

February 4, 2013

Summary of Meeting

The Impact of Low Water Levels in Georgian Bay

City of Owen Sound – February 4, 2013

DRAFT

Attendees

Mayor Ellen Anderson – Blue Mountain (by phone)
Mayor Francis Richardson – Meaford
Steve Vokes, Meaford
Dan Buttineau, Meaford
Harley Greenfield, Meaford
Barb Clumpus, Meaford
James McIntosh, Meaford
Mayor Alan Barfoot, Georgian Bluffs
Mayor Debra Haswell, Owen Sound
Brad McRoberts, Owen Sound
Mayor Gord McKay, Midland

Opening

Mayor McKay opened the meeting by presenting a short orientation Powerpoint. The meeting agreed that our focus was to alleviate the economic harm being caused in the short term by declining water levels in Georgian Bay. It was not to debate the cause of or eventual solution to declining water levels on the Great Lakes.

The meeting agenda was to:

- 1) Identify specific impacts on each community. These would be used to create a “record” of 2012/2013 impacts caused by declining water levels.
- 2) Propose ideas for the Plan of Action. (respecting both the Federal and Provincial governments)
- 3) Identify two individuals to join a working group to create and present the Plan. Establish follow-up.

Impacts Upon Community

City of Owen Sound

Mayor Haswell identified the following:

1. Harbour dredging was needed to protect:
 - a. Existing water intake and outfall
 - b. Two public boat launches
 - c. Major tourism event – Salmon Spectacular
2. Private marina and sailing clubs will be affected

3. Cargill Salt, a shoreline industry, has to reduce ship loadings. The company is considering suspending water transport and carrying salt by road
4. P&H Elevators, a shoreline industry, has had to reduce ship loadings
5. Miller Paving, a shoreline aggregate operator, is concerned about low water levels
6. Ontario Northland, operator of the Chi Cheemaun ferry, is concerned about having enough water to dock the ferry in Owen Sound
7. Not sure if BIA has identified this issue
8. Not sure if cottage association(s) have identified this issue

Town of Blue Mountain

Mayor Anderson identified the following:

1. Water intake for the municipality is affected by high turbidity and contamination. Additional purification is required. May have to relocate the intake at a cost of \$6-10 million
2. Boat slips are no longer usable at a cost of \$60,000. On land storage is reduced by about 45% or a cost of \$13,500.
3. Expect a general impact upon area tourism – no cost estimate
4. Beaches closed due to e-coli – no cost estimate
5. Additional dredging related to low water levels required at a cost of \$265,000
6. Invasive species are destroying area beaches – expect related to low water levels

Municipality of Meaford

Mayor Francis Richardson identified the following:

1. Have seen 5 recent applications for shoreline wells. Some are on-hold because of provincial regulations
2. Need emergency dredging to get boats into the harbour. Cost will be \$10-40,000. The declining water levels have negated the earlier dredging done by the municipality
3. Richardson Boats Limited employs 12 people in the selling, provisioning and repair of boats. They are concerned about the future of their business. (Ref: Letter Jan 29, 2013)
4. Municipal marinas are affected
5. Water intake and outflow are fine for now. Concern for the future
6. Federal Coast Guard station is having difficulty getting on/off their dock at certain times
7. Bay River Restaurant is concerned that their patrons will not be able to arrive by boat
8. Not sure if BIA has identified this issue
9. Not sure if cottage association(s) have identified this issue

Township of Georgian Bluffs

Mayor Alan Barfoot identified the following:

1. Have three marinas in the township. Will obtain comment from them
2. Have hundreds of private water lines into the Bay. They may be cut off from water without extending the lines
3. Water intake and outflow are fine for now. Concern for the future
4. Have had difficulty arranging dredging permits because of the divergence between the provincial government and the First Nations
5. Not sure if BIA has identified this issue
6. Not sure if cottage association(s) have identified this issue

Plan of Action

Get support from Counties and District government. Political and financial support may be available. Have Grey County write a letter of support.

Gain support from interested associations: Great Lake Municipalities, ROMA, AMO, environmental associations.

OSUM seems a likely venue. Mayor Haswell will look into organizing an OSUM meeting.

The output from our initiative should be a letter:

- Signed by the three Counties and Districts, plus the twenty sponsoring municipalities
- Identifying the corrective measures (short-term funding and relaxation of provincial regulations)
- Supported by many factual examples of the impact of low water from around Georgian Bay

Commitment

Mayor Ellen Anderson is willing to work on the Working Group

Councillor James McIntosh is willing to work on the Working Group

Mayor McKay agreed to provide a summary to attendees as soon as possible. This would be used as a guide to obtain further “quantifiable” comment from affected persons and organizations.

Mayor McKay agreed to provide feedback to the attendees after the three area meetings are completed.

Attendees agreed to bring the matter to ROMA and to other community leaders who may be able to assist the cause.