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Michigan Statewide Public Advisory Council

Summer Business Meeting
Wednesday July 10, 2013
Holiday Inn Muskegon Harbor

Participants

Tanya Cabala, *White Lake AOC*
Dennis Zimmerman, *Saginaw River/Bay AOC*
Jamie McCarthy, *Kalamazoo River AOC*
Roger Eberhardt, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Richard Micka, *River Raisin AOC*
Lynelle Marolf, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Mike Ripley, *St. Marys River AOC*
Caitie McCoy, *U.S. EPA GLNPO*
Rick Hobrla, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Sharon Baker, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Kathy Evans, *Muskegon Lake AOC*
Marc Tuchman, *U.S. EPA GLNPO*

Stephanie Swart, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Bretton Joldersma, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Theresa Bernhardt, *Muskegon Lake AOC*
Thomas Tissue, *White Lakes AOC*
John Riley, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Jen Tewkesbury, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Melanie Foose, *Michigan Office of the Great Lakes*
Mary Bohling, *SPAC Chair, Detroit River AOC*
Anne Vaara, *Clinton River AOC*
Matt Doss, *Great Lakes Commission*
Erika Jensen, *Great Lakes Commission*

Welcome, Introductions and Review of Agenda

Mary Bohling, SPAC Chair, Detroit River AOC

Bohling opened the meeting, leading a round of introductions and reviewing the agenda. SPAC members approved the April 2013 SPAC meeting summary with no changes.

Reports from SPAC members

- Clinton River: The Great Lakes Legacy Act video has been shared with the PAC and an AOC tour was conducted with U.S. EPA staff. The Paint Creek dam removal is completed and a large-scale wetland restoration project on Lake St. Clair is also wrapping up with a request to extend the work into other areas. The PAC will be working on removals of the benthic and fish and wildlife BUIs over the next few months; a comparative analysis with a non-AOC location should be completed in October. A new PAC grant will evaluate road stream crossings and there is also work on a landfill issue in the watershed.
- White Lake: Four of eight BUIs have been officially removed. Work is ongoing on the drinking water, fish and wildlife and aesthetics BUIs. The DEQ aesthetics assessment

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results found that some final actions need to be completed to remove that BUI. State criteria for the drinking water BUI have been met, but more work is underway to meet more stringent local requirements related to contaminated groundwater issues. A shoreline habitat restoration project is ongoing that will address the fish and wildlife BUIs. Overall AOC delisting is planned for 2014. A variety of community outreach activities are also underway to increase awareness and understanding of White Lake issues. Greg Mund has been designated as the new PAC Chair.

- Saginaw River/Bay: Informal hearings have been held to consider the fish and wildlife habitat BUI; the purpose was to determine whether the delisting criteria had been met and to explain how the criteria were determined and met. The PAC will be submitting comments on the proposed new GLRI Action Plan. A new communications toolkit has been completed with consultant assistance; the PAC will be working on implementation and promotion to advance education. New bylaws have also been adopted. There is a dam removal underway on the Shiawassee River; the river contributes to the AOC but is not a part of the AOC. The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network is contributing funds to the dam removal to help with sediment control, habitat and building a park in the area.
- Kalamazoo River: There is no new progress on BUI removals. The U.S. EPA is continuing a Superfund dredging project in Portage Creek. There was a community campaign for a more comprehensive cleanup of a former landfill site along Portage Creek that contributed to the contamination. A final decision on the contamination is expected from U.S. EPA next year; capping is a possibility. There are dam removal projects ongoing along river; they are complicated due to contaminated sediments behind the dams which need to be removed. The watershed council is working with university students to map priority conservation areas within the AOC as part of the fish and wildlife restoration plan. U.S. EPA is funding additional engineering design work for removing other dams.
- River Raisin: Local initiatives are underway related to placemaking: local realtors are having a placemaking seminar and there is work underway with neighboring charter townships to be part of a “Resilient Monroe” initiative. Work is underway on a master plan for climate change and the city of Monroe is working with the National Park Service to create a heritage corridor through the AOC. The aesthetics BUI has been removed. Work is ongoing on the eutrophication BUI and the fish and wildlife habitat BUI is 80% complete through dam removal and erosion control projects. Locals have witnessed fish swimming over the rock arch dam. There is debate about whether to focus on the watershed or the waterfront over the long-term, following AOC delisting.
- St. Marys River: There is a proposal to remove the aesthetics BUI on the U.S. side; however the BPAC is responding cautiously because of sewage issues coming from the Canadian to the U.S. side. The BPAC has requested more sampling by DEQ, in particular during rain events, to make sure there isn’t still a problem. The DEQ will look at health department data and other available data to get a better idea of what’s going

on. There are two studies to look at possible removal of the bird and animal deformities BUI on both sides of the border. Work is also ongoing looking at the eutrophication and aesthetics BUIs. Progress has been made on the Little Rapids habitation restoration project; if the project is successful, it may be possible to remove the fish and wildlife habitat BUI.

- Muskegon Lake: Work is underway focused on Ruddiman Creek and across the lake on E. coli and sewer issues to address the beach closings BUI. Two Legacy Act projects are moving forward at the Zephyr site and Ryerson Creek. Over 50% of the habitat restoration goal has been achieved; proposals are being developed on the remaining habitat restoration work. There is strong public and community involvement. The PAC is working on securing matching funds to conduct perceptions research.
- Detroit River: The fish tainting BUI has been recommended for re-designation in a joint effort with Canada. A sediment mapping project was completed that identified five areas that need additional assessment. The list of habitat restoration projects is being revised; the list has been narrowed down to 17 projects, 5 of which are underway. Two big habitat projects have been completed at Belle Isle. A Legacy Act project in the Trenton Channel is moving forward. A work plan is in place for addressing the remaining BUIs.
- Torch Lake: Fish are being collected as part of the MDCH fish consumption project. Two emergency sediment removals are also underway. Michigan Technological University is working on an integrated assessment project.
- Menominee River: Technical work groups are in place to finalize the habitat restoration plan. A sediment removal effort was completed in Wisconsin and another cleanup is in progress.
- St. Clair River: A sturgeon festival was held as a public education/outreach event; it was attended by approximately 600 people. There are 6 remaining BUIs; progress is being made on the benthos and beach closing BUIs. A report on the bird and animal deformities BUI is forthcoming from DEQ; the PAC has requested more information before moving forward with re-designation. MDCH is looking at the fish consumption BUI. Additional monitoring is being done at local water treatment plants to help assess the drinking water BUI. Several habitat projects are underway, including developing fish spawning reefs and nearshore habitat. A one mile shoreline restoration project will include a memorial bench for Janice Littlefield. An AOC symposium will likely be held again this year on the U.S. side.
- Rouge River: Sampling is being conducted to evaluate fish tumors. A celebration event will be held for the Wayne Rd. dam removal project. Feasibility and design work has been completed for a Legacy Act project in the Lower Rouge River. A BUI report card is being developed for public education purposes and a database management system is being put in place to help define the list of AOC projects.

- Manistique River: The PAC is working with federal agencies and DEQ to remove the last two BUIs which are restrictions on dredging and fish consumption. The work is focused on confirming PCBs are not continuing to be released into the river and a dredging project slated for next year.
- Deer Lake: Work is focused on removing the last remaining BUI. Data is showing that mercury in fish is trending downward and the final management action is removing Partridge Creek from the mine system later this year. Removal of the AOC may occur early next year.

Matt Doss also noted that the Great Lakes Commission will be entering a new three year partnership agreement with NOAA to implement habitat restoration projects in AOCs. Projects that have been tentatively identified include the Little Rapids habitat restoration project in the St. Marys River, as well as projects in the Muskegon Lake and Buffalo River AOCs.

Report from U.S. EPA

Marc Tuchman, U.S.EPA-GLNPO

Tuchman reported on the status of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in relation to AOCs. Over one-third, or approximately \$110 million, of the FY2013 appropriations is going to AOC work. FY2014 appropriations have been proposed at \$300 million and that could include another \$110 million for AOCs. The AOC program has visible successes and results; including removing sediments, restoring habitat and removing BUIs. These successes can be accomplished in a relatively short period of time. Four priority AOCs were identified for 2012-2013. Thus far, 37 of 256 BUIs were removed and the Presque Isle AOC was delisted. There are still 38 active AOCs. A lot of work has been completed in the Sheboygan River, White Lake and Ashtabula River AOCs this year. Significant progress has also been made with the River Raisin and St. Clair River. The EPA has also identified priority AOCs for 2014 – St. Clair River, St. Marys River, Waukegan Harbor and Deer Lakes – and for 2016 – Buffalo River, Rochester Embayment, Lower Menominee River, Black River and Manistique River. Consideration is being given to Muskegon Lake, Detroit River, Clinton River and Grand Calumet River for 2018. Tuchman described some keys to becoming a priority AOC, including developing a management plan/action plan for delisting; establishing strong partnerships; close coordination; having a clear vision and rationale; and strong leadership at the local level. He noted that there are two primary types of projects which are the most expensive to complete: sediment remediation and habitat restoration. Priority AOCs receive GLRI funds to implement their actions plans; non-priority AOCs also receive funds, but to a lesser extent. Tuchman said the EPA intends to continue to fund both priority and non-priority AOCs.

Next, Tuchman spoke briefly about consolidating the AOC program under a more centralized management structure within GLNPO. There was also some discussion about Michigan's AOC action tracking table, which documents all the projects that need to be completed in each AOC to remove each BUI, which continues to be maintained by DEQ and shared with EPA. It was noted that the tracking table is a living document that can and should be adjusted

when new information becomes available. Regarding future funding that may be spent on 2018 priority AOCs, Tuchman encouraged establishing a strong rationale for projects that need to be done and how much the projects will cost. Ongoing communication with DEQ and EPA is also important. Habitat projects can take several years of work before they are ready for implementation (e.g., feasibility, engineering design, community engagement, permitting, etc.).

Tuchman provided other updates, including on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWA) and Great Lakes Advisory Board (GLAB). The GLWQA Annex 1 subcommittee is moving forward and will be forming task teams around specific products. The timeframe for this effort is currently unclear. The Great Lakes Executive Committee is the body that is overseeing implementation of the GLWQA. The GLAB was established in 2013 and consists of 18 members who will be advising the government on implementation of the GLRI. Great Lakes Week will be held in September in Milwaukee; however, there are no plans for AOC conference this fall. The AOC conference will likely be held in Chicago in March 2014. [The AOC conference has been scheduled for March 18-19 at U.S. EPA's offices in Chicago.] A new competitive RFA for GLRI funding may be coming out soon.

Miscellaneous updates

Matt Doss and Erika Jensen, Great Lakes Commission

- Status of PAC grants

Ten new PAC support grants have been awarded for 2013. There is some overlap between the 2013 and 2012 grants which are wrapping up this summer and fall. The first 2013 grant payments should be mailed out soon. Questions about individual grants can be directed to Jensen.

- AOC perceptions research project

The Muskegon Lake, White Lake and St. Marys River AOCs are securing match funding for the perceptions research project. Although there is no deadline for securing funding, there is a desire to move forward soon. This opportunity could be reopened in the future if other communities decide they are ready for this work.

- SPAC representation

Renewal of SPAC representation for AOCs has been completed for this year.

- Plans for Great Lakes Week and State of Lake Michigan Conference

Great Lakes Week will be held Sept. 9-12, 2013 in Milwaukee, WI. The week of events will include the GLC annual meeting, a binational public forum for the GLWQA, the International Joint Commission meeting, a joint session, and the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition restoration conference. The State of Lake Michigan Conference has also been announced and will be held Oct. 15-17, 2013 in Sheboygan, WI.

- Congressional action on Great Lakes priorities

The Great Lakes Ecological and Economic Protection Act (GLEPA) has been introduced in both the House and the Senate. GLEPA would reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act and increase its funding level. The legislation won't change the match requirement. Doss noted it was important for Members of Congress to hear from their constituents in support of these bills and the legislation needs bipartisan support in order to pass.

Updates from Michigan DEQ

Rick Hobrla, Michigan Office of the Great Lakes

Hobrla described how AOC and BUI restoration is a priority for the state. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder places importance on measures of progress and regularly issues scorecards. BUI removals are included on these scorecards and so it is important that the AOC program continues to make progress in this area. In addition, a survey of DEQ staff showed that BUI restoration was the top priority for the entire department. DEQ is providing input into the development of the next GLRI Action Plan, including recommending that the EPA continue providing capacity support, funding for priority AOCs and maintaining a pipeline of projects and removal actions. DEQ has also suggested that the merits of project are more important than match and scale.

Upcoming SPAC activities

There was discussion on planning for the next SPAC meeting which will be held sometime in the fall. Suggested topics included placemaking training; examples of public-private partnerships for Great Lakes Legacy Act projects; fundraising techniques; meaningful public/community involvement; climate change; monitoring after an AOC is delisted; and SPAC membership and future funding once an AOC is delisted.

Action Items

- Post Marc Tuchman's presentation to the SPAC website
- Share information on the St. Clair River AOC memorial bench for Janice Littlefield
- Provide information on the House and Senate GLEPA bills and congressional contacts
- Plan for the next SPAC meeting
- Check on PAC support grant payment status