

FRENCH RIVER SOURCE WATER PROTECTION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the French River Source Water Protection Committee was held at the Tatamagouche Branch Library on May 11, 2023, at 10:00 am.

- Present:** Councillor Michael Gregory, Chair
Mayor Christine Blair
Kim Baldwin, Citizen Rep, Watershed
Mark LeFresne, Village Commission Rep
Alex Feix, North Shore River Restoration Rep
Michelle Boudreau, Director of Public Works
Paul Smith, Director of Community Development
Greg Cummings, Watershed Planner, NSECC
Michael Allen, Watershed Planner, NSECC
- Absent/Regrets:** Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart
Greg Watson, Citizen Rep, Watershed
- Introductions:** Introductions were completed by members and the meeting called to order at 10:09am.
- Approval of Agenda:** An agenda was prepared and circulated for the Committee's review and approval.

Moved by Mark LeFresne and seconded by Kim Baldwin

"That the agenda be approved as presented." Motion carried.
- Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the meetings held on March 1, 2022, August 24, 2022 and November 16, 2022 were circulated for the Committee's review and approval.

Moved by Mark LeFresne and seconded by Kim Baldwin

"That the Minutes from the meetings on March 1, 2022, August 24, 2022 and November 16, 2022 be approved as presented." Motion carried.
- Business Arising:** None.
- Siltation:** The email response from NSPW was discussed regarding the province's sedimentation control practices. They committed to improving their practices however some Committee members felt this is still an issue based on recent observances. Erosion at old bridge abutments and on unmaintained K Class roads continues to be a concern, as does ATV traffic through watercourses and the impacts of Fiona debris in the roadside ditches. Public Works staff will try to monitor the area during heavy rains and Councillor Gregory and Kim Baldwin will also complete inspections. Status of siltation to be discussed at next meeting – may need more follow up with the Province. Where siltation is being caused by road maintenance

practices, Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change can also be contacted to address the situation.

Forestry:

The matter of providing public education on Forestry Practices was discussed. Alex noted that Todd Burgess and Steven Moore with Forestry NS may be good resources as they are already working on promotional material around this topic. Where most land is privately owned and many regulations can only be applied to Crown land, it can be difficult to control private harvesting activity. While most private landowners implement responsible forestry practices, some do not. Helping to educate all landowners around ecological forestry practices will be beneficial to the watershed.

Alex noted that some municipalities (possibly Kings) require landowners to submit forestry management plans in order to maintain their resource designation for taxation purposes. Paul Smith to look further into this option for Colchester. While our current watershed regulations do not require forestry management plans prior to harvesting, this remains an option for future. This would apply to all lands within the designated watershed area.

Alex expressed some frustration that developers are held to a looser standard than forestry operators when it comes to disturbing land near watercourses and these types of inconsistencies should be addressed. Spraying of forested lands is also deeply scrutinized while application of products to agricultural lands seems less regulated.

The Municipality recently issued a Request for Proposals for a Forest Management Plan for county owned lands. While this plan will be parcel specific, there may be an option to use some of the same guiding principals as part of an education program for the watershed. We may even want to develop a specific guidance document for the watershed itself.

County Wide Plan:

County planning staff are in the initial stages of creating a County-wide land use plan which must be completed by 2024. Community engagement is taking place now with stakeholder sessions to be scheduled in the St Andrews, Debert and Tatamagouche watershed areas. Uplands Planning & Design, consultant for Plan It Colchester, would like to meet with this Committee to discuss land use management and watershed activities. In the next two months, a stakeholder session will be arranged with this Committee. This process may be able to address some discrepancies in regulations between forestry, land development and agriculture.

Aerial Photography post-Fiona:

Michelle waiting on cost estimates to have aerial photography done in the watershed area to examine Fiona damage. The Association of Sustainable Forestry may also have a map showing some lower quality air photos of Fiona damage. In 2-3 years, the blow down could also increase forest fire risk. Alex expressed an interest in being

involved in any flights of the watershed from a river restoration perspective. Michelle to circulate information once available.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid:

It is unknown the volume of hemlock within the watershed area. DNR has data which would show what part of the forest is hemlock and what stands are greater than 50%. Michelle to provide a GIS map at next meeting.

Johnson Lake:

Public Works staff continue to monitor any algal bloom presence in the French River watershed during their routine inspections. People should use caution and not enter the water during these blooms as cyanobacteria can result in serious illness in humans and can be fatal to animals. Additional information on blue green algae can be found on the provincial Nova Scotia Environment website. This is usually an issue in warmer months such as August and September.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be scheduled in September 2023. Committee members will be notified when a convenient date is arranged.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 am.

Michelle Boudreau,
Recording Secretary