

MEDIA RELEASE

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Policies implemented for protecting municipal drinking water sources; plan now up for review

(North Bay, May 24, 2019) All policies established to protect the sources of municipal drinking water in North Bay, Mattawa, Powassan, Callander, and South River are now in place and being implemented according to the North Bay-Mattawa Source Protection Area's 2018 Annual Report.

"The annual report rates progress on implementation of policies by all affected municipalities, ministries and agencies as specified in the Source Protection Plan. It also flags challenges and areas for review," said David Ellingwood, Supervisor of the drinking water source protection program at the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority (NBMCA).

The North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority administers the Source Protection program under the oversight of the source protection committee and the source protection authority with provincial funding through the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The Source Protection Plan (SP Plan), approved by the province in March 2015, is a set of policies aimed at identifying and mitigating threats to the sources of the five municipal drinking water systems in the source protection area, including Callander, Mattawa, North Bay, Powassan, and South River. The Annual Report, along with the SP Plan and Assessment Report, can be viewed at www.actforcleanwater.ca

All municipalities have fully implemented the Land Use Planning policies in the SP Plan through either Official Plan Amendments or Zoning By-Laws, and have processes in place to ensure that their day-to-day planning decisions conform to the SP Plan.

The Ontario Building Code requires periodic inspections of all septic systems which could pose a significant threat to a source of municipal drinking water. Of the 97 systems slated for inspection in 2018, six required minor repairs while only one system (one percent) failed inspection and required major repairs.

Policies to address the microcystin issue (blue green algae blooms) in Callander Bay through research and monitoring, as well as education and outreach efforts to spur action by residents, require ongoing commitment and resources.

"The five affected municipalities where the Issue Contributing Area is located - Callander, Chisholm, East Ferris, North Bay and Powassan - will need to continue efforts collectively and work to develop a multi-year work plan that will be within their capacity," added Ellingwood.

While all 30 policies in the SP Plan have been implemented, the SP Plan and Assessment Report are up for review. The Source Protection Authority prepared a workplan that outlines tasks to review certain policies, update mapping and amend the documents to stay up-to-date with provincial regulations.

Recently, the Minister of the Environment Conservation and Parks issued a letter providing direction to the Source Protection Authority and Source Protection Committee to proceed with the workplan. Technical work and consultations about the SP Plan updates will take place over the next 12 months.

The Source Protection program has been fully funded by the Province of Ontario since its inception following the 2000 tragedy which saw seven people die and thousands become seriously ill after consuming contaminated drinking water supplied by a municipal drinking water system in Walkerton, ON.

The North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority was founded in 1972 by the Province of Ontario and its 10 member municipalities. A non-profit organization, the NBMCA works closely with the public to balance human needs with environmental needs throughout the region's watershed areas. The NBMCA is one of 36 Conservation Authorities who are members of Conservation Ontario.

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