

## FRENCH RIVER SOURCE WATER PROTECTION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the French River Source Water Protection Committee was held at the Tatamagouche Library on February 28, 2019 at 10:30 am.

- Present:** Councillor Mike Gregory, Chair  
Mayor Christine Blair  
Deputy Mayor Geoff Stewart  
Kim Baldwin, Citizen Rep  
Perry Swan, Village Commission Rep  
Greg Watson, Citizen Rep  
Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development  
Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works  
Michael Allen, Nova Scotia Environment (Watershed Planner)
- Regrets:** Doug Bastow, North Shore River Restoration Group  
Garth Demont, Department of Natural Resources
- Approval of Agenda:** The meeting was called to order at 10:40 am.  
  
The agenda was approved.  
  
Moved by Deputy Mayor Stewart, Seconded by Mayor Blair.
- Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the meeting of January 15, 2019 were approved.  
  
Moved by Mayor Blair, Seconded by Kim Baldwin.
- Business Arising:** None.
- Circulation of Meeting Invites – DNR:** The Committee discussed the current circulation list for meeting invitations and meeting materials and agreed to keep Energy and Mines on the list.
- Uncapped Exploration Well in Watershed Area:** In January of 2019, the County became aware of an uncapped exploration well/drill hole located within the watershed area. The hole is continuously discharging water, which was tested by the Province and found to contain arsenic. Councillor Gregory visited the site over the winter and noted that water leaving the hole is leaving a brown stain, and the hole – which has no casing – appears to be about 2 inches in diameter. There is no visible discoloration about 30 feet away from the hole, at which point the water is running clear. The land owner tested his own well water 1 to 2 years ago and found no evidence of arsenic. The Department of Energy and Mines was aware of the uncapped drill hole and chose not to inform the County and the Tatamagouche Source Water Protection Committee. Committee members felt this showed very poor communication and did not instill confidence in the Province's ability to manage exploration activities. The well in question had been drilled in 2011 and had likely been leaking since then. At the landowner's request, Energy and Mines committed to capping the well but did not provide a schedule or timeline. The Committee requested that a letter be sent to the Province expressing discontent with the lack

of communications on this matter. The following motion was made:

“That staff draft a letter to Energy and Mines on behalf of the Committee expressing dissatisfaction with communications on the matter of the uncapped drill hole, asking for information on other possible uncapped drill holes in the watershed area, asking for details on the plans to monitor and seal any uncapped drill holes, but reiterating that the Committee still wishes to have Mines and Energy at the table.”

Moved by: Mayor Blair  
Seconded by: Greg Watson

Motion carried.

**Forestry Code of Practice:** Consideration was given to which aspects, if any, of the provincial code of practice for forestry should be included within the designated watershed documents for the French River Watershed. The decision was made to keep a general reference to the code at this point and focus on mining for the time being.

The Lahey Report on forestry was only recently finalized and may result in changes to the Forestry Code. M. Allen provided a sampling of forestry related excerpts from other designated watershed documents in the Province. Forestry could be addressed at a later time.

**Protected Water Area Designation – Draft Document:**

The draft document was reviewed by C. Macpherson. The definition of water works operator should be ‘the Municipality of Colchester Operator of the Tatamagouche Water Utility’. Other updates in the draft document since January included:

- Definition of development will include mineral extraction
- Requirements for stormwater management planning were removed for single family homes
- A 10m buffer was added between watercourses and homes – clearing up to the edge of the watercourse not permitted.
- Under definitions, (f), mineral exploration will be changed to aggregate.
- Also gravel pits will require stormwater management plans.

Next steps: M. Allen to format the document and review wording. Once he is okay with the content, the document can be presented to Council. This process could take a number of weeks. Once Council has accepted the contents of the document, it can be presented to the public for consultation. Following public consultation, Council can then make a formal application to the Province for the designation.

**SuNNS Group Comments:** Members from the SuNNS group asked to make a few comments. They requested mapping showing previous exploration holes drilled in the watershed area. Their members had concerns for well water quality in the area of the uncapped

exploration/drill hole, due to the presence of arsenic in the well overflow. They have concerns regarding the uncapped well releasing arsenic, and they asked if the County or Province would test their private well water. They were told that testing of their own wells would be their own responsibility. If they did not already have base line quality tests for their own well water, it was recommended that they carry out such tests.

*(Mayor Blair left the meeting at 11:30am).*

Residents who require more information on available labs for water testing services can contact the local office of Nova Scotia Environment. Any residents who feel they should be reimbursed for testing their private wells should contact Energy and Mines. M. Allen noted that arsenic is naturally occurring in many wells in Nova Scotia and that the Province recommends that private wells be tested by their owners for general chemistry once every 2 years.

The SuNNS group noted that they would like financial assistance for the experts they have hired to review the implications of exploration and mining activities in the watershed.

The Committee agreed to move forward with the watershed designation based on the document with the approved modifications and asked that the document be forwarded to NS Environment for review.

Moved by: Greg Watson  
Seconded: Kim Baldwin

Motion carried.

It was noted that the County Solicitor would also need to review the document prior to approval by Council.

The agenda for the next meeting will include a discussion on the Public Consultation process and possible approaches.

**Next Meeting:**

Next meeting is scheduled for April 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am. Location to be confirmed.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

Moved by: Kim Baldwin

Minutes Respectfully Submitted,



Michelle Newell