

PANEL ON THE FUTURE OF THE TRENT SEVERN WATERWAY

Submission by: Trent Talbot River Property Owners Association

We represent the Trent Talbot River Property Owner's Association located in the Bolsover area, just east of Lake Simcoe. There are over 500 residential properties within a 4-kilometre radius of Bolsover. Most of these properties are located along the Trent-Severn Waterway and encompass three separate Municipalities, The Township of Brock, the Township of Ramara and the City of Kawartha Lakes.

As property owners along the TSW we certainly have an interest in the management of the system. These interests include water level management, weed control, waterfront tax structure, and escalation of poor water quality over past ten years and how they impact the ecosystem, recreational uses and tourism of the waterway.

Water Levels

Water levels are currently being maintained the same way they have for the past 40 years. Water levels need to reflect current precipitation trends. We do not get the same amount of snow and rain as we have in the past. Also the water table itself is gradually becoming lower. A study should be conducted to determine if the changes in water level of the TSW contribute to the decline in the water table. Several residents in our area that have dug wells report that their wells go dry after the water has been lowered in the fall. Does the water level need to be lowered so much?

Current practice is to lower the water level in the fall, then raise the water level in the early spring only to let it back out again in order to provide sufficient current for the Walleye to spawn at the control dam located at Regional Road 50 east of Lake Simcoe. This results in unnecessary drainage of headwaters, especially in years of low precipitation during winter and spring.

Changes in water levels cause annual erosion to shorelines. The raising of water levels prior to a full ice melt in the spring damages docks and property.

Sudden changes in water levels, such as occurred at Lock 37 in the summer of 2005 has resulted in unnecessary fish kills and property damage. No follow-up to reported damage has ever occurred from TSW to the homeowners who filed reports and complaints and had inspections conducted.

Low water levels during winter can result in oxygen deprivation for the fish especially in shallow lakes such as Canal Lake.

Most recently, in late April and early May of this year, the water level dropped in the system below lock 38 sufficient to cause a fish kill.

Excessive high or low water levels can cause the system to be shut down, affecting tourism.

Excessive water leaking between the logs in the dams is contributing to the waste of water. In our area, there is as much water going through the logs in the dams as there is going over them. If the

logs were properly maintained and cleaned of zebra mussels as they are being removed in the fall, this would help to prevent some of this waste.

Water Quality

Water quality in the TSW is in decline. Since the summer of 1997 this decline has been visibly steady.

In 1997 residents could swim across the canal in our area, touching no weeds, seeing no weeds and stepping onto an occasional sandbar. Now you can't swim there at all.

Weeds Immediately West of Lock 38



The weeds are choking the waterway. There needs to be a concerted effort by all levels of government and the public in reducing the pollution that is contributing to the decline of water quality. E-coli has been reported in Canal Lake and along the system. All of this goes into Lake Simcoe.

Major sources of pollution are poorly maintained or inadequate septic systems, phosphates, farm livestock too close to the waterway and possibly, in this area, the cumulative impacts of many quarries discharging high levels of ammonium nitrates.

Excessive weed growth is contributing to the poor water quality causing a decline in recreational enjoyment such as swimming, water skiing and boating in general. Excessive weed growth is also contributing to the decline of tourism along the waterway. We have heard from many visitors to our local marinas that they would not return to the TSW because of mechanical breakdowns of their vessels due to weeds.

Weeds in channel between locks 38 and 39



Fairhavens Conference Centre attracts 5000 visitors per year, has a children's camp and a very active property. Should these visitors and children risk being tangled in weeds while swimming at Fairhaven's beach?

Weeds at Fairhaven's Beach



Weeds at Fairhaven's



Excessive weed growth is contributing to oxygen deprivation for fish. Fish kills are frequent.

Homeowners, frustrated with weeds, have taken matters into their own hands and are using a variety of methods to control them. Some methods that we have heard of include chemicals dumped into the water, old bed springs dragged along the bottom to pull out the roots, cutting of weeds, throwing in tons of cattle seed corn hoping the fish will eat the corn and by doing so, break up the weeds. Are these methods environmentally friendly or do they provide additional risks to our health and the environment? Weed control should be properly assessed and managed by TSW.

Excessive weed growth may be contributing to changes in the ecosystem. Over the past several years we have noticed a change in the fish species in our area. Pike are now in abundance in our area and 10 years ago there were none. In the past two years Crappie have appeared for the first time. During the course of this Walleye and Muskie have all but disappeared. Now Zebra Mussels flourish and are damaging property such as water intake pipes, docks and boats.

Over the past three years we have encountered a horrible smelly green slime that covers our waters in mid summer that can only be dissipated by a heavy rainstorm. This has been contributed to algae bloom from excessive weed growth. Try swimming in this and you come out of the water smelling like you were rummaging in a garbage dump.

Foul Smelling Slime



Decomposition of weeds adds to the fertilizer base for future weed growth.

Maintenance of Structures:

Lack of maintenance is causing great apprehension among residents of this area. In 2001 we brought the poor condition of the dam at lock 37 to the attention of the TSW. At that time the dam appeared that it had deteriorated to the point that there was a small hole passing water through the bottom of the dam. After consultation with experts in 2005 the TSW announced in 2006 that repairs would begin in January of 2007. To date these repairs have not begun. Now we have heard rumors that repairs will not begin until 2008. Although the TSW had promised to keep residents up to date on the condition of this dam they have not told us why the repairs have been postponed. In the meantime the dam has further deteriorated to the point that we now have a waterfall penetrating the dam. If this dam were to be compromised, the lives and properties of residents downstream would be at great risk, not withstanding the environmental damage that would result. Proper maintenance and communication with the community in cases such as this are essential.

Dam at Lock 37



Tax Structure:

Most waterfront property owners are there for the recreational uses the water affords and as a result they pay higher taxes. Currently in Brock Township, a home assessed under \$300,000 is paying taxes equivalent to a home in Toronto worth \$1 Million. However, the current quality of the water is so poor that it is inaccessible for recreational uses. The health risks are unknown. Should we be paying higher taxes for this?

Slimy Weeds Around Dock



With regard to the discussions of future federal taxes being imposed on residents along the TSW, we are absolutely opposed. We have been paying higher taxes for years and nothing has been forthcoming other than an increase in weeds and poorer water quality.

Suggestions:

1. Adequate funding needs to be provided for the maintenance and care of this great Historical Waterway to ensure its health into the future. As stated by the Federal Environmental Minister, the TSW is a jewel. It is time to start maintaining and cleaning the jewelry!
2. A new water level monitoring system needs to be developed, factoring in precipitation forecasts and if those forecasts are not met or exceeded then water levels need to be adjusted to compensate, especially over the winter months. Response needs to be immediate.
3. Concerted effort by all levels of government and the public to reduce pollution. This should include monitoring and upgrading of septic systems, greater control over any discharge into the waterway, control over phosphates, legislated setbacks for livestock and industrial enterprises from the waterway and its tributaries and education for everyone about all of the above.
4. Institute a weed control program until pollution reduction programs show results. Balance is the key. The TSW should be managing the weed control throughout the waterway so that we don't have people throughout the system taking matters into their own hands.
5. Engage the public to assist in the management of the waterway. Many residents have lived along these shores for generations. Listen to them. They should be recognized as critical stakeholders in its environmental management. Mutual education and communication will benefit everyone.
6. Tourism is on a steady decline. This waterway should be showcased and integrated with a provincial and national tourism plan. This cannot happen unless the government properly maintains the system in every way.

Thank you for allowing us to make this presentation. Should you have any questions we would be pleased to answer them.