

**Great Lakes Water Quality Board
209th Meeting**

Summary of Discussion

July 29, 2020 2:30 – 4:30 PM ET
Virtual Meeting

U.S. Member Participants

Jon Allan (Co-Chair)
Sandy Bihn
George Elmaraghy
Frank Ettawageshik
Steve Galarneau
George Heartwell
Sara Hudson
Elizabeth Kirkwood
Kelsey Leonard
Monica Lewis-Patrick
Joe Tomandl III

Canadian Member Participants

Gayle Wood (Co-Chair)
Sandra Cooper
Michael Goffin
François Houde
John Jackson
Carolyn Johns
Irving Leblanc
Ling Mark
Mark Mattson
Chris McLaughlin
Chris Paci
Mark Wales

U.S. Member Regrets

Brandon Hofmeister
Christopher Korleski

Canadian Member Regrets

Mark Fisher

Observers

Emily Santoro – Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
Carla Torchia – Environment and Climate Change Canada
Melanie Ward - Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks

Invited Guests

Thomas Edge – McMaster University (Member of IJC’s Health Professionals Advisory Board)
Cherie Hagen – Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (Co-Chair Great Lakes Coastal Assembly)

Commission Staff

Raj Bejankiwar – Great Lakes Regional Office
Jennifer Boehme – Great Lakes Regional Office
David Burden – Great Lakes Regional Office (Director)
Mark Burrows – Great Lakes Regional Office
Matthew Child – Great Lakes Regional Office
Allison Voglesong Zejnati – Great Lakes Regional Office
John Wilson – Great Lakes Regional Office

Commission Liaisons

Victor Serveiss – U.S. Section
Carol Smith (for Paul Allen) – Canadian Section

IJC Commissioners

Robert Sisson – U.S. Commissioner
Lance Yohe – U.S. Commissioner

Secretariat

Antonette Arvai – Great Lakes Regional Office

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

The co-chairs welcomed everyone to the 209th meeting of the board. The co-chairs acknowledged the traditional First Nations and Tribal territories on which the meeting was conducted that day, given the virtual gathering of participants from various locations. Members and other participants identified themselves.

An item on equity and diversity was added to the end of the agenda at the request of a WQB member.

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

The co-chairs have been providing monthly written updates to members to ensure timely communication of co-chair activities relevant to board operations. Members continue to appreciate the updates. A verbal update was provided during the meeting on the following:

- An IJC guidance document was provided to all boards, which is to be used in developing recommendations that are most useful and implementable. Members were encouraged to use this document in conducting their projects.
- Commissioner interest in the issue of microplastics, particularly the WQB's thoughts on any value-added work that could be done, building upon the IJC's 2017 *Microplastics in the Great Lakes* report.
- During a call with lead Commissioners for the WQB, co-chairs raised the issue of water inequities across the basin in urban and Indigenous communities - an issue members previously suggested a watching brief be developed on. Co-chairs continue to explore how this topic might fit within the mandate the WQB and IJC, and within the purview of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and the role the board could play in this area.

3. Canada Water Agency (*G. Wood*)

Michael Goffin, WQB member and Regional Director General for Environment and Climate Change Canada in Ontario, provided an overview of the recently created Canada Water Agency (CWA). In December 2019 Prime Minister Trudeau directed the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to create a new Canada Water Agency to work with the provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, local authorities, scientists and others to find the best ways to keep water safe and well-managed. The CWA is currently undertaking engagement sessions with provinces, territories, FNs, the public and others to identify challenges and opportunities in managing fresh water and to understand what an appropriate role for this federal water agency would be, recognizing freshwater management is a shared responsibility. Some areas being explored include the need for enhanced federal coordination between various departments that oversee freshwater management (2) the need for transboundary (i.e. provincial) management and (3) improving Indigenous involvement in freshwater decision-making.

4. Board Project Updates (*G. Wood*)

WQB members provided brief updates on board projects and activities.

Manure Management (*G. Wood*)

The work group held its third and final webinar to receive feedback on the board's 2019 report findings and recommendations – one with invited agricultural and environmental non-government organizations; one with the public, as an open webinar; and one with invited government and Indigenous government agencies. The feedback from these webinars is currently being summarized in a report to the Commission to consider next steps for additional work and/or the development of potential IJC recommendations to government. The report is expected to be submitted for board review by the end of August.

Nuclear Decommissioning (*J. Jackson*)

A virtual panel discussion was held July 23rd to gain Canadian perspectives on nuclear decommissioning processes, to balance the U.S. panel discussion held in Petoskey, MI in late February. The work group continues its planning for a virtual workshop in September 2020. Preliminary findings and recommendations are currently being drafted, which will be used to focus topic discussions at the experts' workshop. The project is expected to be completed, with a board report to the Commission, in December 2020.

Wetlands (S. Galarneau)

In December 2019 a letter was sent to the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly requesting feedback on critical questions that arose from the board's 2018-19 wetlands work, particularly around priority setting for Great Lakes wetlands protection. In late July the Coastal Assembly replied positively, indicating the WQB's request has served as a catalyst to think more broadly about how to advance and accelerate coastal wetland efforts. Cherie Hagen, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Coastal Assembly, provided a brief presentation on the Coastal Assembly's approaches and next steps for advancing wetlands protection efforts. This included establishing baselines for range, type and conditions of wetlands; setting goals for wetland extent for healthy Great Lakes; and priority areas to focus actions to achieve goals. The Coastal Assembly intends to collaborate with Annex 7 (Habitat and Species) to implement the approaches.

Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement 50th Anniversary Review (G. Heartwell)

The work group has just begun meeting and has finalized a Terms of Reference for their work. The project goals are two-fold – (1) to assess the impacts of Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) over the years and identify opportunities for improvement and (2) to recommend ways to memorialize and celebrate its successes. The work group recognizes the significance of Tribes, First Nations and Métis in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Agreement and will advance work as a multi-lateral effort (beyond bi-nationalism). The work group is currently designing a process to review historical documents relevant to the GLWQA, as well as to contact GLWQA experts to solicit their input, opinions and stories. This project is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

Great Lakes Horizons (J. Allan)

The name of the project has been changed from "Great Lakes Futures" to "Great Lakes Horizons" to avoid confusion with a similarly named, past project. The goal of the project is to understand the forces that will have a material effect on the Great Lakes (ecologically, economically, socially and culturally) over the next 30+ years. The statement of work for the contracting process has been finalized by the work group co-leads and is currently under review by the US Section Office. It is expected a contract will be in place by the end of September 2020.

Third Great Lakes Binational Poll (K. Leonard)

The work group held their first meeting to discuss the purpose and scope of the previous polls, Indigenous and socio-economic/demographic elements, and the possibility of geospatial and cross survey data comparison. Their next meeting will focus on the survey questions, scope of the poll and beginning the contracting process for a consultant. The polling is expected to be completed in January-February 2021. However, it is recognized that certain communities are not present in the winter months and this polling timeframe may change.

Fossil Fuel Development and Transportation Watching Brief (L. Kirkwood and L. Mark)

Recent developments relevant to the watching brief were highlighted including, recent webinars by the Great Lakes Sea Grant Crude Oil Transport Network; understanding economic impacts and drivers (e.g. oil prices, electrification of transportation); and a reminder of the 10th anniversary of the Enbridge oil spill in the Kalamazoo River (MI) that occurred July 25, 2010.

Great Lakes Nuclear Watching Brief (J. Jackson)

Recent developments relevant to the watching brief were highlighted including, sites for a deep geologic repository for Canadian nuclear fuel waste is narrowed down to two; under Annex 3 of the

GLWQA governments, in the next six months, intend to begin evaluations of nominated substances (includes radionuclides) to decide designation as a chemical of mutual concern; and Ontario Power Generation formally withdrew its application for a deep geologic repository for low and intermediate level radioactive waste.

Microplastics Watching Brief (S. Galarneau)

Given the Commission's recent interest in potential value-added work on the issue of microplastics, the watching brief co-leads will consider expansion/refinement of the watching brief and/or potential work in addition to the watching brief. Any suggestions will be shared with and considered by the full board.

5. Presentation: IJC's Health Professionals Advisory Board's Great Lakes Centennial Study (J. Allan)

Dr. Thomas Edge, Adjunct Professor at McMaster University and member of the IJC's Health Professionals Advisory Board (HPAB), gave a presentation on the HPAB's current Great Lakes Centennial Study Project. Learning about the work of the HPAB, informs the WQB about how its projects intersect with the human health component. Highlights from Dr. Edge's presentation:

- In 1913 the IJC was charged with studying the extent of transboundary pollution as a result of many deaths from typhoid and cholera and how such pollution could be remedied or prevented.
- The IJC identified many areas contaminated by fecal pollution and recommended that all sewage should receive treatment before discharge into the boundary waters.
- While sewage treatment has helped tremendously since 1913, challenges still exist today from combined sewer overflows, sewage by-passes, leaking septic systems, animal wastes, aging infrastructure and climate change.
- The HPAB undertook a project to examine changes and trends in fecal bacteria water quality over the last 10 years compared to that of the 1913 study and to identify science and management gaps to inform a basin-wide microbial reassessment.
- The HPAB's report is currently being finalized by the board and includes recommendations around a binational study of fecal pollution and its sources that are contaminating the Great Lakes.

6. Cross-board Project Updates (G. Wood)

WQB members serving on other advisory board work groups have been requested to provide updates on the progress of these projects.

Currently, WQB members serve on the Science Advisory Board's (SAB) Great Lakes Science Plan project and the SAB's Great Lakes Early Warning System Phase 2 (GLEWS) project. The WQB and SAB are also jointly undertaking a Nutrient Synthesis project. The Science Plan seeks to institute a research plan to ensure restoration dollars are spent with the greatest return on investment. The GLEWS project seeks an approach to identify a stressor or threat early, before it becomes a crisis. This project is linked to the WQB's Great Lakes Horizons project. The Nutrients Synthesis project will assess implementation of federal Domestic Action Plans and the degree to which past IJC nutrient-related recommendations have been used.

The Science Plan project selected a consultant in late 2019 and contract activities are underway. The GLEWS and Nutrients Synthesis projects are newly started. They are in the process of establishing work groups and developing statements of work for contracting with consultants.

7. Equity and Diversity (added agenda item)

An agenda item was added, upon member request, regarding the role equity and diversity play in the operations of the WQB. In 2017 the WQB developed an *Indigenous Peoples Engagement Principles and Practices* document to guide the work of the board toward meaningful engagement

with Indigenous peoples and reflection of their unique views and perspectives. It was suggested this be used as a model for a similar document on diversity and equity. This suggestion was supported by members of the board and a decision made to create a committee to set out a process for developing such a document.

ACTION ITEM: Board Secretary will send an e-mail to solicit member interest in participation on an equity and diversity committee.

ACTION ITEM: An item on equity and diversity will be added to the October WQB meeting agenda.

8. Next WQB Meetings (*J. Allan*)

The WQB's next meeting, the 210th meeting, is the last for the 2020 calendar year. It was originally scheduled for Wednesday October 21st, to be held in-person during the week of the IJC's Fall Semi-Annual Meeting. Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic the IJC's Semi-Annual meeting, and other associated meetings that week, will be held virtually. It was proposed the full-day WQB meeting be held virtually the week earlier on Thursday October 15th. No objections to this date were posed by members.

ACTION ITEM: Board Secretary will send an updated calendar meeting notice to reschedule the WQB's 210th meeting to Thursday October 15th.

9. Public Comments and Closing Remarks

No members of the public were present. The co-chairs thanked members and others for their participation.