

WATER LEVELS

NEWSLETTER

Worried about Lake Levels...the new Dam is coming..

but the road to final approval has been long and “rocky”!

As you may know, the Horseshoe Lake Association was formed to address the controversial issue of returning the lake to “normal” levels following the dredging at the mouth of the culvert in late fall of 2003 to remove what was deemed an unauthorized and therefore illegal restriction where the lake flows into Blackstone Creek. The HLA was successful in having a temporary weir installed in the fall of 2005 at a height it hoped would return the lake close to its previous levels while the process to establish a more permanent structure at the “correct” level was pursued. It was the beginning of a long, frustrating and emotionally packed process that will soon be coming to a satisfactory end.

In the summer of 2008, after a number of public meetings and various removals & replacements of the weir and threats of legal action by some factions, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) adjusted the height of the temporary rock weir to its present height and a line was drawn on the culvert as a marker to help define the placement of a permanent dam at the same height as the rock weir. This action by MNR was the result of their review of all information gathered from the public meetings, presentations by HLA, discussions and correspondence with dissenting Horseshoe Lake property owners, concerns expressed by property owners on the downstream lakes fed by the Horseshoe Lake outflow and the laws regarding the unlawful flooding of private lands. Even Donna Cansfield, then the Minister of Natural Resources, was in attendance at one of the later such meetings. The adjustment of the weir height by MNR was witnessed by elected officials of Seguin Township, as were concerned residents of Horseshoe Lake, including several Horseshoe Lake Association Executives, and representatives concerned about environment and flow to the lakes downstream from Horseshoe Lake. The height of the weir as determined by the MNR represents the maximum height that could meet their approval and corresponds with their survey records of historical water levels before there was illegal tampering with the outflow from the lake. Following this action, HLA was charged by MNR in a letter of Oct 2008 with the responsibility of following the application process and ensuring the temporary weir was not tampered with and that it and the culvert were kept clear of debris that could further restrict water flow to the downstream wetlands and lakes.

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Beginning that day, the HLA was to follow a process defined by MNR under legislation on behalf of all concerned parties to see that the formal application for the construction of the permanent structure to replace the temporary unauthorized weir was approved. The permanent dam would allow for the holding back of water in the lake during the very low water periods of mid summer and for the release of water downstream in the fall and early spring periods of high water. All of the concerned parties were to be included in the application process as MNR would communicate with all interested parties on all matters concerning the application until it was properly approved and the dam installed. This process has been ongoing over the past 3 years.

Since that time:

- The initial application to MNR has been expanded to include application approval by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Department of Transport and the Township of Seguin.
- Concerned parties have requested an environmental impact study to research the possible effects on downstream environments.
- Engineering companies have designed three different physical structures for the dam which have been vetted for functional approval.
- A Registered Land Surveyor has been retained so that measurements of low water, high water, existing weir height and proposed dam height can be compared and verified.
- A full contract for indemnity purposes has been negotiated with the township and insurance policies have been defined.

- An environmental consultant has trained several designated persons on the art of flow measurement. Flow measurements through the culvert were initiated in the summer of 2011 and will be again made in the summer of 2012 and beyond for comparison purposes.
- An Operating Plan for the maintenance and adjustment of the Dam has been completed and approved by MNR.
- An Operating Committee has been formed by MNR with three appointed committee members including:
 - Councilor Ian Mead of Archipelago Township representing downstream concerns,
 - One Horseshoe Lake resident who is not a member of HLA (Mr. David Andrews), and
 - One member representing the HLA membership (Mr. Keith Higgins)

They will report quarterly to the township and to MNR and their Annual report to the same bodies will be made public.

- Fisheries and Oceans have determined that the proposed Dam will not adversely affect fish habitats.
- The Department of Transport is still considering our proposal and has requested significant amounts of engineering and construction data. This process has been on going since the summer of 2010.

As each piece of new data, design or information is created and it is circulated for comment by MNR for input from all of the “interested parties” that have been identified themselves in the process.

Current Status

We have made tremendous strides forward in the past 3 years and as you can see from the above list there have been a number of significant accomplishments. We are not, however at end of job yet!

The final application to the Department of Transport has not been approved nor has the application to MNR pending finalization of the design of the dam. Specifically, the final design of the new dam is held back pending the acceptance of the projected flow of water through the structure as calculated by a hydraulic engineer to ensure downstream wetlands and lakes are not unduly deprived of water from Horseshoe Lake. Perfection in this calculation may not be possible and there has been great study and debate about what is practical and what a good starting point might be so that the structure can proceed. We hope to resolve this final issue soon.

Given the time delay into late October, it will not be possible to finalize all approvals and proceed with installation in 2011. The target for final dam installation is now the low water period in summer 2012. Although your executive is disappointed with the delay, it is important to get it right and we are going to move forward in 2012 as quickly as we can.

We appreciate your support in helping to come to the end of this arduous project! It has been far more complicated, expensive and time consuming than any of us knew at the beginning of the process. It is important we come to end of job soon without any more road blocks as MNR can reject our efforts at any time and revert to their original plan to pull out the rock weir and put nothing in its place.