

**BONNECHERE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN
STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SAC)
FINAL Minutes of Meeting #11 – April 18, 2007
Eagles Nest, Eganville**

Attendees:

SAC: Don Pouliot, Murray Bimm, Steve Munger, Lucy King, Aurel Boucher, Ross Campbell, Kevin O'Connor

Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn: Jan Leroux

MNR: Michael Radford, Joanna Samson, Tom Giesler, Paul Moreau, Darwin Rosien

Waterpower Producers: Peter Boldt (RPG), Janusz Rydel (Multistream Power Corp.), Frank Scheer (Eganville Generation Corporation), Andreas Vornweg (Vornweg Waterpower)

Regrets:

Murray Borer, Niall McArdle

1. Housekeeping Items

1.1 Introductions

Michael introduced Paul Moreau to the group as Pembroke Districts new District Manager. He also introduced Darwin Rosien, Senior Fish & Wildlife Technician to those that may have not met him previously.

1.2 Review of Agenda

No items were added to the agenda.

2. Review & Approval of Minutes of Meeting #10 – Feb 28, 2007.

Don Pouliot submitted new wording to be reflected in the minutes from last meeting regarding historical water levels on Round Lake.

ACTION: Joanna will resend the DRAFT minutes as AMENDED minutes to the group following the meeting for review.

3. Operations Update – Power Producers

Andreas Vornweg

- Water level is where it is supposed to be for this time of the year; no problems have been encountered thus far.

Frank Scheer

- Things have been good so far. We started dry; but have pulled 3 logs since Saturday. Currently there are 6 logs out.

Janusz Rydel

- Once the ice went out, there have been no problems in Douglas.

- There has not been much water during the freshet; with the rain we had, 6 logs were pulled.
- Currently we are 5cm below the upper limit – going down.
- We had problems during the winter with frazil ice, resulting in almost daily spikes in the water level.
- There was no damage; however, we did have problems with operations.

Peter Boldt – RPG

- **Round Lake:** 2 logs were added in the last 2-3 weeks.
- Currently a little higher than the Typical Operating Line in the WMP.
- Working at trying to maintain a gentle curve to June 30th. The difference will be whether the weather stays. If there is no rain, we will be putting in more logs to get the height by June 30th.
- Golden Lake: Close to 169.3 this week.
- This could be the first year we don't exceed the upper limit on Golden.
- There are still no logs in Golden Lake Dam and this is the first year we haven't been over the line at this time of year *(**Note: upon review, historical records indicate that there have been other years where the water level was not over the line at this time of the year.)*

Steve Munger asked if this will be an issue for Walleye Spawning and a discussion followed. Peter indicated that the problem could be in relation to temperature, currently at 4 degrees – if it stays cold, the spawn could be into June. Darwin indicated that when we hit the appropriate temperature, we will establish the amount of water over the spawning shoal which will remain continuous for the duration of the spawn. Each spring is different so we will have to wait and see. Darwin also indicated that Walleye Watch will be starting soon. This will help us determine when the spawn starts, when most of the spawning has occurred, and when it has finished. Walleye Watch is something that occurs every year on the Bonnechere and Madawaska Rivers with local Fish & Game Club volunteers. MNR submits for project funding and we pay the expenses for the volunteers. The volunteers go out nightly leading up to and during the spawn. They take water temperature readings, so that we can determine degree days and estimate when the spawn is over and the eggs have hatched. In addition to temperature readings, they are looking at abundance and are counting the number of walleye they see. This gives MNR a timeline to start calculating the degree days. The spawn timing is quite different from waterbody to waterbody based on temperatures so there is a large timeframe for Walleye spawning and incubation.

4. Lake Trout Presentation (Darwin Rosien)

Darwin went through a power point presentation regarding the data/information collection he has conducted on Round Lake with respect to Lake Trout.

The presentations focused on bathymetry work; the identification of the actual spawning shoal; the identification of the suitable habitat on that shoal; netting of Lake Trout on the shoal to identify active spawning; scuba divers to identify egg locations once spawning started; ice thickness tests; and conclusions & recommendations.

Darwin indicated that Round Lake has very good dissolved oxygen levels (DO) at depth for Lake Trout fry to survive due to the flushing rate with the Bonnechere River. This makes Round Lake great habitat for juvenile Lake Trout and a good candidate for rehab if we can get past the egg and sac fry stage.

A number of questions were asked at the conclusion of Darwin's presentation:

Don P.: What about Whitefish? It is my understanding that Whitefish are also in decline.

Darwin: Whitefish spawn a little later but use the same habitat and spawn at the same depth as Lake Trout. There is a distinct size difference between Lake Trout & Whitefish eggs. It was too cold to dive for Whitefish eggs this past fall, however, we do know they use the same habitat.

Don: What is causing the lack of recruitment for both Whitefish and Lake Trout?

Darwin: There are a number of potential causes: rainbow smelt; stocking ended in 1982; hydro operations; angling pressure.

Don: Because of the lack of recruitment compounded by fishing pressure, should there be a moratorium on Lake Trout fishing?

Darwin: That could be an option. Slot size to protect breeders. Another option could be stocking but we need to be sure of the genetics (currently waiting on results from the DNA lab). There were no fin clips on any of the fish caught, which is proof that reproduction is occurring in Round Lake, i.e. all the Lake Trout caught were born in Round Lake. There was a report last summer of a juvenile Lake Trout caught in Round, approx. 16 inches., which given the size it may have been born in 2004 when the water levels were above the Lake Trout box.

We are working with DFO to decide what, if any, the appropriate amount of habitat loss would be given 90 years of water level manipulation for hydroelectric purposes.

Lucy: Do the Lake Trout return to the same spot to spawn year after year?

Darwin: Yes. It's been well documented and I have seen this in tagging studies other lakes I have worked on. They go back to the same location for spawning as the place they were born. They have very strong site fidelity.

Aurel: If there is a build-up of silt on the shoal, can you clean off the silt? I've seen this done in other places.

Darwin: I didn't see any silting and I only mapped prime/best habitat.

Not sure if the distribution of current habitat is a function of wave action or ice, but we have a very clean habitat. There is clear delineation good habitat VS poor habitat. I figure that the ice/wave action cleans the habitat nicely.

Aurel: What can we do about predators?

Darwin: There are no limits on smelt – we would encourage people to take them. Once a species is in a lake, we can't get them out very easily. If we can recover the Lake Trout population, there would be shift in the current predator-prey balance. Smelt would actually be a food source.

Aurel: What about stocked VS a natural population?

Darwin: The fish we stock are 100% natural. They can reproduce if habitat exists. Our fish culture stations maintain brood stocks and collect wild eggs for rearing.

We could look at taking eggs from Round Lake, fertilize them, and then put them back in. Stocking is not always the solution as it's a very expensive process and the Ministry is trying to move away from stocking if rehab is a possibility. Stocking can be used as a tool.

Kevin O'Connor: In terms of Lake Trout, is there a Lake in Ontario that can be used as a Benchmark to compare Round Lake to?

Darwin: We would have to do Index netting. The netting I did this past fall was not that. It was just a way to catch fish. This netting could be done. In 2002 a SLIN (Spring Littoral Index Netting) was done, but had really poor results in Round Lake. The likely reason for the results is the morphology of the lake. It's very shallow and as a result doesn't work well with SLIN's. A SPIN (Summer Profundal Index Netting) could be better if one was done, but we would be bringing up fish through warm water – not really something we would want to do on Round Lake. Regardless, we know that Lake Trout are present in Round Lake despite being in relatively low abundance.

Steve: I do have experience culturing Lake Trout and know that eggs are very susceptible to movement at a specific time. So, specifically to water level assessment, could there be a time if water levels were dropped shortly after the spawn – wave action could penetrate and cause mortality?

Darwin: The number of eggs impacted would be dependant on the depth that the eggs were deposited. Recruitment success is also directly related to fall and winter temperatures.

Steve: In terms of predators, on Golden Lake there are a lot of Mudpuppies.

Darwin: Again, we can't really control the predators.

Steve: Have you considered trap nets to establish presence of smaller fish?

Darwin: Trap nets can only be used to a maximum depth of 16ft. They are not designed to be deployed from a shoal. Smaller fish would also swim right through the nets.

5. Amendment Proposal #5 – Round Lake lower limit

Peter Boldt:

Based on the good information that Darwin has collected, it does appear that both MNR and RPG need to work further together in a cooperative manner over a period of year to come up with some decisions around Lake Trout. We definitely need more information.

This is an excellent start.

RPG is meeting with MNR on April 30th, and I'm bringing a biologist from a consulting firm, Natural Resource Solutions, to this meeting to try to come up with an agreeable solution in terms of information needs and data collection for a possible amendment down the road that all parties agree to.

Darwin has made an excellent presentation and he is to be commended for it and the work he has done to date.

By removing the Lake Trout Box, it doesn't accomplish anything at this point because we are already been going into it the last two winters.

In order to make a good management decision concerning Lake Trout, we need to look at everything i.e. balance it against Whitefish, shoreline issues, power production, etc... As a result, I'm taking this amendment off the table for the time being until further discussion with MNR can take place.

Paul:

There are a number of issues associated with any decision/conclusions we would make. We really need to examine all of them carefully.

Peter mentioned that operationally, we have been in the box the last two years. This is as a result of the recommendations from the ice damage report.

MNR, DFO, and RPG will have to work together on this. DFO is aware that MNR has allowed RPG to enter into the box the last two winters. DFO is a major player here and will definitely need to be a part of the discussions.

Don Pouliot: What about RLPOA? With reference to water level changes should not the associations for both lakes be involved?

Paul: They are not directly a part of these discussions in relation to habitat, information needs. However, any future proposed Round Lake winter lower limit amendment would be brought to the SAC for discussion.

Mike: DFO has been given the same information as you tonight. Their guidelines generally say no destruction of fish habitat is permissible. So we will have to see where they stand on any amendment given the information collected.

Don: The current amendment is being cancelled. Will the new regime that you all come up with be in place for next fall?

Mike: No and there may not be a new operating regime

Steve: We have been presented here with a lot of new information. Considering the existing and future information Darwin collects, would the RLPOA have a different opinion regarding the removal of the Trout Box (protection of Lake Trout Hatch) if it was found that the Lake Trout in Round Lake were unique to Round Lake.

Don: Given that Round Lake has been stocked extensively from 1931 to 1982, I believe that the chances of a unique genetic strain is very remote.

Aurel: Could you look at using a structure/box that would sit over top of the shoal as opposed to stocking? This would give the fish a better chance at survival by preventing predators from getting to the eggs.

Darwin: We are looking into Scotty Boxes. But we need to look at all possible options and weigh cost VS effort. The use of the Scotty Boxes would be to collect information, and not for rehab of the lake.

6. Categorization of Amendments

Michael went through the hand-out describing the three types of amendments: Administrative, Minor, and Major. For the most part, the varying level of public consultation is the difference between the three types.

Some amendments that make sense, in which you see as not being of any real significance to the public, could be categorized as administrative.

MNR is looking to have the SAC come with a categorization for the amendment package as a whole. If you feel that one over others will pose a potential significant concern with the public, you may want to look at classifying it as major amendment and therefore the entire package would go through as a major amendment.

Paul: To clarify with #5 – the amendment on Round Lake, this has been withdrawn for the time being. When a new proposal has been worked out, it will come back to this committee to go through the same exercise in terms of your recommendation and categorization of type. It will not be a part of the current package that will go forward to the Regional Director.

Mike went through summary of amendments that was handed out.

#1 - Reporting System

#2 – Definition of flood – definition of incident & low/high water conditions

#3 – Extend back the “Hat” on Round Lake

#4 – *Change to the upper limit of Renfrew, Douglas & Eganville – Withdrawn as no longer valid (Douglas & Eganville need to propose their own amendments and the change to Renfrew has been rolled into amendment #6)*

#5 – *Lower limit on Round Lake (Lake Trout Box) – Withdrawn until further information/ discussions are undertaken.*

#6 – Changes to the upper limit at Renfrew (includes portion of amendment #4)

#7 – Changes to the lower limit on Golden Lake

#8 – Compliance & Enforcement – to be conducted by representatives of MNR, power producers, SAC, and a 3rd party arbitrator.

With Amendment proposals #4 & #5 withdrawn, it leaves 6 proposals for moving forward to the Regional Director.

Mike: If you can recall the discussion that took place at the previous meetings, think of a category of amendment that would be most fitting for each one. Think of it in terms of the level of affect of the amendment if it were to go forward and the interest of the public and their level of involvement/interest.

Mike asked the group if anyone had any particular thoughts on a category.

Lucy: It seems to me that I recall some of them being no-brainers and that they just made sense and I would think that those should be considered administrative amendments.

Mike: Yes, absolutely.

Steve: For #7, I would like the greater Golden Lake Property Owner’s Association to see this, so I can see this as being at least a minor amendment.

Aurel: I'm having some difficulty with the consensus approach that's been taken. The meeting of January 17, 2007 – only 5 of 9 SAC members were present at the meeting. A number of amendments were put on the table that night and recommendation were made. Amendment #3, 4 of 5 present agreed with it and 1 of 5 was dissenting. This equates to 4 of 9 SAC members agreeing to the amendment. This is not the majority. I have a problem with this night where 5 of 9 were present.

Peter: Onus is on SAC members to submit their input.

Mike: That night, with 5 of 9 members present, we had a quorum as defined by the Terms of Reference.

Aurel: There are amendments here, like the enforcement one, which we have no say in. If that's the case then they shouldn't be put in front of this committee.

Mike: I agree. We will refine our process better the next time. Something like amendment #8 would not be brought to this committee.

Peter: I disagree. The public needs to react to a process.

Mike: But there are other processes to change policy and bringing it forward in the form of an amendment is not one of them. Currently there is a review taking place of the Water Management Planning Guidelines for Waterpower. This would likely be a better avenue than through an amendment.

Paul: the door is not closed on amendments. We want to know what category for this package. If it's major, then the door will be wide open.

Aurel: Accept this as a non-issue, but I don't agree with how things moved forward with only 5 of 9 members in attendance.

Kevin: I'm having a problem with the categorization because I wasn't a part of the discussions. I have a hard time voting. But I did submit comments to Joanna after receiving the amendment letter from Peter.

Joanna: Opportunity for people to feed into the minutes is always welcome. A number of SAC members have provided me with comments in relation to a set of minutes. Upon reflection after the meeting, both Lucy & Don clarified their recommendation to amendment #8 and that is reflected in the minutes.

Aurel: This is a public meeting – want a quorum decision. Need to note the majority of a quorum present with dissenting opinions. You should be working with the number of members present in the quorum and give opportunity to those that missed.

Peter: Maybe members need more time to digest the information and pick a category of amendment. Everyone comes back to the table at the next meeting with having had more time to reflect on the categorization of each one.

Kevin: Especially after reading this summary, I would like more time to go back through the minutes to digest and this is a major decision.

A discussion took place regarding quorum and the ability of a member who missed a meeting to express their recommendations on particular issue after reviewing the minutes. Comments with respect to a reasonable timeframe for this was also discussed. At a future SAC meeting, the review of the Terms of Reference can be an agenda item. These topics can all be revisited at that time.

Mike: Next meeting, do we want to go back and discuss each amendment? If we do this I would like that people come prepared to make a recommendation for each amendment proposal, not as a whole, as there may be some that we can process as administrative as to make the package that goes to the public less confusing.

Peter: We come back next meeting and:

- Briefly review each amendment to ensure that people understand
- Seek additional comments if necessary
- Categorize each one as we may be able to process those that aren't complex as administrative amendments.

ACTION: Peter - to prepare a slide deck presentation as a summary.

7. Agenda & Date of Next Meeting

Agenda: Review amendments and categorization of each amendment.

Date of Next Meeting: **May 30, 2007** – @ 6pm at Eagles Nest in Eganville – Hall has already been booked.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm.