



ST. LAWRENCE RIVER RESTORATION COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, November 9th, 2022

10:00am to 12:00pm

Virtual TEAMS Meeting

Minutes

Present: Marco Vincelli (Chair), Brendan Jacobs (RRCA), Chris Moran (Citizen), Dorothy Hamilton (SD&G OWA), Duncan Ferguson (GFA), Elaine Kennedy (Vice-Chair/CMC), Emma Tahiralí (MECP), Idalia Milan (EOHU), Jeff Ridal (RI), Joff Cote (MNR), Kayla Sunday (MCA), Matthew Mulvihill (OPG), Nick Cox (Citizen), Stephanie Jaworski (SG)

Observers: Chloe Lajioe (Watersheds Canada), Christopher Fidler (NY DEC), Courtney Holding (RI), Elizabeth Grohmann (RI), Emilie DeRochie (RI), Emma Bacchiochi (RI), Emma Ridal (RI), Josh Filion (RI), Georgia Bock (RI – RAP Coordinator), Britney Bourdages (MCA -RAP Coordinator)

Regrets: Benoit Lebeau (OMAFRA), Bill Smirle (ALUS), Dale Phippen (Citizen), Jake LaRose (MNR), Joe Arthur (Lunker Club), John Towndrow (Transition Cornwall+), Mark Kaddie (Citizen), Patricia O'Hara (Great River Network), Richard Pilon (RRCA), Sara Varty (ECCC), Shawna Rousseau (GF&GC), William Robertson (Citizen)

*To see up-to-date membership list and full names of organizations please click [here](#).

1. Land Acknowledgement (10am)

Before carrying on, in the spirit of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional unceded territory hosting our activities – in my case as I am conducting this meeting from the City of Cornwall, it is that of the Haudenosaunee (hoodt-en-ohshow-nee) Peoples, specifically the Kanien'keha:ka (gah-nyen--geh-hah) (Mohawk). Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples have been and continue to be the stewards of the land. We are grateful for the opportunity to meet here, and we thank all the generations of people who took care of this land. We honour the land, as well as the past and present Indigenous presence. Our shared goal is to move forward, creating new and equal partnerships that are built on truth, honour, and respect.

2. Call to Order and Introductions

Marco Vincelli, Chair, called the meeting to order on Wednesday November 9, 2022 at 10:03am and welcomed all attendees.

a) **Introduction to new SLRRC members:**

Marco Vincelli welcomed Duncan Ferguson (Glengarry Federation of Agriculture), Matthew Mulvihill & Mike Woodcock (Ontario Power Generation) to the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Be it resolved that the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council (SLRRC) approves the agenda of the SLRRC for November 9, 2022

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Dorothy Hamilton

Result: Carried

4. Approval of June 8, 2022 Minutes

Motion: Be it resolved that the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council (SLRRC) approves the minutes of the SLRRC for June 8, 2022.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Dorothy Hamilton

Result: Carried

5. Business Arising

- ✓ Georgia to attach meeting items to future calendar invite for SLRRC and associated working groups, as well as send out via email. (complete)
- ✓ SLRRC members please submit comments/concerns on Beach Closings BUI Assessment Report to Kristin Geater and Georgia Bock. (complete)
- ✓ Georgia to edit Beach Closings presentation to make it easier for the general public to understand. (complete)

6. Working Group Updates

a) **Water Quality Working Group –Brendan Jacobs, RRCA**

Brendan mentioned that the next Water Quality Working Group will review the Phytoplankton and Zooplankton report. There was a meeting scheduled earlier, but it has been delayed.

Brendan also mentioned the various BMP projects taking place and stewardship projects, noting that there are quite a few this year.

i) **Phyto/zooplankton Update – Georgia Bock, River Institute**

Comments from the Water Quality Working Group and DFO have been received and are being reviewed by the RAP team. Once completed, the technical working group will be re-convened and outstanding concerns will be presented and discussed.

b) Fish Consumption – *Britney Bourdages & Kayla Sunday, MCA*

Britney mentioned that cultural fish delisting criteria are being worked on. On October 18th ECCC and MCA met to finish drafting a cultural delisting criterion. On November 2, MCA met with SRMT, to compare delisting criterion for BUI #1 to ensure that they correlate. They will need to meet again internally to discuss next steps forward. MCA would like to link BUI's #1, 3, 4 and 14 more closely together with the Southern AOC.

EK: Georgia and I both attend the RAC committee (the Southern AOC's SLRRC), to understand what is going on in the Southern AOC.

c) Fish and Wildlife – *Georgia Bock, River Institute*

As was presented at the last SLRRC meeting in June, two meetings of the Fish and Wildlife Technical Working Group were held earlier this year to review the background technical reports for the Fish and Wildlife Populations BUI – for marsh bird and amphibians, osprey, and colonial waterbirds. There are two additional criteria focused on fish population management that are being reviewed by MNRF. Since criterion #5 was developed, which focuses on muskellunge, sturgeon and walleye, the typical programming of MNRF has changed to be less species-specific, and now looks at fish communities as a whole. So MNRF staff has been asked to review this criterion, identify how the species mentioned are being managed, and look for data gaps. MNRF is also looking at criterion #6, which focuses on fish community objectives, to ensure that this criterion has been met.

Additionally, a contractor has been hired to write a draft populations BUI assessment report which will pull all the existing background technical information into one report. The final draft is due March, 2023.

CF: Where do you get your fish community objectives from?

BJ: We get them from the Lake St. Francis Fisheries Management Plan.

CF: Where can I find fish community objectives?

GB: I will find and send your way. They are generally available on our e-library, but that is currently down at the moment.

d) Fish Tumours and Other Deformities – *Georgia Bock, River Institute*

Comments from the technical working group have been received and are being incorporated into the final BUI assessment report. It is anticipated that this will be completed within the next two weeks. Once completed, the document will go back to the working group and other key stakeholders.

7. Projects Updates

a) CSS Sampling Updates – Courtney Holden & Josh Fillion, River Institute

Courtney explained that the Cornwall Sediment Strategy (CSS) was a project initiated in 2005 to help manage the mercury-contaminated sediment along the Cornwall waterfront. To ensure the CSS is working, monitoring takes place every 5 years.

Fish Sampling – Courtney Holden, RI

This fall the River Institute sampled fish to monitor mercury levels in fish and compare those levels to the 2017 baseline concentrations. Yellow perch and round gobies were sampled from the 3 contaminated zones. Twenty-five young-of-the-year perch and round gobies were sampled per site, and 10 adults were sampled per site (the adults are sampled to assess bioaccumulation). Currently, fish are in the freezer and will be sent to the University of Ottawa to be analyzed for methyl-mercury and mercury.

Sediment Sampling – Josh Fillion, RI

Josh mentioned that there has also been another round of sediment sampling. This sampling will assess trends in mercury and methyl mercury in surface sediments of CSS. The sampling team returned to the same locations as in 2018, a total of 90 samples were collected across selected contamination zones and reference sites. The top 2cm core was collected for analysis, samples will be assessed this winter and a report will follow in 2023.

EK: CSS – has there been any discussion about proposed possible building of a hotel out over St. Lawrence by Nav Can?

BJ: Any proposed work would have to go through RRCA's watershed management team. They might have to also get a permit from the Province as well.

JR: I have met with Devcore separately, they are aware that they need to discuss the project with RRCA. Currently this project is in its early stages, they know to contact RRCA soon.

BJ: Always encourage pre-consultation.

EK: Would like to request that this topic put on the agenda as an ongoing item – to link back to CSS.

MV: agreed.

Action: Georgia Bock to add Nav Can development to SLRRC agenda as an ongoing item.

b) Eutrophication Monitoring – Elizabeth Grohmann, RI

The RRCA, MCA and River Institute have been working together to sample tributaries that flow into the St. Lawrence River in the AOC. Sampling occurs monthly at 11 tributaries (upstream) for nutrients and water quality. Spring and summer surveys are conducted at the mouths of 14 tributaries (including 5 tributaries from Akwesasne). Benthic invertebrate sampling has been completed for 2 tributaries and will be ongoing.

MV: Do you take a look at other contributors like waste water and CSOs?

JR: The focus is the tributaries, more looking for agricultural inputs and non-point sources. We are trying to address the BUI #8: Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae delisting criteria, which looks at whether the tributaries are impacting the water quality of the St. Lawrence River.

c) St. Lawrence River Strategy – Emilie DeRochie, River Institute

Emilie introduced herself as the new River Strategy Coordinator. The River Strategy team is currently drafting a framework, and will be circulating it in January 2023 and hosting a second workshop and Akwesasne community meeting to review. Emilie also noted that if you wanted to have your input, there is a [survey](#) on the [website](#). Emilie and Britney Bourdages (MCA) also recently presented on this project at the River Symposium. Please view their presentation [here](#).

d) Natural Edge Project – Chloe Lajoie

This year we had a good year, we hosted one planting in May 2022, the Great River Network, Akwesasne, and River Institute were involved. Also completed 25 site visits this summer, 17 in Akwesasne and 8 in Cornwall. Of those 8, 2 were demo sites. This year we completed 9 plantings in total, 10 sites scheduled for next spring for plantings, one demo with RRCA at Charlottenburgh Park, the other one with city and River Institute at Rotary Creek. Aiming for more site visits for next year, as next year is the final year of the project.

8. Communications Updates

a) Beach Closings Public Comment Period – Georgia Bock, RI & Britney Bourdages, MCA

The community engagement period of the Beach Closings BUI ran from mid-August to mid-October. There were many different presentations and advertisements throughout. 31 online surveys were submitted and approximately 40 in-person. Georgia and Britney will be compiling the results into a communications appendix for the Beach Closings report and circulating the report when it is all together. Georgia noted some concerns that were mentioned in the online surveys are: worries about water levels and beaches, concerns about other contaminants in beaches other than *E. Coli*, concerns that redesignating this BUI will lead to less environmental protections in the AOC, and that there needs to be better communication on beach closures to the public and where people can find water quality data before they go swimming.

The next steps will be to finalize the beach report, present to MCA Council, present/circulate to the SLRRC, present to the binational working group in January, and then send for formal consideration for redesignation in early 2023. This will be the first BUI to be redesignated in the St. Lawrence River AOC since 2007.

JR: Water levels is an issue for beaches that are above the dam. Some places in Akwesasne maybe as well.

BJ: agrees.

b) Funky Fish Booklet – Georgia Bock, RI & Britney Bourdages, MCA

Georgia discussed that she and Britney Bourdages (MCA), Aimee Benedict (SRMT) and Emma Ridal (RI) are working together to create a funky fish booklet. We are asking anyone with pictures of funky fish to submit them to us. Our goal is to create a booklet with images of different issues that occur to fish in the St. Lawrence River and tributaries, we hope this guide will help anglers identify some common abnormalities in local fish. Our goal is to have this completed by Spring 2023. We hope this will help with BUI #3: Fish Tumours and Other Deformities and BUI#1: Restrictions to Fish and Wildlife Consumption – people often look at fish, see some sort of abnormality and think its tumours or they cannot eat it, hopefully this booklet will help.

MV: Will there will be some sort of downloadable PDF?

GB: Yes, a downloadable PDF off of the website, and we are also printing some booklets for anglers to take out fishing with them.

BB: Yes, they will be tackle-box sized and also be printed on waterproof paper.

c) Bi-national Meetings –Kayla Sunday, MCA

Kayla explained that we are hoping to work more closely together with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Southern AOC. We have identified working more closely together on BUI 1: Restrictions to Fish and Wildlife Consumption, BUI 3: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations, BUI 4: Fish Tumours or Other Deformities and BUI 14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat. We would like to treat our community as one and try to work more closely together, we hope to work together on addressing traditional fishing practices and other items. We also are hoping to extend our sampling locations to Quebec, so we can include the whole Akwesasne Community, right now sampling stops at the Ontario border.

9. New Business

a) Projects currently being funded & proposed projects – Emma Tahirali, MECP

MECP funding has been not been approved yet, but can go over the various projects that were submitted. One was submitted for the coordination of the St. Lawrence River AOC (River Institute), one to support MCA in the bi-cultural BUI, one for CSS long-term monitoring, one for Best Management Practices with the RRCA, and one to continue the development of St. Lawrence River Strategy (River Institute & MCA).

A summary of ECCC funded projects is located [here](#).

b) Community Member SLRRC Position – Marco Vincelli

Marco mentioned that we are still missing a community member from the SLRRC, and wondered whether anyone had any recommendations?

EK: Would someone from the South Glengarry Environmental Committee would be a good fit.

Action: Marco will draft a letter asking for a rep from the South Glengarry Environmental Committee to sit on the SLRRC, and send this letter to Stephanie after it is approved for circulation.

c) **Constitution and bylaws – Marco Vincelli**

Marco mentioned that he, Georgia Bock and Elaine Kennedy have been reviewing the SLRRC Constitution and By-laws and will be sending around a draft before the next SLRRC meeting, so members will be able to review before our AGM in June 2023.

10. Next Meeting: February 8, 2023 (10am-12pm)

11. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the November 9, 2022 SLRRC Meeting.

Moved by: Stephanie Jaworski

Seconded: Jeff Ridal

Result: Carried