

Stakeholders Advisory Committee Water Resources Management Decision Support System Meeting Minutes

Holiday Inn, North Campus
3600 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

January 26, 2001

Attendees List

See Attachment #1

Summary Minutes

Dick Bartz, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Chair of the Project Management Team (PMT), welcomed the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting attendees. Self introductions were done by the participants. Bartz reviewed the meeting agenda and outlined the meeting objectives. In particular, Bartz pointed out that the PMT is looking to the SAC for pointed project input and for draft review of products including reports, guidance, and communications tools resulting from the project work.

Project Background

Mike Donahue, Great Lakes Commission (GLC), summarized the main objective of the project is to address water withdrawals, consumptive uses and the resulting ecological impacts. All activities and outcomes will be driven by the states and provinces as members of the PMT supported by the Project Secretariat, the associated Project Element Technical Sub-committees (TSCs), and the SAC. The project will characterize, assess, and utilize the currently planned and ongoing related initiatives, such as the Great Lakes Water Use Database, and provide access at all levels of interest to this work through a new web site. Outcomes derived though the project will have to be practical, pragmatic, and instituted basin-wide. Donahue outlined the seven point strategy for the project, including:

1. The project will be state and provincially driven.
2. The funding provided by the Great Lakes Protection Fund (GLPF) should be leveraged to the greatest extent.
3. The project should promote the development of and maximize the use and communications of related ongoing projects.
4. The PMT is committed to the development of interim and final reports and products with immediate applicability.

5. The project will primarily focus on the assembly and synthesis of existing information, not on the creation of new information.
6. Project outcomes will be practical, pragmatic and additive to the existing knowledge base.
7. The project must build into the effort sustainability of data gathering.

The project itself is broken down into five primary tasks, called "Project Elements". Project Element 1 is the structure and composition of the project team including the PMT, SAC, and the Project Secretariat. Project Element 2 is the Status Assessment of Water Resources. Jim Nicholas, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), will lead this portion, ensuring an open, transparent, and inclusive process. Project Element 3 is the Inventory of Water Withdrawal and Use, lead by Tom Crane of the GLC and will include such things as a needs assessment for water use collection and reporting programs and may include an update of the Great Lakes Water Use Database. Project Element 4 is the Inventory of Information on Ecological Impacts and will be jointly lead by Donahue and Wendy Leger, Environment Canada (EC). This project element will include addressing a literature and models search, among other items. Project Element 5 is Project Synthesis and Next Steps which includes the Final Report, refined web site, and workshop.

Roles and Responsibilities

Donahue stated the project structure will be as described in the December 2000 Project Work Plan. Overall leadership of the project will be directed by the PMT, as Chaired by Bartz. The PMT is comprised of representatives from state, provincial, regional, and federal agencies. The PMT will meet quarterly throughout the project. The SAC is composed of a broad group of stakeholders, technical and topical experts whose interests may be impacted by water resources management decisions related to water supply, diversion, and consumptive use.. The SAC will meet formally two to three times over the project timeline. The Project Secretariat is responsible for executing the day-to-day activities of the project and is staffed by the GLC. Three TSCs have been formed by, and report directly to the PMT to specifically address the work and data compilation involved with Project Elements 2 - 4: Status Assessment of Water Resources; Inventory of Water Withdrawals and Use; and Inventory of Information on Ecological Impacts.

Bartz stated that the PMT has refined the original GLC proposal to the GLPF over the last 2 meetings and the nothing is cast in stone. He believes it is very important to receive the SAC input which will positively impact the process.

Project Element Technical Sub-committees

Project Element 2, Status Assessment of Water Resources

Nicholas said that the Project Element 2 TSC has met twice, September 1, 2000 and November 29. The present members of the TSC are USGS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), EC, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and GLC.

Additional membership is being sought and may include Illinois DNR, Michigan DEQ, one or more representatives from Quebec, and others. Nicholas stated the goals of Project Element 2 are to describe the quantity and quality of available data; identify data gaps and their influences; the review and assessment of existing measurement and model errors; and to develop a web interface to the data and derived data. Nicholas said the data is "out there" and it needs to be logically compiled. A large part of the work effort will be to identify how the work will get done and how errors impact the overall process. Gerry Galloway, International Joint Commission (IJC), asked if models will be available on the web. St. Lawrence models will differ from Great Lakes models, and the individual quality of each model can produce large variances in errors. Is there any way, early on, to identify errors and address discrepancies? Nicholas said that a major focus of the Project Element 2 TSC will be to identify types of errors and address how they can be minimized.

Nicholas said the major collection effort will focus upon the seven bodies of water that NOAA currently compiles data for, including, Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, St. Clair, Erie, and Ontario, and Georgian Bay. Marc Hudon, Stratégies Saint-Laurent, asked how the Project Element 2 TSC data collection and compilation work to the Cornwall/Messena area would impact the Province of Quebec. Leger stated that the PMT raised this issue and has directed the TSC to incorporate the St. Lawrence in its work effort. This will be accomplished through existing data sets, inviting additional expertise to the TSC, working with the Coordinating Committee, and the Lake Ontario Study. Sarah Miller, Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), believes it is ill-advised to eliminate the Lower St. Lawrence as any ecological impacts will be magnified as the effects of differing water levels move down stream. Nicholas believes that before the TSC can effectively address and incorporate portions of the St. Lawrence specific expertise will need to be added to the TSC. Hudon believes he will be able to provide some names of specific expertise.

Project Element 3, Inventory of Water Withdrawal and Use

Crane stated that the TSC was formed in November of 2000 and is comprised mainly of existing members of the Great Lakes Water Use Database Technical Sub-committee. Crane and Marilyn Ratliff, GLC, are providing staff support to the TSC. The TSC has met twice, December 1, 2000 and January 19, 2001. The Work Plan was approved by the TSC on January 19. The TSC anticipates meeting approximately every six to eight weeks.

The revised Water Use Database software was completed just prior to the TSC being formed. The revised software, manuals, and requests for the 1998 state and provincial data were forwarded at this time. Crane said the 1998 data will be ready by the next PMT meeting in April, the 1999 data by the end of the calendar year 2001, and the 2000 data by the end of the project. Along the way, data and reports will be backfilled to 1993. The TSC will also review and evaluate the current consumptive use coefficients. In this process USGS and EC will be critical partners. Specific further refinements and testing of the software and reports will follow the submission of the 1998 report to the PMT. Provisional redesign and software upgrades will be on an as needed basis. The states and provinces will have final approval on the report format.

Two stand alone documents that will be produced by the Project Element 3 TSC include a needs assessment detailing emerging issues and areas that the state and provincial water resource managers view as priorities and a status of state and provincial data collection and reporting programs. The needs assessment will be prepared

as an interim product in the 5th project quarter and finalized by September 30, 2002.

Crane showed a sample of the 1998 report using Lake Michigan data. Under the present updated version, the report includes the categories "Great Lakes Surface Water", "Other Surface Water", and "Groundwater." Crane pointed out that the reported groundwater data is not necessarily in line with actual groundwater flows of the basin (*i.e.*, the boundaries for overall data collection are actually based upon surface water flows). Crane said some of the generalized discussion points raised by the Project Element 3 TSC and the PMT include pulling hydroelectric numbers out of the tables since they represent such a large percentage of use and primarily are an instream use. The PMT said to keep collecting the figures but look into amending the tables. The TSC should also be looking at revising the existing consumptive use coefficients. Crane added that the inconsistencies and inaccuracy of the data, old data, estimated data, and simply no data for some categories in some jurisdictions all greatly impacts the validity and usefulness of the data.

Randy Helland, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), asked why the Council of Great Lakes Governors (CGLG) does not mandate the states provide uniform data. Crane said that the uniform collection and reporting of data is mandated under the Great Lakes Charter of 1985 but that funding for these programs currently is internal to the states and provinces and therefore is a limitation to accomplishing this goal. George Kuper, Council of Great Lakes Industries (CGLI), wondered if the scope of the Project Element 3 TSC is too ambitious. Crane said possibly yes, but the primary products will be the needs assessment. Efforts will need to be elevated at the state and provincial level. Currently, water quantity issues take a back seat to water quality issues.

Project Element 4, Inventory of Information on Ecological Impacts

Leger reported that the Project Element 4 Work Plan will be finalized and distributed shortly. The substance and effort of this Project Element is weighted towards the second half of the project. The Literature Search is underway with Michel Slivitsky contracted through December 2001 and the draft Literature search to be delivered by the end of May 2001. The Descriptive Models Inventory is being undertaken by Rao Manam of the USACE, Chicago. The Experts Workshop will be held sometime in the 5th project quarter (August - October, 2001). The Experts Workshop materials will include the Literature Search and Models Inventory and the Synthesis Report will come out of this. The Synthesis Report will also address critical questions and criteria in the future building of a decision support system.

Leger also noted some significant linkages in research and planning, including a Canadian water use and supply study at the sub-basin level; the IJC lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River regulation study; the Canadian Indicators Workshop in April 2001; a scoping workshop in June; ongoing basin-wide mapping initiatives; and the GLC Wetlands Consortium. Rich Greenwood, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) said that in addition to these efforts, the Great Lakes Basin Ecological Team, chaired by FWS, has developed decision support systems for Lake Sturgeon and Great Lakes Islands that may have good connectivity with this project.

It was asked whether the Literature Search would specifically address the improvement standard outlined in Annex 2001 and possibly further develop appropriate criteria. Bartz said that the PMT has tasked the GLC to investigate ways that this question and some similar ones raised by Annex 2001 could be addressed through the scope of this project.

Project Element 5, Project Synthesis and Next Steps

Crane reported major milestones for this Project Element will be the 5th project quarter when the TSCs release interim products; the 7th project quarter consisting of the Public Meeting, final product release, next steps, and the implementation process; and the 8th project quarter which entails the final report delivery to GLPF.. During this process, Crane said that the SAC will be able to provide critical input along the way in report review, ground truthing, and overall project direction and product distribution.

Annex 2001

Jeffrey Edstrom, CGLG, gave a brief overview of the Great Lakes Charter of 1985 including: it is a non-binding “good faith” agreement; includes prior notice and consultation process for diversions and consumptive uses over 5 million gallons per day; and recent export proposals prompted the Charter to be re-examined. Edstrom said any changes to the Charter must protect the resource, be durable, simple, efficient, and retain decision authority in the basin. Annex 2001 lowers the prior notice and consultation process from 5 million gallons per day to zero. At the same time a *de minimis* standard was included which has been a big focus during public comment.

Mike Holt, New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), asked if someone could provide an example of what an “improvement” to the water or water dependent resources might be. Holt feels that improvement is a very broad term with no clear determination on “spot improvement”, therefore, theoretically, an applicant proposing a large withdrawal in Lake Ontario could create a productive wetland along the shores of Lake Superior. David de Launay, Ontario MNR, says that the Province of Ontario thinks that any proposal must link the withdrawal and improvement project to the same geographic location. Mike Ripley, Inter-Tribal Fisheries and Assessment Program, said that the lack of general up front consultation of Annex 2001 has not gone over well with the Tribes. Larry Antosch, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF), believes that Annex 2001 is targeted more towards diversion out of basin and will then be applied to in-basin withdrawal requests once a future set of laws or binding compacts are developed. Jeff Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant, would like to see a stronger definition of “improvement” and also defined as “local”. Impacts will mainly be seen and felt at the local level. Reutter also believes that a *de minimis* standard will constantly have to be reevaluated and if this is the case then a mechanism should be in place at the beginning. Jon Bartholic, Michigan State University (MSU), believes more work and effort should be done on groundwater, especially irrigation to and withdrawal from groundwater sources. De Launay said that a *de minimis* is an issue in Ontario. Regular reevaluation of a standard would have to be figured in. But Canada believes that pressure for diversions will only increase in the future and that a review of the *de minimis* standard will only revise the numbers upward. Another issue is that the Canadian federal government cannot intervene in water issues because it does not have the U.S. water resources development to fall back on. Hudon concurs with de Launay’s statement. Edstrom said that there is a lot of substantive agreement on Annex 2001 across the border, but the *de minimis* standard is not yet resolved. De Launay says that *de minimis* changes the notification and consultation process and potentially eliminates it for withdrawals of less than 1 million gallons per day. He believes the intent behind a standard is to define a benchmark mark at which scientifically sound research supports certain actions and reduces impact. Reutter said that maybe Annex 2001 could require a “net” improvement and that this could be defined under the auspices of this project.

Communications

Thomas Rayburn, GLC, stated that one of the primary goals in this project is to establish a viable and integrated communications system that will make available the data, reports, and information to researchers, policy makers, and decision-makers and provide the necessary level of education, outreach, and detail to the general public on water supply and use issues. Two distinct web pages will be developed to serve these needs.

The Great Lakes Information Network, Water Quantity and Use page (<http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/water/uses.html>) will serve as the initial point of entry for the interim and final products produced during the project as well as all associated data and information. The initial structure of the this page, to be posted in the 3rd project quarter, will consist of linking existing resources primarily from the sources identified by the PMT, SAC and TSC members. Between this time and the release of the final web site in the 7th project quarter the site will undergo almost continual revamping to accommodate project reports, newly identified data, and interactive mapping to help the user access the available data and information. The final web site will be primarily directed to the needs of the states and provinces but will be readily accessible and understandable to all levels of government, citizen organizations, business/industry groups, and other interested parties.

The GLC, Water Quantity project page (<http://www.glc.org/waterquantity/wrmdss/>) will serve as the main page for dissemination of administrative, information, and products generated during project execution. Typical documents and information that will be available for download on this page include PMT and SAC Meeting Minutes, agendas, and members lists; Project and TSC Work Plans; and Project Element Status Sheets. This site was established in the 2nd quarter and will be maintained throughout the entire project to serve interested individuals and groups as an open and transparent source of the documented processes developed to ensure full and focused participation.

Standard communications, inquiries, and distribution will be enhanced through the establishment of at least two intra-project list servers: one to serve the PMT (pmt-water@great-lakes.net) and one to jointly serve the SAC and PMT (sac-water@great-lakes.net). These list serves will be utilized for distribution of meeting agendas, meeting minutes, reports, and general project and project-related announcements. In addition, the Commission's bi-monthly newsletter, The ADVISOR, will serve as another means for general project progress and updates through its distribution to over 3,000 interested parties in the basin.

To streamline the flow of project and project element progress, a suite of "Status Sheets" will be developed and maintained on at least a quarterly basis for each project element. These sheets will outline the associated tasks with each project element, the timeline when work will occur, the status of the work, and commentary on progress. These status sheets will be shared, as updated, with the PMT and SAC through the list serves and posted on the GLC project web site.

Project documentation will be posted and shared in portable document format (.pdf) to ensure ease of accessibility and compatibility with all computer platforms.

Open Forum

Kuper said that the PMT should strive to ensure that efforts such as SOLEC, the Wetlands Consortium, and any other relevant work are integrated (*i.e.*, SOLEC does have a water quantity indicator [7056]). Leger said that to ensure correlation between projects there are individuals participating at multiple levels, including Doug Cuthbert on the IJC work and others. Crane said that this project will not reinvent the wheel, and that building upon experience and data is essential.

Helland believes that impacts to the commercial and recreational industry should be addressed. Leger said that the Project Element 4 Work Plan does address this and the IJC study on Lake Ontario which specifically addresses this will be shared with the group. Crane said the GLPF believes that economic impacts are secondary to ecological in this phase of the work. SAC consensus is that by not including social and economic impacts it is not being treated as a sustainable/whole picture process. Bartholic asked about potential human impacts. Leger said that social and human impacts are not the intention at this point in the project. Ripley believes that ecological impacts will have direct correlation to economic impacts such as with fisheries.

Reg Gilbert, Great Lakes United (GLU) asked what is the relationship between the Great Lakes Water Use Database and Project Element 3? Crane said the GLPF wanted Project Element 3 to be a value-added task with more detail, expanded scope, needs assessment, while maintaining the regular issuance of the data and reports. Gilbert also feels that Project Element 4 is the most important portion of the project and that the Project Element 4 TSC should specifically address the "improvement" definition from Annex 2001.

Hudon asked what kind of effort is currently being directed at the local public water supply users. Bartz said at this point it is a matter of good stewardship on the part of the individuals.

Kuper wanted to know if a better definition of consumption could be derived. Currently it is only measured as a net loss. Is it a matter of refining the coefficients? What about groundwater return? Miller asked if municipal and public water supply representation should be brought to the SAC table. Crane said that the American and Canadian Water Works Associations and local public water supply operators were invited to participate and will receive project communications.

Margaret Dochoda, Great Lake Fishery Commission (GLFC), said Annex 2001 should have local buy-in, consent, and agreement on diversions. Edstrom said that under the Great Lakes Charter, implementing strategies would include municipalities and other impacted jurisdictions.

Bartz stated that as a part of the project, the GLPF has set aside \$175,000 for 50/50 matching funds with the states and provinces to help build internal capacity and to ensure full participation in the project. The PMT has also asked GLC to go back to the GLPF and see if a portion of the available funds could be utilized to further develop and research the specific areas of Annex 2001: consumptive use, basin-wide conservation, and resource improvement. Donahue will report back to PMT and SAC when GLPF reviews this.

Decision Points

1. The Project Secretariat will establish a list serve directed specifically at the SAC but to include all members of the PMT, as soon as possible.
 2. The Project Element 2 TSC will seek to add one or more individuals with expertise on the St. Lawrence River hydrology to the group.
 3. The next meeting of the SAC will be in conjunction with the interim reports release, some time in the late summer or early fall of 2001.
 4. The next SAC meeting should have a focused discussion directly at primarily three or four main points.
 5. The PMT, Project Element 3 TSC and Project Secretariat should pursue the development, definition, and refinement of consumptive use, conservation, and resource improvement.
 6. The Project Element 2 TSC needs to include downstream portions of the St. Lawrence beyond the Cornwall/Messena area to coincide and complement Project Elements 3 and 4 work.
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Minutes Submitted by:

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