

June 11, 2008

The Secretary, Canadian Section
International Joint Commission
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Via e-mail to:
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Subject: Summary of June 9, 2008 Presentation in Jordan, Ontario

Introduction

I am Jim Hudson, Executive Director of the Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC), a non-profit organization based in Hamilton, Ontario. BARC is somewhat unique in that it was formed as an integral part of the RAP process in Hamilton to balance the work being done by the implementation team.

We have been working since 1991 to ensure continued progress on the restoration of Hamilton Harbour and its watershed. Completing this job is important to our over 700 members who are made up of: citizens, industry of all sizes, the public education sector, various agencies, and post-secondary academia.

Like the International Joint Commission (IJC), we favour: science-based decisions, public participation, and collaborative approaches to resolving environmental issues. Yet there are times when we need to don our watchdog hat and speak out. The sudden appearance of Plan 2007 is one of the most serious issues we face. Our stakeholders have many concerns with Plan 2007. I will focus only on the environment tonight and relate our concerns to some of the community programs we offer.

Programs

We deliver 8 different programs to thousands of participants each year. Many are educational. Two examples follow.

Classroom Mini Marsh

This year roughly 10,000 young students from Oakville to Niagara are learning about wetlands. They grow a miniature marsh system in their classroom with materials we provide them in cooperation with the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG). They can even bring the grown plants back to plant in Cootes Paradise. They learn that marshes are: the kidneys of our Great Lakes, buffers in times of major rain events, important spawning grounds for many aquatic species, and, habitat for many waterfowl. In short, they learn that marshes are not wasted land that should be filled in and paved over.

We believe that Plan 2007, with its greatly delayed high water period, will hinder most of these benefits by further tinkering with natural water levels and cycles. It will interfere with restoration of Cootes Paradise, an IJC-mandated requirement for

delisting our AOC! What do we now tell these students, teachers and families about how we value coastal marshes?

Marsh Volunteer Planting

Every year BARC volunteers work with RBG staff to replant native aquatic species to help restore Cootes Paradise. Thousands of hours of volunteer time (of priceless value) have gone into this effort. This is an effort for which governments simply do not have adequate funding.

Plan 2007 will hinder the propagation and regeneration of these plants. It will also favour late-spawning species such as carp that destroy aquatic vegetation. Do we tell those people that a few properties that were built too close to the lake are more important than restoration of our ecosystem?

We also fear spin-off impacts on other programs

Other BARC programs include:

- Yellow Fish Road, in which students learn that only rain should go down sewer drains;
- Adopt a Creek (somewhat akin to adopt-a-highway programs); and,
- Stream of Dreams, in which students learn that they all live in watersheds and why (and how) they should protect them.

Many volunteers for these programs also participate in Mini Marsh and Marsh Volunteer Planting. Will they become disenchanted by the destruction of their other work? Will they disengage? Will students and volunteers begin to question whether our words and the actions match?

Conclusion

Based on the best scientific advice we have obtained, we believe that adoption of Plan 2007 will:

- Do environmental harm to an important coastal wetland;
- Retard delisting of Hamilton Harbour;
- Undermine the environmental education and outreach we've done with thousands of people over 17 years; and,
- Increase skepticism in the minds of young students about how much they should care about the environment.

We believe that Plan 2007 is a step backward! We ask you to implement Plan B+ or at least (as recommended by Doug Cuthbert, Canadian Director of the Study Board) set a definite, and not to distant, date for its implementation.

Thank you for taking a balanced, collaborative approach in your decision-making. The residents of the Great Lakes basin, both human and otherwise, will thank you.

Yours truly,

Jim Hudson
Executive Director