

# 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Health Professionals Advisory Board

## Summary Notes

April 30, 2025  
Washington D.C.

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### US Member Participants

Joan Rose, Co-Chair  
Ellen Dailey  
Matthew Dellinger  
Tisha King-Heiden (remote)  
Shannon Seneca

### US Member Regrets

Shaz Damani

### Invited Guests

Seth Foldy - Public Health Institute at Denver Health (remote)

### Commission Staff

Heather Stirratt – Director, IJC Great Lakes Regional Office  
Tori Agnew- Camiener - Great Lakes Fellow with the IJC, GLC, and Great Lakes Sea Grant Network  
Megan McLaughlin - Great Lakes Fellow with the IJC, GLC, and Great Lakes Sea Grant Network  
Lyne Sabourin – IJC Canadian Section Office  
Ian Stone - Great Lakes Fellow with the IJC, GLC, and Great Lakes Sea Grant Network  
Allison Voglesong Zejnati – IJC Great Lakes Regional Office  
Rachel Wyatt – IJC Great Lakes Regional Office (remote)

### Commission Liaisons

Oliver Dumville – IJC Canadian Section Office  
Breanna Green – IJC US Section Office

### Secretariat

Antonette Arvai – IJC Great Lakes Regional Office

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### Canadian Member Participants

Tom Edge, Co-Chair  
Marc Habash  
Kristen Lowitt (remote)  
Theresa Repaso-Subang (remote)  
Ian Young (remote)

### Canadian Member Regrets

Barry Jessiman

## Welcome & Review of Agenda

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the board and participants introduced themselves. No additions or amendments to the agenda.

## Co-Chairs' Update (Tom E. & Joan R.)

Co-Chairs highlighted HPAB-related activities since the last in-person board meeting in October 2024.

- Co-Chairs continue to participate in the IJC's Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) Work Group meetings.
  - HPAB has reviewed TAP materials and provided input on TAP report priority topics.
- Ongoing participation of board members on cross-board projects:
  - HPAB members joined the WQB's Drinking Water Work Group (DWWG) (February 2025).
    - Presentation to the DWWG on the HPAB's climate change human health indicators report was provided by former HPAB member and project lead, Seth Foldy (April 2025).
  - Tom participated in the IJC Great Lakes Science Advisory Board's (SAB) Great Lakes Science Plan workshop (April 2025).

- HPAB members' continued participation on the SAB's Great Lakes Early Warning System project.
- Co-Chairs' call with Lead Commissioners Chiblow and Acker on April 2 discussed HPAB's Microbial Water Quality Assessment study and membership.

### **HPAB Project Updates**

Project leads provided updates on projects.

#### **Climate Change Human Health Indicators** *(Seth F.)*

The report was transmitted to governments and released in December 2024. The report provides approximately 20 proposed indicators that could be considered towards the development of human health indicators related to climate-driven environmental changes in the Great Lakes. These indicators fall within the categories of climate drivers, environmental change, human health exposures and human health outcomes. Work is currently being undertaken to communicate the outcomes of the report including the development of a GIS StoryMap (multimedia storytelling tool). Seth will be [hosting a session at the June 2025 IAGLR Conference](#), during which a presentation on the HPAB's report will be given. The HPAB considered additional phases of work on this project, such as:

- Pilot testing a select set of indicators to explore developing further.
- Examine those areas that were out of scope in the first phase (e.g., ice cover, land-lake-weather interface, effects on groundwater).

It was noted that in piloting indicators, consider prioritizing communities with aging drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. It was noted that the report can help illustrate how climate-driven impacts can be measured, in addition to the climate-driven changes (e.g., ice cover) used under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and State of the Great Lakes reporting. Members were requested to indicate their interest in leading and/or being members of the work group.

#### **Fish Consumption Advisory Framework** *(Antonette A. for Raj B.)*

Several contractor and workshop summary reports have been developed as part of this project, including a report on Akwesasne traditional knowledge and science. A short summary report will be developed to synthesize the outcomes of those contractor reports, that will highlight the project goals, activities, outcomes and recommendations. IJC staff will work with project leads on the development of the summary report. Following its completion it will be circulated to the board for review. It was recognized that the report would remain internal to the HPAB and any potential public dissemination or communication plans for the report need to be co-created with the Akwesasne community.

#### **Great Lakes Microbial Water Quality Assessment Study** *(Tom E. & Joan R.)*

The project seeks to develop plans to modernize and advance microbial water quality assessment by implementing molecular and genomics methods in water quality monitoring programs in the Great Lakes. A Technical Working Group (TWG), established in October 2024, is comprised of approximately 20 US and Canadian microbial water quality assessment experts. The TWG will plan an inter-lab round robin on methods reproducibility between labs, help establish a Community of Practice for the Great Lakes, and build out a pilot study to test sampling protocols. A Steering Committee (SC) comprise of five US and Canadian members from federal agencies and research organizations was established in March 2025. The SC will help to guide and promote the study and explore possible avenues of funding for the round robin and pilot study. A SC kick-off call was held at the end of March.

#### **Knowledge Translation and Exchange** *(Ian Y. & Kristen L.)*

The project aims to enhance communication and uptake of HPAB projects. A literature review was completed on innovative science communications tools and presented to the board and interested IJC staff in September

2024. Based on this work, a manuscript was developed and is being submitted to peer-reviewed research journals focused on health topics. The work group has been meeting monthly to plan for focus groups with various audiences as potential users of HPAB reports. The HPAB's climate change human health indicators report and fish consumption advisory framework are planned to be used as case studies. The work group is building relationships with communities that will eventually serve as the focus groups to inform the planning and implementation of focus groups, anticipated later this year. In the absence of contract funding, staff will conduct the focus group efforts.

**Wild Rice** (*Matthew D. & Marc H.*)

The project goal is to assess the state of wild rice around the Great Lakes and provide recommendations on its restoration, stewardship and research. In the absence of contract funding, staff will support the project efforts. Project leads, Marc and Matthew, will be [hosting a session at the June 2025 IAGLR Conference](#) on the importance of traditional ecologic knowledge in Great Lakes research, which includes presentations on wild rice. The IAGLR session provides an opportunity to identify contacts/resources for the (pending) state of knowledge review. It was noted that HPAB member Shannon Seneca will be giving a presentation during the session as well as IJC Great Lakes Fellows, Ian Stone, Megan McLaughlin and Tori Agnew-Camiener.

**Action Item: Secretary will schedule a call of the HPAB to clarify the process for new project proposals as well as roles, responsibilities and time commitments entailed with project work group membership.**

**Presentation: HPAB Climate Change Human Health Indicators Report StoryMap** (*Megan M.*)

Megan McLaughlin, Great Lakes Fellow was developing a GIS StoryMap to communicate the outcomes of the HPAB's climate change human health indicators report. When complete, the StoryMap will be a public-facing product that uses interactive maps, visuals and links to use the report's case studies as a way to communicate the key takeaways of the report.

The report and StoryMap help frame how indicators that include both environmental and human health data can be leveraged to help municipalities make informed, prioritized decisions that protect public health, undertake adaptation and mitigate climate vulnerability, and promote the need for continued data collection. Members provided feedback to help improve the StoryMap to further emphasize positive projects/actions in addition to the focus on the case studies from the report.

**Cross-board Updates**

HPAB members serving on cross-board advisory projects provided updates.

**SAB Great Lakes Early Warning System (GLEWS)** (*Tom E. & Shannon S.*)

Project is testing an early warning system framework using two case studies – aquatic antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and aqueous nitrogen. A group of experts for each case is currently being formed. Public health sector expertise is important, and it is critical to capture the linkages between, for example, nitrogen, ecosystem disruption, and human health. There is limited AMR surveillance in source waters and no routine monitoring – wastewater may be a better starting point.

**Action Item – Members are requested to send any publications on either aquatic antimicrobial resistance or aqueous nitrogen to Tom and Shannon to share with the GLEWS project team.**

**SAB Science Plan** (*Tom E.*)

Project to enhance binational coordination of Great Lakes science to protect the region's communities, economy and ecological health. A workshop was held on Centers of Excellence (CoE) in April 2025. Examples of existing CoE were discussed as possible models to consider. The discussions included whether there were existing centers that could be used, opportunities for building new centres, and the need for CoE focused on water communications and engagement with the public. Work force development needs and areas of expertise were also discussed.

**WQB Drinking Water Work Group** (*Shannon S., Marc H., Theresa R-S.*)

This work group under the Water Quality Board includes HPAB members, and it is exploring the need to improve the assessment of Great Lakes source water for drinking water under the Agreement, such as refined or new indicators for source water quality for drinking water. As noted previously, Seth Foldy provided a presentation to the work group on the HPAB's climate change human health indicators report. The work group was interested in the process for identifying indicators, particularly those related to source water for drinking; data needs, availability, and accessibility; and any follow-up or next phases of work being considered.

**Presentation: Great Lakes Fellows Indigenous Engagement Efforts** (*Ian S., Tori A-C., Megan M.*)

Great Lakes Fellows, Ian Stone, Tori Agnew-Camiener and Megan McLaughlin, provided a presentation on their engagement with Indigenous communities in support of the IJC SAB's Science Plan. A variety of communities, including Indigenous communities, were engaged to ensure perspectives beyond academics and government are reflected in the Science Plan. The Fellows shared lessons learned from their engagements. For example: it is imperative to build trust thorough relationship building and have a strong value proposition for them to engage (what will the community be provided). Be flexible in the approach to engagement, and bring your own questions as a guide, but not rigid structure to the meeting. Prepare ahead of the meeting to be aware of treaties and history, current stressors, current community priorities, and cultural norms. IF collecting information in the meeting, obtain their free, prior and informed consent, ensuring they understand how the information collected will be used. A follow-up plan needs to be in place to continue the conversation and relationship with that community (e.g., share back notes, how they would like to see the results of the work). Some human health insights gathered during the engagements included - health of water and humans is intrinsically linked, but connecting pollution to health outcomes is challenging; need for communities to define their own baseline for what is acceptable for health; and the need for indicators of water quality that are easy to understand and remember. Ultimately, the goal of these engagements is to build strong relationships with communities for the IJC to facilitate involvement in future projects.

**2026 Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP)** (*Tom E. & Joan R.*)

IJC Great Lakes advisory boards and HPAB have been asked to provide input on priority topics that should be included in the TAP report. Members felt the Agreement objective related to pollutants was a top key topic, and discussed: including pathogens, microplastics; pollutant transport and human health exposure pathways that interconnect/crosscut many Agreement objectives; and chemical mixtures and lack of understanding of combined and cumulative effects. Habitats and wetlands were another topic identified, in the context of restoration efforts that can ameliorate pollutant issues. Some members additionally noted that TAP recommendations made should be attainable by the Parties. The outcomes of advisory boards' ongoing discussions on priority topics will be communicated to Commissioners for their decision.

**Action Item: Co-Chairs will draft a summary of the HPAB TAP priority discussion and rationale behind the topic prioritization.**

**HPAB Membership Update** (*Antonette A.*)

Due to time limitations, this item will be discussed during the HPAB's June monthly call.

**IJC International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study** (*Lyne S.*)

In March 2024, the Governments of Canada and the United States provided a Reference to the IJC that was developed in partnership with the transboundary Ktunaxa Nation. The Reference requested the IJC undertake certain actions regarding the impact of transboundary water pollution in the Elk-Kootenai/y watershed. The IJC is establishing a Governance Body and convening experts and knowledge holders in a Study Board, which includes members from the Ktunaxa Nation. The Study Board will report and make recommendations to reduce and mitigate impacts of water pollution in the watershed. The Study Board's work will be informed by

Public, Industry and Council of Governments Advisory Groups as well as various Technical Working Groups (TWG). The TWGs will gather and synthesize data in areas such as, water quality status and trends; impacts to human health; impacts to ecosystems; and mitigation efforts. The Study Board will prepare an interim report by fall 2025 and a final report by September 2026. The HPAB is prepared to assist and support the Study Board's work as requested or needed.

**Review of HPAB Presentation to Commissioners** *(Tom E. & Joan R.)*

The HPAB's presentation to Commissioners during the IJC Spring Semi-Annual meeting was reviewed with members, which included project updates and areas of opportunity and challenge. Members provided suggested key messages for co-chairs to include in their presentation including, reinforcing the importance of our relationship and protection of the water; wild rice is a one-health integrating concept; importance of continued collaboration and relationships to conduct work; concept of one water (coupled/continuous system of drinking water, wastewater, storm water, groundwater, etc.); data and information security.

**Next HPAB Meetings** *(Joan R.)*

The next monthly call of the board, scheduled for May 8<sup>th</sup>, is cancelled. Monthly calls will resume in June. The board's next in-person meeting will be in the fall 2025.