

Great Lakes Water Quality Board 220th Meeting

Summary of Discussion

May 3-4, 2023

Detroit, MI

U.S. Member Participants

Jon Allan (Co-Chair)
George Elmaraghy
Frank Ettawageshik (remote, Day 2)
Molly Flanagan
George Heartwell (remote, Day 2)
Brandon Hofmeister (Day 1)
Sara Hudson
Elizabeth Kirkwood
Kelsey Leonard
Monica Lewis-Partick (Day 1)
Eileen Murphy (remote, Day 2)
Shaili Pfeiffer
Joe Tomandl III

U.S. Member Regrets

Chris Korleski

Observers

Ash Kumar - Environment and Climate Change Canada (remote, Day 2)
Carla Torchia - Environment and Climate Change Canada (remote, Day 2)
Melanie Ward – Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (remote, Day 2)

Invited Guests

Alexa Bush - The Kresge Foundation (Day 2)
Catherine Febria - Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, University of Windsor (Day 2)
John Hartig - Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, University of Windsor (Day 2)
Bryan Hogle - The Kresge Foundation (Day 2)

Commission Staff

Heather Stirratt – Director, Great Lakes Regional Office
John Allis – IJC US Section Office
Raj Bejankiwar – Great Lakes Regional Office
Mark Burrows - Great Lakes Regional Office
Rajendra Poudel - Great Lakes Regional Office
John Wilson – Great Lakes Regional Office (remote, Day 2)
Allison Voglesong-Zejnati - Great Lakes Regional Office
Rachel Wyatt - Great Lakes Regional Office (remote, Day 2)

Commission Liaisons

Oliver Dumville – Canadian Section Office
Kathey-Lee Galvin – U.S. Section Office

Secretariat

Antonette Arvai – Great Lakes Regional Office

Canadian Member Participants

Chris McLaughlin (Co-Chair)
Niharika Bandaru (remote, Day 2)
Meredith Brown
Fe de Leon
Carolyn DuBois
Bonnie Fox
Michael Goffin (remote, Day 2)
Carolyn Johns (Day 1)
Jamie Lavigne
Chloe Stuart (remote, Day 2)
Mark Wales

Canadian Member Regrets

Mark Fisher
François Houde
Brian Tucker

WEDNESDAY MAY 3RD, 2023 (DAY 1)

Tours and community conversations about local mitigation and restoration efforts to protect water quality

Members toured sites in Detroit and Dearborn, MI to learn from a variety of organizations working on water issues in the Detroit River and Rouge River watersheds.

Rouge River Area of Concern - Oxbow Wetland Restoration Project

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds used to support progress toward removal of beneficial use impairments related to degraded fish and wildlife populations, degradation of benthos and loss of fish and wildlife habitat. The natural Oxbow channel was recreated and reconnected to the channelized portion of the lower Rouge River. The restored channel provides habitat and wetlands for birds, amphibians and fish; resting locations for migratory fish; and recreational opportunities. In particular, the board heard how ecosystem improvement goals were being linked with social goals to provide community members greater access and connection to the waters.

Detroit River Area of Concern – Lake Okonoka and Blue Heron Lagoon Restoration Projects at Belle Isle

Showcase of restoration projects on Belle Isle, supported by Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds to support progress toward the removal of beneficial use impairments related to loss of fish and wildlife habitat and degradation of fish and wildlife populations. Together these projects reconnect the waterways on Belle Isle, with Lake Okonoka linked on one end by Detroit River and Blue Heron Lagoon on the other. This reconnection allows Great Lakes water and fish to pass freely. It also provides a benefit to people with enhanced birding, hiking and fishing experiences from increased fish and wildlife populations.

Chandler Park Marshlands

A green infrastructure project initiative led by a community-based group, the [Chandler Park Conservancy](#). The project includes the construction of a wetland, rain gardens and bioswales on a community park property to help capture stormwater runoff. The marshland provides habitat for a variety of wildlife including birds, turtles, frogs, butterflies and pollinating insects. The project also provides benefits to the local community by preventing stormwater from entering the city's combined sewer system and reducing basement flooding and providing opportunities for environmental education and exercise.

Eastside Community Network

Board members were educated on how extreme precipitation events overwhelm the city's combined sewer system, disproportionately impacting the city's east side residents with flooded basements. The ECN's [climate equity programming](#) helps residents respond to basement backup and flooding events as well as proactively addressing root causes. Some of these initiatives include the establishment of a resilience hub, to support the community during extreme weather events; support stormwater management and infrastructure improvements; and maintain partnerships with organizations that can provide direct support to residents. ECN also works to ensure local policies prioritize climate equity and resilience through their [Climate Equity Policy Advocacy](#).

We the People of Detroit

Youth leaders were brought together at the office of [We the People of Detroit](#), a community-based grassroots organization that works to inform, educate, and empower Detroit residents on issues surrounding civil rights, land, water, education, and the democratic process. The youth-led discussions educated board members about how their organizations empower youth to lead their programs and policy advocacy to address the intersections of water and environmental justice. Members heard about:

- We the People of Detroit's policy work advocating for the human right to water and programs addressing drinking water affordability and shutoff policies in Detroit.
- Toledo [Junction Coalition](#)'s community education efforts to inform neighbours about water quality and drinking water issues including the impacts of harmful algal blooms.
- [Flint Community Lab](#) facility that provides free water testing for lead and other harmful chemicals and programs that help repair residents' trust and relationship with their drinking water.
- [East Michigan Environmental Action Council](#)'s work in water and youth education on ensuring democratic processes so that community members' needs and priorities are fundamentally reflected in environmental decision-making.

A thank you was extended to all who contributed to providing a memorable and educational day for the board, especially those who helped to organize, host and lead presentations.

Marie McCormick – Friends of the Rouge

Addison Mauck – Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

Herman Jenkins – Friends of the Rouge

Monica Lewis-Patrick – We the People of Detroit

John O’Meara – EC&T - Oxbow Restoration Site

Norrel Hemphill, Esq. – We the Youth of Detroit, We the People of Detroit

Alice Bailey – EC&T - Oxbow Restoration Site

Jatonah Henry – We the Youth of Detroit, We the People of Detroit

Sally Petrella – Friends of the Rouge

Brooke Bowers - We the Youth of Detroit, We the People of Detroit

Erma Leapheart – Sierra Club Michigan Chapter

RaJon Taylor – Blue Network, We the People of Detroit

Bob Burns – Friends of the Detroit River

Patrick Judd – EC&T - Grayton Greenspace Project

McKenzi Waliczek – Friends of the Detroit River

Dr. Alicia Smith – The Junction Coalition

Tricia Blicharski – Friends of the Detroit River

Alexis Smith - The Junction Coalition

Erin Stanley – Eastside Community Network

Mike Harris – Flint Community Lab

Alexis Sims – Eastside Community Network

Candice Mushatt - Flint Community Lab

Alex J. Allen – Chandler Park Conservancy

Cassidy Goyett - Flint Community Lab

Annette DeMaria – EC&T - Chandler Park Marsh

Paul Jackson – East Michigan Environment Action Council

THURSDAY MAY 4TH, 2023 (DAY 2)

Summary of Action Items

1. **WQB members to provide comments on the draft Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) Report to the WQB Secretary by May 18th, 2023.**
2. **WQB members to notify WQB Secretary and/or Co-Chairs regarding their interest to serve on project work groups.**

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

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the 220th meeting of the board. The co-chairs acknowledged the meeting was held on the contemporary and traditional lands of three Anishinaabe nations of the Council of Three Fires - the Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi.

New members Molly Flanagan (Alliance for the Great Lakes), Meredith Brown (Canadian Geographic), Fe de Leon (Canadian Environmental Law Association) and Carolyn DuBois (The Gordon Foundation) were welcomed to their first meeting of the board.

Kathey-Lee Galvin (IJC US Section Office) was welcomed to her first meeting of the WQB, as the new US WQB Liaison, replacing Victor Serveiss. Co-Chairs also announced that Antonette Arvai (IJC Great Lakes Regional Office) would be transitioning out of the WQB Secretariat role, replaced by Rajendra Poudel (IJC Great Lakes Regional Office) as of July 1, 2023.

2. Co-Chairs Update *(C. McLaughlin)*

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:

- **Work Plans** – WQB project work plans were approved by the Commission the week of April 24th, during the IJC Spring Semi-Annual Meeting. This also included approval of the joint SAB-WQB work plan to scope out a process to create a new Great Lakes atlas, inspired by a 1995 atlas developed by (then) Environment Canada and US Environmental Protection Agency. The project will result in a detailed work plan to guide production of the atlas and its content, including identification of potential virtual/online platforms, estimated costs, partners, and leaders in its development and maintenance.
- **Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) Report** – The TAP report is a product of the IJC, informed by the work of the various boards. The draft TAP report was circulated to the WQB, SAB and HPAB for concurrent review in early May. Members were strongly encouraged to take time to review and provide comments on the report. Members are to provide their comments to the WQB Secretary by May 18th. Comments will be compiled and forwarded to IJC staff for consideration in revising the report.

Action Item: WQB members to provide comments on the draft Triennial Assessment of Progress (TAP) Report to the WQB Secretary by May 18th, 2023.

3. Reflections on Day 1 Tours and Community Conversations *(Co-Chairs)*

Members were provided with an opportunity to share their thoughts and insights on the outcomes of the Day 1 tours and community conversations and the potential influence on the current and future work of the Board. These discussions were held as part of agenda items #3 and #8. The Detroit community visit provided the board members to observe, interact, and feel the environmental justice to the black people residing there. Board members expressed that the conversations were inspiring, and their voice should be heard to deliver community welfare. Scalable resilience and climate change are huge issues in that black community. The board members observed the connection between land and water which has the greatest impacts in water quality. If water is placed at the center of decision making, then we can see tremendous impacts in the present and future, which will have lasting impacts in that community.

4. Project Updates *(J. Allan)*

WQB members were provided an opportunity to ask questions on written project updates provided in advance of the meeting. Brief verbal updates were also provided on the Great Lakes Regional Poll Data Analysis project and Manure Collaborative initiative. A summary of the project updates and related discussion is provided below.

Great Lakes Regional Poll Data Analysis *(R. Bejankiwar)*

The WQB has conducted 3 Great Lakes polls (2015, 2018, 2021) to gauge the public's attitudes and perceptions of threats to the Great Lakes and the importance of protecting them. The fourth poll is expected to be conducted in summer 2023. Currently, data from the previous polls are being analyzed to bring more insights of quantitative analytics including inferential statistical findings. The analysis will also help understand the relevance of GL regional poll and other comparable poll reports. The analyses will also be used to identify refinements or additional questions to potentially add to the fourth poll. It is the WQB's vision that the use of polls will be instrumental for the benefit of society.

Manure Nutrient Management Collaborative *(M. Wales & Joe T.)*

This project builds upon a 2019 WQB report that provided recommendations to strengthen the regulatory manure management framework to reduce nutrient runoff. The WQB has established a binational Collaborative of ~30 key stakeholders knowledgeable in water quality, agriculture and manure/nutrient management to find solutions for improved manure management. A contractor was hired to collect and assess data on manure generation, handling and management in two Lake Erie basin watersheds. The final

contractor report was submitted to the Collaborative in April 2023. The contractor's report is to inform the next steps of the Collaborative, who are currently developing a cover letter to accompany the contractor report, outlining their perspectives on how to move forward. The goal is to have the Collaborative continue operating independently of the IJC/WQB, to act as agents of change and find solutions to improve manure management through changes in land use practices, research, and policy. This is a long-term process and the WQB project team continues to seek potential organizations willing to support the Collaborative's continued operation. The WQB aims to transition the Collaborative to independent operation by early September 2023. During discussions it was noted that Marcy Kaptur (Congresswoman, Ohio 9th district) talked about the issue of manure and animal operations at a recent event in April 2023, including needs for improved data and mapping. The WQB/work group may wish to seek out additional information on Kaptur's efforts in this area.

Climate Change Adaptation for Community Resilience Across the Great Lakes Region

This 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. This project is being supported by contractors Potomac Hudson Engineering (PHE partnered with Michael Baker International and LimnoTech. Between November 2022 and April 2023 the work group has met with the contractors virtually six times. The contractor has conducted an extensive literature review to develop top general strategies for climate change adaptation and resilience for communities across the Great Lakes. Effort has been made to engage with wide a range of stakeholders including Indigenous People. In order to engage the Tribes, Metis, and First Nations, WQB board member Frank E. will assist in organizing a meeting with Indigenous People and the project team including the contractor. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the May 31st meeting of the United Tribes of Michigan in Manistee, MI.

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. The WQB received a presentation on the completed work of the contractor in March 2023, which included 4 future scenarios. A final contractor report was submitted to the work group in April 2023. The work group also developed a phase 2 project for the 2023 work cycle, which includes a plan to hire a contractor to help develop and implement a strategy to communicate the four future scenarios to diverse audiences. The primary audiences second phase project include: federal, state, and Indigenous Great Lakes policy makers, policy influencers and influential organization such as First Nations or Tribal resource agencies, Great Lakes educators and academia, policy think takes and environmental nongovernment organizations, national and regional media outlets, and community-centric stakeholders. This project is a signature project that is expected to transform the engagement practices and enable to operationalize and contextualize strategies.

With the recent Commission approval of 2023 projects, work groups will begin meeting to implement the work plan activities. Members were encouraged to join project groups in which they have an interest.

Action Item: WQB members to notify WQB Secretary and/or Co-Chairs regarding their interest to serve on project work groups.

5. Crossboard Work – Portfolio of Nutrient Projects

In advance of the meeting, members were provided with a list of IJC Advisory Board nutrient related projects undertaken in the last 5 years. The list was provided to illustrate the connections and linkages among the boards' work on the issue of nutrients. The projects span a range of issues from understanding gaps in nutrient research, data and monitoring, to impacts, to management, including the use of improved modelling and adaptive management, strengthening of domestic action plans, and collaboratively seeking better solutions for manure management.

6. Presentation - Ecosystem Approach in the 21st Century: Guiding Science and Management

The Headwater Lab of University of Windsor is working on a multiyear project on Ecosystem Approach in the 21st Century. John Hartig is the project lead who has steered this project and remediation action plan (RAP) of deteriorated or contaminated sites using the concept of ecosystem-based management. This project emboldens the importance of community of practice. Some of the common community of practices include US Fish and Wildlife. This project has aimed at fostering community monitoring and interrelationships among projects, people, and places.

7. Presentation: The Kresge Foundation Detroit Program

A presentation on the [Kresge Foundation Detroit Program](#) was provided by Bryan Hogle (Senior Program Manager) and Alexa Bush (Program Officer). The Kresge Foundation, established in 1924, provides grants to establish educational, cultural and health care facilities across the US, particularly by increasing opportunities for low-income people in cities. The work of the Kresge Foundation Detroit Program is based on a number of principles, including respecting and trusting the knowledge of local communities and ensuring climate change, environmental justice and community resilience impacts are considered in the work supported. Local environmental justice and sustainability programs supported by Kresge Detroit were highlighted:

- **Southeast Michigan Resilience Fund** - funds for green infrastructure and habitat restoration projects to reduce stormwater impact, improve water quality, increase usability of public green space, and strengthen regional resilience.
- **Resiliency Hubs** – establishment of hubs in eastside Detroit that provide essential services during emergencies (such as extreme precipitation events and flooding), recovery and every day.
- **Project and Operating Support for Frontline Organizations in Jefferson Chalmers Community** – work with community organizations for flood repair and clean-up; support implementation of climate adaptation actions by individuals in parallel with larger, longer-term projects, such as infrastructure upgrades.

The importance of ensuring community support of projects and actions was highlighted, which entails building trust in those who provide information. Intentional efforts also need to be made to overcome the deeper historical issues of water trauma experienced by communities of colour (e.g., separate water fountains, pools, beaches). It was further noted that regional solutions are needed to protect water quality, but communities want local control in the decisions and actions that will impact them.

8. Reflections on Day 1 Events – Continued (Co-Chairs)

Continued discussion of members’ thoughts and insights on the outcomes of the Day 1 tours and community conversations. See summary under agenda item #3 for points of discussion.

9. WQB Schedule of 2023 Meetings (C. McLaughlin)

The schedule of remaining WQB meetings for the 2023 year was reviewed.

- 221st Meeting – July 27, 2023 @ 1:00-3:00 PM ET
- 222nd Meeting – October 2023, Ottawa, ON [In conjunction with IJC Semi-Annual Meeting].

The IJC’s Fall Semi-Annual Meeting is currently scheduled for the week of October 16th. The date of the WQB meeting that week is TBD. Members will be updated when a meeting date is confirmed.

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

No members of the public were in attendance. Members were thanked for their participation and time to attend the in-person meeting.