

INFORMATION AND CONSENT LETTER

Title of the study: Monitoring in the Grand-Erie Interface: Developing a framework for the lower Grand River and nearshore Lake Erie in consideration of cumulative effects

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To help you make an informed decision regarding your participation, this letter will explain what the study is about, the possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a research participant. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask one of the investigators prior to consenting to the study.

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a research study about surface water monitoring in the lower Grand River and the nearshore area of Lake Erie (e.g., the Grand-Erie Interface, or GEI). The purpose of this study is to assess opportunities to strengthen water monitoring, incorporate cumulative effects, and improve data-decision-making integration in the GEI. There are national, provincial, and local demands for strengthening current monitoring efforts, including new or recent mandates for increased collaboration and for consideration of cumulative effects. However, collaboration across monitoring partners remains limited, implementation of cumulative effects assessment and monitoring remains a challenge, and the use of monitoring data in decision-making is inconsistent.

This study is being undertaken as part of my PhD research. I plan to combine my literature and document review of international best practices and Canadian case studies with perspectives shared by Key Informants (e.g., interviewees). In addition to Key Informant interviews, I plan to engage with the public to assess a current list of valued ecosystem components that may guide future monitoring activities in the GEI.

I. Your responsibilities as a participant

What does participation involve?

Participation in the study will consist of completing a brief (5-minute) online questionnaire and taking part in a face-to-face interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to allow the researcher to review the interview at any time during the study. Audio recordings will not be shared.

The questions I will ask will be determined by your online questionnaire, and may include your insights on implementing cumulative effects, what strengths and weaknesses of current monitoring efforts are, and/or how to ensure data that emerge from monitoring programs are better used in decision-making. For example, what do you feel makes a monitoring program successful? What are your recommendations for implementing cumulative effects assessment and monitoring? What is the role of data derived from monitoring programs in decision-making?

Who may participate in the study?

To participate as a Key Informant in this study you must be at least 18 years of age, and have extensive knowledge or expertise of cumulative effects, water monitoring, and/or decision-making related to the natural environment/water resources/fisheries.

II. Your rights as a participant

Is participation in the study voluntary?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any of the survey or interview questions at any time by not submitting your responses or by requesting to skip the question. Further, you may decide to end the survey at any time by closing your browser and you may decide to end the interview at any time by simply advising me of this decision.

Will I receive anything for participating in the study?

There is no remuneration for participation in this study. However, if expenses (e.g., public transit, gas, parking) are incurred for the interview, they will be reimbursed.

What are the possible benefits of the study?

The synthesis of insights from experienced Key Informants provides a valuable resource that you (as an interviewee) and others can use to enhance your/their knowledge and strategies in aquatic monitoring, management, and decision-making. As such, the collective participation of Key Informants will create a valued resource that may influence present or future theory and practice locally, regionally, and/or nationally. If you are a current end user of this research, you will have the added benefit of receiving guidance – through the interview synthesis report – from leaders in the fields of monitoring, cumulative effects, and related decision-making, which may be beneficial in your current work or research.

What are the risks associated with the study?

Please be advised that when information is transmitted over the internet privacy cannot be guaranteed. There is always a risk your responses may be intercepted by a third party (e.g., government agencies, hackers). University of Waterloo practices are to turn off functions that collect machine identifiers such as IP addresses. The host of the system collecting the data for the online questionnaire, Survey Monkey, may collect this information without our knowledge and make this accessible to us. We will not use or save this information without your consent.

Will my information be kept confidential?

If you do not wish to be identified, your participation will be considered confidential. Your name will not be included in any report or publication resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Alternatively, you may choose to be identified,

and your data (e.g. quotations) will be directly attributed to your name in reports and publications resulting from this research. If you give permission to be quoted, you will have the opportunity to review and approve your quotations. Once all interview data is collected and analyzed, a synthesis report summarizing the perspectives of all participants will be shared with you.

Data collected through the questionnaire will be password protected and erased permanently once your customized list of questions has been determined. All other data collected for this study will be stored for a minimum of three years on a password protected laptop. Only researchers associated with this study will have access to these records. All records will be destroyed according to University of Waterloo policy.

III. Questions, comments, or concerns

Who is sponsoring/funding this study?

This study is partly supported by the Lake Futures project (under Global Water Futures) at the University of Waterloo.

Has the study received ethics clearance?

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE# 23008). If you have questions for the Committee contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or ore-ceo@uwaterloo.ca.

Who should I contact if I have questions regarding my participation in the study?

If you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact Elaine Ho by email at e23ho@uwaterloo.ca. You may also contact my supervisor or co-supervisor. My Supervisor is Dr. Andrew Trant, who can be reached at 519-888-4567 x30385 or at atrant@uwaterloo.ca. My co-supervisor is Dr. Simon Courtenay, who can be reached at 519-888-4567 x35796 or at simon.courtenay@uwaterloo.ca.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



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Please find the consent form on the following page.

CONSENT FORM

By providing your consent, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

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I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study conducted by Elaine Ho, under the supervision of Dr. Simon Courtenay and Dr. Andrew Trant, School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask questions related to the study and have received satisfactory answers to my questions and any additional details.

I was informed that participation in the study is voluntary and that I can withdraw this consent by informing the researcher.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee (ORE# 23008). If you have questions for the Committee contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics, at 1-519-888-4567 ext. 36005 or oreceo@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions contact Elaine Ho at e23ho@uwaterloo.ca.

___ I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis, presentation or publication that comes from this research, with my review and approval prior to use.

___ I agree to the use of direct quotations attributed to me, in any thesis, presentation or publication that comes from this research, with my review and approval prior to use.

___ I permit the researcher to audio record the interview to ensure the information I provide is accurately captured (e.g., for writing an interview transcript). No other use of this recording is permitted.

By signing this Consent Form, I agree of my own free will to participate in this study.

Participant's name: _____ Date: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness' signature*: _____ Date: _____

* *Witness can be the researcher.*