

Subject: Source Water Protection Annual Report

Department: Infrastructure Services

Division: Environment

Report #: INS-2021-023

Meeting Date: 2021-04-12

Recommendations

That report INS-2021-023, Source Water Protection Annual Report, be received

Background and Analysis

As discussed in previous reports to Town Council, the Province of Ontario has implemented a regulatory framework that provides a proactive, multi-barrier approach to safeguard municipal drinking water. The Clean Water Act (the Act) was enacted in 2006 following recommendations of Justice O'Connor and the Walkerton Inquiry to protect municipal drinking water supplies in Ontario. Previously enacted legislation, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act, focus on drinking water treatment, the qualifications and training of drinking water operators, and water quality testing. The Act has brought a new approach to managing municipal drinking water systems in Ontario by requiring that drinking water sources be protected from both water quality and quantity threats.

The Act requires that source protection plans be developed at the local level to protect existing and future drinking water sources, and ensure that drinking water threats (quality and quantity) cease to be, or do not become, significant. The Town of Orangeville is located within the Credit Valley Source Protection Area and is subject to the source protection plan developed for the Credit Valley – Toronto and Region – Central Lake Ontario (CTC) Source Protection Region. The CTC Source Protection Plan (the Plan) came into effect on December 31, 2015.

The Plan contains policies that identify how both existing and future significant drinking water threats will be managed using policy tools such as: prohibition; establishment of Risk Management Plans (RMPs); land use planning; education and outreach, and prescribed instruments. The Plan identifies implementing bodies for each policy, many of which fall to municipalities.

Analysis

2020 marked the fifth full year of implementation of the Plan. The Plan designates fifty-eight (58) policies with varying implementation timelines to be implemented by municipalities in the CTC Source Protection Region. Of those fifty-eight (58) policies, forty-one (41) have been wholly implemented and eight (8) are in progress. Nine (9) of the policies are not applicable in Orangeville.

The Act requires the Town to report to the Credit Valley Source Protection Authority on implementation activities on an annual basis. These reports are available for review upon request from the Infrastructure Services Department. A summary of the Town's implementation and compliance requirements, and implementation status, is provided in Attachment 1.

Of the policies remaining to be implemented, the majority are identified as Risk Management Plan policies. Risk Management Plan policies require source protection staff to work with landowners and businesses located in wellhead protection areas (WHPAs) to negotiate RMPs. RMPs are binding agreements that identify the management measures to be implemented so that activities identified as risks to drinking water cease to be, or never become, significant drinking water threats. In December 2020 there were 38 remaining properties in Town for which RMPs need to be negotiated. The majority of these remaining RMPs will focus on addressing road salt application and chemical storage and handling activities. During the course of the pandemic, staff have been conducting RMP negotiations virtually and are working with landowners and businesses to establish these remaining RMPs.

In addition to outlining policies to protect drinking water sources, the Plan also specifies policy implementation timelines. Timelines in the source protection plan call for RMPs for existing properties to be established by December 31, 2020. In recognition of the significant amount of time required to negotiate Risk Management Plans, the challenges of working closely with landowners during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the hardships faced by businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CTC Source Protection Committee requested that the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks grant an extension to the deadline for establishing RMPs. This extension was granted, and staff now have until December 31st, 2023 to establish the remaining RMPs.

Despite barriers posed by the pandemic, staff were able to advance several initiatives in 2020. Highlights of the source protection work completed in 2020 include:

- Negotiation and establishment of RMPs to address seven (7) drinking water threat activities occurring on three (3) properties;
- Development and adoption of a municipal Water Conservation Plan;
- Development and distribution of promotional material including letters, brochures, newspaper ads, doorhangers, road and trail signage, and website content;

- Reviewing Planning Act and building permit applications for compliance with source protection plan policy requirements; working with development proponents to ensure new drinking water threats are not created;
- Review of water balance assessments and low impact development proposals for new development to ensure groundwater recharge rates are maintained and;
- Engagement and follow-up with existing RMP holders to ensure continued compliance with terms and conditions of previously established RMPs

In 2021 staff will continue to focus on negotiating RMPs with landowners and businesses undertaking significant threat activities in vulnerable areas around Town wells with the goal of meeting the December 2023 deadline. Another key initiative will be the update of the Official Plan to include and conform with the policies and objectives of the source protection plan. Staff also intend to undertake the technical work required to delineate wellhead protection area mapping and drinking water threat analyses for the new proposed Town well.

Strategic Alignment

Orangeville Forward – Strategic Plan

Priority Area: Sustainable Infrastructure

Objective: Maintain Current Assets

Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plan

Theme: Natural Resources and the Environment

Strategy: Protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water resources;
Continue to provide access to safe drinking water that meets the needs of the community

Notice Provisions

None.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts arising from this report.

Respectfully submitted

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Reviewed by

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Attachment(s):

1. Implementation Status of Significant Drinking Water Threat Policies – Town of Orangeville (as of December 31, 2020)