



**IJC Science Advisory Board – Science Priority Committee  
Thirty First Meeting  
Videoconference Meeting Summary**

**April 22, 2020 – 10:00am-12:00pm**

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<b>U.S. Members</b>	<b>Canadian Members</b>	<b>Commission Staff</b>
Carol Miller (Co-Chair)	Jeff Ridal (Co-Chair)	Matthew Child (Secretary)
Mike Murray	John Livernois	Victor Serveiss
Lucinda Johnson	Karen Kidd	Mark Burrows
Mic Isham	Jerome Marty	Antonette Arvai
Joe DePinto	Gail Krantzberg	
Drew Gronewold	Maggie Xenopoulos	

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Regrets: Bob Hecky

Prospective member: Mike Slimak

Guest: Jen Vanator

**1. Welcome and Introductions, and Approval of Draft Agenda**

The Canadian Co-Chair chaired the call and welcomed everyone to the meeting. A special welcome was extended to the new members, and round table introductions were completed. The draft agenda was approved by consensus.

**2. Work Group Updates**

Great Lakes Early Warning System (Lucinda Johnson)

The main focus of the report is to present an organizational framework for an early warning system. The work group report has been finalized, and is expected to be forwarded to Commissioners very soon. A second phase of the project is proposed, which will develop the analytical techniques and risk management approaches of the early warning system.

Declining Offshore Lake Productivity (Joe DePinto)

The project addresses the issue of nearshore eutrophication with contemporaneous offshore oligotrophication. Activities included a literature review, updating data from Bunnell et al. 2014, and a models assessment. The report recommendations are currently being revised by the Work Group to reflect the SMART guidance. Once the Work Group revisions are complete, the recommendations will be sent to the SPC for review.

**Action:** Secretary to forward the revised Work Group report recommendations for SPC review.

#### Stressor Interactions (Staff)

The Work Group report is being revised to incorporate SAB member input, and is nearly complete.

#### Great Lakes Science Plan (Carol Miller)

The project contractor is advancing their analysis of existing science and monitoring program expenditures. The first of two project workshops that was preliminarily planned for August, 2020 has been indefinitely postponed due to COVID-19. In the discussion that followed, it was clarified that:

- Options are being developed for pre-workshop issue exploration using a virtual meeting platform.
- The Lake Partnerships have an important role to play, and select representatives will be invited to the workshops.
- The project is being coordinated with the USGS's Science Plan effort; the USGS Lead is participating on the IJC Work Group, and communications are occurring at a staff level.

#### HPAB's Harmonized Fish Consumption Advisory Work Plan (Jeff Ridal)

This project is being led by the Health Professionals Advisory Board, with SPC participation. Contracting details are still not confirmed due to COVID-19 related delays.

#### RCC's Connecting Channels (Jeff Ridal)

A contractor report is being revised to incorporate Work Group input. Through discussion, some concern about the 'connecting channels' part of the title was expressed. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement refers to 'connecting river systems'.

### **3. Advisory Board Co-Chairs Messaging**

The draft messaging that was circulated with the meeting agenda was developed by the WQB Co-Chairs (with input from the other advisory board Co-Chairs). The document includes draft strategic level talking points for the Co-Chairs to engage with Commissioners in open dialogue on priorities that could be collectively advanced with the Parties. In the discussion that followed a number of points were raised:

- The document is still very preliminary, and SPC input is sought particularly on the monitoring priority, which has linkages to several SAB projects including the ongoing Science Plan.
- Co-Chairs expect to have a webex with Commissioners to discuss the monitoring priority in May.
- The second and third priorities – communication and efficacy – were discussed in the June 2019 Advisory Board priority setting workshop. The SPC's Information Coordination and Flow project highlighted the importance of involving our customers (e.g., the Parties) at the outset of our projects.
- The priorities included in the draft would benefit from the development of associated work plans.

**Action:** Secretary to circulate the draft joint Co-Chairs messaging on monitoring, for SPC input.

#### 4. SPC Work Plans

Staff briefly described the process whereby the SAB, WQB and HPAB Co-Chairs collectively identified the Board work plans that should be advanced for Commission approval. Both of the SPC's work plans – GLEWS Phase 2, and Nutrients Synthesis – were among the five work plans that will be submitted to the Commission in the next few days.

The GLEWS Phase 2 work plan was distributed with the meeting materials, and was reviewed. Board members were reminded about the typical board project process: Commission approval, then formation of a project work group and development of a detailed scope of work, then contractor procurement, then project analysis and reporting (and oftentimes a workshop). In response to a question it was clarified that because the GLEWS Phase 2 work plan focuses primarily on analytical approaches, whereas the Phase 1 project focused on an organizational framework, work group composition will change somewhat.

The Nutrients Synthesis work plan distributed with the meeting materials was reviewed. The work plan was developed collaboratively with the WQB and is a joint SAB-WQB project. Input from the Annex 4 (Nutrients) Co-Chairs was also sought. In response to questions, it was clarified that:

- The project will include commentary on the extent to which the Parties are implementing load measurement and monitoring for the lakes other than Lake Erie, to the extent that previous IJC reports discussed those.
- The focus of the work plan is primarily on Lake Erie, with secondary focus on Lake Ontario. Although the analysis may hold insights for the other lakes, the work group recognizes the need to carefully scope the project to ensure it is relevant for management decision-making. Thus, the primary focus is on an assessment of Lake Erie Domestic Action Plans. There are other SAB projects that are focusing on all the lakes e.g., Science Plan.

Members briefly reviewed previously identified project ideas that could be advanced for the next round of work plans. There was general agreement that the work plan on exploring improved incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into IJC decision-making should be advanced for submission in autumn, 2020. The work plan on climate change impacts on urban areas could also be revisited, including developing a sharper project focus.

**Action:** Secretary to circulate the draft work plan on climate change impacts on urban areas.

#### 5. SMART Guidance

The draft SMART Guidance distributed with the meeting agenda was reviewed and discussed. There was general agreement that:

- The guidance is very helpful and timely, particularly in light of the SPC's interest in maximizing the relevance and applicability of its reports and other outputs.
- Although all boards should strive to achieve the guidance, for science-based boards it may be difficult to achieve all SMART elements in their recommendations. The 'Time-bound' element in particular may be difficult to achieve because (i) in many instances it cannot be pre-determined where the data and information will lead the analysis, and (ii) many water quality stressors and threats have been present in the basin for decades and their associated monitoring, surveillance and management responses are ongoing.

- The SPC's 2018 *Information Coordination and Flow* report emphasized the importance of including the needs of the customer (e.g., Parties) at the front end of board projects.
- The independence of the Board's recommendations must be maintained.

## 6. Other Business

The draft 2020 Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) report will be ready for Advisory Board review in the coming days. A two-week review period is anticipated.

**Action:** Secretary to circulate the draft TAP for board review.

Since the April in-person SAB and SPC meetings were cancelled due to COVID-19, members were asked if an in-person meeting later this summer was desirable (COVID-19 permitting). Members are invited to email their views to the Co-Chairs.

## 7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

*Meeting record prepared by Matthew Child and reviewed by Carol Miller and Jeff Ridal.  
Please forward any errors or omissions to [childm@windsor.ijc.org](mailto:childm@windsor.ijc.org)*