

Michigan Statewide Public Advisory Council (SPAC) Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2021

Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Horst Schmidt, Torch Lake Area of Concern (AOC) (Chair of SPAC)
Patty Troy, St. Clair River AOC (Vice Chair of SPAC)
Anne Brasie, Clinton River AOC
Eric Diesing, Clinton River AOC
Mary Bohling, Detroit River AOC
Bob Burns, Detroit River AOC
Christine Kosmowski, Kalamazoo River AOC
Cheryl Vosburg, Kalamazoo River AOC
Keith West, Lower Menominee River AOC
Sheila Aldridge, Manistique AOC
Corey Barr, Manistique AOC
Kathy Evans, Muskegon Lake AOC
Brian Egen, River Raisin AOC
Barry LaRoy, River Raisin AOC
Dick Micka, River Raisin AOC
Dan Stefanski, River Raisin AOC
Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC
Marie McCormick, Rouge River AOC
Laura Ogar, Saginaw River/Bay AOC
Dennis Zimmerman, Saginaw River/Bay AOC
Paulette Duhaime, St. Clair River AOC
Mike Ripley, St. Marys AOC
Dione Price, Torch Lake AOC
James Polidori, University of Michigan
Paige Schurr, University of Michigan
Paul Seelbach, University of Michigan
Amy Pelka, United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
Carolyn Koch, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Rick Hobrla, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)
Melanie Foose, EGLE, SPAC Liaison
Kimberly Passick, EGLE
John Riley, EGLE
Stephanie Swart, EGLE
Jennifer Tewkesbury, EGLE

Welcome – Horst Schmidt

Horst welcomed everyone to the meeting and encouraged everyone to continue working as cheerleaders for their organizations and continue the work being done in their areas.

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Roll Call/ Review of Agenda – Rick Hobrla/Horst Schmidt

Rick conducted a roll call of the participants beginning with the AOCs and followed by federal and state agencies.

Horst went over the agenda as Rick shared in on screen. There were no changes or comments. Dennis Zimmerman made a motion to accept the agenda, seconded by Bill Craig and accepted unanimously.

Review/Approve Minutes from October 14, 2020 SPAC Virtual Meeting – Horst Schmidt

Dennis motioned to accept the previous minutes as presented, seconded by Bill Craig and accepted unanimously.

Review of Action Items – Rick Hobrla, EGLE

The only action items from the previous meeting were to follow up with minutes and scheduling for the next meeting, both of which were completed. There was an open invitation for anyone that had topic ideas for the AOC conference to submit those to Rick.

EGLE Update – Rick Hobrla, EGLE

Teleworking – Staff continue to work from home. Although there is no official plan for returning to the office, we anticipate a likelihood that it will begin to happen in May. Staff will continue to work from home through the end of April, but in May staff may begin to return to work part time. Rick anticipates a high likelihood that staff will not return to the office fulltime in May but may continue a mix of working from the office and home. That possibility is under discussion. We are looking forward to being able to hold in person meetings again and that may occur later in the summer or fall, depending on how the trends go over the next few months.

Funding/budget – the AOC program operates under a GLRI grant and we are wrapping up the second year of a three-year grant, which runs through March 2022. Funding for the final year has not yet been received but is expected this month. There are no plans for any major changes to the program at this time. Rick did want to emphasize that because of the way the grant cycle runs, there could be a gap in the availability of grant funds in Spring 2022 as there was in this past grant cycle. Most of the current grants expire in February 2022 and we will not be able to issue new grants until the unit's new grant period begins in April 2022. This means there will be a minimum of a month gap but likely longer as the unit prepares to use the new funds so plan accordingly for this.

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Most of the PACs currently have an active grant and staff are working with those who do not.

PAC Support Grants – There has been some issue with delays in getting reimbursement payments in a timely manner. The Water Resources Division Administration Section has recently filled a position so it is anticipated that the additional staff will help in getting payments out. Rick strongly encourages anyone with a PAC support grant who feels that payment is being delayed beyond what is a reasonable amount of time to please contact your AOC coordinator to discuss. The AOC coordinators may not necessarily be aware that there is a problem unless you let them know. We can then follow up with the Administration Section and determine the reason for the delay.

Horst asked if a PAC had funds left available after February 28, 2022, would the PAC be able to spend that during the bridge period? The response was no, if funds are not spent by that date, they would be lost. Although reimbursement requests can be sent in after that date, no additional expenses can be incurred. Additionally, while the final grant report is not due until the end of March 2022, if the PAC wishes to charge the time and effort of preparing it, that time must be incurred on or prior to February 28, 2022 (the end of the grant period).

The Division is in the process of going through training for handling grants and contracts. There are six sessions, three of which have taken place. All staff are participating in that training. As a result, we may learn of previously unknown requirements so there may be some changes coming. It is hoped that the grant application and administration will be handled in a more consistent fashion overall once the training is complete.

SPAC Liaison – Rick recently decided that he needed some assistance with the SPAC, so Melanie Foote has stepped up as the SPAC liaison. She will help organize the meetings, set the agendas and ensure minutes and information are distributed. When we are able to hold in person meetings again, she will also handle travel arrangements and logistics for that. Melanie invited the attendees to send any issues of concerns, agenda items, or otherwise, and she will then discuss them with Rick.

SPAC Representative Designations for 2021 – In an effort to be more diligent in following the rules of the SPAC in terms of designating representatives and keeping current on those designations, half of the PACs were asked to re-designate their representative to the SPAC in 2020. The intention is to ask the remaining half which includes Saginaw River/Bay, Detroit River, St. Marys River, Manistique River, Clinton River, and the Rouge River to confirm or designate a new representative in 2021. Rick will work with Melanie to contact the PAC chairs over the next several months to accomplish this. Instructions on how to respond will be included in the request. Rick opened the floor for comments and questions. Patty asked if part of the reason for underspending was due to a lack of travel expenses in 2020 and if those funds could be otherwise utilized. Rick said that they are being flexible in processing amendments to

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the PAC support grants, so if there is a good reason to expand or alter the work being done, he would encourage you to discuss that with your AOC coordinator. There are a couple of grant amendments already underway.

Dick Micka had a question about the Open Meetings Act and how it affects the SPAC and PACs. Rick said that it has been looked in to and our interpretation of the law is that since they are advisory and not decision-making bodies, they are not subject to the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. PACs are encouraged to make their meetings public as is done with the SPAC, but there is not a legal requirement to do so as best we can tell. One exception is the River Raisin PAC, which is nested under a City of Monroe Commission, so they are obligated by that Act as an official government body.

EPA Update – Amy Pelka

Amy began with a slide of the new, updated AOC map. A copy of her presentation is attached. She shared that with the transition to a new administration there is now a great deal of openness and engagement which is nice. One of the new administration's priorities is environmental justice, greater inclusion, and diversity. Previously they were discouraged from discussing these issues. Something to think about is how those topics can be incorporated into the AOC conference. There were plans to have some discussions on those topics at the conference. There may be a breakout or speaker but those are still in the planning phase.

Focus Area 1 gets approximately \$91 million annually, so collectively since the start of the GLRI that is \$1 billion spent in AOCs. This has translated into some great results.

For FY21 there is \$330 million for GLRI, a \$10 million increase over last year. It is unsure how much of the increase will be available for AOC use. She reiterated that this is a big year. By big she means that while the budget for the AOC program is approximately \$91 million, the requests received so far is well over \$200 million. She attributes this to the great work being done, lots of projects ready to go, and management action lists being submitted. This is not just sediment work either, there is also a great deal of habitat work.

USEPA will be working with the states to determine priorities and which projects will move to the head of the line. Currently there are five delistings and 100 BUIs removed and they are working toward delisting Ashtabula this year. She discussed an overview of the AOCs that have management actions lists, or management actions complete.

There was a question about possible increases in funding over the next several years, and Amy responded that yes, she has heard this, and she does have a list of projects that she can present to her director if additional funds become available.

Another question was how can projects outside the scope of the AOC potentially be funded. Amy said that if there is a project in the watershed that affects the AOC and

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funding the project would help to remove a BUI in that AOC, then that argument could be made funding the project with AOC funds would be appropriate.

There was also a question regarding staffing as it seemed that there was some difficulty in filling positions and Amy does anticipate staffing to remain tight in the future. The response was that in 2020 there was some more attention brought to the Great Lakes and the AOC projects, so they were able to fill a few positions and promote some staff. With an increase in funding they are hoping it may translate into some additional staff.

EGLE Office of the Environmental Justice Public Advocate – Regina Strong

Regina gave an overview of her job responsibilities and a description of the support and services provided by the Office of the Environmental Justice Public Advocate. The presentation was followed by a lively Q&A session. This segment of the meeting was recorded for later viewing, however, there are some challenges associated with Microsoft security. If you would like to view the recording, please contact Kimberly Passick at PassickK@Michigan.gov for the link and instructions on how to access it. The presentation slides are attached as well.

Morning session ended at 12:01 PM.

Afternoon session convened at 1:30 PM.

Horst welcomed everyone to the afternoon session and introduced the first topic speakers. Rick also put out an invitation for anyone that had not been introduced in the AM session to do so at this time.

2021 AOC Conference – Kathy Evans, Rick Hobrla, Amy Pelka

At the last SPAC meeting, the plan was to hold an in-person conference at the end of May 2021. It was subsequently decided that it was too risky to proceed with those dates, however, it was felt that it was important to hold the event face-to-face. The updated plan is to meet in Muskegon on September 29 and 30 with pre-conference activities on the 28th.

The planning team is meeting every two weeks at this time and are still open to suggestions for topics. If you have any suggestions, please forward them to Rick or Amy.

Kathy Evans is helping to coordinate the pre-conference activities and she recently heard back from the Aquastar and they are looking forward to being available for the group to take a cruise. She has also recently spoken with Matt Tomlinson regarding setting up sponsorships, so they are on the same page there. She feels things are progressing well and the most important items at this time are deciding the topics and speakers. Rick said the group is in the process of narrowing that list down now and the

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planning team is meeting the following Wednesday where that will be the primary topic of conversation.

The pre-conference activities on September 28 will include things such as tours of the AOC and hopefully an evening reception.

The proposed, optional dinner cruise would occur on September 29.

The plan is to use the new conference center being built in downtown Muskegon so it is possible this would be one of the first large groups to use the facility.

Paulette added that after the morning's presentation on environmental justice, she felt that it was a necessity to have that issue addressed at the AOC conference. Rick responded that yes, that topic is definitely on the list and Regina has been considered as a speaker or moderator or both.

Horst asked if there was a theme for the event, however one has not yet been set. Rick responded that this year's conference may be much broader than in the past as they are moving from three concurrent breakout sessions to four or five. This is in response to feedback that some breakouts were far too large in the past. Attendees reported a high preference for an interactive experience and that was difficult to accomplish with 100 persons in a breakout session.

Rick shared that travel support is expected to be offered as it has been in the past for local PACs. Attendees that wish to take advantage of that support are encouraged to limit their costs by carpooling, sharing rooms, and any other actions that would minimize cost. More information will be coming. There was a question as to whether the assistance was for one PAC member or two. Rick responded that across the board it is one, however, proposals for two or more will be considered if an effort to minimize costs can be demonstrated.

PAC member updates - All

Rouge River – Bill Craig

No BUIs have been removed however, things are getting done. Their last meeting was held virtually on January 12, 2021.

There is action on the sediment projects at the old channel, main channel, and concrete channel which is exciting.

Their partner, Friends of the Rouge (FotR) continue grant tasks including fish surveys and bug hunts, while following strict Covid guidelines. FotR are also testing road salt concentrations during stream projects.

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The oxbow project, which occurred in three phases, is complete.

The Nankin restoration project received additional funding from USEPA allowing a June 2021 start.

There are five other habitat projects starting in 2021 so there is a lot of activity this year. Washtenaw County received a two-year USEPA grant for a 3.5-mile drain restoration which will lead to an AOC project that was recently completed and is waiting for vegetation to be established.

The Rouge River Advisory Council (RRAC) are submitting a PAC support grant amendment for a website GIS map.

The City of Northville has established a task force that is considering daylighting the drains under a large horse racetrack in the upper region of the watershed.

The Alliance of Rouge Communities has a potential project template on their website for communities to continue offering suggestions for projects. Beyond the habitat list, there are other projects that need to be done. This is a tool to keep those projects in mind and look for other funding opportunities as they become available.

There is a newly formed subcommittee called the SEAS Recommendations Subcommittee which is waiting to review the PAC recommendations report later on in this Program.

There is no time set for the next RRAC meeting.

Muskegon Lake/River – Kathy Evans

The Muskegon Watershed Partnership is the Public Advisory Council and they meet monthly. Staff support is provided for that group through her organization, the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC). That PAC is a very active group, with numerous committees. They are evolving from an AOC focus to look at projects that can be done with Nonpoint Source or other GLRI funding.

The AOC had nine BUIs starting out and have removed five.

The final Legacy Act cleanup project needed for delisting was completed in late 2020.

The final three fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects needed for delisting are currently underway though the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration-Great Lakes Commission regional partnership, of which WMSRDC is a subrecipient so they are managing the projects. Much of the work that will be underway this spring and summer will be vegetative work.

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At the lower Muskegon River project site, a 53-acre former celery farm, wetland restoration is taking place. This will open to the Muskegon River in September so it may be ready to reconnect during the AOC conference.

There is also a project at the former Amoco tank farm which was originally a Standard Oil dock on Muskegon Lake. The restored area is right next to the mouth of Ruddiman Creek which was the first Muskegon Legacy Act cleanup site back in 2006. They were able to remove a concrete containment wall and restore and reconnect wetland in that area during the restoration. Both of these restoration projects will be part of the pre-conference tours in September in association with the AOC conference.

There is a final habitat project, the Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve.

Kathy is working with state and federal partners to ensure monitoring is in place to remove the benthos BUI. The aesthetics BUI is getting very close to removal. The fish and wildlife habitat and populations will be close to removal once the habitat projects are completed. The final BUI for eutrophication is also close to removal and they are collecting data on it.

Detroit River – Mary Bohling

They held a PAC meeting in January and their next one is scheduled for March 8, 2021. There are five habitat projects remaining. Lake Okonoka is near completion, there are some last-minute adjustments to be made.

The feasibility and design have been done for Sugar Island, the permitting process is underway, and it is hoped that construction can begin later this year or early next year.

Feasibility and design are moving forward on Hennepin Marsh. These three projects are managed by Friends of the Detroit River which is the fiduciary for the PAC.

There are two additional projects. One is funded directly by USEPA with the City of Detroit for some riverfront parks. The other is through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for the flatwoods forest on Belle Isle. Once those five projects are completed, they will be able to remove the fish and wildlife BUIs.

There is a Superfund site in the AOC, McClouth, where some ongoing work is occurring.

The biggest area of work is in sediments. They are working on putting together a list of projects. There is a lot of background work that needs to be done to determine where the hotspots are.

Their annual “Shiver on the River” event was held virtually this year. A recording of the event can be shared with anyone who has interest. Nearly 300 persons were reached in this event. There was also a presentation on the Lake Okonoka habitat project.

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River Raisin – Brian Egen

They are currently in a monitoring phase before they can remove the dredging BUI. Sampling of the navigation channel was done last year, and they are waiting on the final report.

The benthos monitoring is ongoing and at the cap that was placed additional monitoring is being worked out this year among the involved entities.

For the deformities BUI, the monitoring of the eagles and herring gulls was not able to take place last year due to the statewide stay home order. They expect to conduct that monitoring this year.

For the fish consumption BUI, fish were collected last year, and they are waiting for the analysis.

To date the degradation of aesthetics, eutrophication, beach closing, and loss of fish and wildlife habitat BUIs have been removed.

They have recently received the River Raisin Implementation plan from the University of Michigan students. The initial draft was reviewed and returned to the students with feedback.

The city, USEPA, and EGLE are working on a design for one of the fish passages that needs some repair work.

With their current PAC support grant, they have focused on outreach and educational materials some of which include combining and updating the past homeowner's handbook with the River Raisin Legacy Field Guide, permanent fishing pole mounts along the river walk to encourage use of the river, and some branded waterproof lanyards and wallet bags with their website information that can be used during cleanup events and public outreach opportunities. They also intend to do some interpretative sign maintenance. They are also working on creating informational posters that can be given to certain agencies such as libraries that will be ready for one thing start to open back up. They have also created some River Raisin Legacy Project stickers and car clings to encourage people to visit their website. They are performing website updates and maintenance and working on an extended outreach documentary. A shorter, teaser version was exhibited in several small film festivals and it was well received.

One area the PAC is very interested in is educational outreach. There is a member who is an educator, so they are going to move in the direction of trying to create curriculum materials that tie the River Raisin Legacy Project and AOC work to students in Monroe County and perhaps beyond.

Melanie added that in 2016 there was significant removal of contaminated sediments with PCBs in the River Raisin. There was a cap placed on top of it and it has been

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monitored to ensure that the cap is functional as some PCBs were left as it was not possible to remove them all. The monitoring has been a little bit inconsistent, but it is continuing until the benthos BUI can be removed. There has been an adjustment to the work plan to allow for this.

Kalamazoo River – Cheryl Vosburg

Their PAC is the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council. Their board of directors meets monthly, six of whom are new. They have been offered some one on one presentations on the AOC and Superfund to better inform them of that activities that are ongoing. There recently received a presentation about the ongoing carp removal program in Lake Allegan from Georgia Pacific.

There is ongoing work in planning for the removal of the Trowbridge Dam.

There is some ongoing work in hotspot remediation in the AOC.

They have been dealing with a situation with Morrow Dam on the River. There was an emergency drawdown to repair the spill gates in November of 2019. The drawdown ended up being nearly a year long during which there was a large release of sediments downstream. This dam is situated at the easternmost point of the Superfund AOC designation areas and the amount of sediments that have been conveyed downstream are in the neighborhood of 300,000 cubic yards, up to 12 feet deep in some places. These sediments extend for miles downstream and have covered previously PCB-contaminated sediments. This has created a complicated issue.

To facilitate board engagement, they have broken into workgroups to target the four priority areas of the strategic plan with the intent to keep everyone invested and involved. They have also formed a couple of workgroups in the AOC that are being led by John Riley, one for biological restoration, and the other for channel design. These are groups coming together to facilitate channel design and restoration with representative from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Michigan Department of Natural Resources, EGLE, USEPA, and some consultants.

John Riley added that at Morrow Dam, EGLE is working with STS, the dam operator. There is an enforcement action against STS for the release of sediments downstream, so they are working to negotiate a settlement agreement and as part of that EGLE has a demand that the company must begin to address the sediment issue. STS currently has equipment on site and there may be some amount of dredging. He is unsure of how much work they will do and how far downstream the sediment has spread. It is anticipated that this will be an ongoing issue for quite some time.

There is also a Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration effort underway. There was an award of \$25 million in funding from NCR corporation to

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address contamination issues. The trustees have been working for over a year to put together a restoration plan to implement projects with those funds. In the next month or so they expect to put that plan out for public comment and there will be a public meeting planned to introduce the plan. NCR corporation has made the first installment of \$10 million and will continue making payments over the next seven years. This process will continue until the funds are implemented in projects.

Saginaw Bay – Dennis Zimmerman

The AOC began with 12 BUIs, three of which have been removed and they are in the process of removing the beach closings BUI. It was believed it would be removed sooner, but that has been pushed back to allow for Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) to complete their microbial tracking project.

At some of the past meetings, several members had expressed frustration that if other agencies or organizations were working on projects, they did not hear about them unless they were directly contacted. Jen was able to collect those reports and pass them along to the PAC members. These include an NRDA report describing amendments and adjustments to a GM settlement from 1998, another NRDA report discussing critters in the river, damages to the Tittabawassee as a result of the dam failures last summer, a FWS report regarding studies they performed that addresses the fish and wildlife deformities BUI, a sampling report from EGLE that was completed last year and will be repeated this year with a focus on nutrients and harmful algal blooms.

The microbial tracking study through SVSU is something new and potentially revolutionary and it is hoped that it will allow them to track where some possible sources of contamination are coming from.

The eutrophication BUI is the one they will most likely begin working on next which will tie in with the beforementioned sampling reports.

Jennifer added that there is an effort to put together a long-term monitoring initiative for Saginaw Bay partnering with National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration and USGS in the Lakewide Action and Management Plan program. They have been working with USEPA to craft a workplan that they will approve and fund. There are a lot of data snapshots but nothing long-term that would demonstrate trends in the bay, which is a dynamic system, so this is something that could assist in making better management action decisions in the future.

St. Clair River – Paulette Duhaime

The PAC's last meeting was held on February 24 via Zoom. They received an update from the Ministry of Environment, Ontario on the Industrial Pollution Action Team program which was initiated after a major spill to the river in 2003. Their focus of action is the detection of and response to spills, human and environmental impacts, and

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communication, all of which have improved. Spills have been reduced in number and volume. They will be receiving detailed numbers in the near future and will share those. Where there is an incident, communication between the two countries regarding the spill or event has improved.

They are working on removing the drinking water BUI. They are waiting on some information to complete the document and that can hopefully be completed this year. Canada is also making progress on removing their drinking water BUI as well. A note regarding the drinking water BUI; the effect of spills and having to shut down intakes due to uncertainty of what may have been in the river at a given time prompted the BUI however, the drinking water itself was not contaminated. As part of removing the BUI in the near future, they wanted to assess the public's opinion on the drinking water and what their level of trust is. To assist in this effort, they applied for and received an amendment in their PAC support grant. They chose River Network as the contractor for the survey due to their experience in this area.

The link for the St. Clair River is SCRiver.org if you would like to take a look at the survey, they would appreciate any feedback. The link shows a faucet with water dripping about halfway down the main page. This is a way to assess the public's perception of the value and quality of their drinking water. They hope to have results in early April and once they have data on public concerns, would like to launch a public education program to address them.

The president of their friend's organization, Sheri Faust, gave a presentation about some of the recommendations received from the University of Michigan graduate students on recruitment (looking toward including a younger demographic), transition to life after delisting, and long-term maintenance. They have started monthly meetings to address the recommendations and intend to include them in the BPAC meetings as part of an ongoing conversation.

Patty Troy added that plans are going forward to have a sturgeon program this year. It may not be marketed as the sturgeon festival as it will be modified from previous years, but they do hope to have some public events related to sturgeon in the area in perhaps June and August.

Clinton River – Eric Diesing

In 2020, they removed the aesthetics BUI, their first. They are working on the remaining seven. Much of the focus has been on habitat and benthos related BUIs. They are in the process of gathering and compiling all of the monitoring data from 2015 to early 2021 to submit a report to USEPA and EGLE.

In 2020 they did a significant data collection effort on the lower river and the Clinton River spillway to look into water quality conditions relating to eutrophication and

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undesirable algae. They will be bringing key stakeholders together to go over those findings and discuss next steps.

A couple of the habitat projects are wrapping up, one of which required some repairs. Additionally, a highlight from 2020 was the repair of a bypass channel that opened around the Yates Dam near Rochester Hills. It was the terminal barrier for sea lamprey coming up into the river. Working with FWS, MDNR, EGLE and numerous other partners, they were able to repair the channel.

There are two other habitat projects in the works for the coming year. The first is in the application phase and the other should be starting soon.

Jennifer added that there was a challenge to get delisted, that being a sediment hot spot that was discovered. EGLE is working with USEPA to find a path forward to facilitate a cleanup.

Torch Lake – Horst Schmidt

The Torch Lake PAC is one that has not applied for or received a support grant, due in part because the member that handled that task for them has had an increase in workload at their current job. This has slowed their ability to get the grant application assembled.

They have had two meetings so far this year. He asked Stephanie to update on the project that is taking place in the AOC.

Stephanie reported that Mannik Smith is managing a project for the State of Michigan and has hired a sub-contractor to implement the work. This work will include the creation of three wetland test plots and two capped locations, the idea being that if they are successful Mannik Smith will evaluate them and determine whether to expand the project within the Torch Lake AOC. At this point, they are in the process of negotiating the sub-contractor's contract, working with them to create a health and safety plan and moving forward with some of the implementation documents that they will need in order to begin work this spring. It is hoped spring work will begin around May. It is planned that Mannik Smith will reconvene the original stakeholders group and give a presentation to provide information on where the project stands. Eventually Mannik Smith will be contracted to assist EGLE in coming up with a larger conceptual design and see where there are feasible areas in the whole of Torch Lake.

There is also work happening on Torch Lake through the Legacy Act. Stephanie is working with her USEPA counterpart, Heather Williams. Heather is working with Honeywell, who will be helping determine sites. Lake Linden, on the North side of Torch Lake Recreational Area, and Hubbell, which is a main source of PCBs to the lake and a significant number of barrels and drums. They are currently in the evaluation phase determining what will be removed and to what extent.

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Lower Menominee River – Stephanie Swart (on behalf of Keith West)

Although this AOC has been delisted, they continue to work to find post-restoration monitoring personnel to assist with the sites. There were several habitat sites and removal of terrestrial invasive species so there is an effort to identify persons that may be willing to take on those projects for the long-term, so they don't have any fallback in terms of the invasive species. This is particularly for the four islands where significant work was done.

Horst added that there was a recent judicial decision that denied a previously issued wetlands permit from EGLE to create an open pit mine near the Menominee River. There may be additional legal challenges by the company who requested the permit but that remains to be seen. There are numerous environmental concerns with regards to this project. After the great deal of time, money, and effort put into the delisting of the AOC, the prospect of a new potential polluter is a source of frustration.

You can read about the initial denial decision at <https://www.wpr.org/michigan-judge-denies-permit-back-forty-mine-banks-menominee-river>.

Manistique River – Corey Barr

Their main contaminants were PCBs which contributed to the assignment of five BUIs. Since the original cleanup there have been multiple dredging operations for ongoing maintenance. The most recent was completed in 2018. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) collected samples in Fall, 2020. John Riley is in the process of drafting the removal recommendation for the dredging BUI. The Army Corps has plans for maintenance dredging at some point in 2021. After that, the remaining BUI of fish consumption will be addressed by sampling in 2024. They will then be situated to begin the delisting process.

Horst asked if this work occurred below the dam. The response was yes, all contaminants were below what was historically called the Manistique Paper Dam, which is now owned by the State of Michigan. They have been working with USACE and FWS to create a more permanent sea lamprey structure that will replace the current dam which is no longer functional. The lamprey effects the Upper Manistique River. FWS is spending roughly \$1 million every other year to simply control the lamprey populations. Currently the lamprey are able to move through cracks in the current dam.

St. Marys River – John Riley

Management actions are complete on the US side, which is great news, however there is a long way to go on the Canadian side. The GLRI has provided funding over the last 10-plus years and much has been accomplished. Unfortunately, the Canadians haven't had that influx of resources and are a little bit behind while also still dealing with some contaminated sediment issues. In addition, politically, some of their legislative bodies

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are trying to make development in wetlands easier and there is a movement to place a smelter which is causing consternation on the Canadian side of the border. The BPAC is actively involved in communication with elected officials about these issues. As was previously discussed, millions of dollars over decades have been expended to clean these areas up and there is no interest in take a step backward.

There are three BUIs remaining on the US side and largely just additional monitoring needs to be done to remove those. There is an agreement to remove some of those binationally, so they are working through some of that.

University of Michigan 2020-2021 project – James Polidori, Paige Schurr, UM

James began the presentation by thanking the group for allowing them to give an update. He is one of the four students working on the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability master's project for the Michigan AOC program. During the summer, they conducted the data collection analyses from the phase one interviews. This was an in-depth analysis of their 39 interview transcripts, with 35 PAC members and all four AOC coordinators. They found common themes within each PAC and across the ten PACs they studied across the State that participated in the project.

From September through November 2020, they conducted the second phase interviews. These were collaborative conversations between PAC representatives and their field coordinators. The SEAS team guided the discussion which were launching pads for creating the individual PAC implementation plans. This phase provides the team with material to create meaningful plans for each PAC, a sense of what it means to turn recommendation into action for both the PACs and EGLE, and an understanding of how implementation plans could be used across the entire AOC program. Not just in each individual PAC, but how each PAC in the state relates to each other. Phase two provides each PAC with a clear and personalized plan which they can then use to implement the desired changes and structures that are important to them.

Some of the PACs have already seen their implementation plans, and the team is working on completing the remainder. Phase two also provides the state and understanding of each individual PAC and how they can assist in their growth, understanding where each would like to go and which recommendations they would like to implement.

Paige shared that the deliverables of the project are the University of Michigan Project Report; ten personalized implementation plans; and a research paper include methodology, themes from phase one interviews, the implementation plans, and overarching recommendations for the AOC program at large. The individual plans document each PACs organizational goals and strategies to reach them.

The hope is that the final report can act as a resource. They will be presenting their findings the week of April 12, 2021. The details are not final, but they will share them

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once they are available. The final report will be submitted April 21, 2021. Additionally, they aim to publish their findings in the Journal of Great Lakes Research this summer. This would consist of a condensed version of the final report.

Each of the plans begins with an introduction of the PAC and a short synopsis of the recommendations discussed. These were derived from the phase two discussions. Each recommendation is then broken down with 1 to 2 year and 3 to 5 year organizational structure suggestions and action items to complete to assist with implementation. Additional suggestions that were not discussed in the phase two conversations can be found in additional insights. These are action-focused actionable plans of less than 10 pages.

There is a multi-stage drafting process to ensure that information is correct, structurally sound, and that it makes sense before sending it to the PACs for feedback.

James again thanked everyone who participated in the project. The communication and feedback have been invaluable to their work and it is their hope that their work will be invaluable to the PACs.

Paige also asked for anyone who had photos of the PACs and AOCs to send them to her, as they would like to include them in the plans. Their presentation slides are attached.

There was a question from John Riley regarding what some of the overall themes are that have been discovered over the course of the project. Paige responded that one of the big ones across the PACs concerns improving education and outreach, thinking about the future organizational structure once the AOC is delisted. A lot of people are thinking about the same ideas in totally different ways because of the uniqueness of each PAC.

Another question from John was what the students were getting out of this project. Paige responded that her focus with SEAS was behavior, education, and communication so this work has been very valuable for her, many of the key themes being seen across the PACs. The ability to speak with people doing this work regularly and thinking about ways to come up with new ways to do things is directly applicable to positions she is currently applying for. For James, his focus is environmental policy and politics so hearing all the different viewpoints and how they connect, and the interplay of policy and procedure of the state, federal agencies, and the PACs has helped in considering what his future role can be. This experience has been extremely valuable to him.

Dick Micka encouraged the students to visit the AOCs, which they had planned to do prior to the pandemic, and said he appreciated the help that they were providing.

Dan Stefanski commented that the interview process was enjoyable, he really like talking about their AOC and loved the energy from the students. He felt the final project

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will be great and help provide a road map for the future, not just something to do, but a living, working product.

Rick thanked James and Paige, along with their colleagues for their hard work. He also wished to emphasize that the product they are providing is not what they think the PACs should do, but rather what they heard from the PACs that they want to do. While they have done a lot of work to organize and present the information, it's really information that the PACs provided to them. He is hoping that the PACs will take ownership of these plans and make them your own. He also wanted to point out that this group is building on the work from their predecessors. They started out from recommendation from previous teams, so this represents a good three years of work. There was a lot of time, effort, and thought that went into this project. Finally, when the final presentation for EGLE is scheduled anyone who is interested will be invited to attend. The possibility of recording the session may also be looked into so it can be provided to those who cannot attend. It is hoped that this can also be presented at the AOC conference in September.

Next meetings & Future Topics – All

Rick stated that the plan at the end of the last call was that this meeting would be held virtually and then the second meeting of the year would be held in tandem with the AOC conference which was going to be held in May followed by a third meeting in the fall which was still up in the air.

With the dates of the AOC conference moving from May to September, and while it may be possible to meet in person in May, it could still be overly optimistic. It is likely that would need to be held virtually as well in the May/June timeframe. Then for the third meeting, try to hold it in collaboration with the AOC conference in September, the afternoon of September 30 as due to a short time frame it would likely be just to handle AOC business without special topics.

Overall support favored a virtual meeting in June. A Doodle poll will be sent out to assist with determining a date.

By the end of the year, it is likely that it will be safe to meet in person so there should be some discussion of the question: do the SPAC members want to return to meeting face to face three times a year, continue virtual meetings as a matter of convenience, or a combination of those?

Some discussion was that a virtual platform allows for more participation as more than one person from the PAC can attend. However, there is the desire to meet in person, especially after the past year.

In the comments, there was a recommendation to have one in person meeting, and two virtual.

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One opinion was to hold face to face meetings except in the winter when there could be bad weather. Another was for two virtual meetings and one in-person annually.

Horst wondered if there could be a hybrid meeting so it could be held simultaneously. Rick said in the past a phone line was made available for people to call in and that could be kept. Additionally, he could confer with Matt Tomlinson to see what the options could be for a hybrid meeting. If a hybrid option was offered, Rick would still want to encourage people to come in person. If it got to the point where only a few people came in person and the rest were on the virtual platform it wouldn't make sense to continue the in-person options. Mary said that the phone line was very limited as far as being able to participate and she would like to see the video aspect remain so people can see what is presented.

In discussing topics for the September meeting there would not be a need for a lot of additional topics due to it being a half day. For the June meeting, there could potentially be some special speakers. We would certainly go back and look at previous ideas.

One thing Rick wanted to bring up was that there were some background conversations following the environmental justice presentation early in the day and there were very positive reactions to that. One of the suggestions that Rick wished to share was whether if there was any interest in creating a subcommittee on environmental justice to continue to discuss the issue and bring them forward to the larger group. Rick felt that if it were to be formed, he felt a mission statement should be crafted for that group to provide a common understanding for what they would be doing.

Paulette suggested having a standing agenda item to discuss environmental justice issues. Melanie added that the agenda item could include a report out on what the subcommittee was working on. She offered to send out a note to the group regarding the issue and anyone with interest can respond to her.

One topic could be a presentation on what the Office of the Great Lakes is currently working on.

If there was interest in what the International Joint Commission was involved with, Rick felt that they could find someone to present.

One of the biggest issues is tackling the sediments and it was wondered if there could be a program or discussion by someone on how to pull that process together as there are some many entities involved in that process. Rick said that Mike Alexander might be a good resource to handle that topic.

Horst had heard an ongoing series regarding mussels, and he could locate the speaker and pass that information on if there was interest.

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Another topic could be invasive mussels and what is happening to the food web. Eric added that their local fisheries biologist through MDNR could be approached as a presenter for this topic.

Rick said he would work with Melanie and the SPAC chairs and come up with a date and agenda for the next meeting in the May/June timeframe.

He had intended to add a recap of action items but once again, most of them involve getting prepared for the next meeting.

The action items are:

- Melanie will send a note to gauge interest in an environmental justice subcommittee
- A Doodle poll will be created and sent to determine the next meeting date for a virtual meeting in May/June
- The minutes will be distributed with the available presentations attached
- Rick or Melanie will share the date of the final presentation of the SEAS Masters team

Horst said that if there was something happening in your AOC that could be a future topic, feel free to send that forward.

He encouraged everyone to get their vaccination when they were able so we can all meet together safely in the near future.

Dennis Zimmerman made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Bill Craig & Mary Bohling.

Meeting ended at 3:51 PM.