

Ministry of
the Environment

Ministère de
l'Environnement



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MAR 22 2007

Mr. Paul Mennill
President
Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association
71613 Old Cedarbank Lane, RR 1
Dashwood ON N0M 1N0

Dear Mr. Mennill:

Thank you for your February 24, 2007 follow-up e-mail about our meeting in December regarding water quality in Lake Huron and the paper that was prepared by the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association (BSRA).

I appreciated your efforts to meet with me. I want to assure you that I found our meeting very informative and I commend the BSRA's ongoing activities to improve the quality of the environment.

The paper contains information that is similar in content to the report you provided to the ministry's Sarnia District Office in October 2006. I am aware that staff provided you with general comments on that report and I would like to use this opportunity to speak specifically to the four urgent recommendations outlined in the paper presented at our meeting.

Ministry of the Environment (MOE) staff have been in contact with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) with respect to the proposal to fund an agricultural demonstration project. OMAFRA co-ordinates projects through the Nutrient Management Directed Research Program. Funds may be available for projects that provide continuous improvement of nutrient management regulations and best management practices. For more information on funding opportunities under that program, please contact Ms. Pamela Joosse, Best Management Practices Verification Specialist, OMAFRA, 3 SE, 1 Stone Road West, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 4Y2, or by telephone at 519-826-3853.

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With respect to conducting a Quantitative Microbial Risk Assessment (QMRA), the MOE's Standards Development Branch is interested in developing QMRA protocols for drinking water and other environmental scenarios. A scoping study was funded in March 2005 which examined the current state of the science of QMRA and, in January 2006, the MOE jointly sponsored an Experts Workshop on QMRA with Health Canada. From these endeavours, we have learned that QMRA is a rapidly growing area of science and is one of a number of useful tools to assess microbiological risk. QMRA is in its infancy in its application to environmental scenarios. Many research gaps have been identified primarily in the information required to improve the current models. The MOE does not yet have a formal protocol for conducting a QMRA, but we have made some initial steps towards this goal, while keeping abreast with the advancements made in this field by other agencies and jurisdictions. For additional information on the MOE's involvement in this area, please contact Ms. Terri Bulman, Acting Manager, Water Standards Section, Standards Development Branch, at 416-327-6951.

Upgrading municipal sewage lagoons to allow for additional treatment, prior to discharge, is encouraged and supported by my ministry. MOE staff are aware of an Environmental Study Report that identified capacity problems with the operation of the Zurich lagoons. Although the effluent from the lagoons meets the ministry's effluent guidelines, enhanced treatment would allow for the capacity issue to be addressed, result in tighter discharge limits, and would improve water quality in the receiving watercourse. We would be pleased to work with the municipality should it decide to proceed with upgrading the sewage lagoons.

As the septic approval authority throughout the county, the Huron County Health Unit has initiated a septic system re-inspection program which was supported through ministry funding under the Canada-Ontario Agreement (COA). The program is designed to educate and raise awareness regarding the detrimental effects that a malfunctioning sewage system can pose on the environment and public health. The septic re-inspection program has been approved by Huron County Council for its third year.

In response to the identification of poor water quality in the area between Sarnia and Southampton, the Lake Huron Southeast Shore Working Group was formed in 2002 under the Lake Huron Bi-national Partnership. This working group, co-chaired by our ministry and Environment Canada, has been working informally to identify and characterize the water quality problem to share program information, and to identify project priorities in helping to resolve these issues. The ministry Co-chair of this committee is Mr. Ted Briggs, Great Lakes Advisor, and he can be reached at 519-873-5064, or toll-free at 1-800-265-7672.

As an update, the manure spill that occurred on July 10, 2006 remains under investigation by the MOE's Investigations and Enforcement Branch. As part of the process for determining whether charges are warranted, an investigator will consider factors such as: the evidence collected; the existence of potential defences, such as due diligence; the seriousness of the incident; whether the matter has been resolved; and the compliance history of the individual or company.

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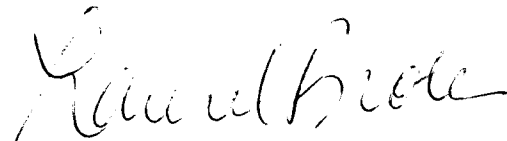
With respect to inspection activities, MOE staff have completed six planned inspections of large farms in Huron County which are subject to the *Nutrient Management Act* (NMA). Nutrient management inspections are conducted to assess the farm's compliance with its approved nutrient management plan and the NMA and Regulations. The inspection involves the examination of manure storage, manure transfer, and field application. Three of the farms inspected did not have sufficient permanently established vegetative buffer strips between fields and adjacent surface water. MOE staff are working with the farmers to ensure that this requirement is complied with prior to any new nutrient application to the fields.

MOE staff will continue to work with our local and federal partners to help ensure clean and healthy beaches and will continue to promote the good work being done by the County and other local groups, such as the BSRA, to improve the quality of the Huron County shoreline.

If you require additional information, please contact Mr. Mike Moroney, District Manager of our Sarnia Office, at 519-383-3780, or toll-free at 1-800-387-7784.

Thank you, again, for taking the time to meet with me.

Yours truly,



Laurel C. Broten

Minister of the Environment

c: Ms. Carol Mitchell, MPP
Huron-Bruce

Mr. Dan Carlow
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
Stratford Office