

Full Authority
19 September 2019
Agenda Item: 14

General Manager's Report

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.

1. Watershed Management

Summer Recreational Levels- Fall Drawdown

Fortunately, water conditions leading up to the summer recreational season were ideal for the CVCA watershed to endure hot dry summer conditions. Water levels in waterways were above average until late in the spring/early summer. In conjunction with these conditions, wetlands were full and would slowly discharge water into the system. As a result, water levels in the dam controlled lakes have remained at seasonal summer recreational levels into September. Only two lakes have slipped slightly below the targeted summer levels. Meanwhile, other watersheds across the Province that do not have as an extensive wetland ecosystem have begun to suffer with drought conditions.

Now that the peak summer recreational period has been winding down, the CVCA begins to implement the fall drawdown.

Water Management – Fall Draw Down

Fall weather means cooler temperatures, shorter days and the execution of the fall drawdown of lake levels on controlled lakes in the Crowe Valley watershed.

The fall drawdown or the intentional lowering of lake levels is a watershed management tool the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority uses to mitigate the effects of another normal cyclical event, the spring flood.

First and foremost, the fall draw down has been a “regular” fall event since the construction of many of the dams on the Crowe River, lakes and its tributaries. Every year, staff reduce lake levels by opening sluiceways by simply removing the stop logs which were in place to maintain higher summer recreational levels. It is the lowering of the water on these lakes which creates storage capacity (extra space) for the spring freshet (runoff). This extra capacity helps the CVCA to mitigate any potential flooding resulting from the freshet. Typically, the lowering of the lakes averages approximately 35 – 40

centimetres (14 to 16 inches), depending on the lake and the dam's discharge capacity. This water management strategy is a normal practice by the CVCA to help protect lives and property during the spring freshet. Of course, the magnitude of a flood in the spring will vary from a minimal flood where very little property is affected or damaged to a 1:100 year flood (or even worse). Therefore the CVCA draws down lake levels every year to be prepared.

The CVCA begins the fall drawdown cycle relatively early in the autumn season for one specific reason, which is to respect the natural cycle of certain fish species in the northern part of the watershed. Managing lake levels to help protect people and their personal belongings during floods is vital, but the CVCA has an obligation to work with nature's cycles and rhythms to reduce or eliminate any impacts from the actions CVCA takes as it implements the watershed management strategy.

For example, the CVCA starts the drawdown on Paudash Lake to accommodate lake trout. This particular species will spawn generally on rocky reefs or shoals in the fall. If the water was left at the summer level during the spawn, then, as the water is lowered, it would leave the spawn "high and dry", killing the eggs. Therefore, the CVCA begins lowering Paudash Lake early in September and finishes the draw down to the winter level by the 30th of September.

The remainder of the draw down follows a progression of lowering lake levels from north to south in the watershed during the period from 1 October to 15 November. In total, the CVCA removes stop logs at the dams located on Paudash, Wollaston, St. Ola, Steenburgh, Kasshabog, Oak, Round, Cordova, Belmont, and Crowe Lakes.

The draw down is targeted to be completed by the November date in order to ensure lakes are at their winter setting before the winter freeze. Of course, the CVCA's target could easily be delayed if heavy rains arrive late in the autumn. This would add a significant amount of water into the watershed system making it difficult to reduce lake levels. However, should this possibility occur, the CVCA will take the necessary steps (remove more stop logs) to reduce lake levels to the winter setting as soon as feasible.

Although the CVCA watershed has experienced dry conditions this summer, the drawdown will proceed as normal in order to ensure the extra capacity is attained for the spring runoff.

Current Watershed Conditions

- Current levels and flows are reasonably close to summer recreational levels.
- Rainfall amounts throughout the watershed have been lower than average for the months of July and August.

Anticipated Conditions

- The CVCA anticipates the fall drawdown to proceed as per the usual dates for each of the dam controlled lakes.
- At this time, staff do not anticipate the drawdown will be significant. However, current conditions could easily change as the watershed enters into the fall season. Often fall rains are greater in total amounts than the preceding summer. Water tables/soil conditions will determine the fall drawdown.
- CVCA staff will continue to monitor weather conditions and operate dams as required to mitigate effects of rainfall as the drawdown is conducted.

2. Administration

The Asset Management training is ongoing with Amanda completing the third session in Kingston on the 9th of September. Roddy Bolivar, of Bolivar~Phillips Water Resource Specialists who has been conducting the training will be at the CVCA on the 24th of September for an individual session.

3. Conservation Areas

McGeachie Trails Improvement Update

Further to the presentation given by Cathy Trimble at the June meeting, there has been some progress to trail enhancement for the McGeachie Conservation Area during the summer. Highlights include:

- Hastings Destination Trails Inc. (HDTI) Chair Cathy Trimble, North Hastings Economic Development Committee (NHEDC) Representative and myself attended the Hastings County Planning Committee Meeting on 13th August to request permission to reallocate funds from Hastings County to cover expenses not identified in the Trillium Grant submission.
- An agreement between the CVCA and NHEDC has been drafted to allow the refurbishment of the McGeachie Trails to proceed. The document is currently being reviewed by our solicitor and will include provisions that the CVCA is not responsible for the work or that any additional resources will be required from the CVCA.
- The trail refurbishment will include funding for upgrades to the trails, signage, new washroom facility and project management expenses. Approximately \$40,000 has been allocated for MCA.
- Regarding short and long term maintenance, the CVCA will be working with HDTI and volunteers to ensure the trail remains at a standard consistent with the other projects in HDTI.

- Work should be progressing shortly as the fall window is unpredictable and the Trillium Grant is only approved for 12 months, ending in January of 2020.

3. Miscellaneous

Crowe Bridge

- Staff have recently assessed the current condition on the campground side of Crowe Bridge Conservation Area and have made some progress to date to eliminate liability issues and reduce vandalism.
- Privy vaults will be covered.
- Old gatehouse to be boarded.