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STATE OF THE LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED 2003

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, June 16, 2004, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. The report entitled State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed 2003 be received.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to advise Committee and Council of the completion of the 2003 State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed Report and the next steps in this process.

3. BACKGROUND

The Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy (LSEMS) program was initiated in 1990, with the goal of restoring a self sustaining coldwater fishery in Lake Simcoe by improving water quality. The main efforts to achieve this goal focussed on controlling and reducing phosphorous inputs to Lake Simcoe to 75 tonnes per year from the 1990 level of 100 tonnes.

Under Phase I (1990 - 1995), LSEMS was successful in reducing an estimated 14 metric tonnes of phosphorus from entering Lake Simcoe each year. During Phase II, which began in 1996, achievements included the completion of an additional 55 water quality improvement projects, a 2.5 metric tonne reduction in the annual phosphorus loading to Lake Simcoe, completion of a hydrologic mass balance for the Lake and the completion of a Total Water Quality Study examining the benefits of phosphorous control measures.

Phase III, which the Region entered into in 2001, has a number of key projects planned including:

- The development of a basin wide watershed plan starting in 2004.
- Enhancing the comprehensive watershed monitoring program to include key performance indicators and associated data needs.
- Increasing public awareness and understanding of environmental issues leading to actions.

As one of the first steps in preparing a Watershed Plan for the Lake Simcoe basin, the State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed report provides simple answers to questions regarding the current health and quality of Lake Simcoe ecosystem. This information

will provide the “base-line” against which programs and achievements can be evaluated to determine the success of future activities.

Once completed, it is anticipated that the Watershed Plan will identify opportunities for protection and rehabilitation of the watershed’s ecosystem.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Because the State of the Watershed report acts as an inventory of existing conditions, the report topic areas are wide ranging and include an inventory of cultural and demographic elements including political arrangements, current and future population projections, land use, and infrastructure (water and sewage services) and Natural Environment (topography, geology, natural heritage, water and air quality and fisheries. *Attachment 1* to this report is the Executive Summary of the State of the Watershed report. Additional copies of that report are available from either the Planning Department or from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. Both the complete report and the Executive Summary are available for viewing and downloading from the LSRCA website at www.lsrca.on.ca .

4.1 Key Findings and Conclusions

The key findings of the report are that:

- Lake Simcoe and it’s watershed is an invaluable natural and recreational resource in southern Ontario and a source of drinking water for many Ontario citizens.
- The lake, however, is under stress due to pressures from changing land use and population growth and continues to be unable to sustain a cold-water fishery.
- Immediate action is required to mitigate the environmental health impacts of human activity by managing future development and finding cost-effective solutions to restore natural resource features and functions.

While activities have been successful in reducing the phosphorus loading over the past several years, the actual phosphorus levels have remained relatively steady (approx. 102 tonnes per year) due to increased development and human activity. The data collected as part of the “State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed 2003” report preparation are essential, as a benchmark, for measuring future changes within the Lake Simcoe ecosystem and for gauging our success in protecting natural resources.

4.2 Next Steps

Next Steps in the process include public consultation with several public forums (timing yet to be announced) across the watershed to be conducted to discuss the “State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed 2003” report and collect input for the development of the Lake Simcoe Watershed Plan. Following this, or on a simultaneous path, Authority staff and partners will begin preparation of the Lake Simcoe Watershed Plan, where solutions will be investigated and an action plan prepared to improve the health of the watershed. The

key to implementation will be to ensure all the partners, stakeholders and watershed residents are involved in finding solutions and taking responsibility to act on them.

Regional staff have been involved in this process since its inception and will continue to participate on both the LSEMS Technical and Steering Committees to ensure that this important initiative is undertaken.

4.3 Relationship to Vision 2026

Vision 2026 contains the goal of an enhanced environment. Participation in implementation of the Lake Simcoe Environmental Management Strategy and in the preparation of the State of the Environment report and the subsequent Watershed Plan will assist in achieving this goal.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Region of York provides on-going budget allocations to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority for the LSEMS project (\$516,250 in 2004). The State of the Watershed Report will require periodic updates, which will be accommodated through yearly budget discussions and allocations. All partners in the watershed will contribute to the Authority's budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Area municipalities will be consulted by LSRCA as part of on-going public consultations within the State of the watershed report phase and during preparation of the watershed Plan.

7. CONCLUSION

Preparation of the State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed report was a necessary first step before preparing a watershed plan and provides simple answers to questions regarding the current health and quality of Lake Simcoe ecosystem. This information will provide the "base-line" against which programs and achievements can be evaluated to determine the success of future activities.

Public consultation on this report will take place within the near future in order to collect further data and advise the public of on-going issues with the Lake.

It is recommended the report entitled State of the Lake Simcoe Watershed 2003 be received.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(A copy of the attachment referred to in the foregoing has been forwarded to each Member of Council with the June 16, 2004, Planning and Economic Development Committee agenda and a copy thereof is on file in the Regional Clerk's Office.)