



Public Interest Advisory Group

2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. EST, Monday, November 23, 2009

Type of Meeting: Conference Call

Meeting Facilitators: James Bruce and Kay Felt

Invitees: All PIAG Members & Study Team

MINUTES

I. Roll Call

Present from PIAG: Kay Felt, James Bruce, Frank Ettawageshik, Dick Hibma, Ken Higgs, William Hryb, David Irish, Don Marles, Roger Smithe, Al Steinman, Jim TeSelle, Dan Thomas (Regrets from Jim Anderson, Kate Bartter, Doug Cuddy, Glen Nekvasil, Jeff Vito)

Present from Study Team: Ted Yuzyk, Syed Moin, John Nevin, and Jill Wingfield

II. Update on Peer Reviews

Eight scientific reports were submitted for independent peer review. All peer reviewers' comments have now been received and the Study Team is working on the responses – which are fairly substantive – and revising the final report accordingly. Seven of the responses are done and have been sent to the peer reviewers; the eighth is expected to be completed this week. Upon receiving the Study Board's responses, the peer reviewers must "accept" the responses prior to making them available to the public. In general, peer review comments have been supportive. Scores for the separate technical reports ranged from 70%-90%.

Key chapters and the draft report as a whole were also submitted for independent peer review. The reviews of the whole report were generally positive and the overall scores were quite high. The chapters are being revised based on the peer reviewers' comments and the Study Board is preparing a comprehensive report that outlines the changes that have been made to all of the chapters and the draft report as a whole. This report will be sent to all of the independent peer reviewers that were involved in the review process.

The St. Clair River report has been revised substantially to reflect the internal and independent peer reviews, public comments and additional research that was conducted over the summer. The Study Team estimates that 60% of the report has been rewritten. Specific revisions include:

- Considerable modifications to the hydroclimatic chapter;
- A new chapter on glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA);
- Strengthened analysis in the hydraulic chapter; and,
- Revised summaries on the public involvement activities based on the PIAG report.

The Study Board asked for clarification from the IJC regarding the inclusion of the 1962 dredging in their analysis as it was one of the key issues raised during the public consultation period. Based on the IJC response which was that 1962 dredging was not part of the study, but the report should recognize the long dredging history, the revised report provides substantially more information on the 1962 and earlier dredging in several locations in the report.

In addition, the IJC clarified that the distinction in the draft report between natural and human-caused changes was unnecessary. As a result, the final report does not focus on the cause of the change; rather, the magnitude of change is the focal point.

The IJC sent letters to the governments requesting clarification about the second recommendation regarding the investigation of potential mitigation measures in the St. Clair River as part of a response to potential impacts of climate change. The governments were asked to respond by last Friday (11/20); however, a response has not yet been received. The Study Board is proceeding with the report and acting on the assumption of a positive response.

The release of the final report has been delayed a bit. The Study Board is now targeting December 9, 2009 during the Study Board meeting as the new release date; however, there are still some outstanding issues that may cause further delay. Technical reports on the additional research conducted over the summer will be made available this week. The Study Board has received clear guidance from the IJC that everything – peer reviews and responses, public comments, and all technical reports – must be made available with the final report release.

III. IJC Public Hearings

The IJC will be holding formal public hearings in the spring 2010 (likely in April) on both sides of the border. At the December 11, 2010 PIAG meeting in Windsor, ON, members of PIAG will be asked to comment on the proposed process and share any lessons learned from the IUGLS public consultation process.

IV. PIAG Report

Thank you to everyone for providing comments on the draft PIAG report. We appreciate the quick turn-around and are confident that the final report will reflect the hard work of the PIAG. John Nevin is revising the report to reflect the comments that were received and will provide a revised version of the PIAG report this week (prior to the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday).

V. Public Comments

While written responses are not yet complete, it is important to note that all of the submitted comments have been thoroughly reviewed by the various scientists involved in the St. Clair Report. The revisions that have been made to the report do reflect the public comments where appropriate. Jill Wingfield and John Nevin are working with the various scientists to prepare responses to public comments and once completed, these will be posted on the Study website.

VI. Other Business

Dan Thomas advised that last Friday (11/20) a report was released stating that multiple samples of Asian carp e-DNA have been collected upstream of the Chicago and Sanitary Canal. Beginning on December 2, 2009, all ship traffic will be stopped and the canal will be shut down. Personnel from various agencies will conduct electroshocking on December 2 and will collect samples of desired species to aide in replanting efforts. Over the course of the next several days, the canal will be treated with the piscicide, Rotenone. The canal will be shut down for approximately 4-5 days for the treatment and scheduled maintenance to occur. Mary Muter advised of Canada's Dept. of Fisheries and Ocean's risk assessment of this issue. Copies of both reports were circulated.

Respectfully Submitted
Jill Wingfield