

Submission to the Walkerton Inquiry
Public Hearing #4
Source Area Protection

This submission addresses those elements of the Public Hearing agenda that Ducks Unlimited Canada has interest and opinion.

a. Lead Role, Key Players

Further to our report recommendations, it is recommended that:

- The Province provide stronger leadership for source protection by developing standards, procedures and regulations, which are guided by an integrated Provincial water strategy and which ensure that source protection programs are implemented at the local and watershed levels.
- Organizations such as Ducks Unlimited Canada, who possess knowledge, expertise and capacity to develop and implement wetland and riparian area protection and restoration programs, be fully utilized in the development and delivery of source area protection programs. Organizations such as DUC will continue to pursue their mission and vision of protecting and restoring wetlands and waterfowl habitat. These efforts can produce water quality and quantity benefits and can be optimized for these benefits if integrated within an overall source area protection strategy. Through a pooling of private and public sector interest and resources maximum multi-contextual benefits can be realized.
- Source area protection strategies be based on the watershed. The watershed represents the unit that best accommodates the natural linkages within and between components of surface and groundwater systems.

c. Source Area Protection Plans

It is recommended that:

- Source protection plans be recognized as an integral part of a long term, secure water supply strategy and should be prepared as part of overall watershed management plans. Source Area protection plans must build upon precise knowledge of the contribution of each element within the surface and groundwater system to the supply of clean water. Only through this knowledge can management options be produced which reflect cost efficiency, resource sustainability. Source area protection plans must not only reflect the present surface and groundwater resource configuration but also the potentials for contribution to source area protection from wetland and riparian area restoration strategies.

- The Planning Act represents a major tool in implementing source area protection programs. Provincial planning policies and policy frameworks for local government must be reconstructed based on comprehensive knowledge of the contribution of land uses to water quality/quantity. In particular the contribution of wetland and riparian area protection/restoration should be assessed
- Watershed based modeling, which accommodates all system components be the basis for source area protection plans. It is recognized that the contribution of wetlands and riparian areas to water quality depends on their unique connectivity to surface and groundwater systems. Without watershed based modeling the precise contribution of these areas and the value of that contribution can only be estimated.

d. Groundwater Management

- It is recommended that a comprehensive groundwater management policy framework be created as part of the overall provincial water strategy. This framework must be founded on knowledge of groundwater systems and in particular the contribution groundwater source area play within the system. Many temporary or seasonal wetland areas although presently not deemed to be provincially significant may play a significant role in recharging groundwater systems. This linkage must be better understood and valued.

e. Finance

- It is recommended that research be undertaken that would provide information and context for valuing landscape level programs such as wetland and riparian area protection and restoration for their water quality/quantity benefits. Presently the indirect contributors to surface and groundwater quality such as wetland and riparian area protection and restoration are not supported based on their value for water quality/quantity because there is no commonly accepted framework to arrive at these values. Our review of the science did not reveal such a framework. This framework must have the capacity to accommodate the variety of value wetland /riparian areas provide to water quality/quantity objectives.