

Meeting Notes

Vermilion River Stewardship, GSWA and Conservation Sudbury

Protection of Private Water Intakes

Friday, 22 March 2013, 2:30 to 3:30 pm

Present: Lin Gibson, Nels Conroy, Paul Sajatovic, Lesley Flowers and Linda Heron

This meeting was called in response to an email from The Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of Environment, dated 29 January 2013 – Addendum 1. This was in response to an enquiry by Stephen Butcher, as Chair of GSWA (enquiry letter not available).

Vermilion River Stewardship (VRS) wrote to Conservation Sudbury (CS) on 4 January 2012 in regards to water quality issues after a 2011 Blue-green Algae outbreak on the Vermilion River, and we subsequently met to discuss possible remedies, including inclusion of private water intakes under the Clean Water Act. At that time CS informed VRS that there were ongoing discussions with MOE and that more information would be forthcoming.

On 15 February 2013, another Blue-green Algae bloom was reported on Ella Lake, on the Vermilion River system. This algae bloom was first noticed in November of 2012, and has persisted to this day.

Notes:

- MOE identified problem with the City wells.
- Municipality was given the option of clusters of 5 or more private systems in Skead to be covered under the Clean Water Act (CWA)
 - CS cautioned the City of Sudbury about going this route
 - Unsure of funding to City
 - City decided against it
 - Looked at alternatives to protect the source
- Village of Trout Creek, Mattawa managed to be included under the CWA
 - It was such an expensive undertaking for taxpayers that they petitioned to be taken out of protection – once you have it you can't go back
 - Must monitor every year
 - Town policies must diminish the threats – must take action against threats
 - 15% of population draw water from private intakes
- Minister Bradley didn't think the CEA was the right vehicle for our situation
- Climate change is addressed in the new PPS - encouraging

Other Tools:

- Lake Simcoe Act – Sudbury Watershed Act
 - Similar type of Act may be what we want in Sudbury
 - Sudbury has so many lakes, would need to be addressed under a watershed approach
 - May be difficult to get a separate Act for Sudbury watershed
- Watershed and sub-watershed planning
 - MOE & MNR are moving integrated watershed management ahead
 - Watershed based project planning
- Hutchinson's Capacity Report will be the cornerstone for the City of Sudbury Official Plan
 - Has good support from the City planners
- Mandatory septic inspection
 - Would be facilitated by an Act
 - Muskoka private septic systems are inspected every 2 years – an anomaly
- Look at other provinces for different models
- Talk to John Gunn for recommendations
- GSWA should take this to Committee to pursue permanent solutions

Addendum 1

From: Minister, MOE (ENE) [<mailto:Minister.moe@ontario.ca>]

Sent: January-29-13 3:18 PM

To: butchersm@bell.net

Cc: Bartolucci_Rick-MPP-CO; fgelinas-co@ndp.on.ca

Subject: protecting Sudbury's water sources

ENV1283MC-2011-3744

Dear Mr. Butcher:

Thank you for your email about the Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance's recommendations to help protect Sudbury's water sources.

The province has provided funding through the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program to the Nickel District Conservation Authority to implement a cyanobacteria monitoring program on Ramsey Lake, a drinking water source for Sudbury. This program allowed for two years of information gathering and monitoring that will increase the understanding of the issue of blue-green algae blooms in Ramsey Lake. The program has also provided education and outreach to citizens in the watershed on how to identify cyanobacteria. This included methods to reduce the potential for algal growth and best management practices such as septic system maintenance contributing to the local drinking water source protection efforts for Ramsey Lake.

In addition, there is a response protocol in place when algal blooms are reported. Samples of algae in the bloom are analyzed to identify potential toxin-producing species, and we work closely with the local Medical Officer of Health to ensure the health of Ontarians.

The Ministry of the Environment and the Nickel District Conservation Authority are partners in monitoring the surface water quality of rivers and streams in the Sudbury region as part of the ministry's Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network. Surface water samples are collected from nine rivers and streams on an almost monthly basis during the ice-free season by the Conservation Authority. The ministry's laboratories conduct tests to determine levels of nutrients and metals. Raw data from 2002 to 2009 are available on the ministry's website.

Regarding your recommendation to include households which are not served by municipal systems in source water protection planning, under the *Clean Water Act, 2006* (the Act) municipalities have the option to include other drinking water systems, including clusters of private systems, through a municipal resolution, and some have elected to do so. Before municipalities elect to bring other types of drinking water systems in under the Act, they may first want to consider other tools available to them to

protect these systems. As a result of work done under the Act, municipalities have information on the vulnerability of drinking water sources for all types of systems. Many are using this information to update their official plans to protect other vulnerable sources of drinking water from future land uses. They can also implement programs such as septic system inspection programs as a best management practice for areas that fall outside the scope of the Act.

Regarding your suggestion to conduct a study on the effects of the City of Greater Sudbury sewage treatment plant effluent loadings on lakes and rivers, ministry staff regularly inspects all of the 12 sewage treatment plants that provide services for city residents. Inspections determine compliance with approval and policy requirements. Scientists indicate that the relationships between effluent loadings and algal blooms are complex as multiple factors contribute to the frequency and location of algal blooms. For instance, in 2011, three out of nine algal blooms reported and confirmed for the Sudbury area occurred at water bodies without sewage treatment plant discharges. These were Bethel, Ramsey and Long Lake.

I hope you find this information helpful. Again, thank you for bringing the concerns of the Greater Sudbury Watershed Alliance to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Bradley

Minister