

**Great Lakes Water Quality Board
217th Meeting**

Summary of Discussion

July 20, 2022 @ 10:00-11:30 AM ET
Virtual

U.S. Member Participants

Jon Allan (Co-Chair)
Sandy Bihn
George Elmaraghy
Frank Ettawageshik
Stephen Galarneau
George Heartwell
Brandon Hofmeister
Sara Hudson
Elizabeth Kirkwood
Kelsey Leonard
Eileen Murphy
Joe Tomandl III

Canadian Member Participants

Gayle Wood (Co-Chair)
Michael Goffin
François Houde
John Jackson
Carolyn Johns
Irving Leblanc
Mark Mattson
Chris McLaughlin
Brian Tucker
Mark Wales
Chloe Stuart

U.S. Member Regrets

Chris Korleski
Monica Lewis-Partick

Canadian Member Regrets

Niharika Bandaru
Mark Fisher
Chris Paci

Observers

Ash Kumar - Environment and Climate Change Canada
James Schardt – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Carla Torchia - Environment and Climate Change Canada
Melanie Ward – Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Invited Guests

Bryan Stephens – Manager, Legislative Policy for Environment and Climate Change Canada

Commission Staff

Heather Stirratt – Director, Great Lakes Regional Office
Mark Burrows – Great Lakes Regional Office
Raj Bejankiwar – Great Lakes Regional Office
Rajendra Poudel – Great Lakes Regional Office
Allison Voglesong Zejnati – Great Lakes Regional Office
Rachel Wyatt – Great Lakes Regional Office

Commission Liaisons

Oliver Dumville – Canadian Section Office

Secretariat

Antonette Arvai – Great Lakes Regional Office

Summary of Action Items

1. **Board Secretary will send an e-mail to solicit members' suggestions on potential topics to consider advancing for 2023 work planning.**
2. **Board Secretary will send an e-mail to confirm members' attendance at the September WQB meeting and optional social dinner.**

1. **Welcome, Introduction and Indigenous Acknowledgement** (*Co-Chairs*)

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the 217th meeting of the board. The co-chairs acknowledged the traditional First Nations, Tribal and Métis territories on which the meeting was conducted that day, given the virtual gathering of participants from various locations. New member Brian Tucker was welcomed to his first meeting of the board. New Great Lakes Regional Office Director, Heather Stirratt, was introduced to and welcomed by the board.

2. **Co-Chairs' Update** (*Co-Chairs*)

The co-chairs provide monthly written updates to members to ensure timely communication of co-chair activities relevant to board operations. A verbal update was provided during the meeting:

- IJC Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) Report
 - IJC staff have begun research and writing of various sections of the TAP report. Report sections will draw on the work/reports of the various advisory boards. Staff are aware of the key board members involved in the various board efforts and may reach out members to seek their feedback as a technical advisor/subject matter expert. Advisory boards, including the WQB, will conduct a review of the full draft TAP report (expected spring 2023).
 - A key piece of the IJC's TAP report is a review of the governments' Progress Report of the Parties (PROP) and State of the Great Lakes Report (SOGL). It is anticipated these reports will be released by the end of July 2022.

3. **Project Updates** (*G. Wood*)

WQB members were provided an opportunity to ask questions on written project updates provided in advance of the meeting. A summary of the project updates and related discussion is provided below.

Follow-up and Critical Analyses of the Third Great Lakes Regional Poll

Commissioners approved the WQB's poll analysis work plan in April 2022. The analyses will include, trend analysis of the past three polls (2021, 2018, 2015); additional analysis in the context of other related polls and scholarly research; analyzing poll results and public perceptions on the Great Lakes ecosystem issues related to SOGL and PROP; and deepening understanding of poll results through focus group study and other demographic analyses. A contracting process is currently underway to hire a consultant to conduct the analyses. Work is expected to begin by the end of August 2022. The work group is also planning to promote and distribute communications products of its 2021 poll, as part of an IJC booth, during the September Great Lakes Public Forum.

Climate Change Adaptation for Community Resilience Across the Great Lakes Region

Commissioners approved the WQB's Climate Change Adaptation work plan in April 2022. The project will define and deliver a package of learning opportunities and planning tools that addresses climate change issues that create common challenges, or opportunities, for communities across the Great Lakes, particularly small to medium-sized communities. A statement of work to hire a consultant is being developed. The goal is to complete the competitive process and select a consultant prior to the end of September 2022

Great Lakes Horizons

The goal of the project is to understand the drivers that will have a significant effect on the Great Lakes (ecologically, economically, socially and culturally) over the next 30+ years. Draft scenarios are being developed including positive, status quo, and negative or degraded futures. There will be two rounds of virtual workgroup and peer reviewer engagements on draft scenario graphics and narratives, which are planned for late July and August 2022. The contract work is expected to be completed in early 2023.

Manure Management

A Collaborative has been created consisting of ~30 people including farmers, members of local government, agricultural organizations, watershed organizations, academics and corporate representatives has held six meetings since forming in Oct. 2021. A consultant was hired in June 2022 to collect and assess information on manure/nutrient inputs, policies/programs and management practices. A kick-off call between the contractor and WQB project management team was held in late June. Monthly calls with the Collaborative and contractor will begin in late July.

Nuclear Decommissioning

The WQB' *Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Facilities in the Great Lakes Basin* report was released in early 2022. A summary video about the report and public webinar was held April 29th. A by-invitation only meeting with regulators is scheduled for July 27th. Collected feedback from the webinar with regulators will be summarized and advice to the Commission on potential next steps for the board report will be developed.

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement 50th Anniversary Review

The focus of the project is to review the GLWQA and its Annexes, to assess the context of how the GLWQA is focused and organized, and whether it could or should be structured differently to better facilitate progress towards its objectives and goals. The consultant supporting the project provided a presentation to the board on the outcomes of their work, which included a series of recommendations, at the April 2022 WQB meeting. The work group has since prioritized a small set of recommendations to advance to the Commission, which will take the form of a letter to Commissioners. The letter is expected to be forwarded for board review by the end of July.

Watching Briefs

The board develops and maintains watching briefs to summarize significant developments, events and information in a factual manner on specific, defined topic areas. They are periodically updated and serve to keep the board informed on issues which have or could impact the waters of the Great Lakes.

Fossil Fuel Development and Transportation

Recent developments were highlighted that included, updates on economic drivers (i.e., oil prices, transportation); closure of the St. Mary's River in early June from a spill of gear oil; and updates on the proposed Line 5 Tunnel, where additional information on safety issues is being requested by the Michigan Public Service Commission before ruling on Enbridge's plan to replace existing pipelines and new pipelines in underground tunnel.

Great Lakes Nuclear

Recent developments included the Palisades nuclear plant in Michigan shutting down in May 2022. Also, in May 2022 radionuclides were renominated as Chemicals of Mutual Concern (CMCs) under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Microplastics in the Great Lakes

Recent developments were highlighted that included, the Government of Canada publishing final regulations to prohibit single-use plastics and the U.S. to ban the sale of single-use plastic products in national parks and other public lands.

Great Lakes Coastal Assembly

The WQB continues to be apprised of the work of the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly (GLCA). The board's 2019 work on wetlands served as a catalyst for the GLCA to think more broadly about how to advance and accelerate coastal wetland efforts. The GLCA has launched their first website [GLCA website](#). The Lake Erie Pilot Steering Team had their kick-off meeting in late June. The Steering Team will be guiding the implementation of a Coastal Wetland framework to help establish a baseline extent of coastal wetlands, determine targets for coastal wetland conservation, and identify where to focus coastal wetland conservation efforts to achieve targets.

4. 2023 Work Planning (J. Allan)

The board had preliminary discussions to prepare for work plan development for the 2023 work cycle. Members were provided an overview of current board projects/activities and timelines, including commitments on cross-board projects. Work plan projects can include continuation or next phases of current work; revisiting topics/issues explored in the past; and/or a new issue or topic that needs to be addressed. As part of the work planning process the projects identified should be consistent with the mandate of the WQB and purview of the GLWQA and consider other criteria such as, adding value to, or building upon, previous work; addressing knowledge gaps; and alignment/support with Commission priorities. Members will be solicited, via e-mail, for suggestions of topics to consider for work planning. At the September WQB meeting there will be fulsome discussion of topics proposed and identification of topics to advance as work plans. The goal is to finalize work plans by the end of 2022 for submission to the Commission in early 2023 for approval.

Action Item: Board Secretary will send an e-mail to solicit members' suggestions on potential topics to consider advancing for 2023 work planning.

5. Presentation: The Canadian Environmental Protection Act

The WQB received an informational presentation on the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999* (CEPA) and a recently proposed amendment, [Bill S-5 Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act](#). Bryan Stephens, Manager, Legislative Policy for Environment and Climate Change Canada provided the presentation.

The CEPA is federal legislation for protecting the environment and human health from pollution, enabling programs such as the Chemicals Management Plan, Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste, and Canada-wide Air Quality Management System. The CEPA is reviewed every five years and was last comprehensively updated in 1999. A proposed amendment - *Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act* - was initially introduced in April 2021 and re-introduced in February 2022 as Bill S-5. Bill S-5 amends the CEPA in two main areas - recognizes a right to a healthy environment, as provided under CEPA and strengthens the foundation for the management of chemicals and other substances. Bill S-5 includes a proposal to replace the CEPA's current virtual elimination regime of PBT substances (persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic) with one that remains risk-based but provides that highest risk toxic substances be managed by giving priority to prohibition. In various government reviews of the CEPA the virtual elimination requirements have been noted to be duplicative and difficult to implement, with suggestions to implement a more effective and functional regime. The new regime for the management of toxic substances would maintain a two-track approach:

- Substances of highest risk given priority for prohibition (total, partial or conditional); definition of such will include thresholds for carcinogenicity, mutagenicity and reproductive toxicity in addition to persistence and bioaccumulation
- Other toxic substances will continue to be subject to regular management actions (e.g., priority for pollution prevention)

Bill S-5 was approved by the Senate in June 2022 and is expected to go to the House of Commons for review and approval in fall 2022.

Following the presentation, some WQB members provided a link to an additional perspective on the [proposed CEPA amendments via the Canadian Environmental Law Association](#). The board was also supportive of holding a panel discussion at a future WQB meeting to understand and hear various perspectives on chemicals management frameworks used in both Canada and the U.S.

6. Presentation: Reinvigorating Social Science in the Great Lakes Region

IJC Great Lakes Regional Office staff member, Rajendra Poudel, provided a presentation on the use and value of social science, particularly in the Great Lakes Region. Social science will become increasingly important in the future governance of the Great Lakes region, connecting human behaviour, policy innovations and best practices in order to adapt to future social, demographic and economic changes. Communicating the value of research and science, qualitative and/or quantitative, is critical to the success of research. The IJC and/or its boards have several examples of social science projects including, the SAB's Ecosystem Services Valuation of the Great Lakes, and the WQB's Great Lakes Regional Poll and 50th Anniversary Review of the GLWQA.

Following the presentation a few examples were provided to highlight the importance of social science and ecosystem valuation:

[Lake Superior Manoomin Cultural and Ecosystem Characterization Study](#) (NOAA, 2020)
[Ecosystem Approach Conference](#) (Aug. 2022)

7. Schedule of WQB Meetings (G. Wood)

The WQB has one remaining meeting in 2022, which will be held in-person the afternoon of Sept. 26th and the morning of Sept. 27th in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON. An optional social dinner for members is also being planned for the evening of the 26th. The WQB meeting is being held just before the governments' Great Lakes Public Forum, scheduled on Sept. 27th-29th in Niagara Falls, ON. Members' feedback was solicited in early June regarding the on-going planning of the Sept. WQB meeting. In response, a few members expressed concern regarding potential conflicts with the Forum and other events being planned that week. This concern was reiterated during the board meeting. Co-Chairs indicated they made the decision to continue with the Sept. 26th – 27th dates based on the solicited feedback received and their current understanding of the Forum agenda, which is still in the process of being finalized. It was recognized some members may not be able to attend the WQB meeting, or only attend portions of the meeting, given their involvement with other events that week.

Action Item: Board Secretary will send an e-mail to confirm members' attendance at the September WQB meeting and optional social dinner.

8. Public Comments and Closing Remarks (Co-Chairs)

No members of the public were present. The co-chairs thanked members and others for their participation and their continued hard work on both WQB and cross-board projects.