

Date: April 4, 2024
Time: 1 pm
Location: Rideau Valley Conservation Authority
 3889 Rideau Valley Drive, Manotick

Source Protection Committee Meeting

Item Number	Item Title	Page	Person Responsible
	Elections		<i>Marika Livingston</i>
1.0	Welcome and Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Agenda Review b. Notice of Proxies c. Adoption of the Agenda (D) d. Declarations of Interest e. Approval of Minutes –February 8, 2024 (D) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► draft minutes attached as a separate document f. Correspondence from Matt Pearson, Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee Chair 	1 2-5	<i>Acting Chair</i>
	Staff Reports, Updates and Presentation		
2.0	Source Protection Staff Update (presentation)		
3.0	Annual Progress Reporting—staff report attached and presentation..... (D)	4-7	<i>Marika Livingston</i>
	Other		
6.0	Other Business		<i>Acting Chair</i>
7.0	Member Inquiries		<i>Acting Chair</i>
8.0	Next Meeting -TBD		<i>Acting Chair</i>
9.0	Adjournment		

(I) = Information (D) = Decision

Delegations: If you wish to speak to an item on the Agenda please contact Marika Livingston before the meeting (marika.livingston@mrsourcewater.ca) or 613-692-3571 x 1148)

If you are a member of the public and would like to join the Zoom meeting please contact the above for more meeting details.

February 26th, 2023

Honourable Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Via e-mail: lisa.thompsonco@pc.ola.org

Re: Recommended Phase Out of Free Well Water Testing in the 2023 Auditor General's Report

Dear Minister Thompson,

In the 2023 Auditor General's Value-for-Money Audit of Public Health Ontario (PHO) released in December 2023, recommendation number 5 states that PHO, in conjunction with the Ministry of Health (MOH), are to update and implement a laboratory modernization plan within 12 months to streamline the laboratory's operations.

https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en23/AR_publichealth_en23.pdf

This stemmed from a 2017 proposal by PHO, collaboratively with the MOH at the request of the Deputy Minister to close six of the 11 public health laboratory sites (Hamilton, Kingston, Orillia, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins) and gradually discontinue private drinking water testing. The justification:

- Mitigating rising costs of maintaining facilities
- Establishing a more efficient operating model that reduces the rerouting of samples to other PHO laboratory sites

About 50% of the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Region population is serviced by private wells. The proposed removal of PHO's free private drinking water testing is of concern to our Ausable Bayfield Source Protection Committee, particularly when Source Protection Regions have been directed by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, Source Protection Branch, to deliver education and outreach to private well owners under the new Best Practices initiative.

In our region, we have been working with service and community organizations such as the Lions, Optimists and Lakeshore Residents Associations to co-host very successful Best Practices 'Water Wise' events that encourage private well owners to sample their drinking water using the free microbial testing provided by the province. By distributing water sample bottles ahead of the event and delivering the samples to Huron Perth Public Health for lab analysis, most of

the barriers to water sampling are removed. At these events 25% to 50% of a communities well water will be sampled in one day or night.

Well owners understand the importance of testing their well water; it is the inconvenience of doing so that is the barrier. One of the goals of the 'Water Wise' events is to encourage well owners to get in the habit of testing their water regularly as part of Best Practices for protecting their drinking water. The hope is that the community groups and service clubs that Source Protection staff work with will make Water Wise water sampling events part of their regular activities.

Private drinking water systems in Ontario do not have the legislated safeguards that are required for municipal/communal/public systems under the *Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002*. Only municipal water supply systems fall under the *Clean Water Act, 2006* and the Source Water Protection program. Health Canada's guidance on waterborne pathogens references three studies that determine that private systems are vulnerable and there is evidence that demonstrates they are more likely to contribute to gastrointestinal illness than public drinking water systems.

If the free water testing phase out recommendation is approved, well owners would have to use a commercial lab for a fee, which disincentivizes testing. When water is not monitored regularly, there is no way to know the true quality of the water, which puts people at increased risk of becoming ill. With private systems being stand-alone systems, any associated illnesses are isolated sporadic events and do not come to public attention like those seen during the Walkerton outbreak.

The private drinking water test data maintained by PHO has been used by researchers to publish evidence that helps support public health policy. Source Protection Committees can access data associated with their area, as was presented at our March 2023 meeting. The data can be used to inform well owners of regional water quality concerns and associated health risks. If PHO stops testing, this data and affiliated research will no longer be available.

In the Walkerton Inquiry Report Part 2, Justice O'Connor concluded the privatization of laboratory testing of drinking water samples connected directly to the *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreak in Walkerton Ontario in May 2000. Twenty-four years later, there is a proposal to privatize water testing once again.

At the January 31st meeting of the Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee the following resolution was unanimously approved:

MOTION #SPC: 2024-02-04

Moved by Philip Keightley

Seconded by Mary Ellen Foran

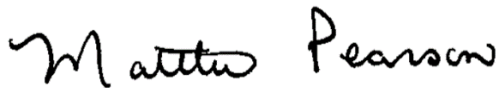
“THAT the Source Protection Committee direct a letter to Minister Thompson requesting that the province not proceed with the recommended phase out of free private well testing in Ontario, and

“FURTHER, THAT area municipalities, the Minister of Environment Conservation and Parks, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, other Source Protection Committees, and local health units be forwarded the letter and asked for their support. “

Carried.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely



Matthew Pearson

Chair

Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee

Cc Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Honourable Andrea Khanjin, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks

Municipalities of Adelaide Metcalfe, Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh, Bluewater, Central Huron, Goderich, Howick, Huron East, Lambton Shores, Lucan Biddulph, Mapleton, Middlesex Centre, Minto, Morris-Turnberry, North Middlesex, North Perth, Perth South, South Bruce, South Huron, Warwick, West Perth, Wellington North
Townships of Huron-Kinloss and North Huron

Huron Perth Public Health, Lambton Public Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit, Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health

Source Protection Regions: Cataraqui; Central Lake Ontario, Toronto, Credit Valley; Essex; Hamilton Halton; Grey Sauble, Saugeen, Northern Bruce Peninsula; Lake Erie; Lakehead; Mattagami; Mississippi-Rideau; Niagara; North Bay; Quinte; Raisin South Nation; Sault Ste. Marie; South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe; Sudbury; Thames -Sydenham and Region; Trent Conservation Coalition

3.0 2023 Annual Progress Report to MECP

Date: April 4, 2024
To: Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Committee
From: Marika Livingston, Project Manager
Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Region

Recommendation:

That the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Committee receive for review the draft Annual Progress Report for 2023;

And further, that the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Committee assess and grade the progress achieved so far, providing a grade achieved through discussion at the meeting of April 4, 2024 to be recorded in the meeting minutes;

And further that the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Committee direct staff to summarize the comments, notes, grading and discussion and provide the Annual Progress Report to the Source Protection Authority for their approval.

Annual Reporting Requirements

The *Clean Water Act* (Section 46) requires the Annual Progress Report to be prepared and:

- Describe measures taken to implement the Plan
- Describe the results of monitoring programs
- Describe extent to which objectives set out in the plan are being achieved
- Contain other information as prescribed by the regulations

Ontario Regulation 287/07 (Section 52) describes other information to be included:

- Description and reasons for policy delays
- Description of steps taken to address deficiencies in information
- Summary of the report prepared and submitted by the RMO each year
- Any other information the SPA considers advisable

Background

The Source Protection Authorities are required to submit an Annual Progress Report each year, under Section 46 Ontario's *Clean Water Act*. The report is to be submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) by May 1 of each year and is to be provided to the SPC for comment at least 30 days prior to this. The report summarizes:

- Measures taken to implement the source protection plan;
- Results of monitoring policies;
- The extent to which objectives of the plan are being achieved; and,
- Other information that might be required by the regulation.

This is the seventh Annual Progress Report since the Source Protection Plan came into effect on January 1, 2015.

There are two components of the progress reporting, a public facing report document and a supplemental form. The MECP has an electronic reporting tool to summarize responses for the 2023 supplemental form and annual report.

The purpose of this staff report is to provide guidance to assist with the interpretation of the Annual Progress Reporting documents, and to outline the process for the SPC review of these documents.

Committee members have been provided with a draft version of both the public facing report and the supplemental reporting form prior to the meeting. Committee members were provided with a comment sheet for written comments and are asked to provide these if desired, by April 4.

Staff will provide a presentation summarizing the reporting information, and the committee will have the chance to verbally discuss and come to a consensus on the report scoring. The discussion and scoring will be summarized in the reports.

Implementing Bodies

The policies in the Source Protection Plan are implemented by “implementing bodies”, who report to the Source Protection Authority each year, usually by February 1, according to the monitoring policies in the Source Protection Plan:

- Municipalities (15 with legally binding responsibilities, 16 with only non-legally binding responsibilities)
- Risk Management Staff
- Principal Authority – approval agency for septic systems – Health Unit, municipality or Conservation Authority depending on location
- Ontario Ministries (OMAFRA, MECP, MNRF, MTO, MGCS/TSSA and MMAH)
- Source Protection Authority (SPA) – the Conservation Authority in its legislated role under the *Clean Water Act*

Reports were received from most implementing bodies, compiled and analyzed by Source Protection staff to respond to the reportable items in the public facing and supplementary Annual Progress Reporting forms.

Reportable Themes

The public and supplemental reporting forms are grouped into themes, corresponding to the reporting that was provided by implementing bodies. Themes include overall progress (implementation status) of policies, monitoring policy implementation, municipal progress, septic inspections, risk management plans, provincial progress, and source protection awareness. There are ten general sections in the public facing annual report, and over 60 reportable items included in the supplemental reporting form for the MECP.

Public Facing Annual Progress Report

The public portion of the Annual Progress Report includes an introductory section which includes Source Protection Committee comments, information about the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Region, and an overall 'grade' for the region in achieving source protection plan objectives. Where the form asks for grading, there are three options for the SPC:

- P: Progressing Well/On Target, meaning that the majority of the source protection plan policies have been implemented and/or are progressing
- S: Satisfactory, meaning that some of the source protection plan policies have been implemented and/or are progressing
- L: Limited progress, meaning that a few of the source protection plan policies have been implemented and/or are progressing

It has ten general sections, that pull information from the MECP supplemental reporting form, and include:

1. **Source Protection Plan Policies:** this section reports a percentage of the policies that are considered to be 'implemented' and 'in progress' in the region. It requires the SPC to grade the overall plan implementation progress, based on information gathered from the implementing bodies. Progress has been made in implementing many policies in the Source Protection Plan according to the timelines set out in the plan. There are 56 policies addressing drinking water threat activities, 50 of which address significant drinking water threat activities, and 6 that address moderate-low drinking water threat activities. There are 16 policies that are not directly associated with addressing specific drinking water threat activities, such as administrative policies, education-outreach, transportation corridors and transport pathways and 15 monitoring policies. Most of the policies are either in progress or are considered implemented.
2. **Municipal Progress:** this section summarizes information on municipal implementation progress for land-use planning and asks the committee to grade the overall progress towards implementing these policies. It also includes information on day to day planning decisions from the municipal progress reports.
3. **Septic Inspections:** there are two on-site sewage systems that require inspection every five years, according to the Building Code. These two systems are inspected by the Principal Authority. The committee is asked to grade the overall progress towards implementing these policies.
4. **Risk Management Plans:** there are several plans required at sites throughout the Mississippi-Rideau Region. Several plans have been negotiated and agreed to, and a few are under negotiation currently or have had a site visit by a Risk Management Official or Inspector. More detailed information is provided in the supplemental form outlining the number of inspections, and information is available outlining delays in implementing risk management policies. The committee is asked to grade the overall progress towards implementing these policies.

5. **Provincial Progress:** this section gives a general summary of information on the reviews by provincial implementing bodies and reports on the progress reviewing previously issued provincial approvals and asks the committee to grade the overall progress.
6. **Awareness and Change in Behaviour:** this report section provides information on road signs in the region and on education and outreach programs and tools in use. No grading is required.
7. **Source Protection Plan Policies: Summary of Delays:** this section discusses policy tools where there are delays in implementation, causing the policy to not meet the dates specified in the source protection plan. In the Mississippi-Rideau Region, this section focuses on discussing a few risk management policies for existing activities. No grading is required.
8. **Source Water Quality: Monitoring and Actions:** no issues have been identified in our assessment reports regarding the quality of municipal drinking water sources, so this section has not been completed. No grading is required.
9. **Science-based Assessment Reports: Work Plans:** no work plans were required to be implemented for our assessment reports, so this section has not been completed. No grading is required.
10. **More from the Watershed:** this section highlights some of the feedback received during the annual reporting process from municipalities with legally binding policy responsibilities. No grading is required.

Annual Progress Reporting Supplemental Form for Source Protection

This form (now online) is meant to provide a standardized form across the province for sharing critical information from the source protection authorities on implementation progress. It is to be completed and provided to the MECP by May 1, 2024.

The report has been provided along with the agenda for committee information and discussion, and to support the information provided in the public facing annual progress report. This report, along with the public facing report, is for submission directly to the MECP to provide additional detail they require to assess plan implementation progress.

Attachments

1. Source Protection Annual Progress Report – Draft for SPC review (public facing report) – attached as a separate document
2. Annual Progress Reporting Supplemental Form for Source Protection – Draft for SPC information (MECP report) – attached as a separate document