



ST. LAWRENCE RIVER RESTORATION COUNCIL

October 11, 2023

Minutes

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

Observers: Britney Bourdages (MCA -RAP Coordinator), Christopher Fidler (NY DEC), Lexy Harquail (RI), Georgia Bock (RI – RAP Coordinator), Leigh McGaughey (RI)

Regrets: Joe Arthur (Lunker Club), John Towndrow (Transition Cornwall+), Mark Kaddie (Citizen), Patricia O'Hara (Great River Network), Shawna Rousseau (GF&GC), Stephen Romano (Cornwall),

*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 10:06am

3. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: Be it resolved that the St. Lawrence River Restoration Council (SLRRC) approves the agenda of the SLRRC for October 11, 2023.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Richard Pilon

Result: Carried

4. Approval of June 14, 2023 SLRRC Minutes

Motion: Be it resolved that the minutes June 14, 2023 SLRRC meeting be approved.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Seconded by: Chris Moran

Result: Carried

5. Review of Action Items from June 14, 2023 SLRRC Meeting

- ✓ Kristin Geater and Elaine Kennedy to reach out the Cornwall and Area Birding Club on SLRRC, specifically BUI #3.

An email was sent, Elaine will follow up to see if there is/was a response.

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

Emma found that 5 cores were taken in that area for the human health assessment. PAHs were below detection, mercury and lead were very low. If we do any future sampling, we will have those results to compare to.

6. Working Group Updates

a) Water Quality Working Group

i) Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae – Brendan Jacobs, RRCA

There was a push this year for implementing agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs), and updating baselines for water quality in Lake St Francis and tributaries within AOC. The WQWG has not met for a little bit, once field season is wrapped up should be a meeting to review results of the eutrophication sampling.

ii) Beach Closings – Georgia Bock, RI

The Beach Closings BUI Assessment Report has been sent to MECP and ECCC decision-makers. We should hear hopefully in the next couple months whether they agree that this BUI should be redesignated from 'impaired' to 'not impaired'. It will be the first BUI to be redesignated in the St. Lawrence River (Cornwall/Akwesasne) AOC since the mid 2000's.

EK: Any plans for any celebrations?

GB: Starting to think about it, please let us know if you have any ideas.

KG: Hopefully should have a decision by the end of December 2023.

iii) Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations – Kristin Geater, ECCC

Consultant was hired for both Bay of Quinte and St. Lawrence River AOC to find a path forward for this BUI. A framework has been suggested as a pathway forward, however there were some

concerns brought up that are currently being addressed. Addressing this first in the Bay of Quinte, and then will move on to the St. Lawrence River.

MV: What would the timeline be for the framework to start having discussions in our AOC?

SV: Hopefully within the next 6 months we can start looking at this BUI in this AOC.

JR: In our AOC, we do not have as much information as Bay of Quinte does to address this BUI.

SV: Comes down to remedial actions that will help address. This BUI is linked to the eutrophication BUI.

b) Fish Consumption –Emma Tahirali, MECP

Continuing to look at finalizing delisting criteria. Working on wildlife consumption criteria specifically, MCA is meeting with SRMT to make sure they are on the same page. Also, working at summarizing raw data from MECP lab on 2020-22 fish contaminant sampling in areas around Akwesasne. Continuing to collect eel and sturgeon sampling for contaminants.

BB: Wondering about timing for MECP funding?

ET: Still waiting, not sure on timeline.

BB: Sturgeon workshop coming up, and setting up a meeting with Jessica Jock (SRMT) to coordinate efforts.

c) Fish and Wildlife

i) **Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations** – Kristin Geater, ECCC

Please see presentation [here](#).

EK: Is it possible to share this presentation and BUI Assessment Report with birding club?

KG: Not sure, can share presentation, but not sure about the report yet, as it is currently being edited.

EK: Will make notes on what to share with birding club and send to Kristin to review beforehand.

DP: Why are mercury levels in cormorants higher?

KG: They eat fish, mercury levels are increasing, looking to see if it's a local issue.

DP: Sein netting that was done in Lake St. Francis – is there any initial comments on that work that happened recently.

MY: MNRF did not have a seining program, did do a trap netting program. Information used to develop index of biotic integrity in Lake St. Francis. Report out March 2024.

SV: Cormorant questions did come out in our review process; the technical report is currently being updated with explanations on why there would be higher mercury.

ii) **Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat** – Anqi, ECCC

Please see presentation [here](#).

BJ: A couple things to note for the criteria and actions slide: plans that have been written have not been accepted for funding long-term. Also, the Bainsville Bay project is moving forward; however, a lot more steps and years are needed to restore the marsh. The Eutrophication

Strategy is still in progress, waiting on forest cover and water quality monitoring data to inform it.

EK: Is there anything the SLRRC should be doing to give a little more solid backing to plans/issues.

SV: River Strategy is a good place to address some concerns, also good to gather comments/concerns now so that we can address in BUI Assessment Reports.

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

This Assessment Report has been recently reviewed by working group, comments were received, and Lexy Harquail and the River Institute will be leading the updates to the report based on River Institute and other comments received.

Lexy Harquail has been with the River Institute about 5 years, and has been based in the education department. She has moved now to a communications position, and is aiding with RAP communications and the other RAP-related items.

7. CSS Update – Emma Tahirali, MECP

A number of sampling projects have been occurring this and last year, data will be assessed and presented to this group soon.

8. Project Updates

a) Eutrophication Sampling – Jeff Ridal, RI

Please see [slides](#). Project coordinated by the River Institute, involving MCA and RRCA, sampling tributaries within the AOC to gather information for the eutrophication BUI.

b) CSS Sampling (sediment and fish) – Jeff Ridal, RI

Please see [slides](#). Both sediment and fish samples have been collected recently to assess mercury along the Cornwall waterfront. Part of long-term sampling plan for the Cornwall Sediment Strategy (CSS).

c) Catch Basin Sampling – Jeff Ridal, RI

Please see [slides](#). River Institute and the City of Cornwall sampling catch basins and assessing for mercury, as part of sampling for the CSS.

d) Natural Edge – Georgia Bock, RI

Please see [slides](#). Updated on Watershed's project for naturalizing shorelines within the AOC. They are currently in the last year of a 3-year project. This project addresses the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat BUI and the Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae BUI.

JT: Wondering whether some plantings have been mowed over by city staff?

GB: Have not heard, but might be the case?

JT: Someone from the City staff mentioned it.

GB: Will try and see if that's the case.

e) Biocultural/Eel Project – Britney Bourdages, MCA

Projects are going well. Extension of contaminant study – Lake sturgeon and American eel were not part 2021-2022 sampling, so now are sampling, the goal is to send 10 of each off for analysis. Obtaining fishing samples from local fisherman. We have workshops that will be taking place this month – eels and sturgeon – having local speakers coming in to talk about species and cultural restoration activities.

f) Agri-Action – Brendan Jacobs, RRCA

Brendan reviewed the different types of projects and how many have been completed recently.

BL: The number of projects you reported were for 2023-2024?

BJ: 2022-23 and part of 2021

JT: Great to see a variety of farmers gathered – is there a bigger farm community gathering that you might present at?

BJ: Do present at Ottawa Valley Farming association, plowing show, agriculture fairs, etc.

g) Bainsville Bay Restoration – Brendan Jacobs, RRCA

This project takes on one portion of Bainsville Bay Marsh. Deals with Point Mouillee (privately owned – working with land owner).

Would like to bring Ducks Unlimited back into project afterwards. This project involves digging in some ponds to create open water habitat – wild rice section, wet meadow, larger 2-acre wetland. Concern of this wetland moving forward, large amount of shoreline. Worked with a consulting company to design a series of barrier reefs, hoping to implement these as part of RAP project. Objective was outlined in Stage 2 Report for the RAP.

EK: Yes great, would like to get that funded.

CM: Barrier reef information, shoreline erosion – could you pass that info on?

BJ: Yes of course can pass it on. Did reach out to Colin Lake (who I believe you are working with), they did not have the capacity to help.

9. New Business

a) Planting Morrisburg Waterfront – Chris Moran

Looking for volunteers for shoreline planting for October 19th at 9am, we will be planting 300 shrubs and wildflowers, snacks and drinks available. This will be with Watersheds Canada.

b) River Symposium – Georgia Bock, RI

The River Institute is hosting it's 30th River Symposium this year. There will be some RAP-related talks, including one on the CSS monitoring. This event is free to attend, and will be taking place at the Civic Complex October 25 and 26th, October 27th will be completely virtual. There will also be a fundraiser dinner on the evening of the 25th, and a River Strategy meeting the afternoon of October 26th (anyone can join). To learn more please visit: [River Symposium 2023 | A River Through Time \(riverinstitute.ca\)](https://www.riverinstitute.ca/river-symposium-2023).

10. Adjournment

Motion: Be it resolved that the October 11, 2023 SLRRC be adjourned.

Moved by: Elaine Kennedy

Result: Carried