

Wingham's Howson Dam safety assessment report will provide 'critical information' for council

A look over the environmental and safety assessments for the Howson Dam since 2016

NEWS Jan 18, 2018 by [Kelsey Dunbar](#) Wingham Advance Times



Pictured are workers, possibly from KGS Group Consulting Engineers, taking core samples on Jan. 16. - Rennie Alexander/photo

WINGHAM — The safety assessment of the Howson Dam is nearing completion.

In an update to the council of the Township of North Huron, director of public works, Sean McGhee wrote that all data required for the dam safety assessment report should be collected by spring of this year.

“This report will be brought forward to council as a matter of highest priority and will provide critical information to assist in the determination of next steps,” McGhee wrote.

The dam safety assessment is only one aspect of the encompassing environmental assessment (EA).

RELATED CONTENT

-

[Species at risk will have limited impact on Howson Dam project](#)

-

[Nearly \\$80K to be spent on Howson Dam safety assessment](#)

-

[Howson Dam committee request committee of council title](#)

-

[Written comments needed from North Huron citizens for environmental assessment of Howson Dam](#)

Council voted to include the Howson Dam EA at the cost of roughly \$80,000 in the 2016 budget, with some funds to come out of the Howson Dam reserve fund. Ultimately, council voted to take the EA route to ensure they are making the best decision possible before taking on the costs of repairs.

EAs have a 10-year shelf life. That means council would have 10 years to implement the suggested project once the process is completed and the EA report is published.

The total estimated cost of the EA was later proposed by GSS Engineering Consultants Ltd. at the cost of \$88,815 excluding HST and the former director of public works estimated the assessment would have been completed by the end of the year (2016).

Community input was part of the EA research, and GSS Engineering Consultants Ltd. hosted a very well attended public information meeting on Sept. 28, 2016 to consider the alternatives for the dam.

Public input, in the form of a signed petition, determined citizens would like to see the dam cosmetically refurbished so it isn't an eyesore, and to raise the water levels.

In November 2016, the EA hit a small detour, as species of fish and mussels at risk were identified in the Howson Dam project area. The species are regulated by the MNRF and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). Both required preliminary work to determine if the dam project would impact the species.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) later stated that they did not have concerns with the proposed work to the Howson Dam, in regards to the species at risk found to be living in the Maitland River.

The EA process was then suspended until detailed information relating to the Howson Dam could be gathered to answer questions regarding the permit requirements under the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act (LRIA).

In June 2017, the Township of North Huron voted to award the safety assessment RFP to a Mississauga company — KGS Group Consulting Engineers — at a total estimated fee of \$79,592.

A four-phase work plan was provided. Phase 1 includes dam hazard classification and inflow design flood analysis, while Phase 2 will focus on a breach analysis. Phase 3 and Phase 4 include preliminary stability analysis; concrete coring and foundation structural sampling; and rehabilitation scope and feasibility.

A member of the Howson Dam and Pond Committee, Rennie Alexander, said KGS Group Consulting Engineers were seen taking core samples on Jan. 16.

The completed report will include comprehensive data to assist council in the preferred course of action and at a level of detail that is consistent with the requirements of MNRF and LRIA, prior to advancing with any long-term plan surrounding the Howson Dam.

by [Kelsey Dunbar](#)

Kelsey Dunbar is a general assignment reporter/photographer with The Wingham Advance-Times. Contact her at kdunbar@wingham.com. Follow her on [Twitter](#) and the Advance-Times [Facebook](#). Email: kdunbar@wingham.com [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)