

DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION

ACT FOR CLEAN WATER



Source Protection Report

By Janet Stavinga, Chair

Over the winter, the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Committee (SPC) finalized, submitted and awaited the approval of our Terms of Reference (ToR) by the Province. The ToR is our work plan outlining the efforts needed to adequately protect sources of municipal drinking water in the Mississippi and Rideau Valley watersheds. The Terms of Reference were approved by the Minister of the Environment in late winter setting out the steps, and the roles and responsibilities of all the players in local source water protection.

2009 is largely devoted to developing the Assessment Reports for the two watersheds. The Assessment Reports are compilations of all scientific information including Watershed Characterization, Water Budgets, Drinking Water Threats and Issues in our area. We anticipate completing a draft Assessment Report in early December, followed by public consultation before submission to the Province in April, 2010.

There is much work to be done to move through the Assessment Report agenda. In early April, we reviewed draft **groundwater studies for Carp, Kemptville and Merrickville**. They show where Carp, Kemptville and Merrickville's municipal drinking water comes from — areas called Wellhead Protection Areas. The draft studies show if the water is vulnerable to contamination and overuse, and what land uses and activities could pose a risk. **Open houses will be held in May** in the three communities to share draft results with local residents and get their input.

These are the first of many studies being completed this year that will show us where our drinking water comes from in the Mississippi and Rideau watersheds, and where it should be protected. Each month, throughout most of 2009, draft studies will be presented to the SPC followed by open houses in local communities. These studies and open houses will include municipal drinking water systems in Almonte, Carleton Place, Munster Hamlet, Perth, Richmond (King's Park subdivision), Smiths Falls, Westport and Urban Ottawa. Further details will be provided in this column, on our website, and in newspaper advertisements.

At our April meeting, the SPC also submitted comments to the Province on **how to improve the Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program**. This program was created by the *Clean Water Act* to provide: 1) grants for activities that protect source water, and 2) provide financial assistance to people whose properties or activities are affected by the Act. Throughout February and March, we undertook efforts to inform the public about this comment opportunity, including a public meeting in Perth on March 9. There will be a second opportunity to provide advice to the province when proposed program details for 2009–2011 are posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry for public review (likely June).

Our comments included the need to extend the current funding commitment for this program beyond its current date of 2011. We feel that financial assistance must be available beyond 2012 when Source Protection Plan policies are being implemented. We're also following up on the need for more local flexibility in program design and delivery.

Our **next SPC meeting** is on Thursday, **May 7 at 7 pm** in the Carleton Place Town Hall Auditorium, 175 Bridge Street. Committee members will be there early for a "Meet and Greet" session from 6 pm. If you can join us, we'd love to see you! Visitors always welcome.

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