

FRENCH RIVER SOURCE WATER PROTECTION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the French River Source Water Protection Committee was held at the Tatamagouche Fire Hall on June 8, 2018 at 10:00 am.

- Present:** Councillor Mike Gregory, Chair
Mayor Christine Blair
Deputy Mayor Bill Masters
Greg Watson, Citizen Rep
Kim Baldwin, Citizen Rep
Perry Swan, Village Commission Rep
Doug Bastow, North Shore River Restoration Group
- Michelle Newell, Director of Public Works
- Michael Allen, Nova Scotia Environment (Watershed Planner)
- Regrets:** Crawford Macpherson, Director of Community Development
Garth Demont, Department of Natural Resources
- Approval of Agenda:** The meeting was called to order at 10:10 am and introductions were made around the table. The agenda was approved, motion by Bill Masters, seconded by Doug Bastow.
- Approval of Minutes:** Minutes from the meetings of October 31, 2017 and December 5, 2017 were approved by the Committee with a motion by Doug Bastow, seconded by Kim Baldwin.
- Update – Watershed Uses:** No major changes in watershed uses were identified. One farm is being rented for pasture in Millbrook area, and there has been no further discussion regarding a potential campground in the watershed area.
- Source Water Protection Monitoring:** M. Newell reviewed results of watershed monitoring in the spring. No major issues identified. M. Newell to contact DNR for copies of their baseline monitoring data within the watershed area.
- Mineral Exploration - Update:** In the winter of 2018, Council directed staff to cease work on the development of best management practices for mining within the watershed area. The work exceeded staff's expertise and Council felt such documents should be the responsibility of the Province. The draft request for proposals for exploration within the watershed area should be released by DNR by June 20th. The Committee felt that the document should be reviewed by the County solicitor. Once the draft document is released, the Committee will meet again to review the document and provide feedback to DNR. Notice of the draft RFP will be posted by DNR in The Light, and the document will be open for public comment for 2 to 4 weeks.
- Greg Watson noted how he requires public input on many of his forestry activities. There has been core sampling in the

watershed in the past. Greg Watson requested more clarity on what exploration could look like, as well as, the Committee needs a clear picture of what the exploration/drilling program will be comprised of.

Exploration, even when a permit is issued by the Province, still requires permission for property access by the owner. Doug Bastow talked about his permits via his watercourse work, and they require land owner permission for access to river banks.

Michelle Newell discussed mineral rights and designated activities/Environmental Assessments. Although the Province owns all mineral rights, there may still be an opportunity to control related activities through watershed designation. Nova Scotia Environment controls some of the activities related to mineral exploration, but mining activities are regulated by DNR.

Greg Watson requested a map of all historic drill holes within the watershed area. Michelle Newell to provide DNR's Council Presentation from February 2018 to Greg Watson. Doug Bastow noted that Department of Fisheries may limit the exploration activities. Staff to look into this further.

Protected Watershed Area:

Michael Allen from NSE talked about protected watershed areas. Once an area is legally protected and designated (watershed, wellfield), the Minister can approve regulations for activities within the watershed. This would include activities that Land Use Bylaws could not otherwise control. Only about 1/3 of the province's watersheds are listed as designated protected water areas under section 106 of the environment act. Some designated areas do restrict mining within the watershed, however these have not legally been tested to date. The watershed designation process can be long; Council approval is required, public input and approval from the Minister.

Committee felt it needs a clearer picture on what the mining activities will include, and more certainty on potential control of activities. The Committee requested that staff proceed with an investigation on what is involved in having the watershed designated.

SuNNS Presentation

Gregor Wilson and John Perkins presented on behalf of SuNNS. A copy of their presentation will be forwarded to staff via email. Mr. Wilson commended the Committee for considering watershed designation and provided a list of watersheds that are already designated in the Province.

The presentation included the following points:

- SuNNS wants to increase community awareness of the potential risks to the water supply, as a mutual interest, as all levels of government are concerned with water quality.
- Citizens wish to support sustainable and locally driven economic development, instead of mining.
- The County should start the watershed designation process to protect a future legacy.
- The Utility should formally designate the French River Watershed as a protected area and prohibit mining and exploration. Mining is prohibited in protected water areas in HRM, Yarmouth, Kentville, New Glasgow, and Amherst.
- The original Source Water Protection Plan needs to be updated to address potential mining.
- The designation is not an 'all or none' situation, it can be focused on mining and exploration. They feel that there is a sense that mining is 'inevitable', but the risks are immediate.
- Photos from nearby mining operations in the Bass River area were provided with discussion on the real economic benefits to the community.
- Data was provided on abandoned mining waste in Nova Scotia.

SuNNS also suggested that the gold mining would be open-pit due to economics. Concern was expressed over dust generation during extraction, and acid rock drainage. They felt exploration and mining would be a risk to the economy, health and quality of life in the area.

The group noted that the RFP is being released before the new Mineral Resources Act is being proclaimed. The group is ultimately seeking prohibition of mining within the watershed and they will continue to meet with ministers and senior officials. Karen Casey issued a letter of support for protection of the waters supply.

There was some confusion as to whether or not a land use by law is required in conjunction with watershed designation – staff to follow up at next meeting.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be scheduled once the RPF has been issued.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.

Moved by: Doug Bastow



Michelle Newell