

Michigan Statewide Public Advisory Council

Fall Business Meeting

Thursday, October 27, 2016
Four Points by Sheraton Hotel
3600 East Cork Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001

Meeting Attendees

Anne Vaara, Clinton River AOC
Mary Bohling, Detroit River AOC
Bob Burns, Detroit River AOC (*Phone*)
Jamie McCarthy, Kalamazoo River AOC
Kenneth Kornheiser, Kalamazoo River AOC
Jim Curry, Kalamazoo Watershed Council
Don Brown, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council
Kathy Evans, Muskegon Lake AOC
Richard Micka, River Raisin AOC
Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC
Patty Troy, St. Clair River AOC
Paulette Duhaime, St. Clair River AOC
Aubrey Macoux LeDuc, St. Marys AOC
Dennis Zimmerman, Saginaw River/Bay AOC
Horst Schmidt, Torch Lake AOC
Emily Finnell, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes
Rick Hobrla, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes
Matt Tomlinson, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes
Ginny Berry, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes
Melanie Foose, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes (*Phone*)
Jen Tewkesbury, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes (*Phone*)
Jon Doyle, Michigan DEQ – Office of the Great Lakes (*Phone*)
Michelle Bruneau, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission
Mark Mills, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
John Perrecone, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (*2nd day*)

Meeting Summary

THURSDAY, Oct. 27

Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Agenda

Mary Bohling, SPAC Chair, Detroit River AOC opened the meeting. *Rick Hobrla, MDEQ* noted that John Riley and Sharon Baker were out on medical leave and unavailable for the meeting.

Meeting minutes from the June 2016 SPAC Business Meeting were adopted.

PAC Support Grants/SPAC Reimbursement

Please note these minutes have been reformatted to meet accessibility requirements. The original content has not been changed. 7/2022

Jon Doyle, MDEQ – Office of the Great Lakes, reviewed the up-to-date SPAC reimbursement form which was sent out in an e-mail on October 26, 2016. He provided the following direction:

- Only fill out the company portion or the individual portion of the form, not both.
- Register as a vendor with the State of Michigan if you have not already done so. Keep the original receipts for seven years, in case of an audit.
- Provide a scanned copy of all of itemized receipts.
- Submit reimbursements requests to your AOC coordinator
- Mileage reimbursement will be \$.54 per mile through December 31, 2016. If the federal rate changes at that point, our rate will change accordingly.

He next reviewed the Financial Status Report (FSR). He offered the following advice:

- Cells highlighted in yellow indicate where data are to be entered. Other cells are calculated automatically.
- Documentation is required for all charges.
- Invoices should include contractor's name, address and phone number.
- Copies of cancelled checks are acceptable as documentation.

Jon offered to send examples of good and bad invoices.

Rick informed the SPAC that the DEQ was considering a modification to its standard practice of providing travel reimbursement for one representative from each Public Advisory Council. Because if the extra duties associated with serving as SPAC Chair and Vice-chair, the DEQ may decide to routinely provide travel reimbursement for one extra attendee from the PACs that serve that role (currently Detroit and Clinton). He asked for SPAC member opinions on that proposed change and all comments were in support. Rick also pointed out that the DEQ always has the flexibility to fund travel for an extra attendee from any PAC but advised each PAC to request and receive approval prior to incurring travel costs.

Michigan Water Strategy

Emily Finnell, Michigan DEQ, reported that the final part of the Michigan Water Strategy was rolled out last Tuesday, October 18.

She reviewed how the Strategy was prepared. She noted the Governor identified five key priorities in the Strategy: (1) Ensuring safe drinking water for Michiganders; (2) achieving 40% reduction in phosphorus in western Lake Erie; (3) developing a water trails system; (4) preventing introduction of aquatic invasive species; and (5) supporting investments in commercial and recreational harbors.

Implementation – Emily described how the State is forming an Interdepartmental Water Team to implement the Strategy.

She summarized a number of steps being taken on implementation and answered a number of questions from SPAC members.

Role of PACs in implementing Water Strategy

Rick split the SPAC members into three groups, and Emily asked each group to address two questions. The questions were:

1. In what ways can a water strategy support your efforts to accomplish AOC goals and life after delisting?
2. Where do you see opportunities for the PACS to provide leadership or take ownership of a specific piece of the strategy?

Each group discussed the questions and shared ideas. Emily collected the answers and thanked all for their input.

Progress in Kalamazoo River AOC

Mark Mills, Department of Natural Resources gave a presentation on the project to remove the Otsego Township Dam in the Kalamazoo River. He noted that several dams in the Kalamazoo River were built by Consumers Energy and gifted to the state in the 1960s. Because of the poor condition of the dams, they have been a safety hazard. However, the abundance of PCB-contaminated sediments behind the dams has complicated their removal. They are currently working with the EPA Superfund program on the removal of the Otsego Township Dam and cleanup of the sediments behind the dam. He directed the SPAC to a website for additional information: <https://www.epaosc.org/otsegodam>.

Kenneth Kornheiser, Kalamazoo River AOC, provided an overview of the Kalamazoo River AOC and background on the legacy of PCB contamination resulting from a number of paper mills along the river.

The formal meeting broke at 3:15 pm and most of the participants travelled to the site of the Otsego Township Dam. Paul Ruesch, the EPA on-site coordinator, provided an overview of the dam removal and cleanup project and led the group on a tour of the site.

FRIDAY, October 28, 2016

Agenda Review

Mary Bohling started off with review of the agenda.

Reports from the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes

- **GLRI Program staffing and funding**

Rick reported that John Riley and Sharon Baker will return to work from medical leave in November or December. He reported on the status of the GLRI Capacity Grant, noting that EPA provided a three year grant, but only a commitment for the first year of funding. He is anticipating it will continue. The Great Lakes States have been working with the EPA to investigate a potential change to the funding formula used to calculate how much capacity funding is provided to each State. This change, if it is approved, could result in a significant increase in funding for Michigan.

- **Annual Michigan/EPA Federal Agency AOC Meeting**

Rick noted the annual Michigan/Federal agency AOC meeting will be held on January 25–27, 2017. DEQ coordinators will be talking with PACs to ensure all of our information up

to date. Rick said that over the last four or five years having all of the federal agencies in the room made a big difference. He emphasized that the meeting is focused on sharing ideas rather than making final decisions.

- **PAC Support Grant Schedule**

PAC support grants are expected to follow a similar schedule as the previous year. The Request for Proposals will be out in February, or maybe the end of January, and will be due by mid-March.

- **Great Lakes Public Forum**

The Triennial Public Forum was held in Toronto during the first week of October. Every three years, the U.S. and Canada hold this meeting and report progress on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and accept input. Rick summarized his impressions of the Forum and advised SPAC members review the 2016 progress report of the parties.

- **IAGLR Conference**

Rick noted that International Association of Great Lakes Research conference will be in Detroit next May. Attendance is encouraged. Mary Bohling will be an IAGLR Program Co-Chair. The call for abstracts will be going out in a couple of weeks.

Report from the Great Lakes Commission

Matt Doss reported that a new grant agreement between the DEQ and the GLC is in place. It will allow the GLC to provide some limited support to the SPAC and includes money to help with the annual AOC Conference, so next year they'll be administering travel funding. Funding to support online registration for the conference will also be in the same grant.

Congress will finalize appropriations in December, and both house and senate appropriation bills put the GLRI at \$300 million. He urges everyone to continue sharing success stories with elected officials. Next year will be a new administration so the future is unclear, but we will be advocating for support. Matt noted that there seemed to be a lot of Congressional support for infrastructure spending. He also reported on legislation introduced to direct the Department of Commerce to establish a resilient waterfront communities network and provide technical assistance.

Report from the Great Lakes National Program Office

- **GLNPO reorganization**

John Perrecone reported that GLNPO Director Chris Korleski and Region 5 Water Division Director Tinka Hyde have swapped positions. At the same time, they are reorganizing GLNPO. They have reduced from three branches to two and have subdivided them into five sections. He also noted that a change in presidential administrations will mean that Gina McCarthy, the head of EPA, will be stepping down and new Regional Administrators will be appointed.

- **U.S. AOC Conference**

John reported the annual U.S. AOC Conference will be held in Grand Rapids on March 29 and 30. A poster session will be added this year. The 2018 conference may be in Duluth

and they are considering Cleveland as the site of the 2018 conference. John invited PACs to submit AOC project videos for the conference.

- **GLNPO Bucket List**

John reviewed the AOC “bucket list” which indicated in what years the work on each of the AOCs is expected to be completed. He noted that, within Michigan, the Raisin, St. Marys and Menominee AOCs are slated to have all work completed in 2017.

Report on the Eat Safe Fish Program

Michelle Bruneau, DHHS reported that she is phasing out of the Eat Safe Fish program and into other assignments. She noted they are in the process of hiring a replacement.

Reports from SPAC members

River Raisin - Richard Micka

Dick summarized work on the final sediment remediation project with the River Raisin to remove PCB-contaminated Dense Non-Aqueous Phase Liquid from a portion of the river bottom and to cap adjacent areas. He noted that the City of Monroe is now a member of the Watershed Council. He suggested that groundwater is still a biggest issue. He reviewed work needed on each of the remaining Beneficial Use Impairments.

Torch Lake - Horst Schmidt

Horst reviewed some of the problems the Torch Lake PAC has struggled with over the last several years. He updated the SPAC on recent efforts by the DEQ to reengage with the PAC on both AOC and Superfund issues. He noted they still have two BUIs remaining – degradation of benthos and restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption.

Detroit River – Mary Bohling

Mary summarized work planned on Lake Okonoka to improve aquatic habitat on Belle Isle. She also reported that work on the Stoney Island habitat restoration project will be completed next year.

Saginaw River/Bay - Dennis Zimmerman

Dennis reviewed continuing problems with muck accumulating along the beaches of Saginaw Bay. They continue to be concerned about the possibility of pathogens within the muck. They are trying to determine appropriate criteria for removing the Beach Closing BUI.

Dennis also emphasized the importance of tying environmental cleanup to economic development, particularly during times of political change.

Rouge River AOC - Bill Craig

Bill reported out a Celebration event for southeast Michigan AOCs hosted by ECT held at the

Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn. He mentioned a joint venture with the Detroit River AOC on a collaborative invasive species control grant. He said they will be working on phase three of the Oxbow project, construction of a fishway bypassing the Henry Ford Estate Dam and the Lower Rouge River Water Trail.

Clinton River AOC - Anne Vaara

Anne noted that the Clinton has been assessing the Eutrophication BUI. She noted that beach closings in the watershed are way down, but the politics surrounding the issue will make it difficult to address the Beach Closings BUI any time soon. She reported that there are ten habitat projects in progress. There are still problems achieving consensus at the local, state and federal levels on what habitat restoration activities are appropriate for the Red Run watershed.

Anne also suggested we should seek ways to measure the economic development resulting from the GLRI work.

St. Clair River AOC - Patty Troy

Patty reported on the completion of several habitat projects. They are meeting with managers of the properties to flush out some management plans. She reported on an event to celebrate the removal of beach closings BUI and benthos BUI on the U.S. side. She noted some legislators and staff members were in attendance. She mentioned that the fish and wildlife habitats BUI is nearly ready to remove, and they are looking at the bird and animal deformities BUI.

Lower Menominee - John Perrecone

John reported the Benthos BUI is about to be removed. Other projects are almost done. The fish passage at the dam is almost done. The south channel is being completed. All work at Menominee AOC should be done by this year.

St. Marys – Aubrey Maccoux-LeDuc

Aubrey reported they are continuing to work on the Little Rapids restoration project. A public kick-off event attended by many of the SPAC members was held back in June. NOAA is funding this project through the Great Lakes Commission. Everything is on track to complete the construction work project in November with vegetation plantings in the spring.

She noted reports of didymo (rock snot), a fibrous, algae, discovered in the area. It grows in low-nutrient conditions, and it's not clear as to whether it's native or invasive.

Kalamazoo River AOC - Jamie McCarthy

Jamie reported there are no BUI removals, but work on the Otsego Township Dam is off to a great start. She also reported on Superfund work within the AOC. She updated the group on their work to increase public awareness regarding fish consumption warnings.

Muskegon Lake - Kathy Evans

Kathy reported that the Muskegon Lake AOC has removed four of nine BUIs - Beach Closings, Restrictions on Dredging, Drinking Water, and Fish and Wildlife Consumption. They're working on different habitat restoration projects and they do try to keep the Great Lakes Commission Facebook project page updated.

The DEQ has funding and is working with the EPA on a study to address an oil slick in Fenners Ditch. They are also working cleaning up contamination at the Zephyr site and investigating option for Ryerson Creek in Muskegon Lake. She also summarized work on reducing phosphorus inputs to Bear Lake.

Kathy noted that NOAA has identified Muskegon Lake as a new habitat focus area. They're developing a local implementation plan for the habitat restoration area.

Break

Other Items

Other AOCs – Rick reported that Manistique is working with Corps of Engineers and Fish and Wildlife Service and planning dredging projects for 2017 and 2018 to remove PCBs in harbor.

Patty Troy asked about the water school the Detroit River AOC is working on. Mary explained that it's based on a Florida water school program. It will be a Two day session – Day 1 - Learning about water science, water quality, and water quantity issues in Michigan. Day 2 - Half day in the classroom talking about politics and economics of water and then a field session taking people to wastewater facilities, etc., and talking about what they can do to impact water quality and water quantity in Michigan. It will be piloted in southeast Michigan, and then other MSU educators around the state can pick it up and offer it around the rest of Michigan. They're hoping to offer it for the first time in the spring of next year.

Plans for Next SPAC Meeting

There was much discussion as to when and where the next SPAC meeting should take place, including the possibility of coordinating a meeting with the U.S. AOC Conference in Grand Rapids and holding an SPAC legislative briefing in the spring. Rick said he'd work with the Chair and Vice Chair to come up with a date.

Review Action Items

- Mary – deciding on next SPAC meeting. Rick will send out a request for ideas for legislative sponsors and speakers.
- Matt Tomlinson will make a list of key contacts and people who often come to these meetings. He wants to capture the entire key group.
- Rick brought up the e-mail distribution list. He'd like everyone to look at it.
- Mary – SPAC Reps - Who needs to be appointed or re-elected at the next couple of meetings?
- Jamie – look over water strategy more as a topic for next meetings.
- Mary all of you review strategy to see AOCs taking a leadership role.
- Mary – in the process of reviewing abstracts for IAGLR.

Dennis moved to adjourn and Bill Craig seconded.

Adjourn

Adjourned at 11:58.