

**Public Advisory Group (PAG)
Meeting notes**

Date: October 9, 2019 from 1 to 4 pm

Location: Centre récréatif, 110 rue Grégoire, Henryville, Quebec

Participants : Ann Ruzow Holland, Teresa Gagnon, Bill Richmond, André Champoux, Kristine Stepenuck, Rose Paul, Madeleine Papineau, Frédéric Chouinard; Cynthia Gagnon, Harm Sloterdijk, Julie Robert, Pierre-Yves Caux, Michele D'Amours, Mark Malchoff, Philip von Bergen, Eric Howe, Marion Melloul

On the phone: Marianne Bachand, Debbie Lee (part of the meeting), Lori Fisher (part of the meeting)

1. Welcome, introduction of participants, minutes and action items from the last meeting (PAG Co-Chairs)

PAG Co-Chairs welcomed participants and began the meeting with a round of introductions. The minutes of the May 2019 meeting were approved and an overview of action items was provided. Keith Robinson has retired and left the study and Debbie Lee has been named as the US Co-Chair for the Lake Champlain – Richelieu River Study (LCRR). She indicated that she is interested in identifying key stakeholders for US engagement this fall. The US PAG members identified key stakeholders for the fall 2018 public meetings and further refined and added detail to the list in March 2019 in preparation for the arrival of the US Outreach Coordinator. The detailed list has been shared with Debbie.

The Canadian Co-Chair asked PAG members who attended the Technical Working Group (TWG) Workshop on Wednesday afternoon June 19, 2019 for feedback. PAG members mentioned:

- They did get useful information from the afternoon sessions, for example, on fish habitat.
- There is a challenge in bundling scientific information and getting it out to the public.
- It wasn't really clear for some what was expected from them during this meeting. PAG members have a lot of experience to share and are interested in looking further into the structural solutions. However the format did not provide an opportunity to discuss these ideas (polite listening).
- One member felt that there was a lack of the use of a more integrated basin management approach.
- PAG members agreed they would like to be invited again to this kind of meeting with TWGs.

2. Overview of the 4 US outreach meetings in August 2019 (US PAG Co-Chair and US Outreach coordinator and members)

This item was part of a continuing discussion on how best to capture, synthesize, and share information from public meetings and other activities with Technical Working Groups (TWG), and to understand what actions (if any) have resulted on the part of the TWGs.

Invitations to the four US community meetings were sent out to over 5000 households in lakeshore communities by the outreach coordinators. PAG members helped lead and provided input to the four outreach meetings and one farmers market tabling event. Technical Working Group (TWG) members from the Social Political and Economic (SPE) were also present at each of the outreach meetings. Both the SPE and the US outreach coordinators drafted meeting notes.

Note: A PAG member commented that his edits to the August meeting notes had not made it into the version of that document shared with PAG members for this PAG meeting. Mark will send these to US Outreach coordinator for inclusion as part of the formal record of those meetings.

In late August, the US PAG Co-Chair shared the notes (including those with the PAG member's suggested edits) with the Study Board and TWG co-leads. She also shared follow up communications received via US mail from one participant in a public meeting with the group. She asked the US TWG co-leads to identify actions their TWGs would take as a result of the feedback received. She received several comments back. For example: Some information heard during the community meetings is being incorporated into the SPE reports; new Q&As could be drafted. She will share the TWG responses with PAG members. PAG members underlined that it is important that the public understands the scientific information.

- Some PAG members are worried that the selected solutions would be seen as popular in the U.S. but not in Canada.
- PAG members felt it was valuable that people at the outreach meetings shared their stories and gave their insights, as these can be useful to understand the broader view of perceptions about flooding in the basin.
- PAG members commented that study outreach should emphasize more how this study will affect people's lives.

“Are public meetings the most effective way to share with the public?”

- Comments at public meetings are not statistical. The number of participants at public meeting, approx. (100 people participated in Quebec and fewer participated in the U.S.) is not a representative number of the affected people and is biased because those “who come are people that care”. The meetings provide just a flavor of perceptions.
- A PAG member commented that people in the U.S and Canada have different perceptions and experiences as related to flooding. They both literally and figuratively speak different languages.
- Difficult to see the larger picture. As PAG, we need to know what people think.
- It seems like an effective approach; something the Study has to do; it is a good way to exchange with the public and doing outreach (giving information); it gives important qualitative information and good ideas could come out of these meetings.
- Studies by the Social Political and Economic (SPE) analytical group, such as those in selected communities in Quebec (Isabelle Thomas), can also help determine solutions to flooding on a local scale and complement public meetings and outreach.
- It is important to balance personal stories and anecdotes as well as to share a broad view of study goals, objectives and activities. The study tries to do both.
- Important to bring mitigation measures to the next round of meetings as well as the results of our modelling (flooding of farms, using wetlands, inflatable weir, hardening of soils,

compensation). Alain Rousseau will be asked to contact Harm Sloterdijk about his work on watershed storage.

- Consider new factsheets

Action:

- **The US PAG Co-Chair will send the full comments she received from the U.S. Technical Working Groups about how they are responding to what was said at the August community meetings to PAG members.**
- **The Canadian PAG Co-Chair will ask Alain Rousseau to contact Harm about the watershed storage study.**

3. Communication and Outreach activities

Michele D'Amours spoke briefly about the fall communication products. The group then looked at the Communication and Outreach calendar. It was noted that a Study Board meeting is planned on October 21-22 followed by an International Joint Commission appearance on October 24th. Two expert workshops are being planned on mitigation measures. The first expected in January is on flood planning. The second possibly late February will deal with floodplain management.

- A PAG member suggested that it would be important to invite New York state representative(s) (but not sure who).
- A PAG member mentioned that there is no easy way to access the LCRR Study page on social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook). Members stressed that it is important to have a presence on these popular portals to be able to easily share information with their network by using websites and social networks.
- The US PAG Co-Chair mentioned the possibility of adding information on a given Performance Indicator (PI) to each issue of the Current.

SPE work:

- The household risk perception survey (discussed at the last PAG meeting) was sent out to approximately 5000 people in the US.
- SPE Canada is conducting a series of meeting to establish a social network analysis map and ensure that all the relevant stakeholders have been contacted by the outreach coordinator.

Outreach:

- US outreach: the mailing this summer to reach people directly was well received and people that came to the community meetings were very engaged even if the number of participants was low in smaller communities. Some misunderstandings were addressed during the meetings (for example, on the impacts of flooding that have occurred in both US and Canada). This fall, US outreach will focus local and regional officials.
- In Canada, actions do not mirror the U.S. but are adapted to the Quebec reality. Ten meetings are planned this fall and winter by the Outreach coordinator. One will be with The Nature Conservancy Canada (NCC).
- PAG members debated the use of the wording “to persuade”, regarding the objective of the meetings with stakeholders. The wording “to invite” was suggested by one participant.

4. Causes and Impacts Report (Rose Paul, Michele D'Amours)

Rose Paul from the Resource Response TWG gave an overview of the content of the report. She mentioned that the report has a new organization following comments by the Study Board. Some changes also include the section on indigenous communities, a better balance of U.S and Canada information and improved references. A new version will be sent to the Study Board tomorrow and comments are expected by October 24th.

This was followed by a discussion on the communication plan for the release of report and the booklet. It was indicated that the report will be published on the IJC website. The following questions were posed to the PAG, “Could the late release of the report generate criticism?”; “Will people understand that the objective of the report is that it is to be used as a platform or starting point for new studies?”; “What about a news release?”

- It was suggested to send a news release on the Causes and Impacts report that ties the report to public meetings in the spring.
- The Causes and Impacts report is seen by PAG members as a valuable and positive product to promote to the public. It will help establish a common understanding across international borders.
- The public in Quebec usually provides input, feedback and comments, but they will need to have time to read the report. It was not advised to hold a consultation on the report. Instead, it was recommended that the Study ask the public to send in comments.
- The public needs to be reminded of what will be coming next after this report and why this report is important. PAG members suggested the following elements :
 - The Study could specify the final report is due in March 2022 and there will be a consultation on that report before it is finalized.
 - It is important to share in press releases that there will be a series of technical reports before finishing with a final report.
 - The Study should specify approximately at what time the consultation on the final study report will be (for example summer 2021) and how much time they'll have to read the report and give comments (1 month)
- PAG members want to announce it, allow people a chance to read it and comment but we should be prepared at the same time to let them know where the LCRR study is today and also remind them that the Study is continuing.
- The targeted public of this report are the people already interested in past flooding (for example people in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu) or any Canadian or American that has been either been impacted by or otherwise interested in the study.
- A booklet (30 pages total both in English and French) will come out at the same time as the report. PAG members can share it with their network.
- Since a mailing list exists already, a PAG member wondered if a letter informing people about the publication of the report and booklet should be sent out. The Study Board seemed willing to have paper copies of the booklet, so this may be an option if funding allows.
- The PAG was asked to reflect upon how people will react to the fact that it has taken 3 years to produce this first report. Q&As should be prepared to address this. The Study wants to share all the work done but it does not want to inundate people with technical results.
 - People at various meetings said: “we don't need more studies, we need results”.
 - A response to “What have you done in 3 years?” may be: “ Governments need a credible study to analyze the facts without mistakes and then get funds if there is the social and

political acceptability. It is more important to be thorough to choose solutions instead of reacting rapidly without preparation”.

5. Next PAG meeting (PAG Co-Chairs)

As we do not have the dates for public meetings it is difficult to plan the PAG meeting. Ideally, it should be several weeks before the public meetings so possibly early March if public meetings are in April 2020. The U.S. and Canadian PAG Co-Chairs will bring this up at the upcoming Study Board meeting.

ALL ACTIONS ITEMS:

- **The US PAG Co-Chair will send the full comments she received from the U.S. Technical Working Groups about how they are responding to what was said at the August community meetings to PAG members.**
- **She will also set the date for the next PAG meeting (in the US) once the dates for the public meetings have been set.**
- **The Canadian PAG Co-Chair will ask Alain Rousseau to contact Harm Sloterdijk about the watershed storage study.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.

Approved by PAG Co-Chairs on November 4, approved by PAG members March 16, 2020