

Rideau Lakes Watershed Plan – Public Advisory Committee Meeting Two
Thursday Jan. 26, 2006, 10:00
Rideau Canal Office Boardroom, Smiths Falls

Minutes

Present: Lynn Preston, RVCA
Doug Moore, Maple Crest, Rideau Ferry
Maggie Leach, Bass Lake
Anne Bradly, Upper Rideau Lake
Bob Bradly, Rural Leeds 2000
Peter Au, Rideau Roundtable
Mary Hegan, Rideau Round Table
Norman Peterson, Upper Rideau Lake
Allan McCallum, Rideau Lake
Nick Stow, Gartner Lee Ltd.
Pat Chamberlain, Big Rideau Lake Association
Sheanna Tinlin, RVCA

Regrets: Brian Alley, Bass Lake
Ann Brown
David Brown
Ted Joynt, Smiths Falls
John Stenson
Ruth Stenson
Chris Canning
Pamela Jones
Sarah Cooke, Smiths Falls

1. Welcome and Introductions

Lynn welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Public Advisory Committee of the Rideau Lakes Watershed Plan and noted that the group was growing in number. Everyone introduced him or herself and gave a brief account of why they were there.

2. Activities since last meeting (Nov. 14, 2005)

Lynn emphasized the importance of the PAC in providing public input into watershed management plans then recapped key points of the last PAC meeting, including:

- The development of a press release after each meeting
 - A request was made for the names and contact information for each media outlet to whom the press release is sent for follow-up by PAC members
 - Sheanna agreed to get back the group with results of who carried the media release in December

- The release of PAC member contact information to the public as links to information about the watershed plan.
 - New member Pat Chamberlain added her name to the list.
- A request was made that a list of names and contact information for members of both the PAC and TAC be released to PAC members and that minutes be put on the RVCA website
- A member of the PAC had not yet been selected to sit on the TAC

Lynn explained that the TAC met in December to review the Goals and Objectives (G&O) of the plan and upon review, the TAC agreed that the “Issues” listed would be better categorized as “Topic Areas” with more specific issues listed under each topic area. No changes have been made to the G&O document since the TAC meeting. Lynn pointed out that the municipalities are too busy to come to the meetings and that she would bring the information to them for comment.

3. Goals and Objectives

Lynn explained the purpose of the meeting was to review and comment on the Goals and Objectives (G&O) (previously circulated) and made reference to the G&O background information document which described how to lay out the objectives of a watershed plan. Mary suggested that the group review the Vision Statement as she found some disconnect with the G&O and wanted to ensure it was kept in mind during the discussion. Key words to be considered include ‘stewardship’ and ‘working together’.

Norman felt that the word ‘steward’ needed to be defined – Who are the stewards? Who are the key players?

Anne felt that the group needed to keep in mind the original ideas identified at the public meetings and ensure they were addressed in the G&O. Maggie reported that she recognized ideas from the public meetings reflected in the G&O. Lynn suggested bringing the summary of the public meetings to the next PAC meeting.

The topic areas were covered by the group sequentially and the recommendations and suggestions were documented. See modified Goals and Objectives table (attached) and other related suggestions below.

A. Surface Water Quality

Peter suggested that potential hotspots need to be identified (e.g. a waste management facility on a tributary).

Nick stated the need to set measures and targets in the objectives.

Peter felt that a public action protocol be described to inform the public of proper procedure for reporting activities that threaten water quality (e.g. dumping). Mary felt this was covered under governance.

Pat felt that septic systems need to be addressed as a working objective in either or both surface and ground water quality. Discussion about current programs and obstacles to re-inspection programs suggested a working objective (which is really an action) which included the documentation of present septic re-inspection programs, education programs and funding sources needed to be added to the list. A recommended action was the environmental assessment of any property prior to being put on the market.

Mary suggested adding a working objective to ‘acquire baseline information on public perceptions of water quality (and other issues)’ and that these perceptions need to be linked to the hard science and used as a baseline from which to develop awareness, education programs, governance, etc. She suggested this objective be added under each topic area rather than lumped under education.

The group agreed that some of the objectives were more like actions (although still important to mention as objectives) and that an additional column of ‘Working Objectives’ should be added.

Maggie felt that education was missing from the ‘Surface Water Quality’ Objectives. Lynn said it was likely that all education components will be lumped under the Topic Area of ‘Education’ since each topic area has an education component.

Mary suggested adding a topic area for ‘Hotspots’ to identify priorities and describe why they were included. The word hotspot implies a specific geographic point so ‘stressors on the health of the ecosystem’ was suggested. As baseline information on the lakes and tributaries is collected, it can be used to identify these stressors.

Nick brought up the need to understand the watershed and the inter-relationships within it such as water quantity, water quality, biodiversity and socio-economic features. He suggested the development of a conceptual model to help communicate these ideas and understand how the watershed works. This model could be very important when developing the education component to each topic area. The idea will be presented to the TAC.

B. Water Levels

Maggie wanted to know who controls the water levels and what influenced how they determined water levels. Allan confirmed that beavers were not really an issue in the upper watershed.

Peter suggested making the link between water levels and climate change.

Mary recommended the action of identifying all factors considered when regulating water levels i.e. not just water levels for navigation in the system. As well, the need to assess the current and future effects of these water levels on the ecosystem should be explored.

C. Fisheries populations, diversity, sustainability and role in economy

The question came up whether to include fisheries populations as an objective or limit the watershed plan to dealing with fish habitat. Doug did not feel that a watershed plan should deal with populations – let the experts deal with it. Anne and Allen both felt that fish populations should be included in the plan as it directly impacts the economy in this watershed. Others felt it was the role of a watershed plan to address the number of species not the population of a species. This will likely lead to further discussion.

The second objective includes the word ‘appropriate’. What does it mean in the context of biodiversity? Lynn explained that appropriateness would relate to human safety, ecosystem health and the reality of introducing a species. E.g. we would not want to re-introduce the Eastern Cougar to the area (due to human safety issues) despite the fact that it is indigenous therefore it would not be “appropriate” biodiversity.

Committee members agreed that the flora and fauna of the whole watershed need to be identified and that other aquatic species (reptiles, amphibians, waterfowl, etc.) had not yet been considered but should be. Rather than expanding the fisheries topic area to include all aquatic species, it was agreed that a separate topic area of ‘Aquatic (other than fish) Populations’ should be added.

Lynn gave a brief description of the new MNR bass fishery regulations, including the elimination of bass sanctuaries, minimum size requirements and a lengthened bass season. For more information contact Scott Smithers at the Ministry of Natural Resources in Kemptville at 258-8204.

D. Groundwater Resources

Anne pointed out there is a need to look at the Safe Drinking Water Act and its effect on tourism operations within the watershed

Everyone agreed that education is an important tool to protect groundwater quality and quantity.

E. Lakefront development and re-development, Lake Carrying Capacity

A recommended action was to get MOE to commit to a Total Phosphorous (TP) level for lakes and the release of the lake capacity model.

Doug recommended the addition of incentives to the education component.

Peter pointed out examples of good shoreline practices can be found at www.reaction.ca

F. Climate Change

There was a consensus on the Objectives already laid out.

A recommended action was to make it mandatory to have an energy evaluation and reduction plan done on homes prior to being sold.

G. Aquatic Vegetation

There was a consensus that more education about the ecological role of aquatic vegetation and best management practices was needed.

H. Invasive Species

There was consensus that education is key to preventing the introduction and spreading of invasive species.

I. Terrestrial Resources

There was a consensus on the Objectives already laid out.

J. Education and Community Action

Bob suggested we prioritize our education objectives as well as our target audiences. Doug suggested we twin incentives with our education objectives. In other words, when an incentive grant or program is sought, an education component should be included.

To help the community understand the impacts of actions Anne emphasized the need for them to understand the concept of watershed, its connectivity and how it works.

Peter pointed out that funding is required to ensure long term sustainability of education programs and recommended adding another objective/action to find the financial resources necessary.

Anne emphasized the need to educate children to ensure the long-term health of the watershed.

K. Communication

Bob emphasized the importance of identifying how we will communicate the watershed plan and its message to the public. There is also a need to identify the role of the public in acting upon issues (who to contact, what action can be taken) through improved communication.

Watershed managers also need to communicate more openly and honestly with the public and other agencies prior to changes in legislation or regulations.

L. Governance

The concept of ‘cultural change’ within and between government agencies (i.e. how government agencies regard each other and work together) was brought forward. This change in agency culture would result in greater transparency and sharing in the decision making process and the delivery of watershed management. Transparency would include communication to the public of the science and rationale behind changes to regulations and policy.

Pat pointed out the need for agencies to enforce existing laws as they affect watershed health (grey water retention on boats).

M. Tourism and Recreation

It was suggested and agreed upon that ‘Tourism and Recreation’ and ‘Economy’ be combined as one Topic Area.

N. Economy

Mary enquired about the role of agriculture in the economy and whether it should be included. Sheanna reported the background findings as support for not including agriculture as an economic force within the watershed (small farms, many subsistence or hobby only). As well, at public meetings, the topic never came up as an issue affecting this watershed.

O. Implementation and Monitoring of the Plan

Allan introduced the Michalski report and the need to ensure that the watershed plan does not overshadow this important report (Rideau Lakes Basin Carrying Capacities and Proposed Shoreland Development Policies, Michael Michalski, 1992; see attached executive summary). The importance of municipal support of the document was emphasized.

4. Press Release

Important points to be covered in the press release from this meeting include:

- Why the Rideau Lakes Watershed Management Plan is important
- Encourage the public to contact PAC members about issues they are concerned about
- Provide a link to the minutes and other information on the web
- Focus on surface water quality since it has been of greatest concern to general public

It was agreed that a list of the media outlets to be contacted will be given to PAC members so they are able to follow up if they do not see it printed.

5. Next Steps

A TAC meeting will be held in February to go over the changes to the G&O document and to come up with action strategies. Doug Moore has volunteered to represent the PAC at the TAC meetings. The next PAC meeting will likely be held in March 2006.