



Thames, Sydenham & Region - Source Water Protection Update

Issue 3, August 2006

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This newsletter provides regular updates on progress on source water protection in the Thames, Sydenham & Region.

For more information on any of the articles or to receive future issues, please contact Debra Kirk, Administrative Assistant, (519) 451-2800 Ext. 223 E-mail: kirkd@thamesriver.on.ca.

With second reading of the legislation we enter the next phase which focuses on the Standing Committee and the run up to third and final reading of the bill.

The Purpose of the Clean Water Act

The purpose of the Act is to protect existing and future sources of drinking water. Government, residents, businesses, First Nations and other stakeholders from various sectors are reminded that protecting water sources in Ontario is critical to the health of residents in communities right across Ontario, whether they are rural or urban-based. That was the finding of the Walkerton Inquiry and that is what Justice Dennis O'Connor called on Conservation Authorities, Municipalities, landowners and government to do.

Hearing Dates for the Clean Water Act

The Standing Committee on Social Policy scheduled hearing dates for the Clean Water Act, during the week of August 21-25, 2006 in Walkerton, Toronto, Peterborough, Bath and Cornwall. Conservation Ontario requested to be included on the list of speakers in Toronto. One hundred presentations were heard.

The Standing Committee will be accepting all written submissions. It is suggested that submissions be very specific about the issue/concern within the draft legislation and that specific recommendations on how the legislation should be amended be provided.

Source Protection Committee Selection

The Clean Water Act establishes a process where Municipalities and watershed stakeholders will develop the source protection plan through the Source Protection Committee. Local control will ensure that plan recommendations are reasonable and

supportable. Through the Clean Water Act, the development of Source Water Protection Plans will be completed under the direction of a Source Water Committee. The Chair of the Committee will be appointed by the Province based on local recommendations from Conservation Authorities.

It is important that the selection of the recommended candidates for Chair and for the Source Protection Committee be an open process that is easily understood and is accessible to all in our region. The Conservation Authorities in our region will be consulting with stakeholders as to what process should be followed to select Committee members and a Chair. This was one of the points discussed at a series of workshops last fall and it is anticipated to be the topic of discussion at a future Municipal workshop after draft regulations outlining the process are available.

Municipal Technical Studies

In December, the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) announced a program to fund Municipal and Conservation Authority technical studies for Source Water Protection. Many projects were submitted across the region as partnerships between the Municipalities and the Conservation Authorities. In our region, projects related to groundwater vulnerability and threats within well head protection areas were approved by the MOE. These included projects in the Municipalities within the geographic areas of Perth, Middlesex, and Oxford Counties.

Projects on Surface water vulnerability were deferred by the MOE. The Conservation Authorities have been working with the MOE to get agreements in place so that these programs can proceed as soon as possible. These projects include vulnerability assessments in intake protection zones associated with the great lakes intakes in the region.

The proposed projects are partnerships between multiple Municipalities and Conservation Authorities. Two of these projects have been proposed to include intakes in Municipalities in the Essex Region Conservation Authority due to the similar nature of the sources of the intakes.

Further rounds of requests for grant proposals are expected this year. It will be necessary to submit proposals for groundwater systems not involved in the work already underway. It will also be necessary to undertake threats inventories in the intake protection zones identified through the surface water vulnerability projects discussed above. As with the previous grants we expect that the province will be providing full (100%) funding for these projects. We look forward to discussing these projects with the Municipalities.

Technical Guidance Updates

The Province has posted draft guidance modules which would guide much of the technical work associated with source water protection if the Clean Water Act is approved. Although posted in June, most of these modules indicate an April version on the cover page which has been revised since the modules were first posted.

These modules provide the basis for the technical studies discussed above. It is anticipated that many of these modules, especially those related to water quantity, will undergo further revisions prior to being finalized. Revisions are anticipated in September. We encourage people to become familiar with the nature of the work described in these modules. Links to current modules are available from our Source Protection web site: www.sourceprotection.on.ca under the links section.

The Conservation Authorities welcome the opportunity to discuss these guidance modules and the technical work they describe with the Municipalities. It will be important to discuss how best to prepare for undertaking the work and what portions exist for carrying out the work. It will be necessary for the Source Protection Committee to determine who will be responsible for undertaking this work as part of the development of their terms of reference. The partnerships being established to undertake the above noted projects illustrate the types of arrangements which are possible to prepare for developing Source Protection Plans. Future work such as undertaking the technical work

behind risk assessment will require even more collaboration to determine the best way to complete the work in each well head protection area and intake protection zone. We look forward to discussing this with the Municipalities in the

First Nations and Source Protection

First Nations communities are being encouraged by the Canadian Government to develop Source Water Protection Plans for their drinking water systems. Environment Canada is developing a guide designed to aid Operating Authorities of water systems in First Nations Communities to develop Source Water Protection Plans. It will be important for both First Nations and Conservation Authorities to participate with stakeholders (including: the Province, local Municipalities, etc.) in the development and implementation of Source Water Protection Plans.

As facilitators working with our local Municipalities helping to develop a Source Water Protection Plan, we contacted First Nations communities in our source protection region to let them know that ongoing scientific research and information is available pertaining to the Thames, Sydenham and Region.

The following First Nations Communities are within the proposed Thames, Sydenham and Region Source Protection region:

- Chippewas of Aamjiwnaang (Sarnia)
- Chippewas of Kettle & Stony Point
- Munsee-Delaware Nation
- Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island)
- Chippewas of the Thames
- Oneida Nation of the Thames
- Delaware First Nation (Moravian of the Thames)
- Caldwell First Nation

Presentations

An important part of the planning process is public and agency participation. In the early stages, this is involving presentations and meetings held or attended by Conservation Authority staff.

If you would like more information or would like a presentation, please contact your local Conservation Authority:

- Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority (519) 354-7310
- St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (519) 245-3710
- Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (519) 451-2800

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