, 2025, Meeting Report and Action Items
The meeting record from February 24 2025 was approved. There were no actions items to review from that meeting.

Guest speaker, John Hartig, University of Windsor
Tom introduced John Hartig as the guest speaker for the meeting. John shared a video called "Burning River" based on John's book of the same name. This is the first in the series "The Grass Roots Effect" presented by The Humbug Film Group. This episode illustrates how several major river fires were the catalyst that sparked a grassroots groundswell of citizen participation, which in turn lead to the first Earth Day, and the modern-day environmental movement. Due to technical difficulties, the PAC viewed the film on mute, while John interpreted, shared some of the history and events causing the fires on the rivers and drew parallels to the PAC's advocacy work and protecting Ojibway Shores. The link to watch John Hartig's presentation from The Humbug Film Group film premier "Burning Rivers" is here: https://web-extract.constantcontact.com/v1/thumbnail?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.ytimg.com%2Fvi%2F0dGLV8dkBpA%2Fhqdefault.jpg.

Phil commented that the Rouge River is an AOC, and links to the Detroit River, a binational AOC. He suggested that the PAC receive an update on the status of the Rouge River remediation and restoration in the future.

PAC Update since February 24, 2025
Tom shared that the Gordie Howe International Bridge Community Benefits Plan initiatives in Sandwich are wrapping up as the bridge inches closer to completion. Gina shared a summary of some of the environmental outreach the DRCC and ERCA have undertaken as part of the community benefits program. This is part of her EPI report.

Little River Enhancement Group (Lil' Reg)

Ian shared that recently, members of Lil' Reg attended the Airport Woodlands, Airport Employment Lands Phase 2 Open House hosted by the City of Windsor and the consultant. Their report provided a

recommendation to naturalize a section in between two of the fragmented forests on the airport property, and create a buffer, amidst the suggested surrounding development. A discussion took place regarding the 2013/14 restoration efforts the PAC, Lil' Reg, DRCC, ERCA and the public supported, with the efforts mowed under and discovered sometime in 2018. Stormwater design is an important interest of the PAC members as well as the buffer (30m) to ensure nature has a place on the property, as the development pressures are high in this area. Ian's slide showing the proposed map is in Appendix II.

Tom added that on behalf of the PAC, he sent an e-mail out to Jim Morrison, Councilor Ward 10, City of Windsor, which included his comments to the consultant collecting feedback. The message applauded the recommendation for preserving the existing natural heritage at the airport and enhancing the buffer and connection of two of the fragmented forests.

Friends of Ojibway Prairie (FOOP)

Mike shared that the Ojibway National Urban Park (ONUP) efforts are ongoing. Most recently, FOOP reached out to MP Irek Kusmierczyk to request a response for an update on the project. Everything is still in the planning and designation process, following the federal government's significant funding, and earlier announcement of its opening in 2025. He also shared that FOOP welcomed the Ontario Nature Executive Director Andrés Jiménez Monge during his recent visit to Windsor. They toured sites within the Ojibway Prairie Complex as well as the Herb Gray Parkway.

Citizens Environment Alliance (CEA)

Derek shared that CEA has been one of many groups that have nominated radionuclides for designation as a Chemical of Mutual Concern (CMC) under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). There have been multiple rounds of recommendations citing the need to establish better monitoring and regulatory frameworks regarding these substances in the Great Lakes. Canada and American nuclear regulatory agencies are recommending against the designation. Environmental and public health groups are saying that the existing regulations are not enough to address the risks and are still waiting for a final decision.

DRCC Updates

Gina shared there are 3 BUIs remaining as impaired, and they will be the focus over the next few years to complete the AOC project.

1. **BUI # 1 - Restrictions on Fish Consumption:** the assessment has been completed by Dr. Ken Drouillard at the University of Windsor for this BUI. 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. The SIC approved the DRCC to begin public and Indigenous engagement in June, which will begin in the new year.
2. **BUI # 3 (fish component Under Review) – Degraded Fish & Wildlife Populations:** 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. 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 accepted by the COA Leads and is now redesignated as not impaired. A celebration will take place soon to share the work that went into this redesignation.

4. **BUI # 14 – Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat:** 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 immerged 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. Implementation of the Canard River Dyke project has begun, and the implementation of the Fighting Island project will begin in 2026.

A brief discussion took place regarding the criteria the DRCC is using to evaluate terrestrial habitat progress as part of the RAP. Gina suggested that a deep dive into the habitat BUI, delisting and sub-criteria, project summaries and work left to do could be a future agenda item for the PAC.

EPI Project Update since February 24, 2025

Gina shared some of the outreach initiatives that have been held since the last meeting in February. The slides with this information are Appendix II of the meeting record. Since February, the DRCC has participated in the Earth Day Malden Park event and multiple cleanups and an environmental walking tour as part of the Gordie Howe International Bridge Community Benefits Plan. The Detroit River Evening was held in June, followed by the Learn to Fish the Detroit River event in July and Peche Island Day in August. There is one final community tree planting event held on Saturday November 1, 2025, at College Avenue Bikeway from 10am to 12pm as part of the Gordie Howe International Bridge Community Benefits Plan.

Roundtable updates from partners, questions, and discussion

Jonathan shared that Wildlife Preservation Canada has been undertaking research about Blanding's Turtles as well as other reptiles locally, focusing on habitat loss and road mortality. Through tracking and monitoring, their team is expanding their knowledge of these species at risk and is working with partners on efforts to protect them. They focused on Blanding's Turtles in Collavino in particular, and shared this update on their website: Highway to shell - Wildlife Preservation Canada News and Events.

Mike shared that the Ojibway Prairie Complex, and Ojibway Shores will be highlighted in the November/December issue of Canadian Geographic. In addition, he attended the September 15, 2025, meeting regarding Peche Island at Riverside Library. Counselor Angelo Marignani put forward a motion to City of Windsor council to establish a Peche Island Management Plan. This would provide an approach that maintains natural heritage on the island while also considering the recreational value that the public is requesting be addressed.

Wrap up and next meeting

Tom wrapped up the meeting and said that the next one will likely be sometime in the new year.

Appendix I. Meeting Attendance

Madison Dugdale	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
Gina Pannunzio	Detroit River Canadian Cleanup
John Hartig	University of Windsor
Ian Naisbitt	Little River Enhancement Group
Tom Henderson	Public Advisory Council (Chair)
Mike Fisher	Friends of Ojibway Prairie
Mark Shafer	Little River Enhancement Group
Kathy Mac Eachern	Member of the public
Rosella D'Agostini	Member of the public
Derek Coronado	Citizens Environment Alliance
Dave Munro	Public Advisory Council
Jonathan Choquette	Wildlife Preservation Canada
John Tomlinson	Member of the public
Phil Roberts	Citizens Environment Alliance
Patricia McGorman	Public Advisory Council

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 February 24, 2025, Meeting:

No action items recorded from the DRCC EPI/PAC February 24, 2025, meeting.