

Full Authority
17 June 2021
Agenda Item: 12

General Manager's Report

Background

The General Manager's report provides a brief update for the Board Members prior to the Board meeting bringing forward additional information and/or progress on initiatives or current issues for the Board members consideration.

Watershed Management

Current Watershed Conditions

- The watershed lake levels are at or above summer recreational levels as per our usual objective to have the lakes ready for the summer season.
- That being said, the current readings are more in line for the end of June rather than the beginning of the second week.
- However, flows are considerably lower than normal. The hydro plant in Marmora is typically off line in the beginning of July when the flow reading on the Crowe River in Marmora dips below 3-4 cms. We have been testing those flow rates in the past week and the plant is sporadically producing electricity.

Anticipated Conditions

- Without at least average rainfall rates for the month of June, the CVCA watershed could easily enter into a Level One drought status.
- As stated in prior years, the number of wetlands and the percentage of area they cover in the watershed help to slowly release water into the system to alleviate drought like conditions or stave them off further into the summer.
- Long range forecasts indicate near normal precipitation for the summer with periods of a possible cool down and intense storm activity. Should this come to fruition, Level 1 or 2 drought conditions could possibly be avoided.

Marmora and Belmont Dams

- Staff continue to have communications with Orillia Power regarding hydro operation, water levels, duty forecast and on call responsibilities.
- Marmora dam fence barrier is being repaired this week to prevent the public from accessing the underside of the west end of the Marmora dam.
- CVCA staff are waiting for the reinstallation of boom logs in front of Marmora and Belmont dams.
- Marmora Dam Barrier has been repaired.

Water Erosion Control Infrastructure Status Update

- The WECI project for Marmora Dam concrete repairs is currently tied at the top of the reserve list with four other projects and is not funded.
- Funding for the Crowe Bride Weir work is waiting for final approval, as it has scored high enough to make the preliminary WECI committee selection list for this year. An announcement is anticipated soon.
- The 2020 Marmora Dam Safety Update report has been circulated to the CVCA. Staff will compile a brief report for the next Board meeting in September to review the report and identify next steps.

Lake Levels

- In general, there has been a growing interest and concern amongst residents in the Crowe Valley watershed regarding lake levels and to a somewhat lesser extent flows in the system.
- As new residents move to the area or relocate their workplace to cottages and homes, there has been a corresponding increase of inquiries coming to the office. Expectations continue to climb as well that the lakes will be at the perfect level all the time and sooner in the year, such as immediately after the spring freshet.
- Chandos Lake levels seem to be the primary focus this year, perhaps since one of the largest lakes in our watershed does not have a water control structure to control levels.
- In addition, without a dam, Chandos Lake was not included in the engineer's report to establish summer, winter and the 1:100 year flood elevation. Therefore, when it comes to development, the CVCA staff does not have an accurate assessment of the extent of possible flooding. This leads to an increase in difficult questions and challenges, which may ultimately result in more hearings at the Board level.

- Currently, staff rely heavily on the best data available (water level readings for the past 30+ years and observed flood events) to review development proposals in or near the floodplain. In order to augment this approach, staff have recently contacted our engineer to determine if there is any opportunity to take advantage of newer modelling systems to produce a more accurate 1:100 year flood elevation.
- As well, lake levels on Steenburg Lake remain a significant point of discussion for residents and the Steenburg Lake Community Association.
- Ongoing discussions have and continue to explore the installation of a manual gauge or adding a remote access gauge on the lake. This would allow the compilation of readings which would provide the framework for determining summer and winter elevations.
- A separate report is provided for the Board members regarding changes to the gauge network for the Flood Forecasting and Warning program.

Conservation Areas Update

McGeachie Conservation Area

- Ongoing repairs and maintenance issues have dominated staff time at MCA. Most items have been minor such as replacing a mattress, screen door and replacing a sand box that had become a hazard.
- A new sign (paid for through an Hastings Development Trail Inc. grant) and donated kiosk still need to be put in place at the cottage side of the property.

Callaghan's Rapids Conservation Area

- Volunteers have continued to inform the CVCA of ongoing illegal ATV activity and using Callaghan's as a garbage dumpsite.
- Volunteers have been authorized to create natural barriers on a path along side the Crowe River. This path has been the most environmentally destructive. It is probably one of the most popular paths as it offers significant "mudding" opportunities for the ATV user group we are attempting to discourage.

- The OPP SAVE Unit was deployed on the May long weekend to ensure ATV users were checked on the Eastern Ontario Trail Alliance trail prior to using the trail that runs through Callaghan's.
- As part of the plan to curtail illegal activity, a report has been submitted to the CVCA by a volunteer which outlines potential next steps for the CVCA. It has been attached for the Board's consideration, review and decision for next steps.

Crowe Bridge Conservation Area

- No further updates on Crowe Bridge regarding the extension for the agreement at this time.
- CVCA staff are waiting for the engineer to conduct a site visit to the property to begin the assessment of the weir. Higher water flows were a concern until recently as well as the COVID stay at home order.

Miscellaneous

- Andrew McIntyre has been working with Fleming College students this semester. Andrew had submitted a project proposal to for mapping wetlands and possibly other natural features in the watershed using imagery available to the students.
- The project was chosen by a group of GIS students as their primary project and Andrew has been in contact with the students on a weekly basis.
- This will map wetlands that have not been identified as regulated and if the results of the project are positive, it could easily be a tool to incorporate into the regulations program at the CVCA.
- The project is set to wrap up by the end of June and will be presented to their professor at the college. Anyone interested in viewing their presentation are welcomed to participate. The contact link will be available at the time of the Board meeting.