

MEMBERS REPORT #30A-19

TO: Directors, Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
FROM: Stewart Lockie, Conservation Areas Coordinator
DATE: May 3, 2019 (to be presented May 15, 2019)

SUBJECT: Gorrie Conservation Area –Site Maintenance and Picnic Shelter Damage

PURPOSE:

To obtain Members direction on current flood damage and maintenance concerns at Gorrie Conservation Area

BACKGROUND:

After the June 23rd, 2017 flood event, MVCA completed emergency repairs to address public safety issues at the site and to temporarily stabilize the berm ends associated with the erosion of the emergency spillway. These repairs were completed under a required MNRF work permit. The temporary repairs included regrading and adding rock protection to the berm ends, removal of a section of concrete wall in the headrace, and filling in the scour hole that the flood waters created.

In January and February of 2018, high flows and ice flowed through the breached area resulting in the redevelopment of the scour hole and again deposited gravel and rock downstream of the breach. Large pieces of ice also pushed up against the picnic shelter and damaged it further. Several trees in the park had also been damaged by the ice flows.

MVCA contacted B.M. Ross and Associates Ltd. to assess the damages and make recommendations. A report was provided to the Members in April 2018, highlighting the infrastructure damages and site conditions at the Conservation Area along with alternative temporary repair options. Three temporary repair options were provided however the following advice was given: “The flow dynamic created by the berm opening, existing spillway, ice flows, and high flow runoff events generates significant forces, high head pressures, and high velocities that are extremely difficult to predict. Because of this, the success of any temporary repairs carries some degree of uncertainty particularly given the extreme weather events we have seen over the Maitland watershed in the last 8 to 10 months”.

Staff also contacted MNRF staff and they advised that MVCA is not required to undertake any additional temporary repair work under the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act (LRIA) however any major modification to the dam infrastructure i.e. repairing the berm, repairing structural damages, removing dam components, etc. would require approvals through the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act.

The following Motion was made and approved by the Members:

THAT the Gorrie Conservation Area be left as is until the Board has had a chance to review the results of the report on the technical requirements for the three options: replace, repair or decommission;

AND THAT staff restrict public access to sections of the site that are not safe to ensure public safety;

AND FURTHER THAT staff circulate a newsletter with this update to the community.

Access to the site has been fenced and signed to restrict public access to the damaged areas of the conservation area. The scour hole and deposited aggregates continue to shift and change when flood waters and ice flows convey through the berm opening. This area of the park has not been mowed or maintained due to the uneven terrain and rock debris.

The picnic shelter has been fenced and signed while the Authority investigates the options related to the future of the dam structure. Repairs to the shelter should only be considered if the dam is repaired, as the picnic shelter structure continues to sustain damage from flooding and ice conveyance through the berm opening. Demolition and removal of the picnic shelter may also be considered if the shelter can no longer be repaired or if the picnic shelter becomes structurally unstable.

Community concerns have been expressed with the vegetative growth on the upstream side of the dam in 2018 and again in 2019. In 2018 the Weed Inspector for the County of Huron advised staff that the Conservation Authority is not required to control weeds in Natural Environment areas unless growth is negatively impacting Agricultural operations. Currently MVCA does not have the resources to maintain (cut) the vegetation in the headpond area. Staff have been monitoring vegetative growth over the last few years for noxious weeds.

Staff are planning to remove the dead trees in the Conservation area this summer as well as to provide picnic tables and access points to the river from the north side of the Conservation Area for public use. Staff have discussed annual grass cutting arrangements with the Township of Howick for the north side of the park which will be brought forward at the May 7th council meeting.

Staff would appreciate the Memberships direction on the maintenance and concerns noted above while the Authority continues to determine the future outcome of the Gorrie Dam.

RECOMMENDATION:

To be developed at the meeting.