

## **TRCWR Steering Committee Minutes (draft), October 8, 2021 (virtual meeting)**

### **In attendance:**

Annabelle Laurin (COTTFFN)  
Brandon Doxtator (Oneida FN)  
Brennan Vogel (COTTFFN)  
Cherlene Vieira (MECP) - CHAIR  
Chris Harrington (UTRCA)  
Eleanor Heagy (UTRCA) - MINUTES  
Jason Wintermute (LTVCA)  
Karen Maaskant (UTRCA)  
Pat Donnelly (COL)  
Stephen Marklevitz (LEMU MNDMNRF)  
Tara Tchir (UTRCA) – PROJECT MANAGER  
Trevor Robak (OMAFRA)

### **Guests:**

Daniel Bittman (LTVCA)  
Lyne Sabourin (Interdepartmental Indigenous STEM Cluster/Indigenous Science Liaison Office/  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada)  
Ngan Diep (MECP)

### **Regrets:**

Brian Locke (LEMU MNDMNRF)  
Courtney Jackson (Aamjiwnaang FN)  
Dan McDonald (MECP)  
Emma Young (COTTFFN)  
Jason Lehouillier (MECP)  
Jason Webb (MNDMNRF)  
Ken VanEvery (MNRF)  
Luca Cagnelli (ECCC)  
Mark Peacock (LTVCA)  
Mary Alikakos (COL)  
Naomi Williams (WIFN)  
Sharilyn Johnston (Aamjiwnaang FN)

**Meeting Goal to share information about related initiatives in the watershed and continue to develop a process of outreach and engagement to potential new partners and a process for tracking progress towards achieving SWA recommendations.**

### **1. Welcome, Land Acknowledgements, and Introductions – Cherlene, Tara**

- London is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796. Tecumseh is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, primarily the Three Fires Confederacy as well as other Anishinaabek peoples, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, Huron, and Myaamia, on lands connected with Treaty #2.
- Roundtable introductions:

- New Steering Committee member: Annabelle Laurin, COTTFN (replacing Emma Young who is on maternity leave); Brennan Vogel, COTTFN; Marta Soucek, MECP (stepping in when Cheriene retires in November).
- Presenters: Ngan Diep, Daniel Bittman, and Lyne Sabourin.
- Review and approve Minutes from July 7, 2021 meeting (attached). We reviewed the actions in the last minutes:
  - We will review the Terms of Reference at the next Steering Committee meeting. As part of this, please consider roles of the steering committee, chairs, etc., as well as the subcommittees.
  - WIFN plan and RAP working group plan – that has not been circulated by Naomi yet.
  - COTTFN – Annabelle and Brennan will follow up with communication coordinators (we were looking for an example of an engagement strategy/plan or communications plan for engaging with a FN community).
  - Metis Nation of Ontario – Cheriene reported that she talked with Luca Cargnelli (ECCC), who said there is an initiative underway regarding the AOC program and MNO participation with that. ECCC is meeting with MNO next month.
  - Steering committee working group meetings – will be discussed today.
  - Online reporting window for SWA recommendations – will be discussed today.
- The minutes were approved as circulated.

## 2. Presentations

- **Lower Thames Valley CA Water Monitoring - Dan Bittman:**
  - Overview of the MECP-COA water monitoring project, providing preliminary water quality and loading results.
  - For many years, LTVCA had surface water monitoring on the main Thames River and Lake Erie tributaries but these stations didn't provide comprehensive data on watershed. There are five sites sampled monthly and six sites sampled bimonthly (PWQMN). The MECP-COA project has enabled them to double the amount of surfaces water quality monitoring, including event-based nutrient loading monitoring. The lower reaches of the Thames are low lying, and there is a series of dykes to protect agricultural fields with pumping schemes to manage water behind these dykes. Routine and intensive sampling occurs at four Thames River sites and 19 subwatershed/tributary sites (1 Lake St Clair tributary with very large pumping scheme; 10 Thames River tributaries and 2 subtributaries, 6 Lake Erie watershed tributaries).
  - Few attempts have been made to estimate loads in tributaries in the low reaches of the Thames. Preliminary routine sampling results indicated the 10 Thames River tributaries contributed 32% of the Total Phosphorus (TP) load to the river each year. The combined watershed area of the 10 tributaries is 4% of the Thames watershed. Preliminary intensive sampling results indicated the three intensively monitored Thames River tributaries contributed 39% of the TP load to the river in 2020. The combined watershed area of these three tributaries is 15% of the watershed.

## DISCUSSION

- The researchers are planning to get seasonal loading information, and to look at the event by event load inventory in another study.
- In 2020, MECP/ECC could not conduct sampling at the Thamesville gauge due to the pandemic but the LTVCA was able to assist, thus adding to the loadings

information already being collected. One application for the TRCWR may help us focus on certain subwatersheds where we know there are higher loadings, to target remedial projects or actions in those subwatersheds.

- In the upper watershed, the UTRCA conducts routine monthly water quality monitoring in 28 subwatersheds, and several of these are also more intensively studied (e.g., upper Medway Creek). It would be good to have a station similar to the Thamesville station further upstream.
- The Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative is another group looking at water quality in the Thames, but it is farming-based not watershed-based. The data being gathered through UTR and LTV programs is very useful to this group too.

- **Initiatives at Agriculture and Agri Foods Canada (AAFC) - Lyne Sabourin**

- Lyne provided an overview of AAFC projects focused on watershed surface water quality monitoring in partnerships with CAs, Indigenous student employment opportunities in environmental lab work, a Healing Garden planning at AAFC London, an initiative from the Eastern Ontario First Nation Working Group hosted by South Nation Conservation Authority (SNCA), and other initiatives within AAFC, notably the Indigenous Science Liaison Office and the federal interdepartmental Indigenous STEM group to partner with First Nations.
- AAFC is interested in collaborating on new or existing projects with TRCWR partners – such as water sampling, healing gardens, etc.

#### QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION

- Lyne Sabourin, Chris Craig (SNCA), and Paula (Oneida FN) all expressed an interest in joining the TRCWR Steering Committee.
- **ACTION: Steering Committee will consider how to add new members. Send input to Tara. We will need to ensure Terms of Reference allows for invitations to new members. FUTURE DISCUSSION AT MEETING.**

- **Clarity on the Muddy Waters of the Thames River and its Interaction with Lake St. Clair: A synopsis of conditions, algal blooms and innovative tools - Ngan Diep**

- In 2016, MECP and ECCC initiated a large-scale field campaign to examine the Canadian nearshore waters of Lake St. Clair and its priority tributary, the Thames River. This project expanded to include many binational partners to address the issue of harmful algal blooms, characterization of conditions over space and time, and development of tools to track and predict harmful algal blooms through remote sensing and instrumentation. We need to better understand the link between Thames River discharges, Lake St Clair, and algal blooms.
- The overall message: Monitoring in the Thames River is very important. Researchers are seeing new, unexpected conditions in Lake St. Clair, primarily algal blooms, and these blooms are changing (i.e., different strains of cyanobacteria).
- Sampling is mainly nearshore. They did do some open water sampling but it is mainly Lake Huron waters. Storm events do push nearshore water further out but it's episodic. Offshore can be pockets of different water; it's not homogeneous. The maximum depth of Lake St. Clair is only 6-7 metres so it's very different than the Great Lakes. Along the northeast shoreline, there is typically no phytoplankton or cyanobacteria. Researchers don't know what impact climate change will have on blooms.

- Remote sensing is not done upstream on the Thames River because the resolution is so poor. They are moving to a different satellite platform and hopefully will get better resolution so that may be possible.

### **3. First Nations Engagement Committee**

- **Update on Antler River Guardians program for 2021 season – Brandon, Annabelle, Tara**
  - An interim report has been prepared summarizing activities from 2021. The various First Nations each had a small event on their own. The pandemic has made the program very challenging to organize and run. COTTFN is ready to pass the torch on to another FN community to administer the ARG4D program.
- **COTTFN Funding Proposal – Brennan**
  - In September, the TRCWR provided a letter of support for the COTTFN funding proposal: “Advancing First Nations Co-Management and Shared Governance of Regional Cumulative Effects in the Deshkan Ziibi Watershed.” This proposed project would build on the CIRNAC First Nations Adapt effort to support Conservation Authorities and First Nations with respect to building partnerships, knowledge, and capacity; advancing efforts related to floodplain management at a regional scale; as well as other local / watershed scale collaborations and engagements on capacity building to improve watershed communications on matters of environmental planning related to agriculture, urbanization, and climate impacts in Deshkan Ziibi.
  - The project is being led by Brennan Vogel (COTTFN Climate Change Liaison), who is working with Kelly Riley and Emma Young or Annabelle Laurin in the Treaties, Lands and Environment Department.
  - Brennan foresees the creation of a core committee of First Nations, Conservation Authorities, and others which would continue working collaboratively to design and implement an iterative consultation framework led by First Nations + Conservation Authorities. The goal is to positively engage with neighboring municipalities and other stakeholders (e.g., health units, academia, higher government) on the gaps and opportunities to better address watershed issues such as riparian zone management and urban development / sewage bypass release, as well as related climate risk issues (e.g., overland flooding) using “Two Eyed Seeing” approaches that incorporate Indigenous knowledge with Western science. This could be through a series of external partnership workshops and participating community engagements and report-backs over the course of two years.
- **First Nations Representation on Thames-Sydenham Region Source Protection Committee (2 positions) – Jason W**
  - The Source Protection Project Coordinator is asking for suggestions on how best to approach local First Nations to see if anyone is interested in taking a seat on the Source Protection Committee. There are openings for two First Nations representatives. In the past, there were three FN seats; the Province has since changed the participant/ stakeholder ratio so only two seats are available now.
  - The per diem is \$150/meeting. The Source Protection Plan states that there are two to four meetings/year, but typically there are two meetings per year. This could change as the Director Technical Rules are being updated in the near future and that will require more involvement from the SPC. Mileage is reimbursed; however, meetings since COVID have been virtual and are expected to continue that way for the foreseeable future.

- **ACTION: Jason and Tara will develop an email to go to the First Nations representatives on the TRCWR outlining this opportunity.**

#### **4. Update on Shared Waters Approach (SWA) Sign-offs**

- We recently received signoff for the OMAFRA endorsement of the SWA. UTRCA and LTVCA have endorsed the SWA. MECP and City of London are both in process of signing off (endorsing).
- **ACTION – Consider whether new SC members will need to endorse the SWA.**

#### **5. Implementation and Outreach – Tara**

- The TRCWR Steering Committee identified that outreach to a broader group is needed in order to seek feedback on how to achieve and track the recommendations in the SWA. To accomplish this, the Steering Committee recommended establishing at least 3 subcommittee working groups. A steering committee member will be identified for each group to: 1) lead development of an engagement, communication and outreach strategy for related SWA recommendations; 2) broaden involvement in the delivery and tracking of the SWA recommendations; and 3) compile complementary initiatives for that working group.
- Tara has placed the following steering committee members in the three working groups:
  - First Nations: Mary A, Courtney J, Emma Y, Ken V, Naomi W, Brandon D, Sharilyn J, Eleanor H, Tara T, plus FN engagement committee members
    - Other possible members: Alizabeth George-Antone, London's Indigenous Community Liaison Advisor
  - Municipalities and Conservation Authorities: Pat D (CO-LEAD), Eleanor H, Jason W, Mark P, Tara T
    - Other possible members: UTRCA Manager, Cheriene V/ Marta Soucek, Jason L Stephen M, Jason W, Brian L Mary A
  - Agriculture: Trevor R (LEAD), Eleanor H, Tara T
    - Other possible members: Cheriene V/Marta Soucek, Jason L, Stephen M, Jason W, Brian L
- The minutes from the June 7, 2021 and the July 7, 2021 meetings provide examples of tools that can assist in tracking recommendations and broadening participation.
- **ACTION – Tara will schedule working group meetings.**

#### **6. Implementation of Partner Recommendations**

- UTRCA staff have begun work on summarizing activities undertaken to address UTRCA water quality and water quantity recommendations. Tara reviewed all the recommendations pertaining to the UTRCA and developed a draft work plan showing relationships between the recommendations/actions and identifying relevant staff. The next step is to meet with the various staff to discuss how we are implementing/addressing these recommendations and identifying gaps. SWA implementation and outreach is really critical in the next year and a half while we have funding.

#### **7. Other Project Updates / Roundtable – All**

#### **8. Next Meeting:**

It was agreed that smaller working groups will meet, and then there will be a Steering Committee meeting. Pat volunteered to chair the next Steering Committee meeting.