

Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee
May 2, 2013

TO: Chair and Members of Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Jane Fraser, Director, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE: February 20, 2013

SUBJECT: Urban Lakes

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

ORIGIN

December 6, 2012, Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee, Item 10.1

Motion: That ESSC request a staff report:

- (1) Identifying the lakes affected by the Centre Plan; and
- (2) Confirming how the Plan will ensure their protection and preservation, as urban densification intensifies.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Lakes are under the Legislative Authority of the Province of Nova Scotia under The Environment Act.

The Municipality has Legislative Authority in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Charter to enact by-laws, manage development, create policies, and expend money in a variety of authorities that may impact water quality.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee (ESSC) refer to the Regional Watersheds Advisory Board the Analysis of the HRM Lakes Water Quality Monitoring Program Data 2006-2011, with direction to provide committee with observations and interpretations of the data with respect to those identified lakes that should be considered by staff prior to future land use planning projects.

BACKGROUND

In the 2011 Ipsos Public Affairs Survey, Municipal Solutions for a Greener Earth – Halifax Regional Municipality, 70% of the residents sampled indicated a High or Very High priority for Preserving and Protecting the Local Environment.

During the 2012 Regional Plan Review consultations, protection of natural assets emerged as a consistent community expectation.

Halifax Regional Municipality has over 1000 lakes.

The Analysis of the 2006-2011 Data for the entire program can be viewed at:
http://www.halifax.ca/environment/documents/HRM_WQ_Report_Oct.30_2012.final.pdf

The Analysis of the Data for Regional Centre Lakes can be viewed at:
<http://www.halifax.ca/environment/documents/RegionalCentreLakes.WQ2006-2011.30Oct2012.final.pdf>

For the past several years, staff and elected officials have increasingly responded to community concerns regarding these lakes. Community groups such as the Oathill Lake Conservation Society, the Shubenacadie Canal Commission, and the municipal Watershed Advisory Boards, have been very keen to look at solutions respecting the challenges to these urban lakes. The data to be reviewed will summarize which lakes are challenged and understand how they are challenged.

There have been a number of successes related to Urban Lakes:

- The successful organization and activities of the Oathill Lake Conservation Society;
- The pilot project of achieving Blue Flag Beach certification at Birch Cove beach;
- Collaboration with Clean Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Youth Conservation Corps on a 2011 public awareness project; and
- A completed policy review project by Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board with respect to Russell Lake.

DISCUSSION

Considering the cultural, heritage, economic and recreational value of the Regional Centre lakes, and the fact that observed trends of increasing phosphorus loading, algal blooms, and plant growth, are contributing to threats to deteriorating water quality and threatening the enjoyment and value of these lakes, a focus on Urban Lakes in the near future may be deemed appropriate.

At this point, staff is looking at a variety of planning/policy project opportunities to progress efforts with respect to lake protection and restoration. The opportunities identified are:

- Regional Plan
- CentrePlan
- Open Space Planning and the potential approach to Greenbelting

- Integrated Stormwater Management Policy
- Stormwater Infrastructure Funding
- Policy recommendations to Province of Nova Scotia

Over the past several years, staff have examined HRM land use policy and compared it with implemented best practices in North America. Generally, the bundle of secondary plans comprising the policy set in HRM, is progressive with respect to natural asset protection. As planning projects continue to update those policies and standardize Regional Plan policy direction (such as through Centreplan), the bundle of policy will offer very good protections. Staff is examining the newer planning/policy opportunities offered under stormwater management, open space planning, and greenbelting, for the consideration of this Committee.

By initiating a discussion on the data assembled, it will enable a more effective, efficient, timely, and informed discussion on tactics for policy work, to achieve the lake quality objective. The intent of this report is to initiate a body of work with the new Regional Watershed Advisory Board that will enable staff, the Board, and other stakeholders to respond quickly to policy opportunities.

Lakes located within, or close proximity to, the CentrePlan boundary

- Albro Lake
- Lake Banook
- Little Albro Lake
- Maynard Lake
- Oathill Lake
- Penhorn Lake
- Chocolate Lake (close proximity)
- Lake MicMac (close proximity)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report does not create any financial implications to the 2013/14 Operating or Project Budgets.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The recommendation will initiate a body of work with the Regional Watershed Advisory Board. Regional Plan Review and CentrePlan have very comprehensive consultation processes that can be viewed at www.halifax.ca.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Protection of water quality with respect to municipal activities is an objective outlined in the Regional Plan. Based on data, experience, and intention to increase development intensification

in the Regional Centre, an aligned focus on reviewing relevant municipal policy may help achieve community objectives related to lake water quality.

ALTERNATIVES

The Committee may choose to not initiate the recommended body of work.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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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