



TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON

REPORT

Item No.

REPORT TO: Reeve Vincent and Members of Council
PREPARED BY: Jeff Molenhuis
DATE: 19/06/2017
SUBJECT: Howson Dam – MNRF and DFO Review of Species at Risk
ATTACHMENTS: None

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby receives the June 19, 2017 Howson Dam – MNRF and DFO Review of Species at Risk for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2016, Council directed staff to further investigate the impact of Species at Risk, which was identified during the natural environment review portion of the Environmental Assessment for the Howson Dam. Through staff recommendation, Council also directed staff to further investigate stability of the dam through a Dam Safety Assessment, subject to the results of the SAR investigation.

In early 2017, staff recommended moving forward with the stability component prior to receiving a formal response on the SAR. This portion of the project was awarded at the June 5th Council meeting.

DISCUSSION

In the process of the Environmental Assessment project, an unknown Species at Risk (SAR) was identified in the project area. This species was the Black Redhorse Sucker fish. This species is regulated through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF). There was also a known mussel species in the project area. This species is regulated through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Both species require preliminary work in context to the proposed construction activities in order to determine if the activity would be of any impact to the species. At the time of reporting to Council in late 2016 and early 2017, it was unclear how the presence of these species would impact any of the options presented within the EA.

There was strong support following the first Public Meeting to pursue rehabilitation. Accordingly, direction was given by Council to proceed with safety assessment following the administrative guidelines for the dam repair or rehabilitation projects, subject to confirmation that the SAR would not impact moving forward with any proposed types of work. Accordingly, an Information Gathering Form was submitted to the MNRF for review and comment in context to rehabilitation and repair. At the same time, preliminary information was submitted to the DFO in context to rehabilitation and repair. Staff also recommended to council to move ahead with a stepped format safety assessment prior to receiving formal response from MNRF or DFO as preliminary feedback from the Ministry indicated that the work considered would likely not be precluded by the presence of SAR species.

Preliminary feedback was received in April from the MNRF. Without any extensive in-water work, the MNRF did not have concern with the proposed work. We asked the MNRF for comments related to other potential project outcomes in the EA process, that being significant structure repairs, potential bridge removal or decommissioning. In late May, the MNRF provided feedback that if no significant changes to the approach to complete the work were made, there was no concern with the preliminary work submitted and therefore no further SAR permitting would be needed.

At the same time the MNRF submission was completed, staff worked with NRSI to submit a duplicate form list to the DFO in relation to a known mussels species in the area. Staff were waiting on complete information on both elements of the black redhorse and mussels before reporting back. The informal feedback in early June from review by DFO was that any change in water level that would impact mussels habitat would require additional field work for detailed surveys. We are still awaiting formal feedback on that from DFO.

In both cases, it appears that the presence of the black redhorse and mussels would have limited impact on project work depending on the scope and approach to construction work proposed.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts at this time.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

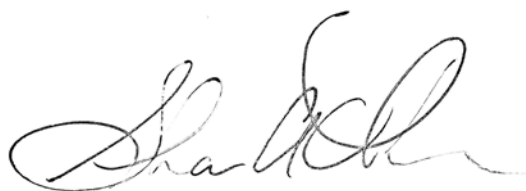
This information can be useful in evaluating the options presented within the EA. If Council wishes to proceed with one option or another, this preliminary environmental investigation should give them an idea of potential impacts the presence of these species may have on any project work.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 2 that residents are engaged and well informed. Goal 3 the Township is healthy and safe. Goal 4 the administration is fiscally responsible and strives for operational excellence. Goal 5 is that the natural environment is valued and protected.



Jeff Molenhuis, Director of Public Works



Sharon Chambers, CAO