

Michigan State Public Advisory Council
June 14, 2022
Business Meeting Minutes
via Microsoft Teams

In Attendance:

Horst Schmidt, Torch Lake Area of Concern (AOC) (Chair of the State Public Advisory Council [SPAC])
Patty Troy, St. Clair River AOC (Vice Chair of SPAC)
Mary Bohling, Detroit River AOC
Robert Burns, Detroit River AOC
Erica Clites, Detroit River AOC, Michigan Sea Grant
Erma Leaphart, Detroit River AOC, Sierra Club
John O'Meara, Detroit and Rouge River AOCs
Doug McLaughlin, Kalamazoo River AOC
Corey Barr, Manistique AOC
Fallon Chabala, Muskegon Lake AOC
Kathy Evans, Muskegon Lake AOC
Milward Beaudry, River Raisin AOC
Brian Egen, River Raisin AOC
Barry LaRoy, River Raisin AOC
Richard Micka, River Raisin AOC
Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC
Laura Ogar, Saginaw River/Bay AOC
Paulette Duhaime, St. Clair River AOC
Amber Falkner, United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
Leah Medley, USEPA
Amy Pelka, USEPA
Harry Castle, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
Mike Alexander, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE)
Melanie Foose, EGLE
Rick Hobrla, EGLE
Kimberly Passick, EGLE
John Riley, EGLE
Stephanie Swart, EGLE
Jennifer Tewkesbury, EGLE

Welcome (Horst Schmidt)

Horst began the meeting by welcoming everyone

Roll Call (All)

As Rick announced each PAC and Agency, those in attendance introduced themselves beginning with the designated SPAC representative.

Review of Agenda (Horst Schmidt)

Horst asked for any changes or additions to the Agenda. . Patty noted that there was no EPA update on the agenda and asked if they wished to do so. Amy Pelka responded that there have been several big updates lately between the All PAC meeting and AOC Conference, so she didn't feel the need to be added.

Brian Egen moved to approve the agenda; Mary Bohling seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Review/Approve Minutes (Horst Schmidt)

Bill Craig moved to approve minutes as written, Brian Egen seconded the motion; it was approved unanimously.

Review of Action Items (Melanie Foose)

All action items from the previous meeting were completed.

EGLE Update (Rick Hobrila)

Rick shared that every three years under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, a [Great Lakes forum](#) is held to discuss work and seek public input. The last forum was held in 2019 and held in Milwaukee. The U.S. and Canada alternate hosting duties and this year's forum is scheduled for September 27-29, 2022 in Niagara Falls, Ontario. This will be an in person event but there will also be virtual options.

- Working Remotely – not much to update. The majority of EGLE staff are working from home. Once every two weeks, staff meet in the office for a collaboration day and unit meeting. This will likely be the new standard for the foreseeable future.
- Funding /Budget – The current grant was originally set to expire March 30, 2022 and EGLE was able to work with USEPA and it has been extended until September.
- 2022-2026 USEPA Management Assistance Grant Work Plan – EGLE is in the process of getting the work plan together for a five-year grant. It will begin at some point between now and October 1 of this year depending on how quickly EPA can move it through their process. EGLE plans to submit the work plan to EPA by the end of this month. Although this is a five-year grant, USEPA commits funding a year at a time. EGLE's previous grant was \$3.5 million per year and it is unknown at this time how much funding EGLE will be asking for this grant. While considerably higher levels are available, there needs to be an assessment as to how much of the funding can be used effectively.
- PAC Support Grants – Depending on when USEPA is able to get the new grant in place, there may be a one month gap for new PAC support grants. While EGLE's grant will be for a five-year period, the plan is to provide PACs with two-three year grants. This should allow for flexibility in planning and would eliminate a gap in funding when issuing a new grant during the current EGLE grant cycle. PACs are encouraged to begin the process of putting their grant applications together now by looking at previous guidance and working

with their AOC coordinators. EGLE will be working on putting together new guidance over the next couple of months.

- 2022 SPAC Designations (Melanie Foose) – Every year, half of the PACs are asked to update their SPAC representatives.
 - Torch Lake: Derek Bradway will be the representative and Horst Schmidt will be the alternate.
 - St. Clair: Patty Troy will be the representative and Paulette Duhaime will be the alternate.
 - Raisin: Brian Egen will be the representative, Milward Beaudry will be the alternate.
 - Kalamazoo: Doug McLaughlin will be the representative and Christine Kosmowski will be the alternate.
 - Muskegon: Melanie shared that she should be informed of their representative shortly. (During the afternoon PAC updates, Kathy Evans reported that Fallon Chabala will be the new representative.)

AOC Conference 2022 (All)

The AOC Conference was held in Muskegon on May 25-26. Rick shared that after three postponements due to covid concerns, he was pleased that we were finally able to hold the event.

Bill Craig attended and wanted to compliment Erma on her presentation for DEI. He felt that the logistics were good and that it was excellent overall. He also enjoyed seeing Kathy Evans receiving recognition for her work.

Bob Burns thought it was a tremendous opportunity to network and he enjoyed it a great deal.

Doug McLaughlin shared that this was his first conference and he felt it was a valuable experience and it was good to be able to hear about successes in the AOC program. He also wanted to highlight the DEI and Public Outreach sessions as being good.

Paulette Duhaime enjoyed the poster sessions but felt it would be helpful to have digital copies of those for future notice. She also thanked Erma for her presentation.

Erma Leaphart thanked everyone for the feedback, and she felt that the tours were wonderful as they were a good way to see the impact of the work.

Melanie Foose felt that this conference was excellent.

Jen Tewkesbury liked that Chris Korleski was in attendance for the entire conference as it showed support for the program.

There was discussion about how information is moving toward digital formats. Something new at this event was the use of an app to create an agenda, run polls, encourage interaction, share photos, and access other conference. Ways that PACs may be able to use digital media for outreach is a potential future topic. There was also discussion that the app did not work well for them and that there was a need for technical support to help those who had difficulty using the medium.

Rick shared that one of the polling questions that was asked at the AOC conference was “how many year of experience in AOCs do you have”? There were many responses in the 1-3 year range which shows there are a lot of new people coming in to this work. There were also quite a few responses of ten or more years which demonstrates the commitment and experience that is associated with the program.

Michigan AOC Program: Past, Present, and Future – EGLE Webinar (All)

A Michigan AOC webinar was held on April 26. There were a couple of polling questions to see how many attended the webinar and what their overall impression was. The polls were not accessible to everyone so there was discussion also about who was able to attend. Bill Craig shared that several members felt that Rick's presentation of the history of AOCs was immensely helpful.

Brian Egen shared that having less technical presentations for people is helpful. Others echoed that the history of the program was helpful for those who weren't as familiar with the program and even those who have been involved for many years stated they got a lot out of the presentation.

Melanie shared that she is working on putting together a timeline as part of the PAC recruitment package, a tool for increasing diversity and for education and outreach. Her goal is to create a generic AOC timeline, and also ones specific to each area.

A recording of the webinar is available for viewing by supplying your name and email address. Rick's presentation, [Michigan's Areas of Concern Program: Past, Present & Future](#) begins at approximately 58:20.

SPAC Elections Preparation (Melanie Foose)

- Chair and Vice-Chair – This fall it will be time to vote for a new chair and vice chair. These positions serve for a term of two years and are generally elected at the fall meeting. Horst shared that this entity is not an EGLE group, but merely facilitated by EGLE. Horst was asked how much time he spends as the chair and he said the actual SPAC meetings and the planning meeting (about an hour). There are three meetings per year. Bill said that as work is done, the group will begin to shrink so perhaps some of the AOCs that are likely to be delisted sooner might consider stepping up as chair. Horst shared that we should consider a legislative briefing in 2023 as one has not taken place in a while. Erma shared that [Healing Our Waters](#) is active in engaging federal legislators twice a year and encouraged PACs that aren't members to join. Rick added in the past the SPAC has hosted a legislative briefing. This is held, typically as a breakfast for state legislators and provides knowledgeable speakers for their benefit. Michigan's legislators like to hear about how the GLRI program brings federal monies into Michigan for its benefit. This hasn't been done for a couple of years due to covid and this coming winter or spring might be a good time to host one as there will be a new group of legislators.
- Nominating Subcommittee – Horst Schmidt, Bill Craig, and Patty Troy volunteered to be on this committee. Melanie will help facilitate the group.

SPAC EJ-DEI Subcommittee Update (Erma Leaphart)

The last meeting was last week, June 7, 2022. Nearly all of the PACs were represented. Their priorities include completing a mission statement, create a recruitment package to engage and provide education, and provide ongoing training for members. Implicit bias training has been provided and there are opportunities for new learning that the committee would like to explore.

One take away from the AOC Conference was concerns about gentrification and that will be a topic that the committee should address.

Melanie shared that she spoke with a contact in Wisconsin, Rebecca Fedak, and they are interested in the committee's PAC recruitment package.

There is a desire overall to increase involvement with the PACs. Erma connected with an angler in Muskegon and he was familiar with the lake's issues. She believes the angler community could be a good one to reach out to.

Paulette mentioned that an accessible document presentation at the last meeting was helpful and will be good for PACs to keep in mind while creating fact sheets and other outreach material.

There was discussion on the implicit bias training that was held, and feedback was that it was a valuable experience.

If anyone outside of the subcommittee is interested in attending the next meeting, please let Melanie know.

SPAC Habitat Maintenance and Monitoring Subcommittee Update (Jen Tewkesbury)

Jen shared that seven AOCs are being represented in this subcommittee and they have met twice so far. Their focus is on habitat monitoring and long-term maintenance.

General discussion has been that there is little to no funding at the federal level to do post monitoring or maintenance at these habitat projects. There are some state funds via capacity grants or PAC support grants but those are not necessarily a stable form of funding. It is recognized that EJ communities tend to be at a greater disadvantage because they may not have the infrastructure or funding on their own.

One question they seek to answer is how successful are and what the expectations for these projects is. From a local perspective, what are the metrics they are trying to meet? These projects take a long time to show biological success so is it appropriate to remove a BUI before they are able to gauge improvements?

They have also discussed exploring alternate funding opportunities outside of the AOC program for monitoring and training for landowners and staff to successfully perform long-term maintenance. St. Clair did an assessment of their projects and provided recommendations to landowners, however there is no mechanism that would force a landowner to follow their advice.

This is not an AOC specific issue; any habitat project will have these challenges. Does there need to be more advocacy for these investments and long-term resilience of these projects? Some of these maintenance activities could be seen as workforce development.

How are other states meeting these challenges? Is there a way for the SPAC to advocate for funding at the state level like some other states do? Would it be beneficial to engage with other organizations like The Nature Conservancy in this effort to put a focus on these long-term projects that are being done to ensure the investment is protected into the future?

Jen will set a meeting for before the next SPAC meeting, likely toward the fall after field season has mostly concluded. There has been some good conversation and a lot of ideas, brainstorming, and determining what they want to get out of the process. One idea was to have information at the next SPAC meeting where they can discuss monitoring programs that the state already has in place and how the AOCs can tap into those.

PAC Report Outs (All)

Detroit River AOC– Mary Bohling

There are four habitat projects remaining and work is underway at all of them. They anticipate that by early next year all management actions will be done and perhaps next year they'll be able to move forward with the two habitat BUIs. They recently finished a [report card](#) where they broke down each of their BUIs and where they are in the process. This plan came out of one that came out of the Canadian side. The report can also be accessed at the [Friends of the Detroit River website](#).

Rouge River AOC – Bill Craig

They had a meeting on May 9. Over the past several months, members have attended or participated in various activities such as the ALL-Pac webinar, the State of the Strait conference, implicit bias training, the AOC conference, the SPAC habitat subcommittee, the SPAC EJ-DEI subcommittee, and the Southeast Michigan report card project. There is a lot of activity happening on their habitat BUI projects and the three channel projects. They have a lot of action and hope in the Rouge.

Jen added that there has been a great deal of work with EPA for sediment remediation work.

Saginaw River and Bay AOC – Laura Ogar

They have members who have been involved in the Lake sturgeon rehabilitation and restocking effort in the river and its tributaries. They are seeing results with project. They are able to view photos of the fish as they grow. This has been a positive experience.

They are putting together a State of the Bay Conference with partners in the watershed. The last time they put on the conference they had looked to develop a report card and had secured a grant for Saginaw Valley State University to develop that but they were unable to complete the work and they turned the grant back. They will be looking to try and get that project going again.

The DOW cleanup in the Middle Groups is just beginning. It had been delayed for a couple of years due to high water levels. This will be important remediation work for the superfund site removing dioxin.

Jen added that she and Bretton have been working to get funding for multi-year monitoring for the bay for nutrients. The inner bay has been listed as non-attaining for water quality due to nutrients. The monitoring would be to develop a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). They are looking at the criteria for the eutrophication BUI to tailor it more to Saginaw specifically versus using the statewide criteria.

River Raisin AOC – Brian Egen

There are four BUIs left to go. They have shifted to outreach efforts and related tasks.

MDOT is working on an I-75 corridor project crosses the river and may impact the AOC.

A new member has been added to the PAC, Dr. Cyr. She is the interim superintendent of Melvindale-North Allen Park schools. They are looking forward to working with her to create some educational material.

They are working on wrapping up grant support grant items. They are updating a field guide, finishing up a video. One item they have been looking to create is an outreach packet and have begun an initiative to create a long-term plan looking toward life after delisting. They have their annual clean-up next week.

Dick Micka thanked Brian, Barry, Milward, and Melanie for having continued to work at the River Raisin as they are now in the monitoring phase.

Muskegon Lake AOC – Kathy Evans

All management actions are complete with four BUIs remaining.

They really enjoyed hosting the AOC conference.

The removal document for the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat and the Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations are in draft form.

She recently became the chair of the watershed group's habitat committee as a volunteer because she is interested in the removal of those BUIs but also ensuring that habitat is maintained.

The watershed group has an action plan that goes beyond the AOC and is involved in making sure the public has access to natural resources as the shoreline develops.

She has been in touch with Peter Van Heest with EGLE as it has been discovered that the former paper mill is leaching PFAS through groundwater into Muskegon Lake. They will be doing some surface water and fish sampling. The watershed group is interested in hearing more about this as work progresses.

Fallon Chabala will be the new SPAC representative. She is working on the next PAC support grant with Stephanie.

Kalamazoo River AOC – Doug McLaughlin

Outreach continues to address sediment contaminated with PCBs and the effort to remove those.

They have been developing some data dashboards to connect data with outreach. They have a [fish contaminate dashboard](#) that is available on the [watershed council website](#) focused on data from EGLE for PCBs, PFAS, and mercury. They want to ensure that the information is consistent with fish advisories that are in place. They have also worked on a [sediment and floodplain soil dashboard](#) for PCBs. They are in the process of simplifying the dashboard. They will be able to count number of views for the dashboards.

They also will develop fact sheets, social media, and more.

There is a group that the watershed council has been participating in that is a multi-agency group looking at the next big removal of the Trowbridge dam. This group is looking

specifically at the engineering, to provide input, and to determine what is left behind to ensure the maximum potential for floodplain connectedness, habitat, and such.

He will be participating with the local Superfund advisory group which is EPA's avenue for getting information from the community. His goal in participating in the group will be to foster diversity of participation and to ensure messaging is put out with an AOC context in mind.

John added that there is a lot going on in the watershed as there at least three different programs working diligently. The superfund, the natural resource damage assessment and restoration trustees, and the AOC program. NRDAR has about 14 pages. Superfund is working on two time-critical projects, including the Trowbridge removal. The Allegan city dam removal is early in the design phase as it will be removed for fish and recreational access.

St. Clair River AOC – Paulette Duhaime

Their annual sturgeon festival was June 3rd with over 3k in attendance. It is their annual outreach event. There were tanks for people to interact with sturgeon and some fish from the Sturgeon the Classroom were released.

They have two BUIs remaining on the U.S. side, drinking water and fish consumption. They are working on a binational drinking water fact sheet. They are close to removing this BUI in both the U.S. and Canada. As part of that work, the Huron Area Drinking Water monitoring group which is run by SEMCOG has put extra monitoring equipment at water intake plants along the river as well as Lake St. Clair, the Detroit River, and Monroe. There have been some equipment problems and they have been troubleshooting ways to correct those. The coast guard and EPA is setting up a work group to augment the notification process, so water treatment plants are notified quickly in the event of a spill.

On September 13th, Canada is holding a BUI removal celebration. This will be a dinner cruise. The fish tumors, fish and wildlife populations, and one other have been removed.

Canada's sediment remediation plan is being finalized. Canada will be capping and covering the final hot spots of mercury. More information can be found at stclairsediment.ca.

They are working on a Great Lakes Ecoregion Network (GLEN) survey, a fairly new associate of environmental groups throughout the Great Lakes. GLEN put together a survey and Paulette shared with members of the SPAC. GLEN will use that information to see where AOCs are in the program and what challenges they face. They will be presenting this information at the public forum in Niagara in September.

They are working on fish consumption advisories. They hope to update those by the end of their current PAC grant. Their next meeting is next week.

St. Marys River AOC – John Riley

All management actions are complete with three BUIs left to be removed. He is waiting on some data analysis to inform the fish consumption BUI. Benthos BUI, fish tumors is the final and they are looking into revising the criteria for that. This may affect some other AOCs and they will be brought in once internal discussions are complete. There was a small oil spill on the Canadian side which was addressed quickly. There aren't many details on this.

Clinton River AOC – Jen Tewkesbury

They have been having meetings with partners to discuss the sediment cleanup plan for PCBs in the lower Clinton. They have some information that there may be an ongoing source of PCBs, but they don't know what that is, and they want to ensure there isn't an ongoing source before moving forward with a cleanup. There are two areas that need to be dredged or capped and it likely won't occur until next year.

The PAC put together a eutrophication BUI subcommittee that includes various partners to figure out how it compares to other AOCs and determine if the criteria is appropriate. They want to ensure there is a good understanding.

All habitat projects are complete. The watershed council had a contractor complete a video highlighting the work that's been done.

Last year there were not very many beach closings, but they want to monitor this year to see if they increase with lower water levels. They may then look at being able to remove that BUI as well.

Manistique River AOC – John Riley

Management actions are complete. The fish consumption BUI is the last remaining. Fish sampling should happen in 2023 to inform that BUI. Once removed, they can begin the delisting process for this AOC.

The Torch Lake AOC – Horst Schmidt

Horst shared that they are waiting on results of the benthos project. There are two more rounds of sampling and once the results are received, they can discuss potential expansion of that project. They will be doing some outreach this summer and may be working with the tribal community last in the summer as well.

EPA is working with Honeywell in a Great Lakes Legacy Act project to do work on the Hubbell and Lake Linden portions of Torch Lake. These areas are the most impacted with PCBs, mercury, arsenic, and some recently discovered computer waste. Honeywell's consultants are putting together plans to remove waste and hopefully move into feasibility studies.

Implicit Bias Training Feedback (All)

EGLE asked if those who attended felt the training was valuable, were there folks that wanted to attend that were unable, and what, if any, additional training would folks like to see.

Overall consensus was that the training was valuable, however, it felt like it just scratched the surface. There was inquiry into whether there was additional training along these lines. There was a great deal of interest in additional training.

Melanie shared that there was a survey sent after the training and it will be used to create recommendations for the group. She will be sharing that information once she receives it.

Fall 2022 Meeting and 2023 Meetings (All)

- Fall In-Person Meeting in Monroe – there was support for this idea. Monroe has been having conversations about logistics and are looking forward to hosting. Mid-September through October would be dates they will be looking at. Generally, they would meet for the afternoon of the first day and the morning of the second day. A group dinner would be desirable for that evening. Melanie will work with the PAC to create a plan.
- Schedule – Once some of the logistics are worked out, dates will be set.
- Annual By-Laws and Roles and Responsibilities Review – this was listed as a potential topic for a future meeting. Horst recommended an annual review of these documents to account for changes.
- Possible Legislative Briefing – we would want to wait for 2023 so the new legislator can be contacted
- Call for Topics/Agenda Items – if anyone has any topics please forward those on to Melanie or Rick. One topic mentioned during the discussion of the AOC conference was the use of digital media for outreach and tools that might be useful to PACs in this area.

Review of Action items (Rick Hobrla)

Action items

- Melanie will set up a meeting with the nominating subcommittee. Anyone with interest in serving as chair or vice chair should contact Melanie at FooseM@Michigan.gov to be considered. One perk of being chair or vice chair is additional travel reimbursement.
- Kimberly will include her slides on accessible documents from the EJ-DEI subcommittee presentation with the minutes.
- Melanie will work with the River Raisin PAC to begin planning an in-person SPAC meeting in Monroe this fall.
- SPAC Representatives will check in with their PACs to see if there is any interest in hosting an in-person SPAC meeting in 2023.
- Melanie will share the results of the survey by MDCR which followed the Implicit Bias training with the participants of the training.

Motion to Adjourn made by Bill Craig, seconded by Paulette Duhaime.

Meeting concluded at 3:15 PM.