



**IJC Science Advisory Board – Science Priority Committee  
Sixty-first Meeting  
Meeting Summary**

**January 23, 2026 – 2:30pm to 4:00pm Eastern Time**

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<b>U.S. Members</b>	<b>Canadian Members</b>	<b>Commission Staff</b>
Lucinda Johnson (Co-Chair)	Mike McKay (Co-Chair)	Matthew Child (Secretary)
Donna Kashian	Jérôme Marty	Jo Werba
Marta Venier	Maggie Xenopoulos	Lyne Sabourin
Jim Hood	Karen Kidd	Breanna Green
Laura Johnson	Nandita Basu	Rachel Wyatt
Margaret Noodin	Katie Stammler	Allison Voglesong Zejnati
	Roy Brouwer	Sommer Abdel-Fattah
		Anna Boegehold
		Tori Agnew-Camiener

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Regrets: Drew Gronewold

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The U.S. Co-Chair opened the meeting, and round table introductions were completed. The October 22, 2025 SPC meeting record was acknowledged.

**2. Ongoing SPC Project Updates**

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Jerome Marty & Margaret Noodin)

A preliminary draft report is nearing completion. The report will summarize findings and insights from the literature review and several Indigenous community engagements, and is intended to be for internal IJC use.

Great Lakes Early Warning System Pilot (Lucinda Johnson)

Case study teams for the aqueous nitrogen and antimicrobial resistance case studies have been meeting regularly and have prepared standard operating procedures (SOP). Based on work group discussions, those SOPs are being built upon to prepare Threat Assessment Reports (TAR) that address a number of components related to each case study topic. A preliminary scoring system is being developed to score each component to ensure consistency across different threat types. An in-person workshop is planned in March, 2026 with the case study teams and additional subject matter experts to critique the draft TARs and scoring system, and discuss opportunities to socialize the GLEWS.

### Great Lakes Science Plan (Jerome Marty & Maggie Xenopoulos)

The initial draft report that the SAB discussed during its October 22, 2025 meeting was revised, and the revised draft was discussed by the project Collaborative at their December 4 meeting with written input received by December 19. The contractor is currently incorporating all input received to prepare a final draft. Concurrently, an Indigenous Knowledge Systems subsection is being prepared by Indigenous partners for inclusion in the report, and a separate summary of Indigenous engagements will be included as an appendix to the report.

The complete final draft Science Plan report will be circulated to the project Collaborative and SAB for 'red flag' review prior to transmittal to the Commission.

At the American Geophysical Union Annual Meeting held in December, 2025 Maggie Xenopoulos gave paper and poster presentations on the Science Plan. The AGU is a very large conference and several people discussed the initiative with Maggie, including several Great Lakes scientists who had not heard about it but were interested in learning more.

It was suggested that the SAB consider giving a Science Plan-related presentation at the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) North America Annual Meeting being held in Montreal in November 2026.

### **3. New Project Work Plans**

#### Outcomes from the December 11, 2025 Advisory Board Appearances

During the December 11, 2025 SPC appearance, Commissioners were briefed on the SPC's Ecosystem Services Valuation Phase 2 project which proposes to estimate the economic value of nutrient mitigation services of coastal wetlands.

During the RCC appearance that followed, Commissioners were briefed on the SAB's Science for Water & Climate Solutions work plan which focuses primarily on wetlands as nature-based solutions. At the end of the RCC appearance, Commissioners signalled that they would like to see the Board think more about rationalizing and aligning the two wetland-related projects. Since the SAB's Solutions work plan is in near final form and will consolidate and improve our understanding of biophysical information gaps to inform the Ecosystem Services Valuation Phase 2 effort, there was general agreement that the Solutions work plan should be prioritized for the next round of work plans.

During the December 11, 2025 Joint Co-Chairs appearance, Commissioners confirmed they want to hold a strategic planning session between Commissioners, Advisory Boards, and advisors to develop priority topics that the Boards can work towards in a coordinated and aligned manner. Staff have prepared a briefing note that Commissioners will consider during their January 29, 2026 Executive Meeting. More information will be provided to the Board in the coming weeks.

#### 2026/27 Work Plans

Three work plans have been under consideration by the SPC for several months or more, and they were each discussed.

- Great Lakes Science Plan Engagement Plan – the work plan proposes to reconstitute the Collaborative, and hire a contractor to support Commissioners, staff and Collaborative

members with engagements with decision-makers and legislators to to explore opportunities and barriers to Science Plan adoption prior to finalizing and formally transmitting the Science Plan to governments.

- De-icing and Salination Work Plan – the work plan proposes a technical synthesis, compilation of available datasets on surface water and groundwater, preparation of screening maps of vulnerable areas, and completion of a high-level risk assessment. In response to a question, it was clarified that watersheds and nearshore areas will be the geographic focus of the project.
- Science for Water & Climate Solutions Work Plan – the work plan proposes to complete a systematic review of literature on wetlands as nature-based solutions and create a database of wetland restoration practitioners and empirical data that quantifies wetland functions to address the critical question of which wetlands to restore, and where in the landscape they will deliver the greatest benefits.

**Action:** Members are invited to provide written input on the work plans by February 6, 2026 to [matthew.child@ijc.org](mailto:matthew.child@ijc.org).

There was consensus amongst SPC members that the three work plans should be finalized and transmitted to Commissioners for approval consideration.

#### 4. Strategic Items

##### Energy/Water Nexus Watching Brief

During the October 22, 2025 SAB meetings, data centers were identified as an emerging issue that would benefit from SAB attention. Since the Water Quality Board is currently consolidating two energy-related Watching Briefs that they have maintained in recent years, there may be synergies and alignment in incorporating energy-intensive data centers into a consolidated Watching Brief. Staff have prepared a draft Watching Brief outline that will be discussed by interested SAB and WQB members in the coming weeks.

In response to a question, it was clarified that Watching Briefs are internal documents that summarize development on an emerging issue, and they can be used to alert the WQB and/or Commission if a concern threshold is reached. It was noted that there is a lot of recent and ongoing analysis related to data centers in the Great Lakes and beyond. It was also noted that a key challenge in developing the Watching Brief will be to carefully scope its focus and content.

##### Work Plan Evaluation Rubric

During the October, 2025 meetings, the SAB preliminarily discuss the pros and cons of formalizing an approach to work plan development and evaluation.

The agenda attachment that contrasted the RCC's 2025 *New Project Identification and Selection Process* document and the GLRO Director's 2023 *Annual Workplan and Project Guidance for GLRO Boards* document was reviewed.

In the discussion that followed it was noted that the upcoming strategic work planning session proposed by Commissioners may provide direction on work plan topics for the coming period. A number of members observed that the existing GLRO Director guidance remains relevant and fairly comprehensive, and it reflects most of what is included in the RCC guidance. Themes that could be

added to strengthen the GLRO Director guidance include ensuring Indigenous engagement, and ensuring consistency with the SAB's enhanced communications plan.

**Action:** Staff will revise the existing GLRO Work Plan guidance to reflect input received.

Triennial Assessment of Progress

The TAP staff team has begun assembling information and content for the 2026 TAP report. The team will be developing an online survey tool to assess Board members' perspectives on select topics. Members will also be asked to provide guidance on some literature reviews.

Members were reminded that information on the Great Lakes Public Forum scheduled for February 4+5, 2026 is included in the agenda packet.

**5. Other Business & Adjournment**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

*Meeting record prepared by Matthew Child and reviewed by Lucinda Johnson and Mike McKay.  
Please forward any errors or omissions to [matthew.child@ijc.org](mailto:matthew.child@ijc.org)*