

Environment and Sustainability Committee
May 5, 2011

TO: Chair and Members of Environment and Sustainability Committee

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

DATE: April 13, 2011

SUBJECT: Update on Lakes Banook & Micmac

ORIGIN

This report originates from staff.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be forwarded to the Bedford Watershed Advisory Board, Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board & the Halifax Watershed Advisory Board, as an Information Report.

BACKGROUND

Lakes have multi-jurisdictional governance:

- Federal Government regulates the fish habitat;
- Environment the lakes themselves; and
- Municipalities govern impacts on lakes such as development, land use, and municipal services (snow ploughing, etc.)

With watershed planning and protection of water quality as a basis of the Regional Plan, HRM does Lake Quality monitoring to gauge the impact of Development on the lakes. As per the recent Water Quality Report, the lakes are in declining condition. The current initiatives are intended to empower communities and HRM residents to take control of their lakes and the actions needed, including behaviour changes, to restore and protect them. Lake Banook is of particular interest due to its economic and recreational value to HRM.

In recent months, the Environment and Sustainability Standing Committee has received several reports, briefings and verbal updates regarding the state of lakes and rivers in HRM, including Plant Growth in Lake Banook, Blue Flag Beaches & Lake Water Quality (see links to original reports listed under ATTACHMENTS).

This report reflects the current status of HRM's multi-pronged approach to address aquatic plants, lake water quality and watershed management issues affecting Lakes Banook & Micmac.

DISCUSSION

HRM's Sustainable Environment Management Office (SEMO) has been collaborating with an ad-hoc community group to address lake quality issues in Lakes Banook and Micmac (see report link under attachment one). These meetings were driven primarily by concerns about unwanted plant growth that impacted recreational activities. Since that report, HRM has partnered with a local community group (the Kinsmen Club of Dartmouth) to submit a grant proposal to RBC's Blue Water Project, to fund work that will address this issue. This project, if awarded, aims to reduce plant growth, increase community lake stewardship, and increase water quality in the affected lakes by conducting public consultation to enhance private stewardship, purchasing a weed harvester machine, and to formalize the development of a Lake Management Society for these lakes.

One part of the public consultation built into this proposal is the application for Lake Banook's Birch Cove Beach to become designated as a Blue Flag Beach. HRM anticipates receiving a decision from RBC on the grant proposal by no later than July 1, 2011.

While the community group and HRM staff await the response of this application, they are pursuing alternative means to manage the anticipated return of weeds on the lake, including the rental or rehabilitation of other lake mower machines already in local private hands.

In the meantime, SEMO has contracted the Dartmouth Area Watershed Network (DAWN) to facilitate community education about water quality in Lakes Banook and Micmac. The objective of this education is to raise community awareness about freshwater quality, threats to freshwater quality – including those from land use practices and development activities – and means to mitigate those threats.

To extend the benefits of this project, DAWN has applied for funding from the Nova Scotia Youth Conservation Corps for two summer students to create educational materials suitable for three public education sessions, as well as handouts suitable for household delivery. The long-term objective of the project is to stimulate community stewardship for Lakes Banook & Micmac, increase uptake of sustainable landscape management and development practices, and decrease nutrient loading into the lakes. This proposal, if successful, will also contribute to the delivery of public education efforts required of Blue Flag candidate beaches, such as planned for the Birch Cove Beach. The application for Blue Flag Candidate status of the Birch Cove Beach is intended for submission in early May 2011, and award late spring or early summer of this year.

The efforts described above have fundamentally arisen due to significant plant growth, which in turn is likely due to an increase in the availability of limiting nutrients – most likely Phosphorus.

Although the ultimate source(s) of Phosphorus have not yet been identified, recent discussions between HRM staff and local freshwater experts have led to an initiative to investigate some potential point sources within the sewer shed.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Initial environmental monitoring to test the nutrient loading hypothesis will be within the proposed budget of D935 - SEMO.

HRM will work with the Province and land developer to contribute to these costs, once they are better understood. The results of this monitoring may suggest the development of further management activities, which would have additional budget implications.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the proposed 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

This report reflects activities that are occurring as a result of community engagement with an ad-hoc community group focussed on Lakes Banook & Micmac as well as the Dartmouth Area Watershed Network.

ALTERNATIVES

None recommended

ATTACHMENTS

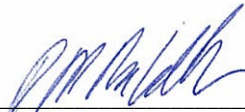
Attachment 1 – Plant Growth in Lakes Banook & Micmac -
<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/swrac/documents/7.2.3.pdf>

Attachment 2 – Blue Flag Beaches - <http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/swrac/documents/Info4BlueFlagBeaches.pdf>

Attachment 3 – Lake Water Quality Report -
<http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/swrac/documents/Info7LakeWaterQuality.pdf>

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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