

Thames, Sydenham & Region - Source Water Protection Update January 2007

In this issue:

- Grants for Technical Studies
- Clean Water Act Passed
- Selection of Chair and Committee
- Sector Forums

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.

Grants For Technical Studies

The Ministry of the Environment (MOE) has announced a request for grant proposals from municipalities and conservation authorities. The request is for proposals to undertake technical studies related to Source Water Protection of municipal drinking water sources. This work will be summarized across the watersheds in the Watershed Assessment Report which the Clean Water Act requires to be completed in the Source Protection Region.

Proposals are due December 15. More information on the request is available from the MOE website. Revised guidance documents are also available on the MOE website. A link to the grant proposal page and the Guidance Documents is included on our Source Water Protection website at www.sourcewaterprotection.on.ca

The Thames, Sydenham & Region and its partner municipalities have been successful in receiving grants based on proposals deferred in the previous round. These include projects to delineate Intake Protection Zones in the Great Lakes and connecting channels. We will be working with our partner municipalities to submit proposals to undertake threats inventories within the vulnerable areas in the watershed as well as completing the groundwater threats inventories initiated last year through this program.

Clean Water Act Passed

Following a series of public hearings, the Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Environment, has passed the Clean Water Act (Bill 43) to provide for a mechanism to ensure a safe and dependable supply

of drinking water through municipal drinking water systems throughout the province. The act delivers on 12 of Justice O'Connor's recommendations resulting from the judicial inquiry into the Walkerton tainted water tragedy. It ensures communities are able to protect their municipal drinking water supplies through developing collaborative, locally driven, science-based protection plans.

Community Driven

The Clean Water Act requires communities to identify potential risks to local water sources and take action to reduce or eliminate these risks. The act will better protect the quantity and quality of water in aquifers, rivers and lakes, including the Great Lakes. The legislation is rooted in the Walkerton Inquiry's recommendations that Ontario needs multiple barriers to protect drinking water starting with protecting the sources.

For the first time, communities will be required to create and carry out a plan to protect the sources of their municipal drinking water supplies. The Clean Water Act will:

- Require local communities to look at the existing and potential threats to their water and set out and implement the actions necessary to reduce or eliminate significant threats.
- Empower communities to take action to prevent threats from becoming significant.
- Require public participation on every local source protection plan. This means everyone in the community gets a chance to contribute to the planning process.
- Require that all plans and actions are based on sound science.

Framework for Success

This legislation is designed to promote voluntary initiatives but does require mandatory action where needed. The legislation sets out a basic framework for communities to follow in developing an approach to protecting their water supplies that works for them:

- Identify and assess risks to the quality and quantity of drinking water sources and decide which risks are significant and need immediate action, which need monitoring to ensure they do not become significant, or which pose a low or negligible risk.
- Develop a source protection plan that sets out how the risks will be addressed. Broad consultation will involve municipalities, conservation authorities, property owners, farmers, industry, businesses, community groups, public health officials, First Nations and the public in coming up with workable, effective solutions.
- Carry out the plan through existing land use planning and regulatory requirements or approvals, or voluntary initiatives. Activities that pose a significant risk to drinking water sources may be prohibited or may require a site specific risk management plan. This plan will set out the measures that a property owner will take to ensure the activity is no longer a threat.
- Stay vigilant through ongoing monitoring and reporting to measure the effectiveness of the actions taken to protect drinking water sources and ensure they are protected in the future.

source: Backgrounder, Ontario's New Clean Water Act: Why we need it, how it will work

Selection of Chair and Committee

Subject to regulations and consultation with our stakeholders, we are proposing that a selection committee be formed. In compliance with the legislation, names will be submitted to the Minister of the Environment for consideration for the position of Chair. The Chair will be an appointment by the Minister. Following the selection of the Chair, names will be sought to fill positions on the Source Protection Committee. Candidates can be nominated by the various stakeholder groups within the region or individuals may put their name forward. An evaluation

of submitted names would be followed by an interview process to select the committee members. We look forward to discussing the process for committee formation with stakeholders at upcoming forums.

We Want to Hear From You

Opportunities for involvement go beyond the committee and can include participation with working groups and sector forums. Individual questions and/or comments are also welcome. If you would like to be included on our mailing list, be sure to contact Debra Kirk, Administrative Assistant (519) 451-2800 Ext. 223 E-mail: kirkd@thamesriver.on.ca.

Sector Forums

We are preparing for sector forums over the next 6 months. At these forums, we will be discussing the committee formation process and potential representation options with stakeholder groups. We will also be presenting the water budget work underway. We look forward to getting input from agriculture and other stakeholders at these forums.

For more information including MOE backgrounders, press releases and links to the legislation visit www.sourcewaterprotection.on.ca

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

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