



## ST. LAWRENCE RIVER RESTORATION COUNCIL MEETING

*Wednesday, February 10th*

*1:00pm to 3:00pm*

### MINUTES

#### **Present:**

Marco Vincelli (Chair - Citizen); Abraham Francis (MCA); Brendan Jacobs (RRCA); Chris Moran (Citizen); Dale Phippen (Citizen); Dorothy Hamilton (SDG-OWA); Elaine Kennedy (Citizen); Emma Tahirali (MECP); Idalia Milan (EOHU); Jake La Rose (MNRF); Jeff Ridal (RI); John Towndrow (Transition Cornwall +); Kristin Geater (ECCC); Leigh McGaughey (RI); Matt Windle (RI); Patricia O'Hara (GRN); Richard Pilon (RRCA); Sara Varty (ECCC); Stephanie Jaworski (South Glengarry); Will Robertson (Citizen); Bill Smirle (ALUS); Georgia Bock (RAP Coordinator); Britney Bourdages (MCA RAP Coordinator)

**Observers:** Jessica Jock (SRMT); Aimee Benedict (SRMT); James Lehnen (NYSDEC); Christopher Fidler (DEC); Joff Cote (MNRF); Christina Collard (RI)

**Regrets:** Andrew Morley (MECP); Candice McKay (MECP); Karen Cooper (GRN); Keith Leclaire (MCA); Benoit Lebeau (OMAFRA); Mark Kaddie (Citizen); Nick Cox (Citizen); Joe Arthur (Cornwall Lunker Club); Mike Fawthrop (City of Cornwall); Nick Cox (Citizen)

- 1. Call to Order and Introductions**
- 2. Introduction of Marco Vincelli**
- 3. Introduction of Georgia Bock**
- 4. Approval of the Agenda**

**Motion:** Be it resolved that the Agenda of the February 10, 2021 meeting be approved as amended.

**Moved:** Dale Phippen

**Seconded by:** Richard Pilon

**Result:** Carried

## 5. Approval of the Minutes from September 30, 2020

**Motion:** Be it resolved that the Minutes of the September 30, 2020 meeting be approved as amended.

**Moved:**

**Seconded by:**

**Result:** Not Carried

**Action:** Georgia Bock will recirculate minutes after making minor changes

## 6. St. Lawrence AOC Massena/Akwesasne Fish Tumour and Other Deformities BUI Status and Assessment Process – Jessica Jock, St. Regis Mohawk Council

Presentation will be circulated afterwards. Summary provided of work conducted for the Fish Tumour BUI with “Unknown, needs further assessment status”:

There were 470 fish sampled in three years (2012, 2013 and 2014). In 2012 incident rates exceeded 5% (delisting criteria) in both reference and AOC sites. In 2013 and 2014 there was no significant difference between AOC and reference sites, with no tumours observed. It was difficult to catch brown bullhead in the St. Lawrence River to use as comparison. White sucker was instead used in some instances.

Community public perception surveys were conducted. When anglers see external lesions, they think water is polluted and the fish are not safe to eat. Public perception: really important to have these conversations.

Next steps: (1) re-evaluating removal criteria for language consistency; (2) multi-agency framework discussion for Fish Tumour BUI; (3) draft the U.S domestic portion of Fish Tumour Report and include section on public perception; (4) continue to engage public, and inform significance of observed external anomalies found on fish in AOC; (5) one more year verification sampling post- Grasse River Superfund Remedy Completion (2022 or 2023).

### Discussion:

- It would be great to focus on community outreach this year with coordination by both SRMT and MCA. Both MCA and SRMT are on-board, it is more difficult to do community outreach during the pandemic
- When calculating tumour rates, there was a size limitation; SRMT were targeting 3-6-year-old fish (Jessica can check on details and get back to Sara)
- Note that criteria being used in Cornwall AOC is 2% incidence, rather than the 5% criteria being used by the Massena RAP. Noted that this is important to look at moving forward. SRMT intends to look at removal criteria and see what is most appropriate

- One more year of surveys to be completed (final verification). Final year verification is also to address public perception
- For documents and more information please visit:
  - <https://www.srmt-nsn.gov/environment/remediation-restoration/st-lawrence-river-area-of-concern/beneficial-use-impairments/brown-bullhead-fish-Tumour-bui>
  - \*\*\*Go to “Remediation and Restoration” under Environment Tab click on St. Lawrence River Area of Concern at Massena/Akwesasne\*\*\*
- Contacts: Aimee Benedict, SRMT RAP Co-coordinator: [aimeebenedict@srmt-nsn.gov](mailto:aimeebenedict@srmt-nsn.gov) for questions or further information. Jessica Jock, Program Manager, Remediation and Restoration: [Jessica.jock@srmt-nsn.gov](mailto:Jessica.jock@srmt-nsn.gov)

## 7. Business Arising

- Water quality group to contact Aevitas regarding recent testing for PCB releases

Brendan Jacobs will draft letter to send to Aevitas and cc Elaine Kennedy who is the chair of the Aevitas Public Liaison Committee

- Kristin Geater to present BUI redesignation process at next SLRRC meeting

ECCC is currently updating this presentation. **Action: Kristin Geater** will present an update at the next SLRRC meeting.

- Elaine Kennedy to follow up with MNRF – Kemptville District to find out the process for informing people of the changes to PSW boundaries, the consultation process, and how the SLRRC can become part of these consultations

Elaine contacted John Boos, MNRF, on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Discussion:

- John Boos did not indicate that if further changes were made that he would contact the SLRRC
  - The overall process is scientific and does not go out for public consultation
  - RRCA noted that these applications do not occur that often
  - The SLRRC would still like to be informed of proposed changes
  - Brendan committed that if there are any future changes proposed in the AOC he would try to update the SLRRC
  - The vast majority of landowners obey regulations when it comes to wetlands
- Elaine Kennedy to follow up about Gunn Creek

Elaine contacted owner of property although hasn't followed up with him. Brendan noted that this property probably falls within Bainsville Bay Marsh, which is a Provincially Significant Wetland.

## **8. BUI Updates**

### BUI # 1 Restrictions on Fish Consumption - *Abraham Francis, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne*

A fish contaminant study being undertaken by MCA and the River Institute is going well. Starting to plan for 2<sup>nd</sup> year of sampling. Britney Bourdages is a new addition to the MCA Environment Program and will be helping to coordinate MCA's involvement in the RAP.

### BUI #3, 14 Fish and Wildlife Populations and Habitat - *Brendan Jacobs, Raisin Region Conservation Authority*

Project: Re-evaluation of the three provincially significant wetlands in the AOC is almost complete. The report will be finalized and submitted to MNRF for review prior to presenting to SLRRC.

### BUI# 4 Fish Tumours and Other Deformities - *Sara Varty, Environment and Climate Change Canada*

Next steps are to follow up on comments received at the December, 2019 SLRRC meeting, and to discuss data sharing with SRMT and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). **Action: Sara Varty** will provide SLRRC with an update on progress at the next SLRRC meeting.

### BUI # 8 Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae - *Brendan Jacobs, Raisin Region Conservation Authority*

Draft Eutrophication Strategy being finalized. A project selection tool is being developed that will be used to prioritize new restoration projects. Information will be provided in a report card format for each sub-watershed and an associated long-term monitoring plan will be developed with input from RI and OMAFRA.

### BUI #10 Beach Closings - *Abraham Francis, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne*

Next steps: As the current Beach BUI Assessment Report contains data only up to 2017, Georgia Bock and Britney Bourdages are updating the report with data from 2018, 2019 and 2020. Once this is finalized, it will be presented to the Mohawk Council.

### BUI # 13 – Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations - *Sara Varty, Environment and Climate Change Canada*

Duncan Boyd presented at a webinar in December his recommendations on how to assess this BUI by using multiple lines of evidence. This framework will be used to guide assessments of phyto- and zooplankton populations in many AOCs. The most recent phyto- and zooplankton populations BUI assessment for the St. Lawrence (Cornwall) AOC was written in 2018 and needs to be reviewed to see if this new approach is appropriate.

Discussion:

- The St. Lawrence Area of Concern-Remaining BUIs and Delisting Criteria -Status Document was circulated with agenda package and can also be found on the SLRRC SharePoint site  
**Action:** Kristin Geater will circulate a chart showing when other BUIs were delisted
- Noted that all non-indigenous harvest of snapping turtles no longer allowed
- RAP website should provide information about redesignation

**9. BUI Redesignation Communication Efforts and Plans – Georgia Bock, St. Lawrence River Institute**

Georgia provided an outline of the planned Beach Redesignation Communication Strategy. The Strategy outlines the steps to be followed during the public comment period for the Beach Closings BUI redesignation. It is understood that this public comment period could start in the first half of this year.

Discussion:

- The Beach Closings BUI Assessment Report is being updated and then will be recirculated to SLRRC
- Comments and questions tracked during public consultation period will be attached as an appendix to the BUI assessment report, together with responses as needed from the working group to the comments. The comments and responses are part of the BUI report submitted to COA leads (ECCC and MECP) for review when considering redesignation
- Kristin reviewed the current delisting process and will provide a further outline at the next SLRRC meeting.  
**Action:** Georgia Bock will add delisting process as an appendix to the communication strategy
- A lot of work has been done between 2002-2012 to determine sources of contamination at beaches. Charlottenburgh Park has a beach management program, Glengarry Beach is the more challenging beach in the AOC as it is downstream of tributary inputs. In MCA territory, water quality data at beaches is generally very good.

**10. Cornwall Sediment Strategy - Emma Tahirali, MECP**

Wrapping up first part of the sediment transport and deposition model carried out by the River Institute and National Research Council, primarily collecting data needed for the model.  
Working with River Institute on next phase of project: Developing a model to determine how sediment travels through the AOC.  
Looking to set up CSS meeting in the next month.

#### Discussion

- A summary to the SLRRC on the long-term strategy for the CSS would be helpful

#### **11. New Working Groups** - *Kristin Geater, Environment and Climate Change Canada*

Over the past years, there has only been one working group (Water Quality Working Group) for 7 remaining BUIs. Currently, we are looking to create 4 smaller focused working groups:

1. Fish & Wildlife Consumption
2. Water Quality
3. Fish and Wildlife
4. Fish Tumours

All groups will report back to the SLRRC so even if you are not a part of Work Group, you will be updated on what is going on.

Membership represents experts on topics relating to BUIs.

Members are responsible for: actively participating on behalf of organization, soliciting input on key decisions, identifying gaps in monitoring data related to BUIs and delisting criteria and providing solutions, writing sections of assessments reports when necessary, reviewing public comments, etc.

#### Discussion:

- Good idea to divide and conquer, looking forward to seeing makeup of groups
- Will Robertson requested to sit on Water Quality Group (beach closures)
- If anyone is extremely interested to sit on groups and have the relevant background experience or knowledge, contact [Kristin.geater@canada.ca](mailto:Kristin.geater@canada.ca)

#### **12. New Business**

##### **Next Meeting**

Future meeting dates: 2nd Wednesday of every 4th month seems to work for the group (June 9, 2021; October 13, 2021; February 8, 2022)

Proposed: **Annual General Meeting June 9, 2021 10am-12pm**

**Motion:** To move the Annual General Meeting to June 9, 2021 from 10am-12pm

**Moved:** Elaine Kennedy

**Seconded:** Jeff Ridal

**13. Adjournment**

**Motion:** To Adjourn at 3:12pm

**Moved:** Bill Smirle

DRAFT