



## **2012 Summary of Positions Endorsed by the Coalition**

### **1. Integrated Water Management at the Watershed Level**

The Coalition believes that by seeking common cause with other stakeholders in the Trent watershed we can advance a broad range of issues in a more effective and equitable manner than by individually promoting our own 'special' interests. Accordingly, the Coalition endorses the concept of Integrated Water Management at the Watershed Level - a concept that has been adopted by numerous federal and provincial government departments and agencies including Conservation Ontario. Such an approach applies to the governance, maintenance of infrastructure, and operations of the lead water management agency (*currently the TSW*).

### **2. The Recommendations of the Panel on the Future of the TSW**

In particular, the Coalition supports the need for: (i) sufficient sustained funding to restore, upgrade and maintain key infrastructure, such as dams, and to bring water management operations up to modern standards; and (ii) a water management agency properly tasked to provide integrated water management at the watershed level.

### **3. A more Sophisticated and Equitable Water Management Model for the Trent Watershed**

The present water management protocols used by the TSW do not adequately reflect the often conflicting requirements of all key stakeholders; a new water management model is required that is capable of taking a range of constraints into account and thereby optimizing operational decisions to ensure the greatest public benefit.

In dry years, when the water supply is reduced, conservation measures need to be applied throughout the watershed – 'sharing the pain' between those on the Reservoir and Flow-Through (RAFT) lakes and those on the navigable channel of the canal.

### **4. Improved Information and Data on System Constraints**

A constraint-based approach to water management will only be effective if constraint parameters can be measured and factored in to the water management model; this will require improved data on several parameters including: fish spawning habitat, wetlands, and navigational limitations.

### **5. Documentation of Preferred Water Levels & Flows on the RAFT Lakes**

The Coalition is working with member associations to provide the water management agency with data relating to measurable water level and flow constraints on individual lakes.

### **6. Progress on Water Management and Jurisdictional Issues under the MOU with Ontario**

The federal Action Plan of 2009 indicated that protocols could be established under the MOU between the federal government and Ontario with regard to water storage, water flows, water allocation and use: CEWF is keen to see progress made on these protocols in the context of water conservation. The harmonization of permits to take water and the identification of lead agencies for issues where there is overlapping jurisdiction have been identified as priorities under the MOU.

### **7. Definitive Advice from the TSW Water Management Advisory Council (WMAC)**

The WMAC has been identified in the MOU and separately by Parks Canada as the body that will set priorities and provide advice on water allocation and related issues: The Coalition looks forward to the WMAC providing definitive advice aligned with, and advancing, the recommendations in the Panel Report and in having these accepted by the TSW.

# CEWF Position Paper 2012 - *Background*

## **Who We Are**

The Coalition for Equitable Water Flow (CEWF) is a volunteer organization that was formed in 2006 to represent the interests of approximately 40,000 residential shoreline property owners on the 41 reservoir and 20 flow-through lakes within the Haliburton Sector of the Trent River watershed in Ontario with regard to water management issues. The Sector includes the sub-watersheds associated with the Gull, Burnt and Mississagua Rivers as well as Nogies, Eels, and Jack Creeks. The residents of this unique collection of 'lake-based communities' comprise the majority of the residential tax base in the region.

## **Our Members**

Membership in CEWF is open to the more than 35 Lake Associations, or equivalent property-owner organizations, in the region. Each Member association appoints a representative to the Coalition and 6-10 of those representatives are appointed to the CEWF Advisory Committee that coordinates Coalition activities.

## **Our Mission**

The Coalition is seeking the implementation of an equitable approach to water management at the watershed level by the Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW) that accords equal consideration, along with fair and just treatment, to everyone in the Trent River Watershed. The Coalition believes that Reservoir and Flow-Through (RAFT) lake communities should be considered equally with all other waterfront communities throughout the watershed where policies relate to safe navigation, access to waterfront property, economic sustainability and the avoidance of negative environmental and economic impacts.

## **Current CEWF Objectives**

In light of the government's response of September 25, 2009 to the recommendations contained in the March 2008 Report of the Panel on the Future of the Trent-Severn Waterway; and Recognizing progress made with the creation of a Water Management Advisory Council in 2010, and the signing of an MOU between the federal government and Ontario in 2011;

CEWF has the following Objectives:

1. Working to represent the interests of CEWF Members to the TSW and other government officials and agencies, and to raise awareness of water management issues amongst all key stakeholders;
2. Continuing to promote an integrated approach to water management at the watershed level that will improve water conservation throughout the Trent watershed without jeopardizing water levels in either the RAFT lakes or the canal lakes;
3. Continuing to promote water management approaches that ensure safe navigation, access to waterfront property, economic sustainability and the avoidance of negative environmental and economic impacts for residents on the RAFT lakes;
4. Seeking to improve the current water management practices of the TSW through regular liaison meetings as well as participation on the Water Management Advisory Council established by Parks Canada for the TSW; and
5. Urging meaningful engagement of the Ontario government to ensure that a watershed-wide approach to water management is the basis for discussions on jurisdictional and other matters with Parks Canada.

## Why Water Management is an Issue

Water management for the Trent watershed is the responsibility of the Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site (TSW), part of Parks Canada, an agency that falls under the responsibility of Environment Canada. The TSW uses 35 dams to turn lakes lying upstream of the canal into reservoirs for the Waterway, draining these “Haliburton Sector” lakes over the summer months in order to maintain navigation on the canal that runs from Trenton on Lake Ontario to Port Severn on Georgian Bay. Lakes with TSW ‘control structures’ (dams) are termed ‘reservoir lakes’: lakes without control structures are termed ‘flow-through lakes’. The “Haliburton Sector” is actually made up of six sub-watersheds: the Gull River (17 dams); Burnt River (13 dams); Nogies, Eels, and Jack Creeks (1 dam each) and the Mississagua River (2 dams).

During the navigation season the TSW aims to maintain water levels on the canal lakes within a narrow “navigation range” that spans just a few inches. To do this requires water level reductions of several feet on some of the reservoir lakes and occasionally dramatic changes in flow rates following dam manipulations. Property owners on both reservoir and flow-through (RAFT) lakes share a number of concerns with the water management practices of the TSW, especially with regard to fluctuating water levels and flow-rates.

In the early 1900s it made sense to give priority to the water management demands of the canal. However, following the development of the Haliburton Sector lakes, a more sophisticated and equitable approach is required to balance the conflicting requirements of all stakeholders. This is important in light of increased awareness of the impact of climate change and environmental issues.

Some of the negative impacts of water level and flow rate fluctuations are listed below. CEWF’s conclusion is that a water management approach that embraces water conservation and minimizing water level fluctuations is to be encouraged.

### Water Levels “too high”

- Low-lying cottages flooded; shoreline erosion increased & ice damage more likely
- Wetlands swamped – nests & beaver lodges flooded, habitat degraded
- Clearance at bridges reduced; unmarked navigational hazards hidden
- Difficult to install and access certain styles of dock

### Water Levels “too low”

- Access to ‘water access’ properties restricted & inability to navigate between some lakes
- Inability to remove boats from boat lifts or to trailer boats at boat launches
- Water intake lines prone to freezing and/or ‘suck air’ in areas with shallow shorelines
- Unmarked navigational hazards created
- Wetlands dry out & barren zone created between high and low water marks

### Flow rates “too high”

- Boating and other in-water activities becomes unsafe; inability to navigate between lakes
- Shoreline erosion increases

### Flow rates “too low”

- River and flow-through lake depths decrease and navigation becomes difficult
- Shorelines on shallow and flow-through lakes become exposed
- Access to water and to ‘water access’ properties restricted
- Fish habitat is degraded e.g. for spring-spawning pickerel
- Water quality degrades; stagnant water and algae blooms can occur

### Lake Levels rising in June (after normal seasonal high)

- Loon nest become inundated
- Wetland habitat degraded in prime breeding season for aquatic wildlife

### Lake Levels falling after winter-set in October

- Trout spawning beds can dry out (applies to shallow- spawning trout lakes)
- Beaver lodges and muskrat houses vulnerable to freezing

## Recent Developments Relating to Water Management in the Trent Watershed

In 2008 a federally appointed expert panel on the future of the TSW released an outstanding report entitled “Its All About The Water” noting that:

*“.. the waterway is really a vast water management system with a navigation channel running through it. To consider the lakes and rivers of the navigation channel as separate from the rest of the system is neither ecologically tenable nor advisable in planning for the future of the waterway”.*

With regard to water management the Panel Report noted:

*Competition for water has caused conflict and debate throughout the watersheds. Now, however, the real possibility of a future with less water and increasing demand is changing that debate. It is no longer “the needs of the waterway versus those of Haliburtons.”.. It is and should be, “how water management can best serve the sustainability of the entire watershed.”*

*In the face of these challenges, we believe that the responsibility for water management is not an appropriate job for Parks Canada. Parks Canada does not have the mandate, legislative and policy instruments or the resources and expertise to do that job well. Moreover, with its responsibility for navigation, Parks Canada should be viewed as a single water user among many.*

### *Recommendation 11*

*Improve management of water by creating and appropriately funding an independent water management agency, reporting to the federal Minister of Natural Resources, to assume responsibility for managing water storage, flows, allocation and use in the Trent and Severn watersheds.*

*We strongly believe that a culture of conservation and an integrated approach to water management embracing ground and surface water are the fundamental principles by which water must be managed by this authority and indeed by all in the watersheds. Citizens, businesses, and industries must also be engaged in decision-making, timely communications, knowledge creation, and education about water and its management.*

In its September 2009 response to the Panel Report, the federal government rejected to notion of an independent water management agency, but did agree to establish a Water Management Advisory Council (WMAC) and to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ontario regarding jurisdictional and other matters including water management. The Coalition has one representative on the WMAC, which began its work in 2010. The MOU with Ontario was signed in 2011.

Following the release of the Panel Report, CEWF’s focus has been on an integrated approach to sound water management at the watershed level. CEWF has taken the view that by seeking common cause with other stakeholders in the Trent watershed we can advance a broad range of issues in a more effective and equitable manner than by individually promoting our own special interests.

In addition to local property owner’s issues, the Coalition is therefore concerned about significant ecological damage caused by fluctuating water levels and sees the deteriorating state of the TSW infrastructure as a public safety issue.

### **Additional Information & Key References**

The Coalition seeks to maintain an up-to-date compendium of key reference materials on its web site at [www.cewf.ca](http://www.cewf.ca); these include:

- A link to the TSW water levels website
- EcoPlans Reports (2007)
- Panel on the Future of the TSW Report (2008)
- Government Response to the Panel Report (2009)
- Announcement of the WMAC (2010)
- Federal-Provincial MOU (2011)

### **How to Become Engaged**

The Coalition is a volunteer organization with limited resources. We work primarily with the representatives appointed by our Member lake associations. If you wish to become engaged with the Coalition we encourage you to:

- Ensure that your lake association, or equivalent body, is a member of CEWF;
- Contact your designated CEWF representative and work in support of their efforts;
- Monitor the CEWF website as [www.cewf.ca](http://www.cewf.ca) for news and updates; and
- Support CEWF's efforts when talking to friends and neighbours, local politicians and government agencies.

If you have any questions please direct these to [cewfchair@yahoo.ca](mailto:cewfchair@yahoo.ca)