



Ottawa, Ontario  
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Mr. Paul Mennill  
President  
Mr. John Gillespie  
Past-President  
Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association  
P.O. Box 411, R.R. 1  
Zurich ON N0M 2T0

Dear Messrs. Mennill and Gillespie:

The Honourable John Baird, Minister of the Environment, has asked me to respond to your letter of June 20, and enclosed copy of the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association's "Water Quality Report – May 2007," concerning shoreline water quality in the Lake Huron basin ecosystem.

I am pleased to provide information on actions currently being undertaken by the Department to address sources and causes of microbial pollution in the watersheds draining to the Association's shoreline areas and our commitment to continue such action in collaboration with Ontario. I am also addressing the two recommendations contained in the Report, requesting that the federal government (1) clarify the legislative roles and responsibilities of Environment Canada, with respect to microbial contamination of surface water by the agriculture and municipal sectors; and (2) assist the Province of Ontario with funding an agricultural and conservation "demonstration project" in Bluewater and participate in its implementation.

Environment Canada is responsible for enforcing the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, as well subsection 36(3) of the *Fisheries Act*, which prohibits the deposit of deleterious substances to waters frequented by fish. The *Fisheries Act* defines a deleterious substance as any substance that, if added to any water, makes the water deleterious to fish or fish habitat; or any water that contains a substance in such quantity or concentration, or has been changed by heat or other means, from a natural state that it would, if added to any other water, make that water deleterious to fish or fish habitat. Deleterious substances may include chemicals, manure, sewage and other substances harmful to fish or fish habitat. Enforcement decisions are made in accordance with the "Compliance and Enforcement Policy for the Habitat Protection and

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Pollution Prevention Provisions of the *Fisheries Act*," (copies enclosed). To report such incidents in your area, please contact Mr. Michael Bell, of Environment Canada's Enforcement Branch, at 416-739-5905.

The Department's Enforcement Branch in Ontario Region works closely with the provincial Ministry of the Environment to ensure that the provisions of the *Fisheries Act* are being fulfilled. The Inter-Jurisdictional Compliance Protocol for Fish Habitat and Associated Water Quality establishes the roles and responsibilities of Environment Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and other agencies in dealing with water quality concerns. To promote compliance with subsection 36(3) of the *Fisheries Act*, the Adopt-a-Watershed pilot project was initiated in 2005 by Environment Canada, in collaboration with the Ontario ministries of the Environment, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Natural Resources; as well as Conservation Authorities and local community groups. The pilot project promotes the reduction of nutrients (such as faulty septic systems, fertilizer and manure runoff), pathogens, chemicals, and sediment loading from rural communities to the Great Lakes. As you may be aware, one of the pilot projects is taking place in St. Joseph's Ravine/Zurich Drain, which impacts directly on the Bluewater Shores area, and three others are taking place in other priority subwatersheds: Pine River, Avon River, and the Middle Maitland River. Three of these four priority subwatersheds drain into Lake Huron.

The Adopt-a-Watershed pilot project is about communities adopting watersheds to promote ecosystem health by caring for our water, land and air, and by conserving biodiversity and species at risk (neighbours educating neighbours). It promotes the protection of our ecosystem, healthy communities and a sustainable agriculture industry through education and stewardship. The project piggybacks on existing programs in the watershed, and community and agency collaboration is key to its success.

To date, 39 of 60 landowners in the Pergel Gully (the Gully beginning at Zurich and entering Lake Huron at St. Joseph) have had a peer-to-peer visit, and 18 of those 39 have had a stewardship visit by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority. In 2006, the Pergel Gully Adopt-a-Watershed Project has yielded the identification of 42 best management projects. To date, 17 projects have been initiated or completed.

In addition to the Adopt-a-Watershed pilot project, Environment Canada developed the Tile Outlet Marking Program, in 2006, to reduce the release of harmful substances to fish-bearing waters from subsurface runoff, as more than 60 percent of manure spills in Ontario enter watercourses through tile drains. In some watersheds, over 75 percent of agricultural land has been tiled.

Tiles can be a significant pathway for nutrients, pesticides and pathogens to enter watercourses and affect our water resources and our beaches. The Program's objective is to assist landowners to easily and quickly locate the outlets, to monitor the outlets during and after liquid manure application, and to quickly locate the source of manure spills should they occur. At present, over 40 Drainage Superintendents and Ministry of the Environment Agriculture Officers are in the process of marking the tile outlets. In addition, the landowners who are applying liquid manure are asked to follow the *Liquid Manure Application TIPS for Tiled Fields*, which outlines common sense, no cost, practical tips that farmers can undertake to reduce/eliminate the release of liquid manure into waters frequented by fish.

Unfortunately, Environment Canada does not have a funding program that would cover capital costs for demonstration projects on the scale of anaerobic digesters. However, the EcoAction Community Funding Program provides financial support to community groups for projects that have measurable, positive impacts on the environment. Funding support can be requested for projects that have an action focus, a community capacity-building focus, or a combination of both objectives. For more information, please contact Ms. Kim Colavecchia at 416-739-4768.

Through the Canada-United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) and the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem, Environment Canada will, among other things, continue to work to promote better land-use practices for the protection and restoration of water quality, and effective coordination amongst agencies responsible for ecosystem management. These priority efforts are being undertaken through an ecosystem-focused watershed approach in cooperation with the Province of Ontario, local governments and organizations in the Bluewater Shores area.

Canada and the U.S. endorsed the Lake Huron Binational Partnership, in 2002, to meet the commitments of the GLWQA to protect and restore Lake Huron. It provides a binational forum for the restoration and protection of the Lake Huron ecosystem. The Partnership, co-led by Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, focuses on issues of binational priority, such as contaminants, loss of fish and wildlife habitat, and ecosystem change, including the impact of non-native species on the Lake. For more information, please visit [www.binational.net](http://www.binational.net).

Other issues, such as the fouling of beaches by algae and bacteria, have been the subject of Canadian domestic activities in Lake Huron. Environment Canada initiated and co-chairs a multi-agency Lake Huron

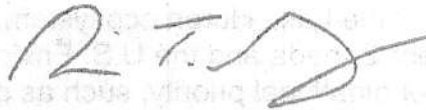
Southeast Shore Working Group, which provides a forum for federal, provincial and local agencies and stakeholders to coordinate activities, share information and identify shared priorities for the restoration of near shore water quality along the Lake Huron shoreline, between Sarnia and Sauble Beach.

In support of the Working Group, the Department's National Water Research Institute has conducted research projects on microbial and nutrient inputs to Lake Huron. Investigations into the causes, fate and effects of bacterial and algae contamination have been the subject of several studies, over the last three years, along the Huron County shoreline. The relative contributions of microbial pollution from agricultural activities, septic systems and natural sources (e.g. geese and gulls) at Amberley Beach, and in the 18-Mile River watershed, have been the focus of study. The Working Group continues to promote and implement projects such as reducing inputs of bacteria and nutrients from farms and septic systems, shoreline and rural non-farm stewardship, the "Adopt-a-Watershed" pilot projects, and clean beach certification. It also provides support to landowner beneficial management practices and awareness activities.

Environment Canada and its partners have also developed a strategy to improve collaboration and integrated ecosystem management for the Canadian portion of the Lake Huron/Georgian Bay watershed. The Lake Huron Watershed Framework for Community Action promotes working relationships between individuals, communities and governments to manage the Lake and its watershed in a healthy and sustainable way. This initiative seeks to provide additional opportunities for coordinated planning actions to enhance environment restoration and protection.

I trust that my comments help to assure you and your association members that Environment Canada is indeed well informed and active in our collective goals to restore and protect the Lake Huron ecosystem, including the Bluewater Shores area.

Yours truly,



Brian T. Gray, Ph. D.  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Science and Technology Branch

Enclosure