

TRCWR Steering Committee Minutes June 7, 2021 at 10 am (virtual meeting)

ATTENDEES:

Brandon Doxtator (Oneida FN)
Cherlene Vieira (MECP)
Chris Harrington (UTRCA)
Emma Young (Chippewas of the Thames FN)
Eleanor Heagy (UTRCA)
Jason Wintermute (LTVCA)
Mark Peacock (LTVCA)
Naomi Williams (Walpole Island FN)
Pat Donnelly (COL)
Stephen Marklevitz (MNRF)
Tara Tchir (UTRCA)
Trevor Robak (OMAFRA)

REGRETS:

Brian Locke (MNRF)
Christine Rogers (Aamjiwnaang FN)
Dan McDonald (MECP)
Jason Lehouillier (MECP)
Jason Webb (MNRF)
Ken VanEvery (MNRF)
Luca Cagnelli (ECCC)
Mary Alikakos (COL)
Sharilyn Johnston (Aamjiwnaang FN)
Warren Huff

1. Welcome and Introductions

- New member Stephen Marklevitz from MNRF (COA Coordinator (Acting) for Lake Erie Management Unit)
- Goal is to re-engage and begin discussion about establishing a road map for moving forward

2. Finalized Shared Waters Approach (SWA) document – Eleanor

- TRCWR website will be updated in the future – stay tuned!
- Web page for SWA: <https://www.thamesrevival.ca/home/shared-waters-approach/>
- Link to SWA pdf: <https://www.thamesrevival.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SharedWatersApproach-Dec2019finaldraft.pdf>
- Other than the recommendations tables, the document meets the minimal accessibility standards. The tables are not in standard format for accessibility as there were technical difficulties in achieving this standard. Note that the partners were satisfied with the document.

SUMMARY:

- ✓ It was agreed that any changes to the document will be included in the minutes for the Steering Committee (SC) to review.
- ✓ It was recently identified that 1.1.2.2. First Nations Teachings and Understandings (pages 5-6) (<https://www.thamesrevival.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SharedWatersApproach-Dec2019finaldraft.pdf>) are almost identical to pages 10-13 of an article / paper by Dr. Deborah McGregor (<https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/iipj/article/view/7385/6029>), but it is not clear in the SWA that this is the source for this text. Tara and Eleanor are re-writing this section for Dr. McGregor's review. Dr. McGregor was sent an example of the change in text on June 10, 2021. Once we hear back, the appropriate changes will be made to the document on the website. The Steering Committee and First Nations engagement committee were cc'd on the email to Dr. McGregor.

3. Steering Committee member endorsement of SWA – Chris

- LTVCA Board of Directors endorsed the SWA at the February 25, 2021 Annual General Meeting.
- UTRCA Board endorsed the SWA at the November 13, 2020 Board Meeting.
- Changes in processes / workloads of the past couple of years as a result of Covid have meant that many of the member endorsements have had to be postponed:
 - City of London is intending to include some additional information and possibly look for approval in July
 - ECC and MECP have both started the process
 - OMAFRA is starting to move back into normal processes following pandemic
- Oneida First Nation recommended engaging their chief and council, as well as the clan mothers (who carry the responsibility for the land, environment, and waters). These two groups can determine if they support the SWA.
- Chippewas of the Thames First Nation elections will be in July. Endorsement will have to wait until new chief and council have been elected and have determined priorities for the community.
- Walpole Island First Nation is requesting funding to continue involvement and to engage / communicate with the community. The process would be to re-engage with the community first, then go to chief and counsel for endorsement. They recommend developing an engagement strategy for this initiative, with a work plan and budget for engaging and communicating with community members. Funding had been received previously from ECCC for this initiative and for the Lake St. Clair Coordination Council.

SUMMARY:

- ✓ First Nation Engagement Committee might be the avenue for determining engagement strategies for each of the First Nations partners.
- ✓ The Conservation Authorities need to develop a watershed based resource management strategy as part of the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and its regulations related to mandatory programs. LTVCA is using the SWA as a template for this. There is a need to engage with the First Nations to develop the strategy. It is anticipated that the First Nations and the CAs will have a co-management role. It was recommended by LTVCA that the LTVCA and UTRCA general managers meet with First Nations representatives to discuss how to develop this strategy, with guidance from the City of London First Nation liaison positions, and support from the MECP.

4. Update on Antler River Guardians program for 2021 season - Emma

- The 2020 agreement was amended to extend project timelines and reporting due to 2021 because of the pandemic.
- As the program develops, it may need assistance from other agencies as in the past (MNR rangers, technical expertise and support, connections).
- The intent is to partner with the COTTFFN Justice Department through the Youth Justice Program. It will be a modified version for this year (maybe a series of short camps), and will likely not run all summer long. There is a desire to make it available to youth from other First Nations if possible.
- Several partners offered support, in addition to providing expertise in western science methodology:
 - MECP offered support in the organization, facilitation, administration,
 - LTVCA offered facilities and staff,
 - UTRCA offered funding for start-up costs, etc.,

- COL offered up tours of waste water and drinking water treatment facilities, etc.

SUMMARY:

- ✓ Emma is meeting with the COTTFFN Justice Department on June 10, 2021 and will reach out if there is any help wanted.

5. SWA Implementation and Outreach – Tara

- We have received COA funding over two years to develop an engagement and communication strategy to support partner implementation actions of the various recommendations in the SWA, as well as to broaden participation in the delivery of the recommendations.
- There was a discussion about expanding membership. It was agreed that it is beneficial to keep the representation but perhaps open it up to others such as:
 - First Nations: Participation of all 8 First Nations with traditional territory in the Thames River watershed
 - Metis
 - Other municipalities:
 - LTVCA / UTRCA are going to all municipalities to discuss the changes to CA Act and this could be the way to bring this to municipalities.
 - Chatham Kent has an environment officer who could be approached. Town of Ingersoll staff were involved in some meetings in the past.
 - Oxford County and Stratford were approached in the past and kept somewhat informed.
 - City of London is willing to help engage other municipalities.
 - Agricultural sector: important, especially given the amount of land in the watershed. There are many groups, so need to determine who and how to engage:
 - One avenue might be through the Thames River Phosphorous Reduction Collaborative, which includes representatives of several agricultural groups.
 - Other groups include Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation, National Farmers Union, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Ecological Farmers Association.
 - We likely need a subcommittee to develop a plan.
 - Other Conservation Authorities:
 - SCRCA is working on a phosphorus reduction plan for the Sydenham River.
 - Canada – Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan (LEAP): may overlap with nutrient reductions initiatives and habitat management.

SUMMARY:

- ✓ Need to develop a complete list of potential partners and allies.
- ✓ Next step is outreach and develop engagement models with the potential partners/allies to determine their needs and level of participation.

6. Other Project Updates / Roundtable– All

- City of London - Restructuring to incorporate social justice, COVID, and climate change issues. The City declared a climate emergency more than a year ago and

some staff titles have changed to incorporate this shift of focus. City recently created an anti-racism and anti-oppression position and an Indigenous Community Liaison Advisor position.

- City of London and UTRCA are conducting a floodplain mapping project.
- COTTFN - hired a Climate Change coordinator.
- LTVCA
 - Partnered with Cambium Indigenous Professional Services to conduct modelling and floodplain mapping for the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation. Given the proximity of the other FNs to the COTTFN, the model might be suitable for similar projects. There will also be a climate change component, some risk assessment, and community outreach sessions.
 - Developing/ updating floodplain mapping, have developed a draft model for hydraulics, and completed bathymetry. Mapping and risk assessment is next.
 - Undertaking side scanning multibeam sonar project from Chatham-Kent to the mouth of the lake in order to update modelling of flow regimes. Purchased a large piece of equipment to help with this.
- MNRF (Lake Unit)
 - Developed native species Habitat Suitability Indices for determining optimal habitats for fish (walleye, white sucker, sturgeon) in the Thames. They are looking for collaborators and would like to engage with FN. This is a very new project and they just started the engagement process.
 - Conducting acoustic telemetry project in Lake St. Clair, involves tagging fish (muskie) and watching distribution. They are looking for collaborators and would like to engage with FN. City of London fish tag monitoring project for Springbank Dam may be of use.
- Oneida FN - conducting contaminant monitoring to get baseline testing for contaminants. Looking at arsenic leaking into the soil and creeks from old railroad tracks. Goal is to communicate this information to community members. Dan from LTVCA will be presenting to MECP and ECC about monitoring. Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network also has extensive data that can be accessed, and MECP has soil guidelines. MECP offered support with interpretation of these results.

7. Next Meeting in early July: TARA TO SEND OUT APPOINTMENT

Items to discuss:

- co-chairs for steering committee
- structure of committees and governance:
 - further thoughts regarding expansion of membership (see 5 above)
 - do we need a different governance model (e.g. more working groups)?
- Determine types of outreach and communications tools that can help to promote the SWA and engage with current and potential new stakeholders of the TRCWR collaborative to encourage participation in implementation activities.
- Determine what support partners need to implement SWA recommendations, including types of communication products (e.g., presentations, fact sheets, etc.), proposal writing, etc.
- Determine what tools should be developed for tracking progress towards actions/ recommendations from SWA. Some examples include:

- A catalogue of projects and programs undertaken by partners that are organized by actions / recommendations (e.g. similar to 2018 nutrient reduction project catalogue: <http://thamesriver.on.ca/nutrient-project-catalogue>)
- A spreadsheet of actions/ recommendations from the SWA, as well as who is responsible and status updates, for each partner (see example attached to June 12 email).