

Thames River Clear Water Revival – Thames River Water Management Plan  
**Steering Committee Meeting #15 - Minutes**  
Tuesday, February 24, 2015, 12:30 – 3:30 pm  
City of London Emergency Operations & Training Centre (Byron)

**CHAIRS:** Tom Copeland / Scott Abernethy

**ATTENDEES:**

Aimee Johnson, Walpole Island First Nation  
Cherlene Vieira, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change  
Eleanor Heagy, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
George Henry, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation  
Isabel Lewis, Caldwell First Nation  
Jason Wintermute, Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority  
Luca Cargnelli, Environment Canada  
Scott Abernethy, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change  
Tara Tchir, Project Manager, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
Tom Copeland, City of London  
Trevor Robak, Ministry of Agriculture and Food/Ministry of Rural Affairs

**REGRETS:**

Chief Louise Hillier, Caldwell First Nation  
Chris Harrington, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority  
Dan McDonald, Ministry of Agriculture and Food/Ministry of Rural Affairs  
Dave Richards, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Dean Jacobs, Walpole Island First Nation  
Ian Kerr, Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change  
Jenn Richards, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Larry French, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation  
Pat Donnelly, City of London  
Rob Wallis, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry  
Sharilyn Johnston, Aamjiwnaang First Nation

**UNCONFIRMED:**

Oneida Nation of the Thames  
Delaware Nation - Moravian of the Thames

**GUEST:**

Linda Nicks, Hydrogeologist, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

**PURPOSE OF MEETING:**

- Develop a work plan for the Water Management Plan

## 1. WELCOME AND REVIEW OF AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

- a) Tom welcomed everyone and introductions were made around the table. Scott Abernethy is standing in for Dan McDonald (co-chair), Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.
- b) Meeting Agenda  
Tom reviewed the agenda and no additions were made.
- c) November 12, 2014 Minutes  
**ACTION: The November minutes were not attached so they will be reviewed at the next meeting.**
- d) Outstanding Action Items (attached)  
Tara reviewed the table of action items from the November 12, 2014 meeting. Some of the items will be discussed at today's meeting.
- e) Symposium on December 2-3, 2014  
Eleanor gave a brief summary of the SWI Symposium (see action items table – February 24 for details). Aimee asked that “AFN” not be used as an acronym for Aamjiwnaang First Nation, as it is the acronym for the Assembly of First Nations.  
**ACTION: AFN will be changed to Aamjiwnaang First Nation in the action item table and from now on**

## 2. NEW BUSINESS

- a) Groundwater Proposal  
Linda Nicks, UTRCA Hydrogeologist, gave a presentation on groundwater's possible contribution of phosphorus and nitrates to surface water, specifically the Thames River. In December 2014, Linda submitted a proposal to the Loblaw Environmental Fund for a pilot project to look at nitrates and phosphorus in groundwater wells. Her proposal asked for \$30,000 to sample 10-12 wells, 8-10 times/year. If the proposal is declined she will be looking for other funding sources. Possible sites for the study are Sifton Bog (London), or Nissouri Creek (Dorchester area, east of London near the 401, identified by MOECC as hotspot).

### DISCUSSION:

- Cheriene said MOECC may be interested in funding this project, but the proposal needs to clearly demonstrate the potential loading component to river. If there are no existing data to show this connection, then the proposal should be expanded to find this connection. Ideally part of the study would examine the impact of groundwater on a stretch of the river.
- George said the COTTFN would like to support the proposal. This First Nation uses groundwater and some of their wells are near the Thames River. They are very interested in finding out more about groundwater.
- Tara said the Water Management Plan draft table of contents includes a section on groundwater, and this may be a place for this research.
- Jason said the Municipality of West Elgin may have a suitable study area. There are wetlands near the river and a lot of agriculture. Cheriene encouraged Linda to find a study area in the LTVCA.
- Tom suggested that Linda develop a major, multi-year proposal to bring to the steering committee for consideration. A pilot study is needed.

**ACTION: Tara/Linda will provide the Loblaw funding proposal to the SC.**

**ACTION: Linda will develop a proposal to bring to the steering committee in the spring**

b) Development of a Work Plan for the Water Management Plan

Tara explained that she has drafted a table of contents for the Water Management Plan (WMP), based on the contents of the Grand River WMP. The WMP is to be written by the end of 2016. Tara pointed out that the First Nations component of the table of contents needs to be developed.

Tara organized the WMP contents into three main sections that look at:

- what we have (watershed overview/state of the environment),
- where we want to go (vision for the watershed), and
- how we want to get there (integrated, adaptive water management action plan).

DISCUSSION RE SECTION 1 – STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT:

- The Landscape – does climate change fit into this part or do we look at it as an impact/factor/issue? Maybe both.
- Surface Water System – along with CSO's add runoff and storm water management (urban and rural), as well as sewage treatment plants
- Key Hydrologic Processes – Interbasin transfer is from Lakes Erie and Huron, water is used by many municipalities and communities, not just the City of London
- Key Issues of the Watershed Water Quality – add Quantity and Climate Change. Under nutrient loads and concentrations - add other contaminants such as mercury. Under Groundwater – add input
- Need to include Biological Component in this section. This includes fisheries, benthos, SAR, mussels, turtles, snakes, etc. – aquatic ecosystems and wildlife.
- May add Knowledge Gaps/Emerging Issues – e.g. pharmaceuticals, pipelines, plastic micro beads.

DISCUSSION RE HOW TO DEVELOP WMP:

- GRWMP – defined water uses, then turned them into water objectives/targets/indicators, and set long-term goals.
- Define uses and objectives before going further, link to biological aspect.
- Can obtain water use information in existing reports and from user groups.
- Don't let scope get too large. May be a matter of stating that a topic will be addressed in the larger watershed management strategy.
- General high level goal – to improve health of the Thames River. How to define health – drinkable, swimmable, fishable?
- First Nations have a larger vision – the river is also a source of food and sustenance, spiritual as well as physical. Bring in connection with water and land, stewardship. Government definition of fishable may not be sufficient for First Nations. Fishing uses very important for First Nations.
- Look at broader range of water quality parameters – how to bring the river back to life.

DISCUSSION RE USES OF THE THAMES RIVER:

- Working river – water taking, irrigation, livestock, effluent discharge, hydroelectric generation, industrial and commercial processes (aggregate extraction, golf courses)
- Recreation and tourism – boating, fishing, swimming, viewing (swimming may be an objective rather than a use)
- Fishing – for recreation and for sustenance
- Water quantity supply and management – flood management, storing water – natural geofluvial processes
- Habitat

- Rural storm water management
- Culture, ceremony and spiritual connection for First Nations, also for new Canadians
- Transportation
- Trapping
- Education
- London Prevost (naval ship) at the Forks
- Fishable, Swimmable, Drinkable as an ideology
- Trees and Transpiration

**ACTION: Tara will incorporate ideas into table of Contents for the Water Management Plan and distribute prior to next meeting.**

- *Develop Google Excel spreadsheet of water quality / quantity projects with spatial coordinates (to identify gaps and optimize sampling effort) - DEFERRED*
- *GIS product for water quality / quantity work on watershed - DEFERRED*
- c) Charter / TOR for the TRCWR (brainstorm components) - **DEFERRED**
  - *Erosion Control Plan*
  - *Fish Management Plan*
  - *Others?*

### 3. PROJECT UPDATES

- a) Co-Chair role and Governance Model of TRWMP  
Tara explained that Chris Harrington had revised the text in the WMP Terms of Reference regarding the governance model, as a result of co-chairs being established in fall 2014. The committee looked at the revised text that Chris provided.

Aimee expressed concern that there is still confusion between the Clear Water Revival and the WMP. We need to develop a terms of reference for the overall Clear Water Revival, and then pull out aspects that are related to the WMP.

**ACTION:** Chris will be asked to develop a governance model for the CWR, and to pull out aspects that are related to the steering committee for the WMP.

- b) Status of community-based water quality project with First Nations  
Tara explained that the First Nations are developing a proposal that will include youth engagement (stewardship) in an 8 week work experience that will incorporate water quality monitoring and traditional ecological knowledge.  
George Henry talked about developing a curriculum for 7 – 14 year olds about natural law.
- c) Status of WISKI  
Tara explained that the additional software has been ordered, that a programmer position has been developed (Chris is currently interviewing for that position) and that a training plan is being developed
- d) Status of agricultural attitudes study  
Tara explained that a statistical researcher position has been advertised
- e) Status of 2014 Application for Award of Environmental Excellence  
Tara informed the group that Pat had contacted her to let her know that we were unsuccessful in receiving this award.

#### 4. ROUND TABLE

a) Status of LTVCA water quality monitoring plan

Jason explained that Gertrud Nernburg identified water quality data gaps in her SWI study, specifically in the Lower Thames. There are no data from downstream of Thamesville/Kent Bridge. COA has provided funding for Gertrud to conduct a gap analysis. Her report will be ready March 31, 2015. The goal is to increase water quality monitoring by adding more stations to the WISKI system.

Aimee noted that there may be some stretches of the river where, for cultural reasons, water quality stations should not be installed, and that First Nations should be involved with these discussions.

**ACTION:** Jason to present Gertrude's recommendations for the Lower Thames to the steering committee when her work is completed.

b) Status of the Thamesville Station

Jason explained that Environment Canada had provided funding through the Great Lakes Nutrient Initiative for a three year project to install a water sampler at Thamesville. That funding may now be ending which leaves the future of the Thamesville station in jeopardy. Luca said that there will be applications to the Treasury Board for future funding, but money is needed in the meantime. Jason said it is a challenging station to maintain so EC has kept control of it. Cheriene said MOECC may be able to pick up some of the cost of analysis.

**ACTION:** Luca will talk with Sandra George (GLNI) about the intent for this calendar year.

c) Forks of Thames Initiative

Tom read parts of a memo from Pat Donnelly about London's "Back to the River" initiative. The London Community Foundation is offering a \$500,000 grant for projects that get people to face the Thames at the Forks.

d) Engagement of municipalities and agricultural community – **DEFERRED**

#### 5. NEXT MEETING

The next Steering Committee meeting will be Tuesday, March 31. A Communications Committee meeting will be scheduled on the same day, as some people are on both committees.