

ALGONQUIN ECO WATCH ANNUAL UPDATE – 2007

Greetings; During the past year Algonquin Eco Watch has been involved in many activities pertaining to the well-being of the Algonquin Ecosystem. Following is a brief summary of the issues that we continue to deal with.

We are pleased to have been a major partner, along with Ontario Parks, the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority and the Algonquin Park Residents' Association, in developing a 3-year program to conduct septic re-inspections on all 305 private leases within Algonquin Park. This program has taken over 4 years to finalize, is scheduled to commence during the 2007 field season, and upon completion will help to ensure that waters flowing out of Algonquin Park remain in pristine condition.

We recently submitted our second "Request for an Investigation", regarding the decommissioning of the CN Rail line through Algonquin Park, to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. Once again we were refused on the grounds that the Ontario Ministry of the Environment is presently engaged in ongoing communication with CN and further investigation at this time would be unproductive. A member of the Algonquin Eco Watch Board of Directors attended the CN Annual General Meeting in Moncton, New Brunswick, this spring and read a prepared statement concerning the fact that CN has not acted in an environmentally responsible fashion with respect to abandoning their mainline through Algonquin Park 11 years ago.

Algonquin Eco Watch is now represented on the Local Citizens Committee (LCC), which is engaged in developing the next Algonquin Park Forest Management Plan for the period 2010 to 2020. We also participate on a Citizens Advisory Committee, during the process whereby the Algonquin Forestry Authority is applying for certification from the Canadian Standards Association; to certify that forest management in the Algonquin Park forest is sustainable. In preparation for participation in these programs, Algonquin Eco Watch commissioned consultants to investigate the future of old growth pine in Algonquin Park. If the present "Uniform Shelterwood" management system is retained, old growth pine will eventually be restricted to the protected zones, just a small part of the Park. Copies of that report are available upon request. The recent request by the Minister of Natural Resources to "Lighten the Footprint of Logging in Algonquin Park", as recommended by the Ontario Parks Board, will significantly affect the Park forest management program. We have submitted comments to the Minister in this regard.

Owing to the passage of time, it is now considered unlikely that all headwaters sourcing outside Algonquin Park, but flowing into the Park will achieve "Algonquin Park Headwaters (E67n)" status under the "Ontario Living Legacy" program. The Regional Director of the Ministry of Natural Resources Southern Region invited us however, to compile a short list of 5-10 of the most significant headwaters, with the idea that those might be given "special status" recognition under protective legislation available to the Ministry. If this can be achieved, it will mean that development incompatible with protecting the quality and quantity of headwaters may be avoided in those waters. We are presently working with the Regional Hydrogeologist toward that goal.

It appears that the Kearney Graphite mine has new owners. Prior to the re-commencement of mining activities, a closure plan will have to be submitted and accepted by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Our latest communication with that Ministry indicates that as yet no plan has been submitted. While Algonquin Eco Watch feels that mining at the source waters of 3 major rivers, i.e. the north and south branches of the Magnetawan River and the Tim River should never have been allowed, our primary concern remains that if mining is resumed and expanded as planned, the headwaters of the Tim River, which flows through Algonquin Park, would be negatively affected.

For 2 years Algonquin Eco Watch has been endeavouring to meet jointly with the Ministers of Natural Resources, the Environment and Northern Development and Mines. The purpose of this meeting would be to discuss issues that "overlap" between Ministries. Such issues as the decommissioning of the CN line through Algonquin Park, protection of Algonquin Headwaters, and headwater pollution from mining activities all reach beyond Ministerial boundaries and connect with other Ministries – hence the logic of a joint meeting. We are unsure as to why we have been unsuccessful in this regard, but we will persist in our attempts to meet with these Ministers, hopefully before this fall.

Membership in Algonquin Eco Watch may be obtained or renewed by forwarding a cheque or money order for \$15.00 or more to "Algonquin Eco Watch, RR#1, Spring Bay, ON, P0P 2B0. You will receive a tax-deductible receipt. We invite you to also visit our alternate website www.arctic-waters-threatened.com, which deals with the threat of Arctic fresh water diversion to satisfy the growing need for more water in southern areas.

website: www.algonquin-eco-watch.com



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