



ST. LAWRENCE RIVER RESTORATION COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

10:00am to 12:00pm

Minutes

Present: Marco Vincelli (Chair), Benoit Lebeau (OMAFRA), Brendan Jacobs (RRCA), Chris Moran (Citizen), Dorothy Hamilton (SD&G OWA), Duncan Ferguson (GFA), Elaine Kennedy (Vice-Chair/CMC), Emma Tahirali (MECP), Idalia Milan (EOHU), Jake LaRose (MNRF), Jeff Ridal (RI), Joff Cote (MNRF), Kayla Sunday (MCA), Matthew Mulvihill (OPG), Nick Cox (Citizen), Sara Varty (ECCC), Stephanie Jaworski (SG), Stephen Romano (Cornwall)

Observers: Aimee Benedict (SRMT), Britney Bourdages (MCA -RAP Coordinator), Christopher Fidler (NY DEC), Emma Ridal (RI), Erin Smith (RI), Georgia Bock (RI – RAP Coordinator), Leigh McGaughey (RI)

Regrets: Bill Smirle (ALUS), Dale Phippen (Citizen), Joe Arthur (Lunker Club), John Towndrow (Transition Cornwall+), Mark Kaddie (Citizen), Patricia O'Hara (Great River Network), Richard Pilon (RRCA), 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

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 February 8, 2023 at 10:03am and welcomed all attendees.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Be it be resolved that the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council (SLRRC) approves the agenda of the SLRRC for February 8, 2023.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Jeff Ridal

Result: Carried

4. Approval of November 9, 2022 Minutes

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

Moved by: Jeff Ridal

Seconded by: Chris Moran

Result: Carried

5. Business Arising

- ✓ Georgia Bock to add Nav Can development to SLRRC agenda as an ongoing item. (complete)
- ✓ 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. (complete)

6. Beach Closings

- a) **Presentation on comment period results** – *Georgia Bock, River Institute and Britney Bourdages, MCA*

Georgia and Britney presented a summary of the Beach Closing comment period and [Assessment Report](#), specifically outlining the next steps. Please click [here](#) to see the presentation.

EK: Noted that a septic system inspection program is still needed. Elaine also wondered about the wording of the motion, whether we should reword it and say ‘change of status’ rather than ‘letter of support’ first.

JR: Agreed with Elaine, should be asking to endorse the report and recommend the status change.

MV: Wondered about funding cuts, if this BUI is redesignated, to local programs.

BJ: Yes, funding would be lost. We do have funding for the next couple of years, and progress should continue to be made. Would like see larger-scale projects funded in the region in the long-term.

EK: One of the things we are going to have to count on is to rely on partnerships, where we can put more and more people/organizations behind our requests. We have relied on funding from the AOC program, but we should be striving for it to move forward and become not impaired. We will need to work together to get funding opportunities for the future.

JR: It is really a question that every AOC asks before delisting a BUI. Needs to be a science-based process – if there is evidence that we are meeting the delisting the criteria, then we should move to change the status of the BUI. The [River Strategy](#) aims to tie future funding through the COA and broader plans, and will provide a landing platform for a number of different plans.

BB: Agrees with Jeff – perhaps it would be prudent to have a short presentation on the River Strategy to the SLRRC – provides life after the RAP. The River Strategy is growing into something incredible and is informed from the [River Rapport](#).

MV: Yes, we can look into this.

Action: Georgia Bock to see if we can have a River Strategy presentation at the next SLRRC.

b) Recommendation for status change for Beach Closing BUI

Elaine sent wording in the chat: in the motion, add after the words letter of support, which states that the SLRRC endorses the changed for the Beach Closing BUI from "Impaired" to "Not Impaired"

Marco, Elaine and Jeff reworded and presented the following motion:

Motion: Be it resolved that the SLRRC supports the change of status from “impaired” to “not impaired” as recommended in the Beach Closing Beneficial Use Impairment Assessment Report and a letter of support be sent along side the Report to Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks for a formal decision-making.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Stephanie Jaworski

Result: Carried

Action: Georgia and Marco to draft a letter of support from the SLRRC to be sent along side the Report to ECCO and MECP for formal decision-making.

7. Working Group Updates

a) Water Quality Working Group –Brendan Jacobs, RRCA

The RRCA is in process of finalizing 2022 restoration projects, of these, a couple large erosion control projects and wetland projects. We are working closely with a farm looking to do tree planting and retain water in their farm (catchment basins – looking for experts to help), it will be a great demonstration farm.

Eutrophication monitoring – there is currently monitoring underway for nearshore areas, and tributaries for water quality. There was a meeting with project partners last week, and there will be another one at the end of this month to review sampling results and to discuss sampling for this coming field season.

The RRCA is also submitting a proposal for a GIS tool that will be able to summarize eutrophication data and other RAP data, it will help with data for final assessment reports.

BB: MCA is excited for Brendan’s GLPI proposal, we will send in a letter of support soon.

b) Fish Consumption – Britney Bourdages, MCA

KS: IJC fish consumption is currently on hold, will be looking to resume chats later. We are also looking at bringing this to the binational meetings.

SV: Asked whether Britney could mention the cultural delisting criteria

GB: We have been working closely with MCA to create a new delisting criterion. This criterion will be added alongside the existing 'scientific criteria'.

BB: *New criterion:* *An increase in the Akwesasne community knowledge and/or willingness to engage in safe biocultural/ traditional fishing practices.*

We will be working on a plan to address this criterion. Applying this criterion to BUI 1, 3 and 14. MCA had also been approved to do some eel and sturgeon contaminant work, these are fish that are not typically assessed for contaminants, but that are important to the community.

GB: Will be setting up a Fish Consumption Working Group meeting soon to discuss this.

BB: Also working with southern AOC to see where all the fish contaminant sampling has been completed, seeing where the gaps are.

c) Fish and Wildlife – Georgia Bock, River Institute

An assessment report has been drafted for BUI 3: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations by Kim Hughes (contracted by ECCC). MNRF is currently reviewing and recommending wording to address criteria 5 & 6. After edits are compiled the next step will be to share with the Fish and Wildlife Working Group. We will be looking at hosting a Fish and Wildlife Group in the early Spring to discuss BUI 14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat, reports on the different criteria are ready for review.

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

Kristin Geater has been updating the assessment report based on comments submitted by the Fish Tumours Working Group. Currently the report is receiving some final edits before being sent around for review. Next step will be to meet with MCA staff and talk about the multiagency process for this BUI.

8. Projects Updates

a) St. Lawrence River Strategy – Georgia Bock, River Institute

The River Institute and MCA staff have been working on drafting a framework for the River Strategy after compiling information from a couple workshops that we hosted early last year. We are ready to present the draft framework and have scheduled a workshop for all organizations working on and/or interested in the river. This workshop will be occurring virtually on March 9th from 10-11:30am. Please contact Emilie at ederochie@riverinstitute.ca if you would like to attend. There will also be an Akwesasne community meeting on February 15th.

9. Communications Update

a) CSS Documents – Georgia Bock, River Institute

Georgia has finished working on updating the two CSS documents (Admin and Guidance), and has created a CSS factsheet for landowners. She was worked with staff from RRCA, MECP to create this, and ECCC and MCA have reviewed. Soon these documents will be circulated and added to the website.

ET: Emma mentioned that MECP has funded two new projects to do with the CSS for the 2023 year. One of them will be young-of-the-year (YOY) fish analysis (for YOY fish collected last field season), and the other will be a catch-basin monitoring project.

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

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and the River Institute are working together to create a funky fish guide. This will be a small booklet that will fit inside a tackle box, it will highlight the different deformities/abnormalities found on fish and the St. Lawrence River and whether they are eatable or not.

PDF copies will also be available online.

c) Multiagency Meetings – *Sara Varty, ECCC*

These meetings are now occurring regularly, there is also now a science priorities discussion, specifically we are looking to see what fish contaminant data is available for the two AOCs (southern and northern). We are meeting regularly, and lots of discussions are occurring.

BB: It's exiting, we are at a point where we are all starting to work together.

EK: Chris Fidler – do you know if there is report on what's been happening on this to the RAC?

CF: Would be good to add to the RAC agenda.

10. New Business

a) Constitution and Bylaws – *Marco Vincelli*

Currently we have a working group to edit our constitution and bylaws, we have a meeting February 23rd to review recommendations. Following which we will circulate to the SLRRC for review before our AGM in June.

b) Nav Can Development – *Elaine Kennedy*

EK: Is the area in front of Nav Can one of the contaminated zones?

JR: It is Zone 2 east, it is in the sediment work that we have been doing, Zone 2 stretches from the St. Lawrence College to past waste water treatment plant. The more extreme contamination is in the western section of this zone. The eastern part of the zone is less contaminated. They are well aware that they need to approach the RRCA as the administrator of the CSS process. Lissa Deslandes (RRCA) is the point person for this.

EK: The RRCA used to be responsible for fish habitat, however it is now DFO, they should be aware of this project.

JR: CSS Strategy is an agreement amongst many agencies to work together, including DFO. Most often CSS applications are docks, Lissa writes back to applicants with specific conditions.

11. Next Meeting: June 14, 2023 (10am-12pm)

12. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the February 8, 2023 SLRRC Meeting.

Moved: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded: Stephanie Jaworski

Result: Carried