

MEMBERS REPORT #18-21

TO: Members, Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
FROM: Stewart Lockie, Conservation Areas Coordinator
DATE: March 8th, 2021 (to be presented March 17th, 2021)

SUBJECT: Gorrie Dam Decommissioning and Park Rehabilitation
- Public Information Centre Comments and Update.

PURPOSE:

To update Members on the Gorrie dam decommissioning and rehabilitation project progress and to provide comments received from the Public Information Consultation.

BACKGROUND:

On June 17th 2020, Members approved a conceptual decommissioning plan for the Gorrie Dam. The plan was developed by GSS Engineering and authority staff. Since this time, staff has continued with the process of obtaining final plans, specifications, public consultation and regulatory requirements for obtaining the necessary decommissioning approvals and permits. A summary of the major outcomes are listed below:

- July 2020. Presentation of conceptual plan to the council for the Township of Howick
- October 2020. Scoping meetings completed with Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to identify any early concerns or requirements in the application process.
- January, 2021. Decommissioning and rehabilitation plans and specifications completed by GSS Engineering and submitted to MNRF, DFO and Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks.
- January, 2021. Decommissioning and rehabilitation plans posted on the MVCA website and notification of public information centre options sent to local community and Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON).
- February, 2021. Public information centre completed with details provided in this report.
- February, 2021. Funding applications have been submitted to the MNRF WECI fund and the Environment and Climate Change Canada's Eco Action Community funding program. Results are expected by the end of May.

Public Information Centre (PIC) Outcome

On January 14th and 15th, a PIC was planned to provide the public an opportunity to view and comment on the proposed decommissioning and rehabilitation plans. The PIC was planned to be carried out by individual household appointments at the Wroxeter Administration centre. When Covid 19 restrictions were announced on December 28th, the PIC was postponed. Staff made adjustments to the PIC and offered appointments by telephone or virtually by Zoom on the dates of February 22nd and 23rd. It was also indicated that adjustments would be made to the method pending Covid 19 protocols at that time. On February 12th it was announced Huron Perth Public Health would move into the orange frame work. Plans

were adjusted to offer in-person meetings to the Administration office following safe covid19 protocols. All three options were provided to interested participants when they emailed or called to schedule a meeting.

One request was received for an in-person appointment and completed on February 22nd. Staff also received two other phone calls to inquire on the proposed plans however an appointment was not requested.

No written comments were received from these discussions however the following items were identified as concerns or identified as positive feedback:

Comment: Interest in having signage developed to highlight the history of the site along with signage to highlight the environmental benefits of the project.

Response: Staff has included signage development into the MNRF application to ensure the history of the site is maintained. Eco Action Community funding application also includes a signage component to highlight the environmental benefits of the site rehabilitation.

Comment: ATV use is occurring in the headpond location damaging native plants and habitats.

Response: Signs have been installed on the property to indicate this is an illegal activity. Authority staff finds this hard to enforce as violators can avoid being caught and MVCA has limited staff resources. Promoted calling OPP to enforce and to increase monitoring of this activity in the community.

Comment: Likes to see natural restoration, including the head pond area. Important aspects were tree planting, restoring cattail habitat, keeping invasive species from establishing, and promoting the return of insects and wildlife.

Response: Natural rehabilitation was considered in the plan to protect water quality, reduce grass cutting and to provide diverse habitats for wildlife. Once the decommissioning is complete, the river channel will adjust in the head pond area. Native plants will establish in the different habitats created and will provide habitat for insects and wildlife. Invasive species will continue to be monitored and controlled.

NEXT STEPS:

Once approved by Members, the public information centre details and comments will be forwarded to MNRF and DFO for inclusion into the application submission for approvals. Consultation was also completed with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation by newsletter updates, phone calls, and email correspondence. No comments or feedback has been given from the SON to date.

Staff is currently awaiting approvals from all regulatory agencies for the submitted plans and specifications. It is hoped that all approvals will be granted by the end of April, 2021. Project tenders will be developed and sent by early March to ensure contractors have sufficient time to develop tenders and return them for consideration by mid-April. Award of tender would be conditional on approval from all regulatory agencies.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Members approve the Public Information Centre process and results as presented.