

**Attachment to Minutes of July 27, 2010 Meeting  
St Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency**

Hello, I'm Luke Dailey, and on behalf of the St. Lawrence Valley Environmental Coalition, I'd like to thank you for giving us this time to present our concerns, views, and ideas on the opportunities for the future of our River and Valley. Our coalition was formed a little over a year ago, by a group of people representing local organizations, agencies, and institutions. Most of our members are volunteers, and have been working for decades on environmental education, protection, conservation, stewardship, remediation, and research. Our common concern was that the environment was not being mentioned or considered in the proposed agreement regarding the reallocation of funds originally designated for the St. Lawrence Aquarium and Ecological Center.

The St. Lawrence Valley Environmental Coalition was created to:

- Advocate for the natural environment;
- Promote the use of a significant portion of the New York Power Authority funds for environmental projects and programs;
- And work cooperatively with other stakeholders to ensure that all projects undertaken will yield the most local economic benefit with the least environmental harm.

In order to accomplish this, we are asking the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency to open their eyes, ears, and minds to some new ideas and realities. We are very pleased that the agency has agreed to draft a strategic plan. However, we are very concerned that projects are already being presented, again behind closed doors, before a strategic plan has been prepared. Our first suggestion is that you prepare and distribute, for public discussion and comment, a strategic plan, as well as instructions for how projects are to be submitted, reviewed, and decided upon. In developing your plan, we hope you will adopt important goals to ensure long term benefits without damaging effects. I'll briefly mention these, and each of our presenters will explain and give examples of projects that meet both goals of economic opportunity and environmental sustainability.

The first is to correct past abuses of our environment. The Coalition feels that remediating contaminated sites and restoring damaged lands and waters should be a high priority, so as to return these areas and resources to a healthy and productive condition. As a 20 year member of the Massena Remedial Advisory Committee, I will address this topic with a few examples in a few moments. I'll be followed by Coalition member Pete Skomsky, who is also a member of the County Environmental Management Council. Pete will share some of his insights into habitat rehabilitation and environmental enhancement issues.

The second is to protect natural resources that are vital to our social and economic well being. We feel that aggressive action should be taken now to conserve resources such as our rich and productive farmland and forests, our diverse wetlands that are so important to fish and wildlife, and our beautiful and recreationally significant rivers and lakes. Representatives from the St. Lawrence Land Trust, including Board President Erika Barthelmess, and Vice President Tom Langen, will give a brief presentation on the Land Trust's Grasse River Conservation Initiative.

The third is to promote economic development. We feel that all new development should be sustainable, located and designed to be in harmony with the environment, and should be approached in a comprehensive manner, encompassing everything from farming and education to small business and industry. Former County Planning Director Richard Grover, who is also one of the founding members of the Coalition, will give a brief presentation on economic development opportunities arising from outdoor education, recreation, and conservation projects. In addition, local businessman Don Lucas will share information from his eco-tourism enterprise... Muskie Magic.

I'll begin with the activity I'm most familiar with- the remediation of contaminated sites. I've lived here for 33 years. For 20 of those, I've served on the Remedial Advisory Committee for the St. Lawrence River-Massena Area of Concern. Mandated by the International Joint Commission, this group monitors the

restoration of beneficial uses that have been lost or diminished, due to industrial and other uses. The "Massena Area of Concern" is one of 43 designated in the Great Lakes Basin as having the most serious environmental problems, and includes sections of the St. Lawrence, Grasse, and Raquette Rivers. Since 1987, through the Remedial Action Plan, federal and New York State Superfund programs, much of this waste has been removed, though some sites are still contaminated, and the remedial options for those are currently under consideration.

Although it should NEVER be used as a reason to allow industrial contamination, remediation efforts are a form of economic development. The cleanups in Massena have cost over 1 BILLION dollars so far. Yes, billion with a capital B. That's a lot of jobs- removing sand and gravel, jobs for truck drivers, laborers, heavy equipment operators, hazmat workers, surveyors, materials labs, biologists, and many other associated occupations. Of course, some of the money has gone to lawyers and "outside consultants", and I can't give you any figures on how much actually was spent on local payrolls.

Massena is not the only "River Town" that has had a superfund project. The "Sealand Restoration Site" in the town of Lisbon is another example. This was a state permitted landfill, where types of waste NOT in the permit were deposited. Some came from the 1976 oil spill in the St. Lawrence River. Thirty Four years later, it is just now being reclassified as a site that no longer presents a significant threat to public health and/or the environment. However, property owners are still required to maintain the remedial systems and are prohibited from using groundwater in the immediate vicinity. This site cost over 15 Million dollars to remediate- only \$754,000 was recovered from 4 of the 22 identified "responsible parties". A similar situation occurred at General Motors in Massena, where a company leased an unused building, contaminated the site, and was "MIA" when it came time to pay for the clean up.

So this is the downside of industrial economic development- unfortunate "accidents", insolvent companies, and "hit and run" incidents. From my long term involvement with the process in Massena, I am well aware of the time, expense, and difficulties involved, once an industrial site becomes contaminated. My personal reason for being here tonight, for attending meetings for 20 years, and for helping form our Coalition, is to prevent these kinds of problems in the future. It concerns me deeply, that in a rush to create jobs at any cost, you may lose what brought some of us here, and keeps others here- the natural beauty and resources of our area.

As you draw up the procedures for this agency, please consider policies requiring thorough investigation of environmental histories, and environmental liability insurance for applicants. Please support full remediation of problem areas, do not succumb to pressure to ignore them or use "quick and cheap fixes"- which just delay the real cost to a later date. There are at least three good reasons to insist on complete clean ups:

- To permanently remove the threat to public health and the environment;
- To create more jobs than a less thorough remediation;
- To enable the site to be used for other purposes in the future.

Thank you for your time, now we can move from problems we need to overcome and avoid, to possibilities and opportunities we can consider.

In conclusion, what we are asking of the St. Lawrence River Valley Redevelopment Agency:

- A- Accept new realities- this is no longer a 1950's economy.
- B- Broaden your vision to include other options and types of economic development;
- C- Create a plan;
- D- Develop a process for applicants and projects;
- E- Expand and invite more agencies, local business people, non-profits and the public to give their ideas.