

## **Trout Creek Community-based Watershed Strategy Open House and Community Meeting Summary**

As part of the Trout Creek Community-based Watershed Strategy process, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) held an Open House and Community Meeting on December 3, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to bring the community together to discuss improving the health of Trout Creek. The open house included displays, information and maps of the watershed from the UTRCA, in addition to displays from the Local Outdoors Opportunities Partners (LOOP), the Perth Stewardship Network, the Avon Trail, Harrington Creek Eco Group, and the Harrington Community Club.

Approximately 40 people signed in for the community meeting. The attendees included mostly landowners in the watershed as well representatives from the Township of Zorra, the Town of St. Marys, the Rotary Club of St. Marys, and members of local environmental/community groups. After a presentation by the UTRCA outlining the Trout Creek Community-based Watershed Strategy process, participants were divided into three small discussion groups. The small groups were facilitated to allow participants the opportunity to provide their input and identify local environmental issues or concerns. The groups were also asked to prioritize their concerns by placing dots next to the issue they felt strongly about.

Issues prioritized by the three groups included water quality/quantity, soil erosion, cattle access to streams, potential negative impacts from gravel pits, habitat protection, impact of the Wildwood Dam, and saving Harrington Pond. All of the issues/concerns are listed below.

Participants were asked to fill out a Community Values Assessment Survey to provide more information about their concerns. In addition, the survey allowed interested people to volunteer for the Local Advisory Committee (LAC). The LAC will prioritize the concerns/issues gathered and develop action plans to address them.

The Trout Creek Community-based Watershed Strategy is funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

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## **Issues/Concerns Gathered at the December 3, 2008 Trout Creek Open House and Community Meeting**

### **Group 1**

- Soil erosion off farmland
- Need mitigation and education
  - Mandatory
- Saving Harrington Pond for cultural reasons (fishing heritage)
  - What is the protection for the wetland complexes?
- Need more vegetative buffering along waterways and pond
- Stabilize riverbank – erosion
- Fallen trees in river (willows)
  - Need clean up
- What are the results of the dispersion sandwich (Alderman Farm) on water quality improvement?
  - If good technology, let farmers know so they can utilize it
  - How do we make our drains cleaner?
- Find more historical information
- All the proposed and current gravel pits in watershed; silt runoff (incentives?)
  - Need mitigation
  - Impact on groundwater – cumulatively
- If a wetland owner can't log his woods, then there should be incentives
- Garbage in creek near 29<sup>th</sup> Line near bridges; need garbage cans
- Increasing and maintaining recreational opportunities
  - E.g., Wildwood CA - ensure fast boats don't ruin it for others uses
  - Harrington CA and Wildwood
- Avon Trail – keep it going
- Deep wells (200 foot) with E. coli; what is the source?
  - Information on groundwater
- Farmers need financial help to make the right decisions; society benefits so should share costs (taxes on wetlands and woodlots – exemptions and incentives)
- Water quality
- Can't canoe downstream of Wildwood to St. Marys – tree blockage
- Algae in Harrington Pond due to nutrients in creek water
- Education on fertilizer use on fields
- Recognition that both urban and rural land uses cause pollution
- Township should not spray roadsides near provincially significant wetlands; but safer spray now used (costlier)
  - Weed issue vs. wetlands + lawn kill + calcium
  - More communication? Township hears complaints from both sides.
- Trail at Wildwood – promote/develop mountain bike trail on south side

## Group 2

- Fence cattle out of creeks – incentives to encourage landowners
  - Who pays – farmer – alleviate taxes for land taken out of production
  - Incentive programs
  - Consider examples such as ALUS in Norfolk County to compensate landowners
- Habitat protection
  - Corridor for wildlife
  - Aquatic and terrestrial
- Tax incentives/exemptions for Beneficial Management Practices
- Potential negative impacts from gravel pits in area
- Sources of spring water
  - Concerned with degrading water quality in springs
  - Between line 33 and Wildwood Lake – needs dredging
  - Destruction of natural springs through alteration/development projects – aquatic life affected
- Wildwood reservoir degraded due to uses of recreational facility and further downstream
  - too many aggressive uses of Wildwood
  - degrades water quality in reservoir and receiving waters
- River/stream erosion
- How to deal with development conflicts, i.e. gravel pit/water quality especially if project is in conflict with local government works
- Maintenance of Avon trail
- Help with improving access and ease burden on those maintaining
- Public education and awareness
- Harrington Pond – siltation and build up (possible clean up)
- Planting trees in wind rows
- Tile runoff very fast into creeks and ponds
  - Noticing change in hydrograph, tiles transporting water off landscape
- Contamination of deep wells (required UV treatment)
- Development of trails – potential project to explore natural areas and promote existing trails
- Aesthetics (differing opinions)
- Thames River Fisheries Management Plan
  - Use information collected previously
  - **Concern:** address stall in TRFMP process and build on it. Do not want to lose TRFMP. Leads to distrust from public involved in TRFMP in process for Trout Creek. **Response:** information gathered in TRFMP process is not lost, just taking far longer than anticipated to complete due to lack of funds, information from TRFMP can and will be incorporated into Trout Creek community strategy.
- Trout Creek watershed
  - Split into 2 areas – upstream of Wildwood and downstream of Wildwood
  - Many improvements upstream of Wildwood involved landowners
  - Incorporate all uses including upstream in management plan for reservoir
- Loss of forest cover
- Treatment of ditches different than natural water courses – ditches closed – loss of habitat and aquatic life
  - Environmentally friendly drain maintenance
- Degraded water quality

- Where to gain access to information on the watershed? – better access needed, especially on species, and from all government agencies
- Deep drain – now has lots of trees
  - Does it need maintenance? **Answer:** if drain contact drainage super to assess
- Concern with toxic herbicide application – ditches – water
- Trout Creek – silt @ 33<sup>rd</sup> line needs clean out
- Best aquatic systems is free flowing not dammed – creates long term problem with water quality
  - Need to balance community interests with need for dam – best use
- Data source of ONHS and watershed report cards
  - Make sure consistent
  - Use implementations/recommendations
- Enhance parts of trail with plantings
- Respect private landowners – work with and partner

Overall comment to balance the needs and values of those living in the watershed with the uses especially pertaining to natural heritage features and resources rather than politically or economically driven needs.

### Group 3

- Water quality – algae, smell, low flow, turbidity around St. Marys, geese at Ducks Unlimited area, Harrington/St. Marys dam
- Impact of flooding – intense rainfall causing floods and damage – Camp Bimini, St. Marys
- Pollution from cattle access to creek
- Soil erosion - in Town of St. Marys
- Water levels - low levels – impact of low levels – can we prevent
- Impact of Wildwood dam operations
  - Drawdown is affecting other landowners
  - Effect on surrounding areas
- Silt in south end of Harrington Pond
  - More information on the pond itself
- Challenge of implementing best management practices, not farming – economics, looking for solutions; different solutions
- Blockages – trees in creek below Wildwood
- Used to fish trout now only carp
- Springs – focus on cold water protection (all over)
- Retention ponds in St. Marys – buffering ponds needs to be done
- Harrington Hills impacted by heavy rainfalls – erosion
- Lots of turkeys, deer, rabbits, herons, gulls – become an nuisance
- Geese
- Lots of salamanders – breeding areas
- Lots of frogs
- Areas that need trees – wildlife/windbreaks
- Dragonflies
- Protecting prairie habitats