



Wheatley River Nitrate Reduction Pilot Project Community Stakeholder Working Group

Session #4: Estuaries / Goals & Strategies

Wheatley River Community Hall, March 16, 2011

In attendance:

Phillip VanNieuwenhuyzen, Shane Gillis, Jeremy Stead, Travis Dykerman, Melvin Ling, Stewart MacRae, Randall Nieuwhof, Ann Wheatley, Vernon Rodd, John Anthony Langdale, Vicki Reddin-Gauthier (Community Stakeholder Working Group Members), Austin MacDonald (Public), Cindy Crane, Mike vandenHeuvel, Sean Ledgerwood, Jennifer Roper, Erica MacDonald (resource guests), Tracy Gallant (WRIG Coordinator), Rob Reddin (Facilitator).

Overview:

Our fourth meeting was intended to address questions that the community stakeholder group had on the subject of our estuary, both in terms of estuary ecology and sensitivity to nitrates, and some concerns specific to our estuary, including potential tidal restrictions at causeways. It was also on the agenda to continue our group discussion in the direction of goals/targets, and strategies for the draft plan.

After introductions around the room and a brief recap of the three previous sessions, the agenda for the evening was presented, beginning with two presenters on estuary issues: Cindy Crane, from the Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry, and Mike vandenHeuvel, of UPEI/AVC and the Canadian Rivers Institute. Cindy presented on the topic of differing sensitivities to nitrates between different estuaries, and tried to address some of the specific concerns for this estuary. Ultimately, Cindy presented flow dynamics, and the physical characteristics of the estuary, in this case, as minor or non-factors in anoxic events, and identified nutrient losses as the key factor. Cindy's presentation was followed by Q&A. Mike then presented research from another watershed on the North Shore, demonstrating the effects on fish habitat, and the resulting stresses on some fish populations, in conditions of overgrowth of sea lettuce and anoxia. A Second Q&A followed Mike's presentation.

After a quick break, Rob led the group into the topic of goals or targets for the draft plan. The complexity of this task was clearly evident, as there is a variety of criteria that the group could choose to use to frame the target. After exploring that challenge, and hitting on the idea of goals as being more general, more oriented toward observed results or conditions in the watershed, versus targets that are oriented toward more quantitative, specific (though somewhat problematic) measurements and calculations, Rob split the group into two smaller groups of five, and asked them to try to identify acceptable goals. The discussions tended toward inclusion of strategies, sometimes focusing on them, so progress was also made in that regard, though sometimes at the expense of a clear set of goals. As always, evaluation sheets were completed at the end of the meeting.