



A NEWSLETTER FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS
 March 2009

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Do Wetlands in the Rideau Valley Reduce Flooding?

YES THEY DO! According to wetland theory, and now according to scientific research on the wetlands of the Rideau Valley itself, wetlands reduce downstream flooding by storing water for a certain time after a period of heavy rain or snowmelt. As a result of that water storage in wetlands, downstream flooding is less severe.

Hydrologists at the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) have just finished an in-house study and report called "Quantifying the Importance of Wetlands in the Management of Floods and Droughts in the Rideau Valley Watershed".

They estimate that all wetlands in the watershed probably reduce the 1:100 year flood by roughly 10%!

WETLAND NUMBERS

- 15% of the Rideau Valley area is wetland (9% protected as PSWs; 6% not protected as non-PSWs)
- all wetlands provide 10% reduction in flood risk in the Rideau Valley
- 4% increase in flood flow locally with loss of non-PSWs

Using numerical modelling techniques, RVCA scientists were able to quantify the potential cumulative effect of the loss of wetlands on peak flow discharges and minimum dry weather flows at selected locations within the watershed. It was found that flood risk would increase if wetlands are removed or lost. The water storage function of the wetland would no longer be available.



We are fortunate that about 15% of the Rideau Valley watershed consists of wetlands. Many jurisdictions in Ontario have much smaller numbers. Of the total 15% of wetlands in the Rideau Valley, 9% are already protected under the provincial status of Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs). The remaining 6% are locally significant wetlands or non-evaluated wetlands (non-PSWs) and are not currently protected by RVCA or provincial regulations.

RVCA's analysis further revealed that the 1:100 year flood flow would increase by about 4% locally across the watershed with the loss of all non-PSWs in the valley. The impact of wetland storage and flood attenuation gradually diminishes downstream from the wetland location. The full report is available on the RVCA website www.rvca.ca.

Flood reduction, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, water cleaning service, water recharge to aquifers...the evidence is mounting that wetlands in the Rideau Valley provide some major, cost-effective services for people and municipalities in this watershed.

RVCA Client Satisfaction Survey

Over the next three months, EKOS Research Associates will be asking many of RVCA's clients and partners about how we can improve service. This modest investment in the people side of the conservation business will result in a plan to adjust our way of doing business to provide better service to our municipalities, shoreline landowners and the farming community.

Interviewees will be selected by the consultant from a long list of potential respondents in each category. If you are approached by EKOS about this survey, we urge you to please make the time to talk to them about RVCA and our business with your municipality, group or family. The goal is to make our conservation products and services better suited to your needs. We expect the final report at the end of June.

Kemptville Creek Flood Maps

Updated and extended flood plain mapping on Kemptville Creek and its tributaries will shortly be available for viewing and use by municipal staff and the public. The maps show the areas along the creek that are subject to flood hazards where development will be discouraged because of expected high water at certain times of the year.

The new maps cover the entire length of Kemptville Creek from the Elizabethtown-Kitley township line downstream to the confluence with the Rideau River north of Kemptville including the entire North Branch and Barnes Creek.

The new mapping was approved by the RVCA Board of Directors in March paving the way for use by RVCA and municipal staff in defining areas that are subject to flooding along the waterway and in the process of updating Official Plans and Zoning Schedules.

The Final Report and new maps are available from the RVCA website (www.rvca.ca; Watershed Information System; Flood Risk) after April 14.

Emerald Ash Borer

The three Conservation Authorities serving Ottawa have been invited to sit on a City of Ottawa Task Force to deal with the pending threat of an invasive insect called the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) which was found in Ottawa last summer (infected packing material is the suspected vector). It is slowly spreading from the northern US and southwestern Ontario and there is no way to stop it at the moment. The goal is to slow its progress and give time for research and natural predators to catch up.

The Task Force is proposing a balanced program of defensive work such as preparing for the regulation of wood product transport, tree removal and disposal (from City property), tree injection research, proactive tree planting and a large public communications effort.

The scientists tell us that about 25% of Ottawa's tree cover (both urban and rural) is made up of ash trees. Other municipalities may be similar in forest composition. Ash species are very common in rural woodlots, fencerows and riparian buffers.

The EAB attacks all kinds of ash indiscriminately. The eventual loss of millions of trees would have a large economic, social and environmental effect on the watershed.

A Ministerial Order (from the federal Minister of Agriculture) is expected soon prohibiting (like others already in effect in southwestern Ontario) the movement of specific materials including trees, nursery stock, logs, lumber, wood packaging, wood or bark, wood chips or bark chips of the genus *Fraxinus* (ash) as well as firewood of all species from within the City to points outside the City without prior permission from the CFIA. Transporting of firewood has been identified as the major vector causing new outbreaks of this pest.

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