

“What Do We Want?”
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Video Conference

June 28, 2006

Meeting results

Hyperlink contents

[Toronto](#)
[Cleveland](#)
[Ann Arbor](#)
[Chicago](#)

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**Toronto
meeting results**

June 28, 2006

[to contents](#)

Group priorities

Issue priorities

- Focus on accountability
- Focus on human health affects
- Focus on effective mechanisms for multi-jurisdictional implementation of the Agreement
- Secure gap analysis on basin problems and solutions
- Assure compatibility of restoration efforts such as the Great Lakes Regional Collaborative and Agreement objectives
- Extend Agreement reach on emerging concerns, chemicals, interactive and synergistic effects

Organizing priorities

- “Dynamic messaging”: 1) for general public, 2) between grass tops and grassroots
- Assure ongoing binational NGO engagement, mirroring the bi nationality of the Agreement
- Must secure resources for ENGO and citizen involvement

Sample quotes

What results do we want from the Agreement review?

Catherine Masson: Clean water is a matter of good governance, from top down and bottom up.

Michael Gilbertson: Renewed focus on Article 4 of Boundary Waters Treaty, especially injury to health. Serious effects are occurring in humans, especially children’s health such as teratogenic effects on structure of brain and functioning. The Agreement has been badly served by the use of the word “ecosystem” in the Article 2 purpose of the Agreement—divisive within IJC and governments and NGOs.

Rimma: Agreement should support monitoring network which is able to adapt over time, usable to gauge improvements against, accessible to everyone.

Kent: Environmental justice should be a focus. Enhance accountability. Like the idea of public petition process to force accountability and implementation.

Heather: Agreement should address land use on a watershed planning basis. Ecosystem approach has been badly interpreted, but non-point source issue is massive and Agreement should address.

John Birnbaum: Agreement is a political document: we should focus on protecting what is already in the Agreement and there encourage its implementation, but keep relevant to the average citizen, that is, relate the Agreement to waterfronts, long-term health, actions of politicians at all levels. Particularly interested in netcage aquaculture, and wetland protection and restoration

Kent: Risk management sounds like abandoning virtual elimination when industry refers to it

Rimma: Every person in the public should be able to see how they're directly affected by Agreement and industry activities.

Kent: Support addition of more timelines in the Agreement.

Anastasia Lintner: Let's implement properly

John Jackson: Implementation

Gail Krantzberg: Implementation mechanism that commits all levels of government to Agreement implementation and to some extent industry and NGOs

Manfred: Enforcement; accountability, and governance becoming more concrete by the GLWQA at all levels of jurisdiction

Sara Miller: Want the Agreement to survive current political climate, that is, U.S. disdain, and the GLRC sucking energy from it. Address groundwater issues as integral. Better definitions and acknowledgment of our current reality

Moyra Haynie: Tools for public analysis of progress

What should regional basin ENGOS do to support other basin ENGOS and citizens to participate in deliberations around the Agreement?

Michael: We need public outrage again. NGO community must start to re-organize, and students need to get involved. Injury to children's brains as a result of chemicals in the Great Lakes should be a driving force. Can make alliances with other organizations, particularly students in universities.

John Birnbaum: Tie in with health groups such as OMA.

Heather: Tie to health impacts have worked in relation to sprawl.

Rimma: Monitor, and provide knowledge to others of how they can get involved in monitoring. Then give them a place or organization to report data to, someone who can analyze and identify trends.

Heather: Draw connections for people. Make issues personal for them. Public petition process then gives them a step to take to get involved.

John Birnbaum: Time at which people will be listen to results from discussions will be when draft proposals are ready. Between December 2006 and May 2007, decision makers may be open to hearing from NGOs. Something tangible to share with people and ask for their input. Hopes that either GLU or others may continue to meet in basin during that period to share preliminary proposals with public, explain clearly, and ask for action. Georgian Bay Association could do meeting for all communities along Georgian Bay and relate the Agreement to the Bay. Also get credible health groups to release their information on where we stand now vs. when agreement was signed, and need to achieve those objectives.

Derek Coronado: We've lost a lot of time to excite public before review complete. So take long term approach. Public health is a good leverage tool. Eagles returning to Detroit river important since it shows that when work at something, can accomplish a goal. Can't just connect people to the review, but to their broader environment. Principles in paper are important and carry on to other areas such as CEPA review.

John: We've focused on how the Agreement has failed. But there may be some value in assembling success stories around basin to show people value in it as well. Motivate further engagement of public and politicians. Are there any lessons to be learned from Europe in terms of binational processes re. water shared water boundaries?

Michael: Agreed. Concentrations of PCBs and DDTs are greatly reduced, good objective data available on this. But at present concentrations, still seeing effects on children. There are chemicals which industry disingenuously introduced as supposed alternatives, and these concentrations have risen. Gov allowed companies to do this, only took note after twenty years. Reconnect parts / systems within government which control these emissions.

Gail Krantzberg: An international campaign/appeal for this treasure, public service announcements, visual images. Need a spokesperson for the lakes, a voice, a celebrity.

General discussion

Activities and support requires ongoing binational partnerships both aware and sensitive to differences between nations and communities but equally if not more willing to identify the water and the threads that are common

Need to harmonize with U.S. restoration efforts. Problem of direct lobbying in D.C. for restoration diverting GLWQA energies to restoration

Is Canada-Ontario Agreement an access point? Some ability to structure COA on what should be in the GLWQA and push this in the review. There is a stakeholders forum in development serving as sounding board for two ministers.

Contending with the apparent CGLI strategy to anthropomorphize the issues—can we steal this message and begin to discuss the economic value of the GL

Report of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration versus of GLWQA—are the messages compatible? Should have a hard look at both documents and see how they correlate and look at a gap analysis.

Mobilizing—how? Citizens of common heritage, sharing stories (versus information sharing). Identify who can dispel connotation of dividedness, sensitivity to Canadian / U.S. differences

Dispel misnomer that US pollutes more, not really always the case.

Ignore politics, constituencies as much as possible, use simple messaging: Transboundary pollution, Walkerton is everyone's backyard, children's future is in the balance

Need to be conscious of timeline—gear up for May / June 2007 hearing: 1) will need to organize ENGOs of importance to GLWQA to convey to the grassroots, 2) need an historical view , a vision of stalling out and the impending problem, 3) tap into Great Lake polling project already conducted in the United States, forthcoming GLU / Biodiversity Project effort in Canada

Participants

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“What Do We Want?”
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Video Conference
Cleveland
meeting results

[to contents](#)

June 28, 2006

Questions informing discussion

- What should the environmental community advocate in the review / revision?
- What should lead groups do to support the rest of the environmental community and the public in the review / revision?

Report-out summary of group’s priorities

1—Agreement issues

- We should advocate undertaking revision
- Need public petition / accountability
- Include role for subnational governments
- Improve provisions on erosion / runoff
- Include means for dealing with emerging chemicals
- Add focus on human health

2—Messaging and organizing

- Communicate on values, especially human health
- Use teachable moments such as local flooding
- Engage growing watershed movement
- Make a centerpiece of subnational role in revision as a means of energizing new constituencies
- Mark out differences between institutions GLC, GLRC, GLWQA
- Take the issues to the public immediately
- Begin regular reporting by the environmental community on the GLWQA, plus and minus
- Engage the scientific community
- For environmental community, provide both information and actions local groups can take

Selected comments

- Inform process by gathering and sharing best examples regionally
- Should produce one major report on GLWQA success / failures – did past revisions have an effect?
- Need synergy with other initiatives like restoration and compact
- Produce a diagram of the relationship between Great Lakes institutions
- Connect issues to people—Can I fish, swim, drink?
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to connect with economics (tourism, fishing)
- Explicitly include a role for state and local governments in the GLWQA

- Straw poll on revising GLWQA: 7 in favor, 0 not in favor, 1 abstention, organizers not voting
- Strengthen physical and biological goals of the agreement
- Involve scientists in the review
- Make use of the watershed network to organize around the GLWQA
- Organize conferences that rotate around the region on what should be done with the agreement
- Produce a very simple, short writeup of what we want, but with detailed appendices, for politicians
- Organize events that compare the past, for example, showing the “Return of the Cuyahoga” film, with the possible future, good and bad

Participants

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“What Do We Want?”
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Video Conference
Ann Arbor
meeting results

[to contents](#)

June 28, 2006

Summary of groups response to questions

What should the environmental community advocate in the review / revision?

- Prevention—Commitment and specific steps to implement pollution prevention.
- Enforcement—Create specific enforcement mechanisms with real teeth. Expand the mechanisms for enforcement such as broader legal remedies.
- Education—Major broad-based educational effort on Great Lakes issues that include regular ongoing communication to the general public.
- Public participation—Robust interactive decision making process with meaningful public participation that includes a mechanism for public action such as a direct petition process.
- Funding—An accounting funding commitments and projects. Add to or amend the agreement to include a mandatory funding mechanism such as creating a trust fund.

What should lead groups do to support the rest of the environmental community and the public in the review / revision?

Engage in review of the Agreement

Call for funding and implementation of the Agreement

Conduct a major grassroots public education effort about the far-reaching possibilities of a properly funded and implemented Agreement, , including preservation and restoration of the Great Lakes for our children and future generations.

Economic analysis that includes:

- Estimated economic costs of failing to implement the Agreement, such as adverse human health effects and lost opportunities for expanding commercial and recreational fishing, tourism, and urban waterfront redevelopment
- Estimated economic benefits to be gained by full implementation of the Agreement, including avoided costs but also resource quality-of-life improvements with attendant influx of firms, population, and economic activity.
- Estimated cost of full implementation of the Agreement, with a price tag for each set of goals and objectives

Relevant participant comments

- Want mechanisms with more teeth
- Increased public awareness, with new generation since the last review
- Implementation of current agreement.

- Focus on prevention and enforcement.
- MM: Agreement at least calls for enforceable mechanisms to be developed.
- MM: Overall it should be preventive and proactive.
- Consider broadening to wetlands restoration, coastal health, and invasive species
- Apply an ecosystem approach, protect pristine areas, monitor stressors in an annex or separate agreement
- Agreement could be endangered if broadened to controversial topics (e.g. climate change)
- Create goals and time lines for Areas of Concern and shift burden of proof to the polluter
- Create a trust fund
- Better prevention through a middle ground with industry promoting recycling, reuse, energy generation, and more
- Clear prescriptions for class-action (standing for affected associations)
- Would like to add air quality but feel it is beyond the scope of the agreement.
- Raising the awareness of the federal governments that this is an agreement – accountability
- Zero discharge
- Build awareness up from the grassroots
- Priority for new addition: climate change
- Include a mechanism for stakeholder participation in implementation (e.g., monitoring)
- Climate change should be included where it affects water quality
- Require assistance for nontoxic alternatives
- Sustainability through implementation of the precautionary principle
- Robust, interactive public participation and ability to influence actions
- Assess the cost of loss of ecosystem services
- Economic viability of basin

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“What Do We Want?”
Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Video Conference
Chicago
meeting results

[to contents](#)

June 28, 2006

Summary of responses

What do you hope for from the review of the GLWQA? One or two things to be achieved

- Implement the Agreement
- Improve the accountability of the parties
- Set benchmarks
- Enhance the effectiveness of the IJC
- Assure the Agreement represents both the regional and local picture, connecting the two

What activities should the basin environmental community carry out to achieve goals and what support should we give to citizens?

Organize for legislative implementation

Provide education and advocacy

Provide resources, including money, to groups

Clear, concise communication: bullet points to discuss with the public

Understanding the fiscal impacts and having models to show the benefits

Better portrayal of the impact of the Agreement on public policy, e.g., Great Lakes Initiative

Select individual responses

What do you hope for from the review of the GLWQA? One or two things to be achieved

- Conni Clay, Save the Dunes Council: Raise the profile of prevention for the issues being raised.
- Dana Schindler, Michigan Audubon Society: Need to improve enforcement. Use it as a collaborative way to generate legislation and governmental action. Increase the ability of local units to use the Agreement as a way to spur government action. Make the Agreement vibrant and committed on waste, specifically on leachate dumping, and specifically useful for municipalities.
- Lois Morrison, The Nature Conservancy: the Agreement should be able to incorporate new and evolving information. Agree with Great Lakes industry recommendations: identify pervasive region wide issues. Issues included should be aquatic and terrestrial issues that affect the water. Invasive species and habitat biodiversity. There should be an annex on

invasive species. IJC should set up benchmarks so that while the Agreement is loose it also makes governments more accountable.

- Russ Tooley, Centerville Cares: Organizations should collaborate; there isn't enough input to get people interested. Need sound bites to increase awareness and interest. So long as the current Agreement has room in it, we would be more effective to find ways to figure out how to tell legislators what we want and obtain consensus with public
- Paul Heltne, Humans and Nature: Output of review should translate what's currently in the agreement into legislatively operative recommendations. So many of the annexes are in general language with good intent and direction, but there is a lot that needs to be done to help legislative bodies. We don't need a new agreement. It is one thing to say we have a goal of zero emissions, but we should say, for example, by 2012 having zero emissions in specific pollutants including rationales for decisions, if there is or is not a need for more research, and legal remedies as injured parties.
- Sofia Dorsano, Endometriosis Association: Intensify the value of Agreement as an organizing tool. Insist on an updating and refining of the entire document. Increase dialogue amongst groups to brainstorm and understand how to converge issues to be used as an organizing tool. Improve accountability, have the Agreement represents both the big picture and the things most important in local areas, and how they correlate with each other
- Peggy Salazar, Southeast Environmental Task Force: No new document. Need an effective, updated document that both parties will agree to but can still be enforced. Have the review process include everyone with expertise and experience. The Agreement should understand rural and city contributions and issues
- Irene Senn, Religious Coalition for the Great Lakes: Securing legislation that implements the Agreement.
- Lin Kaatz Chary, Northwest Indiana Toxics Action Project: We need to revitalize the Great Lakes activist movement. We need a clear agenda; return to people's understanding of the importance of toxics as well as restoration and biodiversity. We need to make it so that the Agreement can be pushed legislatively on both sides of the border. We need an accountability mechanism. We need aggressive science advisory capacity.

What activities should the basin environmental community carry out to achieve goals and what support should we give to citizens?

- Conni: Need models and ideas of the fiscal impact of issues that we're proffering. We need to educate our constituency and the public at large about the Agreement.
- Dana: We should keep it low key until the next administration. We can make the Agreement vibrant only if it specifically addresses our needs, for example, takes zero discharges and itemizes it with clear benchmarks and goals. Incite people based on zero discharge. How do we change the Agreement to motivate others to help us pass legislation?

- Lori: The environmental community should resolve the issue of toxins and restoration so that we don't go out with the disconnect.
- Russ: Research to lead to enforcement to understand where we are now and see in ten years where it has changed
- Paul: Translate operational language into legislative language. There is enough space in the Agreement to go after some of the newer problems now identified; if there is not, then we should revisit the Agreement to include new dangers. We should work within the framework of what we currently have until we get out of this current administration
- Sofia: Add a component that looks at how to communicate recommendations in a way that is compelling and moves the IJC to act the way we want them to. We need more focused discussions with aggressive agendas, but we need to make sure we are communicating directly. If we do decide to open agreement, we should focus on implementation and accountability. We should prioritize the other issues.
- Peggy: More meetings among environmental groups and hearing all viewpoints
- Irene: Help with education and advocacy both of NGOs and the public. Have people bugging their legislators to make this binding. Need to know more factual information. Boomerang effect: U.S. writes to Canada, Canadians write to the U.S. to make the Agreement enforceable.
- Lin: We need money and support. Working together we can persuade foundations how important this work is. Return to people's understanding of the importance of toxics as well as restoration and biodiversity. Have funded projects and concrete strategies.

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