

Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative Meeting
May 2, 2007
Bay City, Michigan
Meeting Summary

The purpose of the meeting was to continue discussions on how state, federal and local interests can work together through the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative (SBCI) to achieve resource protection, improve environmental quality, and expand economic development in the Saginaw Bay Coastal area. The major outcomes of the meeting were to summarize first-year SBCI activities and identify issues on which to move forward for the second year.

Mr. Tom Hickner, Bay County Executive and Steven Chester, Director Department of Environmental Quality welcomed the group. Director Chester indicated that the meeting was the second meeting of the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative with the first meeting held last August. At the August meeting the group identified a number of issues and projects that we collectively agreed to pursue. Significant progress on a number of these issues including:

- Saginaw Bay tourism,
- Identification and protection of high quality wetlands,
- Phragmites control,
- Development of a speaker series on environmental issues of specific importance to Saginaw Bay, and
- Evaluation of potential human health implications of the algae on the shoreline.

Director Chester also mentioned that Governor Granholm provided her support for a grant request to provide significant federal funding for the Kawkawlin River restoration project. Also, the DEQ will be providing funding for removal of the old water treatment facility at the Bay County beach in Pinconning.

Director Chester indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to provide a brief update on the activities currently underway and to identify new activities for the second year of the SBCI.

Also, Director Chester mentioned that the DEQ has requested a Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative federal earmark and that the earmark has received strong support from Congressmen Kildee and Stupak. State Senator Jim Barcia has also been strongly supported the funding request. Ms. Jeannie Henry of Senator Barcia's office read a statement of support from Senator Barcia to those present.

Brenda Brouillet, MDEQ, provided a presentation outlining the progress of the first year efforts of the SBCI. That presentation can be found on the SBCI web site. Those present asked a number of questions regarding:

- Timeframe for release of the brochure regarding the *Phragmites* demonstration project,
- Problems with *Phragmites* control in county drains running into Saginaw Bay,
- *Phragmites* control mechanisms,
- Status of Senate Bill 152 proposing to control phosphorus in dishwashing detergent, and
- Status of point and nonpoint sources of phosphorus to Saginaw Bay. A phosphorus committee recently issued 32 recommendations to control phosphorus. A copy of those recommendations can be found on the SBCI web page.

Tom Hickner provided a summary of a meeting held earlier this spring to identify potential second-Year issues/projects that could be undertaken by the SBCI. Jim Bredin then facilitated a discussion of potential second-year projects. The issues/projects identified include:

- Need to increase access to Saginaw Bay including recreational access, increase public parkland, and assist with dredging project for boat launches/marinas. Various categories of access are needed (kayak/canoe, swimming beaches, fishing/duck hunting, boating). Potential to use Finn Road access site in Hampton Township as an example. The effort should include MDEQ, USACOE, Township Officials, Mayors, County Commissioners, marinas owners, etc. May need to develop subgroups to deal with issues such as road ends, dredging existing facilities and developing new facilities.
- Need to evaluate current legislation being proposed to evaluate road ending issues.
- Need educational efforts regarding the beach grooming general permit process for private property owners.
- Continue and expand efforts of the current Tourism Work Group to market the success stories in the area. Should consider recent information indicating that there are more fish being harvested and fewer people fishing.
- Need to provide information regarding nutrient (phosphorus) loading into the Saginaw Bay including the identification sources and types of nutrients, and develop an action plan to control nutrients. This should include educational effort and more citizen-friendly communication.
- Need educational efforts regarding sources of nutrients (CSOs, point sources, sediment runoff, animal feeding operations, non-point sources, etc.) to Saginaw Bay. Development of a "Pollution Map" was suggested to help identify measures to take at the local level. This effort could also develop a watershed prioritization process for future phosphorus and sediment control efforts.
- Need to take a look at existing regulatory programs to determine if they are working for Saginaw Bay. Examples: are the current CSO design standards adequate to protect for ecoli exposure in the Saginaw River and Bay. Do the frequent CSO overflows also contribute too much phosphorus to the Bay. Are the industrial and municipal point source phosphorus limits protective enough given the effects of lower water levels and zebra mussels on algae growth in the Bay.
- Need to work with Mid Michigan Regional Management System. The Mid Michigan Regional Management System's focus is primarily on Bay, Midland and Saginaw Counties. Their focus is regional collaboration on goals which may overlap some of those of the SBCI in the areas of natural resource and the environment; sustainable business and jobs; and developing regional cohesion.
- Need a demonstration project at the Bay City State recreation Area to clear algae from the beach.
- Need to determine the impacts of pesticides, toxins and other pollutants in the watershed, specifically in regards to fish consumption advisories.
- Need a Saginaw Bay Coastal legislative priority list to address common goals: phosphorus control, failing septic systems, and road end issues. This would include establishing goals and objectives for the SBCI.
- Need legislation addressing *Phragmites* control efforts, including funding for control efforts.
- Support efforts to evaluate the St. Clair River's contribution to lowering water levels in Lakes Michigan and Huron.

Director Chester then initiated a discussion regarding the development of some type of structure for the SBCI including an executive committee that could help provide on-going local, state and federal direction to the efforts of the SBCI. The group identified the following potential issues:

- Must make sure the meeting and progress information gets back to each county. Must make it easier for locally interested individuals to participate. Educational efforts should include adults, not just schools.
- May need to develop a 5-10 year plan for the SBCI identifying future priorities.
- Must get additional interested groups involved such as marina owners, marina users, landowners, and drain commissioners.
- Each county should consider having a formal SBCI workgroup to identify local issues. In addition, each county would provide representatives to the regional SBCI group to participate in future meetings to guide process.
- Need to consider the use of technology, e-mail, video, to involve more people, focus at county level and provide educational outreach to all of the counties involved.
- Look for ways to increase funding of the Saginaw Bay Watershed Restoration Fund to about 20 million dollars. This would allow funding of about 1 million dollars in specific projects in the watershed per year.

The DEQ staff indicated that they would summarize the meeting discussions and provide a meeting summary to the entire SBCI membership for comments on potential second-year projects.

Director Chester and Tom Hickner thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.