



Public Interest Advisory Group

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST, Friday, November 6, 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, James Anderson, Kate Bartter, Doug Cuddy, Frank Ettawageshik, William Hryb, John Jackson, Mary Muter, Glen Nekvasil, David Powers, Roger Smithe, Alan Steinman, James TeSelle, Dan Thomas, Jeff Vito (Regrets from Richard Hibma, Kenneth Higgs, Donald Marles)

Present from Study Team: Eugene Stakhiv, Syed Moin, John Nevin, and Jill Wingfield

II. Introduction of New Members

Three new members have joined the PIAG. Glen Nekvasil, vice president of the Lake Carriers' Association, was appointed by the IJC in September to replace James Weakley. Jim TeSelle from Wisconsin represents coastal interests as head of the Wisconsin branch of the Great Lakes Coalition. TeSelle is an engineer by training, grew up on the lakes, and is very knowledgeable about coastal issues. Frank Ettawageshik joins as a tribal representative, a position previously held by Dan Tadgerson. Formerly the Tribal Chairman of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB), Ettawageshik is now the Executive Director of the United Tribes of Michigan.

III. Minutes Approval

As the minutes from the August 19, 20 meeting were just provided to the PIAG recently, the minutes will be presented for approval at the December 11, 2010 meeting in Windsor, Ontario. Members were advised to get their comments in ASAP.

IV. PIAG Report Discussion

List of PIAG Speaking Engagements

In an effort to keep a better historical record of the outreach efforts of PIAG members, Jill Wingfield has compiled Appendix #5 to the PIAG report. Members were urged to review the list and let Jill know if they have any information to add.

Comments

There was significant discussion regarding several sentences (pg. 4, lines 13-16; pg. 22, lines 4-7) in the report that express general acceptance of the findings and recommendations of the Study Board. Some members felt that the contents of the report do not adequately support these statements and thought these statements minimized the opinions of those that do not agree with the Study Board. Careful selection of terms (i.e. "acceptable" rather than "agreeable") will likely help the group reach consensus on these points.

Mary Muter will provide suggested revisions in order to make the list of issues concerning residents of Georgian Bay more comprehensive (section 4.1, Key Issues Identified by the Consultation). In addition, it is important to clarify that the concerns among shore property owners differ across the basin. In Georgian Bay the issue of access may be more significant than it is on Lake Michigan as many property owners cannot reach their property if water levels are low. On Lake Michigan, however, concerns regarding property damage and loss due to high water may be more considerable than in Georgian Bay.

The draft PIAG report contains 7 appendices which add quite a bit of bulk to the report. Some of the information might be cut to keep the report as concise as possible. As Appendix #1 is redundant with Final St. Clair Report, it will be left out of the PIAG report. Members are urged to review the appendices and propose deletions to John Nevin and Jill Wingfield.

In Section 4.5 Summary of "What We Heard," the last sentence (pg. 22, lines 7-8) should be revised. Most PIAG members supported adding a caveat to the statement to indicate that the majority of members of PIAG shared the general level of satisfaction expressed by the public.

Most PIAG members agreed that if the bulk of the dissatisfaction with the report is from one or two specific groups or geographic regions then that should be stated in the executive summary. These members suggested adding a sentence that outlines those groups/areas that have "considerable concerns" with the report.

There was also some discussion about the emphasis put on the response forms verses the statements made at the public meetings. The intention of this report, however, is not only to summarize what we heard, but also what we didn't hear. That is, people that come to public meetings are those that likely have an issue with the report whereas people that support the findings and recommendations likely did not come to the meeting or did not speak up at the meetings.

In the future, efforts to disseminate the executive summary more widely and to solicit comments from the public should be made. This should be part of the public input process.

Approval Date

Members were urged to submit final comments and suggestions before 15 November 2009. Comments are needed by this date in order to meet the December 1, 2009 deadline.

V. Update on the Status of the St. Clair River Report

Final Report

The Study Board has a very tight schedule for revising the draft report into the final report. Chapters 1-4 have been reviewed by the Study Board. Reviews of chapters 5-7 are currently underway.

Peer Reviews and Responses

Eight subproduct reviews have been received; responses for five of them have been made and three are in process. The IJC is managing the process with the U.S. and Canadian peer review agencies; therefore the IJC will make the decision about when to post the comments. Based on the meeting with IJC last week, all peer review comments and Study Board responses are scheduled to be posted by mid-November. In addition, the entire draft report has been peer reviewed by the chairs of the peer review group. Each chapter has also been reviewed by four separate peer reviewers.

Update on IJC Meetings with Study Board and Governments

The Board presented a status report to the IJC at the semi-annual meeting at the end of October. The overall message is that the science and analysis has been supported by the peer reviews. In addition, the Board and the IJC discussed clarification of the mandate of the Study in regard to the 1962 dredging, the ability of the Board to examine mitigative options in the context of climate change, the need for governments to endorse the legacy recommendations and the development of an adaptive management strategy. The Commissioners confirmed the Board's interpretation that the Study period begins after the 1962 dredging, confirmed its intention to recommend to the two governments continuing financial support for the legacy recommendations after the end of the Study, supported the Board's plan to develop an adaptive management strategy, and committed to seek guidance from the two governments on the ability of the Board to examine mitigative options in the context of climate change.

VI. PIAG TWG Assignments

The TWGs have been restructured and we have three new PIAG members who need assignments to a TWG. The TWGs under the St. Clair Task Team have all been disbanded.

Revised TWGS include:

- Hydroclimate;
- Adaptive management (new leadership – Wendy Leger);
- Plan Evaluation and Formulation Group (the former PEG has been expanded to include Plan Formulation; leads David Fay and Bill Werick); and,
- Information Management and GIS.

Two additional functions, Economic Advisors and Mitigative Options, have been added also. As was the practice during the St. Clair River portion of the Study, PIAG members (one from each country) will rotate through the Lake Superior Task Team.

The purpose of the liaison positions is to help the TWG understand that the information they are assembling will need to be communicated to the public. In addition, the liaison should advise the PIAG on the efforts of the TWG and, if necessary, engage the PIAG to address public involvement concerns.

Proposed assignments will be sent out soon to PIAG and appointments will be finalized at the December meeting.

VII. Update on Coastal Zone Site Selection

An update was provided regarding the questions that have been raised with the Coastal TWG by the PIAG liaisons, Jim Anderson and Roger Smithe.

With respect to concerns raised about sample sites on Lake Erie, Dr. Syed Moin noted that the Board has advised the Coastal TWG to ensure that there is at least one sample site on Lake Erie.

From a communications perspective, it was noted the Study needs to be able to justify the selection of sample sites and to assure the public that “their backyard” is represented. The TWGs have been urged to take this issue into consideration as they draft work plans and develop their research projects.

Contracts for work can be prepared prior to specific site selection so there is still time to select the best sites (both in terms of representation and available data).

No new data is being collected; each sample site will be assessed based on data that is already available. Sites that have the best and most data available, however, are not necessarily the most representative sites. These sites have been studied in the past because they are critical sites, or sites that have been identified as “hot spots.” It is important to understand that sample sites have to be selected because there is not enough time or resources to study the entire coastline. The Study has asked Baird to write a report identifying sites that are representative of the shoreline. In addition, the Board is looking for overlap among the various TWGs.

Many of the issues raised by TWG liaisons were also raised by the Independent Peer Review Group. The Board is working to see that the site selection process reflects these recommendations and addresses these concerns.

VIII. December Meeting Agenda

Items for the December meeting agenda include:

1. Approval of minutes from August 19-20 meeting and November 6 conference call
2. St. Clair Report
3. Progress on Lake Superior Work
 - a. St. Mary's River, Hydropower and Rapids Issues
 - b. Reorganization of the Plan Evaluation Group
 - c. Adaptive management update and PIAG discussion on communicating this complex issue to the public
 - d. Coastal zone site selection process and PIAG discussion on communicating the process to the public
4. Confirmation of TWG assignments
5. Public Meeting Schedule and Locations
 - a. IJC plans for formal hearings
 - b. Next Round of Study Public Meetings
 - c. Recommendations for Future Conduct of Meetings
6. Mysteries of the Great Lakes video (show during lunch)

Please send additional suggestions to Jill Wingfield and John Nevin.

IX. Other Business

The PIAG will meet again by conference call at 2pm on November 23rd for a briefing on the peer review comments and Study Board responses on St. Clair River report.

Respectfully Submitted
Jill Wingfield