

**Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body  
Meeting Summary**

June 16, 2021

2:00 p.m. EDT

**Remote participation was available to individuals registering at:**  
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/520295914156262415>

Listen only mode was available by calling:

Canada: +1 (647) 497-9368

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Passcode: 483-557-500

**Notice:**

Notice of the meeting was provided to the public through the Great Lakes Information Network's distribution list on May 17, 2021. Notice was also posted to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Water Resources Regional Body (Regional Body) website at [www.glsregionalbody.org](http://www.glsregionalbody.org). The notice included an announcement that the meeting agenda, draft resolutions and materials to be discussed during the meeting were available on the Regional Body's website. Call-in information was also posted to the front page of the Regional Body website.

**Call of Meeting:**

2:00 p.m. EDT— The meeting was called to order by Marie-Claude Th  berge, designee of Premier Fran  ois Legault.

**Roll Call:**

The following Regional Body members, constituting a quorum, were present:

**Illinois (designee of Governor J.B. Pritzker):** Loren Wobig, Director, Office of Water Resources, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

**Indiana (designee of Governor Eric Holcomb):** Ryan Mueller, Deputy Director, Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

**Michigan (designee of Governor Gretchen Whitmer):** James Clift, Deputy Director, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy.

**Minnesota (designee of Governor Tim Walz):** Jess Richards, Assistant Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

**New York (designee of Governor Andrew Cuomo):** Jim Tierney<sup>1</sup>, Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources, on behalf of Don Zelazny, Great Lakes Programs Coordinator, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

**Ohio (designee of Governor Mike DeWine):** Mary Mertz, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

**Ontario (designee of Premier Doug Ford):** Jennifer Keyes, Director, Natural Resources Conservation Policy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

**Pennsylvania (designee of Governor Tom Wolf):** Tim Bruno, Chief, Office of the Great Lakes, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

**Québec (designee of Premier François Legault):** Marie-Claude Théberge, Direction générale des politiques de l'eau, Québec Ministère de l'Environnement et de la lutte contre les changements climatiques

**Wisconsin (designee of Governor Tony Evers):** Todd Ambs<sup>1</sup>, Assistant Deputy Secretary, on behalf of Preston Cole, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

## **Actions Taken**

### ***Review of December 8, 2020 Regional Body meeting minutes***

Ms. Théberge noted that the December 8, 2020 minutes of the Regional Body were previously posted as draft to the Regional Body website. She invited a motion and a second to approve the minutes. A motion was made by Mr. Ambs to formally approve the minutes of the December 8, 2020, Regional Body meeting. Mr. Mueller seconded the motion. The motion to adopt the December 8, 2020, meeting minutes was approved without objection.

## **Reports**

### ***State and Provincial updates on implementation of the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (Agreement).***

## **Québec**

Ms. Théberge submitted the following report:

- **City of Ottawa application to take water in Québec**

Québec wishes to give an update about the application for a water withdrawal that Québec received from the City of Ottawa in Ontario in 2020. As mentioned at the last Regional Body meeting, the proposed withdrawal is for 185 MGD, and the withdrawal would be located on the Québec side of the Ottawa River. The City of Ottawa currently withdraws water from a location within Ontario, and they are looking to switch the location of their withdrawal in its entirety to Québec. The volume of water consumed will exceed the 5 MGD threshold set out in Article 205 of the Agreement. Current estimates put the consumptive use at 37 MGD, so 20% of the water withdrawn will not be returned.

Because this withdrawal implies a transfer of water from our province to another province, Québec's legal framework requires that we hold a provincial public consultation about whether to lift the current ban on water transfers out of Québec. Therefore, a public notice announcing the public consultation was sent around on May 21 of this year to water users, First Nations, environmental groups, and local media outlets in Québec inviting them to participate online.

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<sup>1</sup> Signed proxy forms for individuals participating on behalf of official member designees are available upon request.

Please note that this consultation focuses only on whether the ban against transferring water from the Province of Québec to the Province of Ontario should be suspended for this proposed transfer. Québec law generally bans transfers of water out of the province, but if the reason for the proposed water transfer is to advance a public interest (which it is in this case, as the water is for public supply purposes) then the proposed suspension of the ban must first be subjected to a public consultation followed by a decision by government.

As a reminder, there will be no diversion of water outside of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Basin, the water will be taken from within the St. Lawrence River Basin and will stay at all times within the St. Lawrence River Basin, and the water will be used only for public water supply purposes. We believe that there is no reasonable likelihood that the other Parties to the Agreement would consider this regionally significant or potentially precedent setting.

The public consultation will take place online from June 21 – September 21, 2021. If you have any comments on the specific issue of whether the government of Québec should suspend the ban on transfers, they can be sent to us using the online form that will be made available on our Web Site ( [Application by the City of Ottawa to lift the ban on water transfers outside Québec - Public consultation, June 21 to September 21, 2021 \(gouv.qc.ca\)](#) ) at the start of the consultation period.

Furthermore, in accordance with Article 205 of the Agreement, at another time Québec will be officially sending a formal Prior Notice and Opportunity to Comment to all Parties. However, we are still waiting to receive all the relevant information from the applicant before sending this formal notice and starting the 90-day comment period on whether or not the proposal is consistent with the Standard established under Article 203. Current timelines point to this formal notice and comment period beginning this fall. We will keep you updated if this changes.

- **Regional support program for issues related to water**

Back in 2018 Québec launched the Quebec Water Strategy. The strategy funds a new Regional Support Program for Water Issues that aims to promote water resource management and improve water resource and ecosystem protection.

The program funds local projects that meet needs identified by watershed organizations and Regional Round Tables in their management plans. Projects are very varied and range from boat washing stations to help eradicate invasive species, public outreach activities, restoration or enhancement of wetlands, restoration of riparian zones and monitoring of municipal stormwater management structures.

Since its launch in November 2019, 47 projects have been selected for funding. This represents more than \$ 2.5M CAD in grants for a total investment of \$ 5.7 M CAD.

- **New rules to reduce lead in drinking water**

On the subject of water quality guidelines, the Québec government amended its Drinking Water Quality Regulation back in March of this year to reduce lead levels in drinking water. These amendments reflect the most recent guidelines coming from Health Canada and lowers the maximum acceptable concentration standard for lead in drinking water to 5 micrograms per litre.

It is the water system managers and municipalities who must ensure that this standard is met and that an action plan to reduce lead in drinking water is in place.

- **Water Action Forum**

Our Minister of Environment recently launched the creation of a Water Action Forum. The role of this roundtable, which has met twice so far, is to strengthen the coordination of government action and better align government priorities with those of local and regional actors, including watershed organizations. The Water Action Forum will focus primarily on issues related to water knowledge and challenges highlighted by watershed organizations.

- **2030 Plan for a Green Economy**

The Plan will help achieve the 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target Québec has set for itself, namely a 37.5% reduction compared with 1990 levels, and to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. It will also strengthen Québec's capacity to adapt to the consequences of climate change. Key to this are actions focusing on adaptation. Here investment will be made notably in Flood risk prevention (\$120.5M CAD) and reducing the risk of coastal erosion and landslides (\$75.6M CAD)

There is a web link to information in English which will be available in my written report: [2030 Plan for a Green Economy | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](https://www.gouvernement.qc.ca/fr/actualites/2020/04/2030-Plan-for-a-Green-Economy)

- **Low water levels**

Québec is in its third month of below normal rainfall levels (50% below average for the months of April and May) and we are already experiencing low water levels and reservoir levels, particularly in the south of the province and the Saint Lawrence. This is already impacting the farming sector and represents a risk to public drinking water supply in some critical areas. We are working with other ministries to keep on top of the situation.

## **Illinois**

Mr Wobig submitted the following report:

I am Loren Wobig. I serve as the Director of the Office of Water Resources in the Department of Natural Resources in Illinois and as an Alternate Appointee to the Regional Body and Compact Council on behalf of the honorable Illinois Governor JB Pritzker. Illinois Department of Natural Resources Deputy Director, John Rogner, also

serves as an Illinois Appointee to the Regional Body and Compact Council on behalf of the honorable Illinois Governor JB Pritzker.

This briefing report provides updates on Illinois' efforts related to:

- Design efforts with the US Army Corps of Engineers and the state of Michigan associated with the Aquatic Invasive Carp Deterrent Ecosystem Project at Brandon Road.
- The status of the city of Joliet's Petition for Lake Michigan water.
- The status of Illinois' 10-year Lake Michigan water reallocation determination; and
- State Water Plan Updates including proposals to make programmatic changes to Illinois water data collection methods and creation of an Illinois Flood Center.

**BRANDON ROAD:** The state of Illinois signed a Preconstruction, Engineering, and Design (PED) Agreement at the end of 2020 as the non-federal sponsor for the Brandon Road Project. Illinois also signed an Intergovernmental Agreement with the state of Michigan that provided for Michigan's generous contribution of \$8 million dollars toward Illinois' required non-federal share of project design expenses for the first of three increments of the project. The joint state and federal design team is finalizing a Project Management Plan (PMP) identifying design tasks, critical design issues, and project governance and hopes to have that document signed next month. The Design Team has already held one value engineering design charette to consider cost saving improvements to the project and will be holding its second design charette focusing on the Engineered Channel next week in Springfield, Illinois. Similar to the initial Great Lakes States gathering that was held in Chicago in 2019, the states Illinois and Michigan will be co-hosting a Facilitated States and Provinces Forum on June 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> in cooperation with the Great Lakes Commission and with facilitation by Adam Saslow of Kerns and West, Inc. The state of Illinois is making progress toward securing necessary private land rights for the project including rights-of-access needed for site Geotech and potential Hazard Waste Investigations.

**JOLIET:** To eliminate dependance on the deep aquifer for their long term water supply needs, the city of Joliet, Illinois petitioned the state of Illinois for a Lake Michigan Water allocation for up to 15mgd beginning in 2030 and provided via the city of Chicago infrastructure. As part of its petition, the city has agreed to undertake a significant water system improvement plan within their community to provide a system with less than 10% non-revenue water loss by 2030 as well. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources held a pre-hearing and public hearing earlier this year to hear testimony from the city of Joliet and concerned stakeholders. Based on the information obtained during the hearing process, the Department of Natural Resources is currently preparing an order in response to the city's petition.

**LAKE MICHIGAN WATER REALLOCATION:** Approximately every 10-years, the State of Illinois reevaluates its granted water allocation to permittees, the allocatees previous water use, and related trends of that water use. The state of Illinois has contracted with Stantec to evaluate permitted water use, projected water use needs, and

recommended reallocation. The state is preparing to send out draft reallocation numbers to each of the permitted allocatees in July for consideration and plan to have the reallocation process completed by the end of 2021. The reallocation numbers will reflect significant efforts by many communities, Chicago in particular, to improve water conservation measures in their communities.

**STATE WATER PLAN UPDATE:** The state of Illinois is updating its State Water Plan focused on 13 key water issues ranging from water quality to navigation and recreation. Improved over previous Illinois water plans developed, this current water plan update will particularly focus attention to “weave in” social and environmental justice considerations in the evaluations and recommendations related to these key water issues. Highlighted Lake Michigan draft recommendations include:

- Simplify and improve annual water use reporting and data submittal processes including a shift to volume-based metrics from fiscal based metrics.
- Expand IDNR Water Resources Lake Michigan Programs to include full time staff dedicated to working with all communities utilizing Lake Michigan Water, but especially under resourced and disadvantaged communities to assist them with their water supply system improvement and water conservation plans and funding for those plans.
- Establish provisions for potential offshore wind and/or wave energy generation in Lake Michigan; and
- Promote increased maritime transportation of commercial goods between the Great Lakes and Gulf of Mexico via the Chicago Area Waterway.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these highlights of current actions in Illinois.

## **Indiana**

Mr. Mueller submitted the following report:

### ***Ongoing Drought Planning and Coordination***

The Indiana Departments of Natural Resources and Homeland Security, in partnership with the Indiana State Climatologist and NOAA’s National Integrated Drought Information System are hosting three Drought Workshops during 2021. The Drought Planning Preparedness workshop was held on April 6 -8 with the goal of better understanding Indiana’s planning, mitigation efforts and responses to drought. Upcoming Sub-state workshops will focus on specific regional issues and needs with the goal to *recognize and enhance coordination between state and local levels when preparing for and responding to drought. The Sub-state workshops will be held on July 27-29.*

*Anticipated outcomes from the workshops include:*

- developing a common understanding of drought and drought needs;
- developing a common understanding of planning and mitigation resources that currently exist; and,
- increasing collaboration with partners at the state level and local level for drought planning and mitigation efforts.

**Water Use in the GL basin - Indiana (data from 2020 is still being collected and analyzed)**

- Currently there are 1059 Significant Water Withdrawal Facilities (SWWF) registered in the Basin.
- SWWF has the capacity to withdrawal 100,000 gallons a day.
- Have added about 20 new facilities in last two years, mostly irrigation
- Water use in the Basin for 2019- ~500 billion gallons total
- Decrease of about 250 billion gallons over the last 5 years, mainly driven by Energy Production/ Industrial use
- Nisource Baily station retired in May 2018 accounts for a significant portion of the reduction.
- Industrial decreases more gradual, likely due to conservation efforts, and portion of Arcelormittal Harbor East plant shut down in 2018.
- Of the 1059 SWWF:
  - o 1576 wells (a facility can have multiple wells / intakes) – Accounting for 34 BG
  - o 254 surface intakes – Accounting for 465 BG
- When you compare withdrawal vs. capacity:
  - o SWWF total – 17.1%
  - o Surface – 19.2%
  - o Wells – 7%

Data for each SWWF can be found online at: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/water/4841.htm>

**Michigan**

Mr. Clift submitted the following report:

The Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will be transitioning back to the office starting July 13; however, we expect this reassembling process to occur over a period of several months. Many of our staff will continue to work in a primarily telework environment while others will return to the office on a more full-time basis over time.

Michigan’s Water Management Program continues to work with the Water Use Advisory Council (WUAC), a collaborative stakeholder forum that coordinates research and provides programmatic support. The WUAC submitted its first biannual report to the legislature in December 2020. The report included requests for additional funding or other resources necessary to implement recommendations to advance and improve data collection, modeling, research, and refine administration of the water withdrawal assessment process and Michigan’s water conservation and efficiency program. The state budget is still being developed as of this report, so it remains to be seen which recommendations will receive funding from Michigan’s legislature.

The Data Collection and Models Committees are also discussing results of the Cass County Pilot Project, a public and private collaborative study of a heavily irrigated county in Southwest Michigan. Lessons learned from the pilot project and how its results

can be used to improve additional data collection and modeling efforts in other areas in Michigan are still being discussed. The WUAC's Models Committee is providing oversight for the principal investigator's efforts to update the Cass County Pilot Project's groundwater model to address issues raised by EGLE, the United States Geological Survey (USGS), and the Models Committee. USGS completed a study in two other watersheds in the west central Lower Peninsula, whose final report is under internal agency review. This study included the use of fiberoptic cables and thermal imaging cameras to identify groundwater discharge zones in streams, groundwater, stream flow, and streambed conductance data, as well as a groundwater/surface water model. Due to concerns about potential future water supply development, the USGS is currently studying the Michindoh Aquifer, a glacial aquifer underlying portions of Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Michigan's legislature appropriated additional funding to EGLE for the study of the Michindoh Aquifer. EGLE, USGS, and the Michigan Geological Survey are currently meeting monthly to coordinate state and federal data collection efforts in the Michindoh Aquifer.

To date, over 5,300 large quantity withdrawals have been registered through Michigan's program: over 3,500 through the on-line Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool, over 1,700 through site-specific review authorizations by EGLE staff, and 25 permits for new or increased withdrawals over 2,000,000 gallons per day. Over time, site-specific reviews inherently increase in complexity and time required to perform. Two additional staff have been hired to focus on site specific reviews and an additional groundwater modeler was also hired to support the work of the program.

EGLE and the WUAC's Water Conservation and Efficiency Committee are working collaboratively to identify opportunities to strategically integrate water stewardship into current and future climate, energy and water infrastructure policies and programs. To support these efforts, the OGL is sponsoring a Dow Sustainability Fellows Project through the University of Michigan. A multidisciplinary team of graduate students are conducting an assessment of Michigan's climate, energy, water infrastructure, and sustainability policies' and programs' current contributions toward Michigan's water conservation goals and objectives and identify gaps and opportunities to advance progress toward these goals through specific policy and programmatic changes. As part of the project, the team will also review other Great Lakes states and provincial water conservation programs, water rich states similar to Michigan, and relevant federal programs. Team members may be reaching out to Regional Body members to learn about other Great Lake state and provincial water conservation programs in the near future. The final white paper will include recommendations for advancing the state of Michigan's progress on achieving the water conservation and efficiency goals and objectives under the Compact. Michigan will share this report with the other parties once it is finalized in December.

OGL is also co-funding an Integrated Assessment (IA) research project with Michigan Sea Grant that will develop a Water User Committee (WUC) guide and facilitate participatory modeling case studies of the first WUCs that will be convened in Michigan. The WUC guide will be developed using a stakeholder-driven approach with surveys and

focus groups to successfully incorporate the diverse perspectives of the state’s water users and builds capacity for local collaborative governance of water resources in Michigan. The IA proposal is currently going through a competitive review process through Michigan Sea Grant and NOAA. If the final proposal is successful, the project will begin in January 2022.

Michigan has had a number of educational efforts underway. EGLE hosted its first Fix-a-Leak Week in March. The Fix-a-Leak week was led by EGLE’s Office of the Clean Water Public Advocate to bring together consumers, community partners, utility providers and plumbing experts from across the state to educate Michiganders on the environmental and economic costs of water waste. The effort also focused on the importance of water conservation programs to support these efforts in small and disadvantaged communities. This week was also sponsored in partnership with the EPA WaterSense program. The Office of the Clean Water Public Advocate also launched the Water Leak Pilot program in two Michigan communities in partnership with community-based organizations and state and local partners.

The Michigan Environmental Justice Conference was held in May featured sessions on a wide range of topics including federal and state priorities, climate and equity, tribal perspectives, the future of infrastructure, and a community town hall. One session focused on panel of advocates/water experts on water equity challenges of affordability and aging water infrastructure, and how we can chart an equitable path forward. EJ Conference session recordings available at this link:

[https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3308\\_3333-551173--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3308_3333-551173--,00.html)

Michigan also celebrated its annual Great Lakes and Fresh Water Week, June 5-13. This annual event raises awareness of the Great Lakes, inland lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater and educates people know about the importance of water resources, their impact on lives around the state and what people can do to help preserve this unique resource. This year’s week focused on three themes, appreciate, educate and recreate and was sponsored EGLE, along with its partners including the Department of Natural Resources, the MiSTEM Network at the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).

## **Minnesota**

Mr. Richards submitted the following report:

- Drought conditions have persisted in many areas of Minnesota this spring and summer and we are getting close to convening a Statewide Drought Task Force. The entire Lake Superior Watershed in Minnesota is currently experiencing low stream flows and also moderate fire danger.
- Watershed restoration projects are taking place on several cold-water trout streams in Duluth. Amity Creek and Tischer Creek are impaired due to excess turbidity and efforts are underway by multiple agencies to determine the sources and solutions.

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- The DNR’s Sea Lamprey control work was hindered by COVID-19, but work will resume this summer. We have seen that wounding rates are holding steady for lake trout and other species.
- The DNR will be receiving over \$1 million in federal funding from NOAA on July 1, 2021. With it, the Coastal Program will deliver data and climate change technical assistance. DNR will be supporting six pass-through projects:
  - Arrowhead Regional Development Commission will map coastal erosion hazard areas.
  - The Science Museum of Minnesota will do research into “rocksnot” on the North Shore.
  - The University of Minnesota research bacterial hazards in Lake Superior streams.
  - The University of Minnesota will build a mobile stormwater testing laboratory.
  - The South St. Louis SWCD will improve fish migration in Tischer Creek.
  - Hamline University will expand education on water quality and climate resilience.
- Work continues on the U.S. Steel Superfund Site where there is significant contamination. Work was expected to cost around \$75 million and the bids came in over \$200 million! There are enormous amounts of contaminant to be removed, restored and remediated. Funding is through the Great Lakes Initiative/Legacy Act and partnership with US Steel.

St. Louis River Estuary Updates:

- Substantial projects are taking place this summer that are cleaning up the St. Louis River and Estuary. Minnesota continues efforts towards delisting the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC). The work has a big price tag, but we are making significant progress.
- The Kingsbury Bay and Grassy Point restoration project continues this summer and will be completed in the fall of 2021. This \$18 million project in the St. Louis River Estuary will restore valuable coastal marsh habitat by removing excess sediment, remediating waste, and removing non-native vegetation.
- In April, common tern habitat restoration work was completed on Interstate Island. The rare common tern bird nests on this island which is one of only two tern colonies remaining on Lake Superior. Interstate Island is a small island in Lake Superior that sits directly on the Minnesota and Wisconsin border, running through the Duluth-Superior harbor.
- Extensive wild rice restoration continues this summer across the St. Louis Estuary. Project partners include the Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, 1854 Treaty Authority, MN DNR along with other St. Louis River Wild Rice Collaborative partners.

## New York

Mr. Tierney submitted the following report:

1. New York is continuing to advance more than 130 coastal resiliency and restoration projects along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River in the aftermath of record flooding in 2017 and 2019. These projects are part of Governor Cuomo’s \$300 million “Resiliency and Economic Development Initiative” for this area of New York. New York is also in the process of completing at least two dozen advanced stream restoration/flood mitigation studies for flood-prone watersheds within the Great Lakes Basin.
2. Interestingly, water levels on Lake Ontario are now substantially below average. The low water has triggered IJC’s Lake Ontario Board of Control action to deviate down from its standard water release rates from the Moses-Saunders hydro-electric dam in order to elevate Lake Ontario water levels.
3. New York’s 2020 Annual Water Withdrawal Reports are in. A new, online reporting system was developed and was well-received by the stakeholder community. Compliance with reporting requirements has been consistently good. The online reporting form now includes required fields to reduce the submission of incomplete data. Our water withdrawal data will be shared with the Compact Council by August.
4. New York now web-posts information from Water Well Completion Reports including the address, well depth, rock depth, groundwater depth, casing length, screening, and yield. Statewide, New York posted data from 120,000 wells in addition to the 25,000 that were previously posted. This data can be searched. This information is frequently requested.
5. We are making an extensive outreach effort to the agricultural community to address some misunderstandings about the conditions under which a water withdrawal permit is required. Water withdrawal reporting appears to be substantially accurate. However, we have identified a number of farms that should have applied for permits, or permit amendments, for new sources or increased water withdrawal system capacity. We are working closely with the agricultural community to address the confusion, help them through the permitting process, and provide education and outreach going forward.
6. New York was an active participant in the Procedures Update Team’s Phase II efforts. We appreciate the time and effort invested by all Procedures Team members.
7. New York’s water supply permits contain conditions that enable New York to monitor compliance with the principles and metrics of the Compact. New York has designed its existing Public Water Supply Permit Program to ensure that all water withdrawals and diversions within New York meet Compact requirements. NY has nearly 600 permitted water withdrawals within the Great Lakes Basin. We are regularly working to refine our program to improve management of our shared water resources.

## **Ohio**

Ms. Mertz reported that Ohio Department of Natural Resources staff have collected and begun to examine the data on Ohio's 2020 Lake Erie Basin water withdrawals, consumptive uses and diversions, pursuant to compact protocols. As of the date of the Regional Body meeting, 96% of the facilities have reported, which is on par with the past. ODNR is confident that the remaining outstanding reports will be submitted shortly. Ms. Mertz also reported that no new permit or registration has been applied for or issued for uses within the basin that would be relevant to Compact issues.

Mr. Mertz next reported that the State continues active management of its H2Ohio plan. She reported that this is the State's very resource intensive effort to keep Lake Erie water clean and usable for withdrawals and consumptive uses across the State, and specifically in the Lake Erie region, it is designed to prevent algal blooms. Accordingly, in the State's last budget over \$200 million was included to assist with best management practices for farmers, which is important as the State's coastline is heavily developed with farming activity. She noted that while a significant amount of the work is focused on preventing harmful algal blooms, a significant amount of the funding also relates to natural infrastructure. She noted that in just two years the State has initiated over 57 projects, most of them in the Lake Erie Basin, with a particular focus on the Western Lake Erie Basin. She stated that they are looking forward to seeing what kind of difference that's going to make in terms of water quality. She stressed that the State has been putting in a great effort to work with landowners as well, and over a million acres just in the Western Lake Erie Basin has been secured by the Ohio Department of Agriculture to engage in the best management practices that the State provides incentives for. She noted that the State anticipates that by this fall, the State will have a scientific team that's been engaged to analyze all of the new data that we will develop over the summer and be in a position to report back on the State's successes and our failures. She noted that this step was important in order to learn what the State is doing that is working. She stated that she felt that while Western Lake Erie Basin is probably the most heavily impacted by algal blooms, they may eventually become a problem throughout the entire system so the outcomes may assist the other States and Provinces in the future.

## **Ontario**

Ms. Keyes began by stating that she was glad to report on some of the key initiatives underway in the province of Ontario.

She noted that Ontario is working on completing its 2020 Water Management use report which is due in August. To that end, she informed the members that Ontario continues to report its best available water use information on withdrawals, diversions and consumptive uses within the Great Lakes basin. This year, she noted that the Province is making additional investments and updating a data tool that is used to align the information collected through the Province's permit to take water program to be more consistent with the requirements of the State and Provincial reporting protocols adopted by the Regional Body. Under the Provinces water quantity management review, she reported that after four years of public engagement and extensive review of the Province's water taking policies, programs and science tools, Ontario has now

implemented changes to enhance how water takings are managed in parts of the Province where water availability is or could be concern. She noted that the new changes to Ontario's water taking program include giving municipalities more input into whether water bottling companies can use groundwater in their areas, establishing priorities for water use to help guide decisions about how water should be shared amongst users when there are competing demands for water, putting in place a more flexible approach to assess and manage water takings in areas where water sustainability is a concern, and making water taking available data available to the public. She stated that the new rules come into effect on April 1, 2021. She also noted that at the same time as Ontario's moratorium on new and increase water bottling taking ended.

Ms. Keyes also reported that another significant milestone in Ontario is the signing of a new Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA) on Great Lakes water quality and ecosystem health. On June 21 of this year, she reported that the ninth COA on the Great Lakes regarding water quality ecosystem health came into effect, marking the 50th anniversary of this agreement, which was first signed by Canada and Ontario in 1971. This agreement sets out actions that each level of government will take as they work together to restore and protect and conserve the Great Lakes for the purposes of achieving a healthy, prosperous and sustainable region for present and future generations. The Lakewide Management Annex includes commitments to improve understanding and implementation of adaptive management approaches to outflow regulation strategies for the upper Great Lakes as well as the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River system. This includes enhancing the Province's understanding of water budgets within the Great Lakes basin. The Provinces commitment and agreement recognizes the links between water quality and quantity. For example, through this agreement, Ontario is committed to maintaining Provincial networks for monitoring stream, water quality and quantity, as well as groundwater quality and quantity in the Great Lakes basin. She noted that Ontario has a range of groundwater research underway in the Great Lakes basin to meet the commitments under the new COA, including regional scale groundwater monitoring to predict groundwater levels in a watershed scale, with real time weather forecast data as well as ground and surface water discharge modeling. She reported that the Province also operates seven integrated climate change research monitoring stations throughout the Province. The Province is also investigating plastic capture technology.

And in 2020-21, the Province partnered with Pollution Probe to support the establishment of a Great Lakes plastic cleanup and initiative to collect plastic waste from marinas around the province using innovative plastic capture technologies. She noted that this is the largest initiative of its kind in the world being used to tackle plastic pollution in the Great Lakes and waterways. Ms. Keyes stated that funding from Ontario will allow Pollution Probe to install two types of plastic capture technologies, sea bins and litter traps, to help capture litter and plastic pollution at 10 marinas throughout the Province. She noted that overall there are 25 marinas taking part in the Great Lakes plastic cleanup initiative, which continues to build momentum in the Province. The Great Lakes plastic cleanup initiative was launched in August of 2020, and was founded by the Boating Ontario, the Council of Great Lakes Region, Pollution Probe, Ports Toronto and the University of Toronto trash team. In May of 2020 the Great Lakes plastic cleanup

initiative kicked off their little bins big problems, which is a new campaign to bring awareness to the problems of plastics in the Lake.

### **Pennsylvania**

Mr. Bruno reported that in 2020 the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) began the process of updating the Pennsylvania State Water Plan in accordance with Pennsylvania's Water Resources Planning Act. The process utilizes the water conservation and efficiency program goals to determine if the existing plan reflects the objectives, policies and purposes of the Water Resources Planning Act. He further noted that what it does is it provides provisions to, as necessary to address new priorities, or instead augment those existing ones that are included in the plan. DEP looks to continue this work through 2021 with an ultimate finish in 2022. The Great Lakes Basin sections of this report will receive an update throughout this process including both the basins of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, where the Commonwealth has the Genesee River watershed that enters Pennsylvania.

Secondly, he reported that Pennsylvania participated in a series of events that began in September 2020 that explored water reuse across the United States, and specifically inside of region, with a particular focus on EPA's Region 3 Mid Atlantic States. He stated that the Commonwealth participated with 34 other states' water regulators to share and learn about a range of water reuse issues. This was done in concert with not only US EPA, but the Water Reuse Association and a number of US water administration associations. Pennsylvania contributed to an EPA Region 3 water reuse profile that identified water reuse drivers and barriers within Region 3, including specific activities of the jurisdictions.

Mr. Bruno asked the group to recall that back in January of 2020, Pennsylvania requested of the US members of the Regional Body to provide some answers to a questionnaire regarding their implementation statutes for the Compact and Agreement inside their jurisdictions as well as how they implemented those both through regulatory and permitting standpoints. At this point, Mr. Bruno thanked all of those jurisdictions who provided information back to Pennsylvania, noting the responses were excellent, and that the responses have been used. To that end, Mr. Bruno reported that DEP has a team of policy and legal staff who have been combing through and doing a "compare and contrast" exercise with each of the other States' laws and regulations so that Pennsylvania can then augment its current methods of implementing the Compact in Pennsylvania. It is the hope to have further information coming out of that effort later this year.

Additionally, Mr. Bruno reported that the DEP is preparing its 2020 water use report submission to the Great Lakes Commission as part of its reporting commitments. Coming out of the reporting, Mr. Bruno noted that they are noticing some interesting trends that are likely directly due to changes in use due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He speculated that these are things that likely being seen in the data and statistics in other places around the Great Lakes. Accordingly, he stated that as we move forward over the next six months, it was his hope that that the members might be able to share information and identify some of these trends and issues that will help guide our future use of water

during any types of circumstances that resemble what the States and Provinces have gone through during the course of the pandemic.

At the conclusion of the report, Mr. Wobig stated that he appreciated hearing about how the information the States’ provided to Mr. Bruno was being used, and asked that Mr. Bruno provide a summary of the results of that “compare and contrast” effort. Mr. Bruno responded saying that there may be something of interest that can be put together for the other States.

### **Wisconsin**

Mr. Ambs reported that the City of Waukesha diversion project continues to move forward with an expected completion date in 2023. He noted that in the December, 2020 meeting, he provided an update of the permits received and the permits that were still outstanding. Since the December meeting, he reported that the City of Waukesha received all necessary approvals. He noted that they have also submitted a variety of plans associated with those approvals. He noted that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is working on the final State diversion approval, incorporating the Compact Council diversion approval conditions, and expects to issue the approval at the end of the month. He informed the members that the DNR will notify the Regional Body members and the public when this approval is issued. Information on permits is available on the Wisconsin DNR website’s City of Waukesha page. He stated that Wisconsin DNR representatives are happy to discuss any aspects of the city’s, Wisconsin’s, or City of Waukesha’s diversion approval and implementation further with the interested parties.

Mr. Ambs then reported that on the Village of Somers, which is a small village down in the southeast corner of Wisconsin. The Village of Somers notified the Wisconsin DNR that they have a straddling community diversion application to divert up to 1.2 million gallons per day from the Lake Michigan basin to the Mississippi River basin with return flow to Lake Michigan—the water will just go over the divide but come back through to a system that ultimately returns the water back to Lake Michigan. He reported that the Wisconsin DNR is reviewing the application and has requested additional information from the Village, and after that is complete the DNR will issue a public notice announcing a public comment period and hearing once the DNR has received the additional information from the village. He noted that the agency is carefully considering the new procedures adopted by the Regional Body and Compact Council to be used for diversion applications, and the State will be following all requirements of these procedures with this application.

And then lastly, Mr. Ambs drew the members’ attention to the recently completed central sands lakes study. Specifically, the Wisconsin geological natural history survey conducted a study to evaluate and model the potential impacts of groundwater withdrawals on three lakes in central Wisconsin. These seepage lakes were experiencing significant drawdowns, especially during dry times, as are being experienced right now. The project results and recommendations to the legislature and a recorded presentation on

the study is available on the DNR webpage, and may be of interest to others working on managing high capacity wells and potential impacts to surface waters. Mr. Ambs noted that the report found that two of those three lakes were already overdrawn on the water budget and the third or very close. This study, in conjunction with a court case that is currently before the Wisconsin Supreme Court that looks at the question of whether or not the DNR has the ability to look at the cumulative impacts of high capacity wells and withdrawals on surface waters, will make for some interesting legal decisions and precedents in the state of Wisconsin by the end of this year.

**Administrative reports.**

Ms. Théberge invited Peter Johnson on behalf of the Regional Body’s Secretariat, to give an administrative report. Mr. Johnson reported the following:

- Despite the pandemic over the last year, this last year has been very busy and there is a lot of work that has been ongoing and will be undertaken going forward.
- As you know, over the last year, in the middle of the pandemic, the Regional Body and Compact Council finished off the updates to the Regional Body Procedures, Compact Council Guidance, and the Compact Council’s Rules of Practice and Procedure. In addition to numerous discussions with Tribes, First Nations, Métis, and our Advisory Committee, we held a public feedback session and public comment session and then reached consensus on what the final versions would include. In December the final Regional Body Procedures and Compact Council Guidance amendments were adopted, and in a special meeting held in April, the Compact Council adopted final Rules of Practice and Procedure. Some minor edits were made, including the correcting of typos and adding page numbers to the table of contents, and have been posted to the Compact Council website. A comment and response document is in the final stages of review, and barring something unforeseen, should be posted to the Compact Council and Regional Body websites in the next few weeks.
- Now that we have almost reached the end with the Procedures Updates, we are in a position to more fully focus on Science Strategy implementation and other such activities.
- To date, we’ve hosted several webinars, the recordings of which can all be found on the Compact Council and Regional Body websites. We also hosted another session at this year’s virtual IAGLR, where we had five speakers talking about water budgeting and water balance in one form or another.
- We are now prepping for the next Cumulative Impact Assessment, which has to be done by December 2023, but which we are hoping to get done sooner than that—in 2022. Through it, we’re looking to expand our understanding of impacts, including the effects of changes in the system do to climate change, as well as reduce uncertainty around some of the water budgeting.
- I want to thank in particular the members of the Science Team, and the Co-Chairs—Judith Kirby of Québec, Don Zelazny of New York, and Shaili Pfeiffer of Wisconsin. In particular I want to thank Judith for also Chairing the IAGLR

session and generally working closely with me particularly while Québec serves as Chair of the Regional Body to work through some of the implementation issues.

- On a more esoteric note, we've also done some updates on the Science Strategy layout that should make it easier to share with others, which is something we strongly encourage everyone to do. You can find it on the Regional Body and Compact Council websites under the Science sections.
- On a final note—as you know, today's meetings of the Regional Body and Compact Council are taking place virtually. Normally it's the summer meeting that takes place in person, but for obvious reasons we aren't doing that. Assuming we stay on the current trajectory for the pandemic, we are planning on meeting in person in Québec City this December, and then meeting next summer in Erie, Pennsylvania after Pennsylvania assumes the Chairmanship. This actually works out nicely because Québec City is beautiful in the winter, and if you want to stay over afterwards there is skiing nearby, and Erie is also a beautiful city along the lakefront and with Presque Isle nearby, and that's something you would want to take advantage of in the summer.

Due to technical difficulties, Ms. Théberge was unable to participate in the rest of the meeting, and Mr. Bruno, as Vice-Chair of the Regional Body, served as Chair for the remainder of the meeting

**Opportunity for public comments.**

*Members of the public were given an opportunity to ask questions or provide comments.*

An opportunity was given to the public to provide comments. No comments were provided by the public.

**New business.**

No new business was considered by the Regional Body

**Other business.**

Mr. Bruno closed the meeting by noting that Ms. Théberge would soon be retiring from the Province of Québec. Mr. Bruno offered some reflections and appreciations for the four years that she had served on the Regional Body, the great experiences they had shared, and the important work that had been completed. He noted that Ms. Theberge would be greatly missed.

**Adjourn.**

Draft—For Discussion Purposes Only

A motion was made by Mr. Bruno to adjourn. Mr. Wobig seconded the motion. All members voted in the affirmative, the motion was approved, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:04 p.m. EDT. The next meeting of the Regional Body will be set and noticed at a future date.

The full text of the materials discussed at the meeting is available online at [www.glsregionalbody.org](http://www.glsregionalbody.org).