

Full Authority
16 June 2016
Agenda Item: 14

Low Water Response

Background

As the Board Members know and understand, the CVCA is responsible for flood forecasting and warning as part of the Authority's water management program. The other end of the spectrum includes the CVCA's responsibility to implement a program to prepare and coordinate a response plan in the event of low water or drought conditions. This agenda item is to provide a brief background of the program and notification of the Board's responsibilities.

Purpose and Objectives

This program recognizes that water management needs to be approached in a coordinated manner at both the provincial and local level. The provincial role is to provide overall direction through policies and guidelines, central information storage and analysis and emergency support. At the local level, the conservation authority is responsible for monitoring levels, information collection and program delivery. As part of this program and in response to low water conditions, Water Response Teams have been established in the past to assist with implementing the response

Therefore the purpose of the Crowe Valley Water Response Team (WRT) is to coordinate the activities of water management agencies with respect to dissemination of information, analysis and response to water events, especially in the event of a severe drought.

Specific objectives include:

- To characterize the Crowe Valley Watershed with respect to water resources and water demands.
- To identify water concerns including resource protection and adequate supply.
- To identify and categorize low water conditions through collection and monitoring of precipitation, surface water level/flow, and groundwater level data (if available) and comparison of this data to historical values.
- To recommend action for response to low water conditions and to implement water management strategies.
- To communicate with user groups to fully understand the water demands.
- To provide advice to local, provincial and federal decision makers.
- To evaluate the role of the Team and the effectiveness of the Water Response Program.

Membership

Certain organizations are required members of the WRT as a result of their organizational mandates, legislative tools, communication abilities and background data. The following membership of the Crowe Valley Water Response Team will include:

- Crowe Valley Conservation Authority representative (voting member)
- One representative from all Member Municipalities of the CVCA (voting members)
- Unimin Mines Representative (voting member)
- Federation of Ontario Cottagers representative (voting member)
- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change representative
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry representative
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs representative

The WRT Members' Commitments

- Partnering with the province to ensure coordination and local watershed support
- Considering and incorporating local knowledge and indicators of low water
- Ensuring that public concerns are heard and taken into consideration
- Attending meetings, communicating back to their sectors, sharing relevant data and implementing drought management tools
- Identify actions needed to manage the response to drought on a watershed basis
- In extreme drought, the WRT will provide advice to local and provincial decision makers.

Indicators

For example, if the stream flow indicator is used in the summer, a Level 1 would be declared if the monthly flow is less than 70% of the lowest average summer month flow. A complete chart of the levels and thresholds will be provided to the WRT should a meeting be required.

Until that time when a meeting is required, CVCA staff will be monitoring the primary indicators of low water conditions within the water bodies in the CVCA watershed. When the indicator conditions are approaching a Level 1 condition, the CVCA will initiate communications between team members. A meeting will be called to confirm a Level 1 condition and any change of status will be at the decision of the team. There are three levels of drought which can be declared, each with more severe restrictions.

The last WRT meetings were held in the summer of 2012 to address drought like conditions.

Financial Support

Recently, a 2016 Funding Protocol for Ontario Low Water Response was received from the Ministry of Natural Resources Surface Water Monitoring Centre. It outlined the eligible costs for 2016 and includes support primarily for the following

Meetings (ie. room rental, volunteer travel)

Education (ie. public outreach, presentation materials)

Communication (ie. media, print, advertising, mailing)

Requests for planned/anticipated funding in these categories must be made directly to the A/Coordinator of the Surface Water Monitoring Centre and all final expenditures must be documented, itemized and submitted to MNRF by December 15th, 2016.

Since there are changes to the funding support (ie. no resources allocated to staff time), Conservation Ontario has offered to collate a response on behalf of all CAs to the Ministry.

Board Discussion