

The Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) is an integral part of the St. Clair River Remedial Action Plan (RAP).

What is RAP?

The goal of Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) is to restore and protect beneficial uses in these Areas of Concern within the Great Lakes basin. AOCs are geographic areas where human activities have caused, or are likely to cause, impairment of beneficial uses or the area's ability to support aquatic life.

The United States and Canada, in cooperation with state and provincial governments, agreed to develop and implement RAPs in a 1987 protocol to the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. Each RAP is to embody a systematic and comprehensive ecosystem approach to restoring and protecting beneficial uses and serves as an important step toward virtual elimination of persistent toxic substances.

Remedial Action Plans are being developed and implemented at all 42 "Areas of Concern". The mechanisms responsible for the loss of ecological integrity in these areas are identified in the first step of the RAP process. Plans of action are then designed to systematically rejuvenate these areas to a level which meets *both* government and public expectations. These restorative measures use an "ecosystem approach" which considers not only land, air and water degradation, but also the loss or restriction of human uses in the Great Lakes Basin.

Remedial Action Plans are the cumulative, ongoing product of cooperation among federal, provincial, state and local governments and communities. All courses of action must first be ratified through public consultation within the Area of Concern. This sustained interaction between public and government representatives not only stimulates public awareness and education – it is pivotal for the sustained management of a successfully implemented RAP.

What is BPAC?

Public participation is an important and necessary component as it serves to inform the public, improve the plan by gaining information and advice from the public, gain support for plan implementation, and provide a mechanism for accountability to the public. The Binational Public Advisory Council (BPAC) provides a channel for informed and continuous public participation on all aspects of the planning process including: goals, problem identification, planning methodology, public involvement program, technical data remedial action alternatives, plan recommendations, and plan adoption.

Who is on BPAC?

There are 58 positions on BPAC, 29 filled by Canadian representatives and 29 filled by US representatives. The positions represent several sectors in both countries. The sectors include Agriculture, Business and Industry, Citizens-at-Large, Community Groups, Conservation/Environmental Groups, Education, Fishery, Health, Labour, Municipal, Native Peoples, Provincial/State Agencies, Shipping, Tourism and Recreation.

The City of Sarnia has two positions on BPAC. These positions are currently held by Victoria Donohue and Tip Haagsma.

You can find more info on BPAC and RAP from the web site www.friendsofstclair.ca.