

International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board

Summary of Discussion

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

1:30 – 3:30 pm CT (2:30 – 4:30 pm ET)

Virtual Meeting

Chair: Mike Goffin

1. Welcome and Administration

U.S. Member Participants

COL Karl Jansen (Board Co-Chair)
Theresa Haugen
Mike Hirst
Kelly Sjerven
Jim Stark
Patty Thielen
Doug Franchot
Pam Tomevi
Matt Gouin
Scott Jutila (Secretary; Engineering Advisor)
Abigail Moore
Rebecca Seal-Soileau

International Joint Commission

Mark Gabriel, US Engineering Advisor
Rob Caldwell, Canadian Engineering Advisor
Kevin Bunch, IJC

Canadian Member Participants

Michael Goffin (Board Co-Chair)
Todd Sellers
Kiley Shebagegit
Trina Rawn
Greg Chapman
Karen Cederwall
Megan Garner
Matt Myers
Mark Lee
Chief Brian Perrault
Matt DeWolfe (Engineering Advisor)
Wellsley Hamilton (Secretary)

Additional Participants

Kelli Saunders, International Watershed Coordinator
Amy Adrihan, Minnesota Pollution Control
Lucas King, alternate for Chief Perrault
Teika Newton, AMC Co-chair
Joshua Jones, alternate for Al Pemberton
Cassidy Mazur, Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association
Denis Parent, ECCC

The agenda and the June 16, 2021 meeting summary were approved. Action items were completed or updates were provided under specific agenda items during this meeting.

- **ACTION:** Secretariat to post approved meeting summary on IRLWWB website.
- **ACTION:** Board members to review the September 9th meeting summary and identify edits to the Secretariat by October 22nd.

2. Review of IWI Proposals

The Core Monitoring Proposal was presented by Todd Sellers. Work was undertaken year ago to delineate a framework for basin-wide monitoring. The framework identified monitoring needs for: effectiveness monitoring, early warning surveillance, and adaptive management. The current proposal is intended to discuss rationalizing monitoring sites in the basin and reach agency consensus on a basic core monitoring program. The proposal involves a workshop facilitated by a technical expert and provides capacity and resources to effectively collaborate with the jurisdictions and agencies involved.

The full proposal is still in draft, including budget estimates. Key items that require Board approval are outlined in the cover sheet. Draft language for the Board's work plan is also identified in the cover sheet. The International Multi Agency Arrangement Working Group will review the proposal before it is formally submitted to the IJC.

The IJC Advisors are looking forward to reviewing the submission. If the proposal is received by the Advisors in a timely matter, they should be able to provide comments for the proposal to be submitted by the October 29, 2021 deadline. The Board approved the proposal in principle for Fall 2021 submission to the IJC.

The Adaptive Management Proposal was presented by Teika Newton. The proposal involves a half-day workshop engaging residents in the basin and soliciting input on the application of the IJC's climate change framework. The workshop will be a brainstorming session to determine whether adaptive management program is working as hoped and should serve to inform local climate change related studies about priorities. Participants will be provided with a summary climate-related planning and adaptive management for the rule curve. The workshop will take place virtually in March at the same time as the Watershed Forum. in virtual format

Doug Franchot identified that the vulnerability of mining is not quite ready for Board review. A proposal to do some kind of work to understand the past and potential impacts of mining in the basin has been discussed for many years and there has been quite a lot of input to date. There however remains some significant confusions so the group is going to step back to summarize the purpose and objectives of the proposal to frame discussions with the AEHC, CAG, IAG and the board. IJC Advisor, Mark Gabriel indicated that given Commissioner interest in this proposal it should be submitted for IWI consideration as soon as it is completed and vetted by the Board, as opposed to waiting for the next IWI call for proposals.

- **ACTION:** Core monitoring IWI proposal to be submitted to IJC advisors for comment.
- **ACTION:** Send Adaptive Management IWI proposal to IJC advisors for comment.
- **ACTION:** Update Adaptive Management IWI proposal to reflect Fall 2021 funding request, as opposed to Spring.

3. Special Presentation Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association

Cassidy Mazur provided an overview of the Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Associations, formerly the Lake of the Woods District Property Owners Association, activities and engagement throughout the basin. LOWDSA is interested in and does advocacy related to environmental impacts to water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, property values and fair taxation, land use & development and support for vibrant communities.

LOWDSA Activities relevant to the IRLWWB are linked primarily to the Lake Smart Program. Examples of the Association's work include the three webinars held over the summer on algal blooms, microplastics and forestry 101. Other community events include farmer's market booths, dock visits, seedling plantings, flowering rush meeting, shoreline cleanups, kids camps, etc.

There has been a significant focus on setting up zebra mussel cleaning stations and expanding the monitoring network in Canadian portion on Lake of the Woods. This is similar to efforts in the U.S. portion. The Board was glad to hear there is continuity across borders

Cassidy also informed the Board that the LWDSA is available to send out content through social media.

4. Next Steps: Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Recommendations

Board member Matt Myers presented an overview of the status of the status of Environmental Emergency Preparedness Recommendations. The Secretariat and the IJC confirmed that the Board's 2019 recommendations to the IJC related to reviewing the Canada-U.S. Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan and clarifying the emergency notification process from the Board were never forwarded to government.

Since that time 2019 work underway by the EPA and ECCO to update the Canada-U.S. Joint Inland Pollution Contingency Plan regional Annex III (CANUSCENT) was delayed but is now in its final stages of review. Canadian approvals should take place in the next 6 months. In addition, the Community advisory Board recently put forward 5 new recommendations.

The Board agreed that the original report and recommendations should be resubmitted to the IJC. The accompanying cover letter should highlight the independence of the report and the importance of submitting the recommendations to government; the current context and usefulness to governments should also be highlighted. The Board further recommended that the CAG recommendations also be shared with the IJC via the cover letter.

- **ACTION:** Secretariat to draft cover letter for Board review and submission to the IJC by October 18th.

5. IJC Semi-Annual Meeting Preparation

The IRLWWB meeting with the Commissioners is scheduled for 4:00pm ET on October 19th. The presentation has been drafted and will focus on the phosphorus reduction recommendations. The Emergency Preparedness and Response recommendations will be added. The Board recommends that the phosphorous reduction letter to the IJC should clarify that Canada should develop a target as protective of Minnesota's as this was an issue when the original recommendations were put forward in 2018

- **ACTION:** Secretariat to update the phosphorus reduction target setting letter and recirculate to the Board for review before submitting to the IJC on October 18th.

6. Special Presentation: Risk Based Basin Analysis – Water Stress Indices

Denis Parent from Environment and Climate Change Canada' Water Quality Monitoring and Surveillance Division in the Science and Technology Branch provided presentation on the technical aspects related to two key analytical tools for considering water quality risks and stressors.

Risk Based Basin Analysis (RBBA) is a tool used by ECCC under their risk-based adaptive management framework. The framework is aimed at optimizing the Department's activities to produce results that are more targeted and better adapted to the needs of users. It also serves to inform decision-making related to the design of the monitoring network.

The RBBA is a spatial analysis tool used to quantify the relative risk to water quality and aquatic ecosystem health. Out of 1138 sub-sub-drainage areas (SSDAs) across Canada, including transboundary drainage areas the RBBA was used to identify priority drainage areas nationally where there may be risk to water quality from a combination of stressors; to provide a global picture to assess monitoring efforts nationally and to inform national reporting (e.g. Canadian

Environmental Sustainability Indicators). The presentation shared with the Board included information about the stressor variables considered and intensity calculations.

Denis Parent then reviewed two examples of watershed based analysis initiatives. In the Wolstoq/St.John's Watershed and subsequently in the St. Croix River watershed a Water Stress Index (WSI) approach was applied. Whereas the RBBA is good for comparing relative water quality at the drainage and sub-drainage basins, the WSI is more appropriate for analyzing the relative health of areas within a sub-basin and is a more appropriate scale for planning and management actions. The WSI is likely a more relevant analytical tool for the IRLWWB to consider. The WSI is a good tool for fostering collaboration among watershed groups, academia, and various levels of government by using a common language and consistent data to guide freshwater conservation and management. The results are communicated in an accessible story map format for the Wolstoq/St.John's Watershed and the St. Croix River watershed.

Key lessons learned during these two WSI processes include: Set clear objectives and consider the scale for intended uses; Clearly identify the limitations of the analysis for example is it a prioritization tool versus in-depth watershed modelling; Dataset availability and quality is important; a lot of data is created so plan information sharing tools (e.g. Google Earth layers, StoryMap, etc.); consider opportunities to add in additional information that may not get captured in analysis (e.g. areas of concern, point sources). Denis Parent offered his contact information for follow-up and recommended the Board consider the St. Croix report and story map when they become available.

7. Roundtable

Kelli Saunders provided an International Watershed Coordinator Update. The current focus has been on getting information out via website, this has included information related to stories on ECCC sampling work; the March watershed forum; and the soil and conservation district stories. The Ask an Expert series was successfully launched this fall as well.

The IJC advisors reminded the Board about their appearance at the IJC Semi-Annual meeting on October 19, 2021 from 4-4:45 pm ET and followed up on contacts to inform a water level investigation related to Lake of the Woods. Contacts were provided to Mark Gabriel via the MSTeams chat. The Board was also notified that the IJC recently re-appointed Chief Perrault and Mark Lee.

An update on the on the Flood Forecasting and Communications Subcommittee (FFCS) discussions was requested by IJC Advisor Mark Gabriel. Scott Jutila informed Mark that the FFCS Terms of Reference and membership list has been written and is being reviewed by the Water Levels Committee and IJC advisors.

8. Closing Remarks

The meeting adjourned at 3:45pm CT.

Drafted by: Abigail Moore USACE, Wellsley Hamilton, ECCO, Scott Jutila USACE