

Meeting Notes

**BOFEP Salt Marsh and Restricted Tidal Systems Working Group Meeting
Canadian Wildlife Service Boardroom
Canadian Wildlife Service, Sackville, NB
Thursday, 21 February 2008
10:00-3:00**

Participants:

Deanne Meadus (*Ducks Unlimited Canada, Co-chair*); Tony Bowron (*CBWES Inc., Co-chair*); Danika van Proosdij (*Saint Mary's University*); Geoff Harding (*Ducks Unlimited Canada*); Denise Sullivan (*Clean Annapolis River Project*); Jen Graham (*Ecology Action Centre*); Cindy Spicer (*Mount Allison University*); Melissa Cummings (*NB Dept. of Transportation*); Anita Hamilton (*Fisheries and Oceans*); Al Hanson (*Canadian Wildlife Service*); Jeff Ollerhead (*Mount Allison University*); Denis Hache (*Fisheries and Oceans*).

News:

Deanne Meadus has stepped down as co-chair of the working group (WG) and it was decided that unless someone from the broader group would like to step forward to co-chair or chair, that would continue as chair. Anyone interested in co-chairing?

Reminders & Action Items:

- ? Comments on the Jacques Whitford Background report for the Fundy Tidal Energy SEA are due Feb. 29, 2008.
- ? New Brunswick has a call out for research projects relating to tidal power – submissions due March 10.
- ? Check the status of your GOMC membership and consider joining the Ecosystem Indicator Partnership Committee. Also, consider contributing info on your project or data set(s) to the data base ESIP is developing for the Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy.
- ? The Terms of Reference for the WG can be viewed at:
http://mail.bofep.org/mailman/listinfo/smarts_bofep.org
- ? You can subscribe or unsubscribe to the SMaRTS listserv and view a searchable archive of listserv correspondence at:
http://mail.bofep.org/mailman/listinfo/smarts_bofep.org
- ? Anyone who is working on a salt marsh or tidal barriers related project who did not submit a project summary for this meeting, are encouraged to consider submitting one for inclusion on the SMaRTS website in order to facilitate information exchange and collaboration and to avoid potential duplication of efforts.
- ? In addition to project summaries, anyone who has restoration, monitoring, research or related reports/articles/materials that would be of interest to others in the group are encouraged to submit them to BoFEP for posting on the website. Best way to do this is to send your document in either PDF or Word (to be converted to PDF) to Jon Percy at (communications@bofep.org). I would request that you also send a note out on the list serve to let folks know to look for it. Jon will also create a link from the SMaRTS page to any

documents we post. So easy peasy – send the PDF to Jon and a note to SMaRTS.

Discussion of current research projects in BoF - discussion of challenges/requirements arising from project summaries (circulated in advance of meeting) – All

Project summaries were prepared and circulate in advance of the meeting in order to focus discussion during the meeting. The compiled set of summaries will be re-circulated with these minutes and posted on the SMaRTS webpage.

Report on 2007 Salt Marsh Workshop – Jennifer Graham (EAC)

Jennifer provided a summary of last year's salt marsh restoration workshop and distributed copies of the proceedings (CD). It was agreed that the event was a success (over 80 participants), that it covered a broad range of topics during the two days, offered plenty of opportunity for information exchange and networking and served to greatly raise the profile of salt marsh restoration and monitoring in the region.

There was a discussion around a number of the challenges and next steps that were identified at the workshop including: the need to improve the ability to match potential restoration project sites and partners with funding opportunities (how to go from inventories to projects); the need for improved inventories of coastal wetlands; the challenges/questions surrounding the necessity and nature of monitoring; how to better link efforts to restore salt marshes with the efforts and the need to protect intact systems in the first place; the need to revitalize the SMaRTS WG; the value and need to prioritize restoration needs and site (can we/should we be more strategic with monies for restoration and less opportunistic).

Report on Musquash MPA – Anita Hamilton & Deanne Meadus

DUC (and their partners) has completed their fourth and final year of post-restoration monitoring of the Musquash salt marsh restoration project. Report is not yet complete but will be soon and will be circulated to the WG. Original goal of DUC project was to restore the capability of this site to support waterfowl, which has been achieved.

DFO is currently working with a wide range of provincial, federal and NGO partners to develop a Management Plan for the Musquash Estuary and that the draft is anticipated by March 31, 2008.

The MPA encompasses only the watercourse and does not include the adjacent wetland or upland areas of the estuary. The boundaries of the MPA are identified on DFO's website (http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans-habitat/oceans/mpa-zpm/index_e.asp). However, approximately 80% of the wetland and upland is under one form of conservation protection either through provincial, federal or NGO mechanisms (e.g. DUC owns a portion of the wetland, as does the Nature Conservancy of Canada).

A long-term monitoring program (plan) is also being developed for the MPA which will be an ecosystem-based program which will extend beyond the watercourse to include the adjacent habitats (watershed). It is anticipated that the salt marsh component of this program will be based on the GPAC Regional Monitoring Program (<http://www.gulfofmaine.org/habitatmonitoring/>).

Discussion of status of provincial and federal wetland protection & compensation efforts – Jen Graham

Jen lead a discussion on the provincial and federal mechanisms for the protection and restoration of wetlands, focusing on NS's new no-net-loss approach. There will be opportunities over the coming year to participate in provincial process to develop both a water and a wetland strategy for the province. Some discussion around how the NS approach differs from the NB one was had, as well as how the federal wetland policy fits in. See the EAC project summary for more information on EAC's project activities in this area and contact Jen Graham (coastal@ecologyaction.ca) to learn more.

Al circulated 2 articles on wetland policy issues in Atlantic Canada. Al will circulate pdf's to the group and posting them on the BoFEP webpage

Wetland mitigation and compensation: Canada Experience (C. Rubec & A. Hanson)

An analysis of wetland policy in Atlantic Canada (E. Austen & A. Hanson)

Nova Scotia now has depth to water table maps for the province which should improve ability to identify and delineate wetlands over what was possible with the original provincial wetland inventory maps.

Al et al. is working on an article on assessing wetland values and function and anticipates that the report will be available soon (March 31, 2008). He indicated that the report will contain a section dealing with wetland identification and delineation which will encourage the use US Army Corps of Engineers approach. When released, it will be available on Wetkit (<http://www.wetkit.net/modules/1/>).

Cindy mentioned that Mount Allison is considering developing a wetland identification and delineation course that would mirror the Eagle Hill program. Stay tuned for information.

Tidal Power in the Bay of Fundy – implications for salt marshes & opportunities for SMaRTS? – Danika van Proosdij (SMU)

A background report for the Fundy Tidal Energy SEA has been realized and is available for review at:

<http://www.offshoreenergyresearch.ca/OEER/StrategicEnvironmentalAssessment/BackgroundreportfortheFundyTidalEnergySEA/tabid/280/Default.aspx>

Comments on the document are due February 29, 2008.

Danika indicated that the report mainly focuses on test area off Cape Split and the potential more immediate area impacts such as: impacts on fishing community, deep water currents & sediment dynamics, and large mammals.

It lacks information and consideration for the potential impacts further afield and closer to shore. No mention of habitats in upper part (intertidal) of the system. The impacts of the test turbines is likely going to be limited to the immediate area, however, should the project proceed and a significant number be installed, they have the potential to decrease the overall energy of the system which will be felt most in the upper reaches of the estuaries within Minas Basin system (our salt marshes and tidal rivers).

Danika is preparing a written response identifying this information/knowledge gap. Asked if the letter could come from SMaRTS but the group decided it was best to have letters come from the various SMaRTS members. If ready in advance, Danika will circulate a draft of her letter which folks could use to draft their own.

New Brunswick gov't has put out a request for research regarding tidal energy opportunities on the NB side of the Bay. Limited to NB researchers & partners. Deadline for submission is March 10.

Deanne - Atlantic Society of Fish and Wildlife Biologist AGM this spring in Wolfville. They are planning on having a special session on tidal energy in the BoF. More info at:

<http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/ASFWB/>

Update on tidal barrier audits & Discussion on SMaRT's role as a regional advocate for salt marsh restoration and the removal of tidal barriers – Anita Hamilton

Anita gave a presentation on the Gulf of Maine Council Ecosystem Indicator Partnerships (ESIP). For information contact Anita or check out ESIP's website:

<http://www.gulfofmaine.org/esip/>

“The Ecosystem Indicator Partnership (ESIP) is a committee of the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment. ESIP is developing indicators for the Gulf of Maine and integrating regional data for a new Web-based reporting system for marine ecosystem monitoring. Activities of ESIP initially center on convening regional practitioners in six indicator areas: coastal development, contaminants and pathogens, eutrophication, aquatic habitat, fisheries and aquaculture, and climate change.”

We discussed the fact that information on many of our projects and related information has already been provided to other committees (habitat restoration and/or monitoring committees) and so should already be available to ESIP.

Folks are encouraged to visit GOMC's website and check the status of their membership and contact information. ESIP is a crosscutting committee within GOMC which has apparently absorbed a number of the earlier (sub)committees which members of SMaRTS may have been involved in.

Also discussed SMaRTS' role as an advocate for salt marsh restoration. Was re-affirmed that SMaRTS is not an advocacy group but rather is a forum for technical discussion, networking and information exchange.

Denis Hache – mentioned a tour of the CN rail line he participated in several years back and that a number of small-scale (1-3 ha) potential tidal wetland/fish passage restoration projects were identified along the line. Also spoke of the Memramcock dam and the fact that is in considerable need of repair and that the cost of these repairs would be greater than the cost of purchasing the lands upstream of the dam and the reconstruction of the dykes and aboiteau.

Denis also mentioned that apparently DFO-science in NL is taking a lead on shifting habitat compensation emphasis to the restoration and increasing of primary productivity. Something that might be worth investigating and keeping an eye on as this would be something that would be of considerable relevance to the group.

AI - Environment Canada is working on a compensation guidance document to accompany the federal wetland policy. Anticipated to be available by next year.

Review of small project(s) for funding: current FY– All

Discussed potential projects to support with the monies available (~700) which has to be spent by March 31, 2008. All agreed that supporting Danika's efforts to conduct a comprehensive historical analysis of the extent and distribution of salt marshes in the upper Bay of Fundy was of considerable value to the WG. Agreed to provide funds to support the creation of a digital historical mosaic of the upper Bay of Fundy.

Danika will provide Tony with a brief project summary and budget request which will be submitted to BoFEP.

Developing project plans for Fiscal Year 2008/09: due 20 Feb – All

Tony will prepare an operations budget request to BoFEP requesting \$1,500 for the 2008/09 fiscal year. \$\$ will support two WG meetings and one or more student projects and participation in the May 2009 BoFEP science workshop.

WG Chair & Next Meeting

Deanne has stepped down as co-chair. Tony will remain has chair of the group. A co-chair is always welcome if anyone from the broader group is interested.

Next meeting will in October 2008. Date, time and location information will be decided at a later date.

Other

Jeff suggested the possibility of joint meetings with ACCESS and the Gulf of St. Lawrence Coalition for Sustainability. All agreed that this was a good idea and something that we may explore in advance of the 2009 BoFEP science workshop.