



TOWNSHIP OF NORTH HURON

REPORT

Item No.

REPORT TO: Reeve Vincent and Members of Council
PREPARED BY: Jeff Molenhuis, Director of Public Works
Sharon Chambers, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: 07/11/2016
SUBJECT: Howson Dam Environmental Assessment Update
ATTACHMENTS: ATTACHMENT 1 – GSS Engineering Recommendation Email
ATTACHMENT 2 – MNRF Letter re: LRIA Requirements
ATTACHMENT 3 – BM Ross Letter
ATTACHMENT 4 – Email from NRSI re: Species at Risk (SAR) fish identified
ATTACHMENT 5 – Picture of SAR fish identified

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby receive the report Howson Dam Environmental Assessment Update for information;

AND THAT the Council of the Township of North Huron hereby direct staff to prepare an RFP document to conduct a Dam Safety Assessment to determine the feasibility of an application under LRIA for approvals with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the first Public Meeting for this project, the majority of comments received to date indicate support for repair or rehabilitation of the dam. For significant rehabilitation work, there are approval requirements through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) through the Lakes and Rivers Improvements Act (LRIA). Through the early stages of investigation of the project area and background information, the following is noted:

1. Council authorized \$15,000 to be released from the reserve to investigate the feasibility of repairing the dam in 2014.
2. BM Ross was engaged to assist with the investigation. LRIA approvals and stability were not scoped as part of the work.
3. BM Ross completed design drawings in 2014/2015.
4. MNRF provided comment on January 21, 2016 on permit requirements under LRIA (Attachment 2);
5. BM Ross provided a letter to the Township on January 21, 2016 confirming that their proposed work exceeds the threshold for requiring a permit, according to the Ministry permitting requirements (Attachment 3);
6. The BM Ross January 21, 2016 letter indicates the heavy bridge structure is significantly contributing to the stability of the dam (Attachment 3);
7. Public comments received to date largely support the repair of the dam only, and do not wish to consider rehabilitation of the bridge;
8. Council has received correspondence requesting that the Environmental Assessment (EA) be put on hold, and that an application be made to the Ministry for the repair work designed by BM Ross.

In addition to the items noted above, field investigation of the natural environment within the project area was conducted under a scientific collectors permit. This work has identified a black redhorse sucker fish, which is a Species at Risk identified as “Threatened” under provincial legislation for the Endangered Species Act (Attachments 4 and 5).

Accordingly, GSS Engineering has been consulting with the MOECC and MNRF to define some of the parameters around permitting requirements to support a LRIA application, as well as requirements for the Species at Risk. Additionally, we have been in discussion with the MOECC to consider the feasibility of putting the EA on hold.

DISCUSSION

Based on the comments received to date and considering that it appears the primary alternatives for consideration are rehabilitation or decommissioning, our consultant is recommending at this time to further investigate the LRIA application through a preliminary assessment to appropriately determine the feasibility of permitting and potential costs of improvements required through rehabilitation, if warranted. This investigation work would be considered a preliminary Dam Safety Assessment, and is expected to be required to complete the EA process if rehabilitation is the preferred alternative. As such, it would be appropriate at this time to consider undertaking this work to appropriately inform the EA process.

Additionally, for the Species at Risk identified, investigation of the permitting requirements to allow for any work to take place is also being further investigated to appropriately inform the EA.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The original intent of the RFP was to provide for a balance of investigation of alternatives with the budget available for the project. Some preliminary estimates of the work required to support a LRIA application were in the range of \$60,000 to \$80,000, which is in addition to the price expected for the EA itself. There may have been some cost efficiencies built into completing both at the same time; however, this would still be largely in excess of the budget available. As such, the RFP was scoped to allow for preliminary approval scoping/costs and preliminary capital costs of the alternatives. It’s unclear at this time what a preliminary Dam Safety Assessment would cost relative to the \$60,000-\$80,000 estimated cost to make the LRIA application; however, it would likely fall in line with that estimate.

Costs on the project to date are estimated at \$30,000. GSS has confirmed they could put the EA on hold, including their costs, for a separate firm with experience in LRIA permitting to undertake the Safety Assessment work required to support a LRIA application.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS


The Safety Assessment may take up to 3 to 6 months depending on intricacies of the analysis process. The EA could be re-instated after the results of LRIA and Species at Risk assessments, with the results of the investigation being integrated back into the EA document.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 3 the Township is healthy and safe. Goal 4 the administration is fiscally responsible and strives for operational excellence.



Jeff Molenhuis, Director of Public Works



Sharon Chambers, CAO