

**Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee**  
**February 6, 2012**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Phillip Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

**DATE:** November 17, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Functional Plan Update: Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan

**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC), September 8, 2011: Functional Plans

**BACKGROUND**

Policy E-18, Regional Plan: Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) shall prepare a Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan to establish a water quality monitoring program for the Municipality.

## **DISCUSSION**

The September 8, 2011, Report to Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee indicated that the Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan is “near completion”. This report is intended to better explain what that means.

According to Regional Plan, the Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan should consider:

1. Specifying the duration of monitoring for the pre-construction, construction and post-construction phases of development;
2. Specifying the physical and chemical water quality indicators to be measured, the location and frequency of testing and the format of submissions to the Municipality in each phase of development;
3. Assessing lake water quality against the water quality objectives established under Policy E-17 to detect changes such as eutrophication, which would be used as a basis for re-evaluating watershed management controls and future development potential within the area;
4. Conforming with all water quality policies, specifications, protocols and review and approval procedures approved by Regional Council; and
5. Establishing an on-going monitoring program for selected lakes and rivers to determine the state of water resources and to detect changes over time.

The lead for this functional plan is Energy and Environment (Planning and Infrastructure).

Work to date includes:

- Water Quality Monitoring Program:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/environment/lakesandrivers.html>;
- Completion of Consultants Report:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/environment/documents/HRM.Water.Quality.Monitoring.Functional.Plan.Jan2010.pdf>;
- Update to former RPAC:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/rpcsc/May192010RegionalPlanAdvisoryCommitteeAgenda-HRM.html>;
- 2010 Service Review Report to Regional Council:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/Council/agendasc/documents/100427ca11.1.3.pdf>; and
- 2011 Save our Lakes Policy Work:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/environment/documents/HRM.Water.Quality.Monitoring.Functional.Plan.Jan2010.pdf>

Currently, between staff time, laboratory costs, and other sampling costs, the annual monitoring program costs to HRM is slightly less than \$100,000 per year. The lead for this work, and the municipal subject matter expert on water quality matters, is the Environmental Performance Officer, Water.

Staff has not made a final recommendation on the Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan to Regional Council. The Consultants report, which was prepared prior to the commencement of the current manager of the department, offers service level options ranging between essentially current funding levels and approaching a \$1 million per year option.

Staff continues to recommend that the current level of testing is appropriate to influence and inform the decision making and operational services of the municipality. The current focus is on taking the current data and better articulating it to decision makers (particularly councillors), the public, and staff. As such, work with the newly formed Water Policy Advisory Group will review the water quality data in January 2012 and interpret the data. Following this, an Annual State of the Lakes Report will be provided to the Committee.

There remains a gap between monitoring results and operational practices by HRM. This is the key piece that staff needs to address prior to offering Regional Council a final Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan. It is expected that the Watershed Studies work, the Storm Water Management Functional Plan, and the progression of the Save Our Lakes policy work will logically fill this gap.

It is anticipated that following the work on the Annual State of the Lakes Report, completion of the current Watershed Studies Work and the Storm Water Management Functional Plan, a final report will be provided to Regional Council recommending finalization of the Water Quality Monitoring Functional Plan.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no implications from this report to the 2011/2012 Operating or Capital Budget.

Current Water Quality Monitoring efforts are expensed from D935 (SEMO Administration).

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Following public concern over declining Lake Water Quality, Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee directed staff to assemble a Water Policy Advisory Group. In addition, HRM has three Watershed Advisory Groups supporting Community Councils. There are also numerous environmental groups such as Sackville Rivers Association, Shubenacadie Watershed

Environment Protection Society, Ecology Action Centre, Clean Nova Scotia, and Dartmouth Area Watershed Network providing advocacy and advice to HRM related to Water Quality Matters.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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