



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION
PRESENTATION TO THE
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY
COUNCIL OCTOBER 8 2015

Proposed Water Act for Prince Edward Island

PEIFA Concerns – Precipitation

1) We have concerns over recent Environment Canada predictions of more frequent and severe weather events taking place in Canada

2) Precipitation is estimated to be average or above average. Weather patterns are predicted to be more erratic which includes more heavy rainfall events. This may result in groundwater not being recharged at the same rate if excessive run off or extended dry periods occur

Concerns continued - Water Table

3) Any depletion of the fresh water table would require above average rainfall for one or more years to replenish the table to its original level

4) If water table replenishment does not take place in one to two years the water table will remain in a deficit position. This will require more years to replenish.

The PEI Water Act will require an Action Plan to address water table deficits

People Impacts

5) Impacts to local homeowners and businesses (50% of Islanders are on private wells) could be significant if water tables drop

If water table levels lower significantly, and local wells are affected, who will be compensated and how will they be compensated?

People Impacts continued

- In areas of high irrigation use in Canada, the lowering of water tables is an issue now
- The PEI Water Act will require protection to be in place for homeowners and businesses to deal with potential losses related to lower water tables

Streams and Waterways



6) We are concerned with the physiological changes occurring such as low water levels, water temperature increases and water quality degradation creating anoxia conditions in our local streams, rivers and estuaries

Streams and Waterways - 2

- Ecological changes to our waterways, how will this impact local fish populations (smelts, eels, silversides, juvenile lobster, rock crab, oysters, etc.)?
- On going monitoring should be part of the new PEI Water Act as currently monitoring is based on phone calls from the public
- Healthy waterway benchmarks need to be established

Water Quality

8) The use of groundwater to irrigate fields could mean exposure to pesticides and nitrates which eventually could make their way back to our streams, estuaries and drinking water.

The PEI Water Act needs to have provisions in place to ensure all irrigation is carried out with appropriate safeguards in place

Current Moratorium and required Protection

9) What research/data was used previously by the Provincial Government to reach the decision to introduce the moratorium on deep water wells? What has changed to warrant the discussion around opening the moratorium?

Watershed Management

10) There is a discussion on managing watersheds on a watershed by watershed basis. There are over 263 designated watersheds around the Island (30 main areas), Does this mean deep water wells could be used for irrigation in one area but not another based on watershed area? The new PEI Water Act must clearly define how the individual locations will be managed

Recommendations



1) Independent scientific research needs to be completed, peer reviewed and shared with all Islanders and local governments on the potential impacts of deep water wells before important decisions on PEI's groundwater are made.

Recommendations 1

2) The Province of Prince Edward Island should consider a differentiation between the assessment of deep water wells requiring fresh water and deep water wells requiring saltwater.

Can salt desalination be considered as an alternative to using fresh ground water for agricultural requirements?

Recommendations - 2

3) We suggest a “Precautionary Approach” be considered in assessing watershed levels. Green, Yellow, Red. Healthy Waterway Benchmark need to be established with accompanying detailed action plans. Potential impacts and consequences on adjoining watersheds must be made clear

Recommendations - 3

4) Additional areas of focus include provisions to deal with water table deficits, loss of water due to low water tables, on going monitoring, irrigation standards and standardized criteria for local watershed management

5) Suggest the current timeline is too aggressive to incorporate such a complex and multi faceted piece of legislation

Recommendations - 4

5) Specific programs are required in the Act to monitor, and protect local ecosystem health, prevent groundwater contamination and the depletion of groundwater levels

Summary



Many of these concerns contained in this document were previously brought forward by the PEIFA last year while discussions on deep water wells were taking place.

Our concerns have yet to be addressed, however we are confident the Environmental Advisory Council will escalate these concerns and recommendations to the appropriate Ministers and government officials in their report recommendations