



ST. LAWRENCE RIVER RESTORATION COUNCIL

June 14, 2023

Minutes

Present: Marco Vincelli (Chair), Benoit Lebeau (OMAFRA), Brendan Jacobs (RRCA), Chris Moran (Citizen), Dale Phippen (Citizen), Dorothy Hamilton (SD&G OWA), Elaine Kennedy (Vice-Chair/CMC), Emma Tahirali (MECP), Idalia Milan (EOHU), Jake LaRose (MNRF), Jeff Ridal (RI), Joff Cote (MNRF), John Towndrow (Transition Cornwall+), Nick Cox (Citizen), Stephanie Jaworski (SG)

Observers: Anqi Liang (ECCC), Britney Bourdages (MCA -RAP Coordinator) Christopher Fidler (NY DEC), Emilie DeRochie (RI), Emma Ridal (RI), Georgia Bock (RI – RAP Coordinator), Leigh McGaughey (RI), Kristin Geater (ECCC),

Regrets: Bill Smirle (ALUS), Duncan Ferguson (GFA), Joe Arthur (Lunker Club), Kayla Sunday (MCA), Mark Kaddie (Citizen), Matthew Mulvihill (OPG), Patricia O’Hara (GRN), Richard Pilon (RRCA), Sara Varty (ECCC), Shawna Rousseau (GF&GC), Stephen Romano (Cornwall), William Robertson (Citizen)

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

1. Call to Order

Marco Vincelli, called the meeting to order on Wednesday June 14, 2023 at 11:06 am and welcomed all attendees.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: Be it resolved that the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council (SLRRC) approves the agenda of the SLRRC for June 14, 2022.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Chris Moran

Result: Carried

3. Approval of February 8, 2023 SLRRC Minutes

Motion: Be it resolved that the minutes February 8, 2023 SLRRC meeting be approved.

Moved by: Chris Moran

Seconded by: Nick Cox

Result: Carried

4. Review of Action Items from February 8, 2023 SLRRC Meeting

- ✓ Georgia Bock to see if we can have a River Strategy presentation at the next SLRRC. (complete)
- ✓ Georgia and Marco to draft a letter of support from the SLRRC to be sent along side the Report to ECCC and MECP for formal decision-making. (complete)

5. Working Group Updates

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

The eutrophication team met to plan the field work for this season. MCA will be doing some extra work including tributary and benthic work. We have also just received an email from the River Institute summarizing year one for eutrophication sampling.

The RRCA has been moving ahead with BMP projects, we have at least 20 farms involved with 63 projects in last year. Most common project being tree planting and buffers.

b) **Fish Consumption** –*Emma Tahirali, MECP & Britney Bourdages, MCA*

BB: MCA just received data for fish contaminant sampling work that was conducted around Akwesasne in 2020-2022. It is in a raw data format, so we will be working with Jeff from the River Institute to figure out next steps on assessing it.

We just received funding to work on contaminant sampling for both Lake Sturgeon and American Eel, in this project we will be working closely with local fisherman and taking samples from fish that are already being caught for consumption. Project is underway now.

MCA is also working really closely with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, now having monthly meetings with each other. We are communicating now on fish contaminant sampling for Akwesasne as a whole, seeing where gaps are where we might need samples taken.

ET: Another priority task for Fish Consumption Working Group is finalizing the delisting criteria for BUI 1. It is currently being updated.

BB: Shared the wording to the new biocultural delisting criteria: *“An increase in the Akwesasne community knowledge and/or willingness to engage in safe biocultural/ traditional fishing practices.”*

As part of this delisting criteria, MCA hosting 2 community workshops one for sturgeon and one for eels.

MV: Will we be seeing something at the SLRRC on changes to delisting criteria?

ET: Will be sharing a document on all of the changes taking place.

DP: Will the study results be shared with SLRRC?

ET: Raw data that was sent to MCA on fish contaminants from MECP lab, the data will need to be analyzed and go into a BUI Assessment Report that will be shared to the SLRRC.

BB: Agreed – right now it’s a long chart, once we can break down the data we can provide summaries.

c) **Fish and Wildlife** –*Kristin Geater, ECCC*

This working group includes the two fish and wildlife BUIs: populations and habitat.

For BUI # 3: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Populations:

A draft BUI assessment report has been received from a consultant, Kim Hughes, it summarizes three technical reports and includes a section on fish communities from MNRF, the next step is for the report to be distributed to the broader Fish and Wildlife Working Group.

Concurrently, conversations will be taking place with MCA staff, Britney and Kayla, to determine the most effective means of engaging MCA staff through the review process, and how to incorporate a biocultural perspective into the assessment

Additionally, there will be a presentation to the Restoration Council on the results of the assessment.

For BUI #14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat:

There are three delisting criteria based on the development and initiation of plans to protect and improve wetlands and shorelines along the St. Lawrence River and in Pattingale Creek.

The next steps for this BUI are to present the reports and progress on implementation to the technical working group and then to the Restoration Council. After than the BUI Assessment report will start being drafted.

EK: I don't think it would hurt to have Cornwall and Area Birding Club involved in populations.

KG: If you could send me the contact information, I will reach out to the group.

EK: Sounds good.

BB: Patricia O'Hara, name spelling – add both Kayla and Britney for MCA.

EK: Could Kristin send criteria for BUI #3 to Elaine so she can connect bird club member.

KG: Sure

Action: Kristin and Elaine to reach out the Cornwall and Area Birding Club on SLRRC, specifically BUI #3.

d) Fish Tumours or Other Deformities –Kristin Geater, ECCC

The background information was presented to the Restoration Council in 2019.

A draft BUI redesignation report has been developed and reviewed by the technical working group and the Restoration Council, and all comments have been incorporated.

The next steps are for Georgia and Britney to focus on the development of public and MCA-focused communications material, which are going to be extremely important to help people understand the scope of this BUI and to reduce fears around consuming fish from Lake St. Francis.

BB: MCA has already started creating some of these communications materials.

6. CSS Update – Emma Tahirali, MECP

For the Cornwall Sediment Strategy – over the winter timespan we received funding for monitoring. Current monitoring includes: young-of-the-year monitoring program, adult yellow perch monitoring program, near shore surface sediment program, and a mercury track down study (looking at catch basins etc for mercury sources).

DP: Would the third study include the Dev Core development area?

ET: Sampling in the three zones. It is a nearshore sampling, so most likely, can look up and confirm.

EK: Dale brought up a good point, even if not in exact place, should be added then.

ET: Good point, usually sample in same areas for comparison. Will make note of that.

Action: Emma Tahirali to see whether any sediment monitoring locations for CSS are near the proposed Dev Core location.

7. New Business

a) **River Strategy Presentation** – *Emilie DeRochie, River Institute (11:40am)*

Emilie presented on the River Strategy, please see presentation slides [here](#).

KG: What is the difference between River Strategy, River Rapport, and the Great River Network

GB: **The Great River Network** is a group of individuals/organizations, based out of Cornwall, who formed in 2015 (originally called the Upper St Lawrence River Protection Network). They came together to give the community a voice and a seat at the table for local (mainly Cornwall) based environmental concerns (50+ members).

The **Great River Rapport** is an ecological health report on the Upper St. Lawrence River. It primarily brings together the *science* needed to understand the system, and then communicates that out to various audiences (community, youth, academics, policy makers). It has identified a suite of 35 ecological indicators capturing the health of the River from Kingston to Lake St. Francis (see www.riverrapport.ca). The River Institute works closely with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne on this project.

The **River Strategy** came about, because it was recognised (through the work that was happening for the Great River Rapport and other initiatives before the River Rapport) that there were many organizations working on the river but no coordinated effort to help everyone be aware of what was happening on the river. The idea behind the River Strategy was to create a hub for all the partners/members/organizations to have a platform to communicate/connect/collaborate – a sister initiative to the River Rapport.

The Great River Network is a community-based organisation at a more local level. The River Strategy expands on this concept, but includes a greater geographical area, and also brings in additional partners across many sectors (govt - local, provincial, federal), academic, community, non-profit, industry). During our River Strategy workshops, we noticed that people were concerned about the same issues that the Great River Rapport had identified, and is currently working on. We foresee that going forward, the work of the Great River Rapport can be extended by adding scientific research on topics identified by science subcommittee of the River Strategy. This allows the River Rapport work to continue on the current list of indicators (science focussed), with the potential to add new indicators identified by River Strategy Science Subcommittee. The Great River Network is involved with the River Strategy as a member.

BB: Thanks to Emilie for everything, enjoy working with her on this project.

ED: Also, good to note when the River Rapport started, there was a round of community surveys that were filled out. We used those surveys to inform the River Rapport.

b) **Forest Resource Inventory Funding** – *Dorothy Hamilton (11:50am)*

Dorothy presented on the plans for forest resource inventory funding (via LiDar) the Eastern Ontario Woodlot Association (Eastern OWA) received recently. ECCC has announced \$1.2 M for the OWA for five years to conduct forest inventories. Please click [here](#) to view presentation. This inventory and information should also be available on [the OWA website](#). Please contact Dorothy if you would like more information.

8. Adjournment

Motion: Be it resolved that the June 14, 2023 SLRRC be adjourned.

Moved by: Elaine

Result: Carried