

Erin wastewater plant approved

Controversial plant that threatens the ecology of the Credit River OK'd

The Coalition for the West Credit River (CWCR), a group formed to oppose the soon-to-be-built Erin Wastewater Treatment Plant northwest of Toronto, voiced disappointment in late May upon learning federal Environment and Climate Change Minister Jonathan Wilkinson allowed the project to proceed.

The CWCR, comprised of the Belfountain Community Organization, Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club, Ontario Rivers Alliance, Ontario Streams, Trout Unlimited Canada — Greg Clark Chapter, and the West Credit River Watch, made a request to the Minister on Feb. 25 to designate the project under the Impact Assessment Act (IAA). That designation, if approved, could have changed or cancelled the project.

The CWCR request shared concerns about the plant's potential adverse effects on brook trout and cold-water fish habitat in the West Credit, as well as cumulative effects from the project's treated effluent discharge on aquatic species at risk, migratory birds, Indigenous peoples, social and economic conditions related to angling, and non-federal protected areas.

The Minister said, "The potential adverse effects within federal jurisdiction would be limited through project design and the application of standard mitigation measures and the regulatory processes that currently apply to, or have been undertaken for, the Project..."

"The Coalition is not deterred by the Minister's Decision," CWCR Chair Judy Mabee stated. "We will continue on with our work to protect this highly valued cold-water brook trout population in the West Credit River. We are more than willing to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and other federal and provincial regulators, including the Town of Erin and its consultants, to advocate for a wastewater plant that sets a new best in class industry standard for the protection of sensitive cold-water receiving streams."

According to the CWCR, the plant's daily discharge of 7.2 million liters of warm sewage effluent into West Credit will create an oxygen depleted and toxic plume that will extend several hundred metres downstream into brook trout spawning, rearing, and nursery habitat.

The CWCR's "Cut the Crap, Keep the Credit" petition attracted more than 22,000 signatures.

"We are still wading through all the federal Impact Assessment documentation, but stay tuned, because we have more work to do," Mabee said.

– Steve Galea

COVID-19 !

MORE PARK PERKS

Ontario day-use permits are free at 115 provincial parks from Monday to Thursday until Sept. 2.

Visitors can get a daily vehicle permit up to five days in advance for 17 select parks to get guaranteed access and avoid lineups. Daily permit availability for specific parks and dates can be found online.

"Getting outdoors and spending time in nature can have many positive benefits on our physical and mental health this summer, as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19," Environment, Conservation and Parks Minister Jeff Yurek stated.

– Jason Bain

Northern Lake St. Clair new boating rules

Boaters and anglers require a pleasure-craft licence from Walpole Island First Nations (WIFN) as of June 1, if they want to stop in the south end of the St. Clair River.

The need for the \$100 license for motorized boats of non-band members who stop in the bays and channels of Walpole Island First Nation was announced in a May 21 news release. This includes the Canadian side of the main channel of the St. Clair River. Those travelling down the St. Clair or Snye Rivers will not need a licence, if they don't stop in Walpole waters. Those who have a valid Walpole Island fishing licence will not require the pleasure-craft licence, either.

The decision to implement this was in reaction to watercraft speeding and landing in sensitive ecological areas, potentially causing damage. Personal watercraft and waterskiing are now prohibited there, too.

Walpole Resource Protection Officers will enforce the new measures. Licence revenue will help defray the costs of enforcement to stop the harmful activities.

Licences can be purchased at the Walpole Island First Nations Governance Building and several commercial locations on the island. For more information, call 519-627-1481.

– Jeff Helsdon

THE BUCK STOPS HERE

The Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA), a group that worked to promote sustainable, high-quality deer populations, wildlife habitats and ethical hunting experiences, is no longer in Canada.

QDMA Canada shut down last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization had 13 chapters in Ontario, three in Quebec, and three in New Brunswick. QDMA and the National Deer Alliance merged in the US to become the National Deer Association.

– Jeff Helsdon

OOD's Scott McGuigan fishes below the Basset Channel on the St. Clair River, a spot you'll now need to shell out an extra \$100 to access.

