



A N E W S L E T T E R F O R M U N I C I P A L C O U N C I L L O R S
February 2009

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Flood Season Preps

As we enter the normal high water season in Eastern Ontario, it is prudent to review your municipal plans, personnel and procedures for flooding if it occurs in your area.

Be on the lookout for Flood Messages from RVCA as part of your preparations:

- Watershed Conditions Bulletin – contains information about current conditions in the watershed that may set the stage for possible flooding if the right weather patterns should develop. Be informed and aware.
- Flood Advisories – when it is determined that flooding could result from an approaching weather system expected to bring heavy rain or warm air causing a rapid snowmelt. Prepare your flood response procedures.
- Flood Warnings – when it is determined that flooding conditions will definitely be experienced. Time to activate your flood response procedures.

Wetland Hydrology Study

RVCA technical staff is just completing a study using numerical modelling techniques to quantify the hydrological functions of wetlands in the Rideau Valley.

Watershed theory says that wetlands act like retention ponds during floods, absorbing huge amounts of water in the pores in the organic mud bottom of the wetland and in the open water areas themselves. This water stays there for a certain time before being slowly released back into the surface system as the season progresses and allowing infiltration into the subsurface aquifers to replenish groundwater reserves. The result is a lower peak downstream of the wetlands and a more gradual decline of the high water condition. Both characteristics (flood attenuation and low flow modification) are valuable for municipalities and property owners because the extreme highs and lows of the annual water regime are somewhat muted. Less damage at flood time and less drought during the drier times.

Preliminary results indicate that the RVCA study proves this theory. It looks like Rideau Valley wetlands do provide a measurable benefit to downstream landowners in lowering the peak flows. More numbers to follow as available.



Hydrogeology and Plan Review

RVCA comments on impacts of proposed land use changes on the quality and quantity of groundwater as part of its plan review functions for municipalities. This review is undertaken by staff Hydrogeologist, Mr Asher Rizvi. He also provides hydrogeology expertise to the neighbouring Mississippi and South Nation CAs when required. The technical field investigation is always done by qualified, independent consultants who are commissioned by the development proponent – they retain 100% of the professional responsibility for that important work.

The role of RVCA is to conduct a review of the consultant’s hydrogeological assessment study, and then advise the municipal decision-making body as to whether or not the consultant’s studies provide a sound basis upon which to proceed with the development approval.



RVCA looks at two important aspects of the consultant’s work:

1. **adequacy of the technical work within the context of provincial technical guidelines** – including site characterization, field and laboratory testing, and numerical analyses, and
2. **appropriateness of the consultant’s conclusions and recommendations**, given the findings of the technical work and in the context of the prevailing policy framework at both the Provincial and local level.

The primary “benchmark or standard” that RVCA applies in this function is the MOE’s *Hydrogeological Technical Information Requirements for Land Development Applications and related Technical Guides*. The reviewer also applies professional judgment to the task – hence the requirement that our Hydrogeologist must be a licensed Professional Geoscientist or Engineer. Mr. Rizvi is a licensed P.Geo. with 15 years of experience.



Deficiencies are sometimes identified in the technical work, or how it’s documented in the consultant’s report. When consultants respond positively to our reviewer’s comments with additional testing or analysis, or by providing needed clarification of the methods used and/or the rationale behind his/her recommendations, the desired result is a report that provides sound technical support to the municipality’s decision to approve the development and makes for a well-informed community in the vicinity of the development (existing nearby residents as well as prospective purchasers of residences in the development itself) – the happy ending that we’re all after.

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In 2008, RVCA carried out 75 such Hydrogeological Reviews on projects ranging from severances and subdivisions to major urban developments and drainage issues of all kinds.

In addition, Mr Rizvi is involved in the Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Network project (water quality and water level monitoring of 15 wells) and provides input to all in-house subwatershed plans and studies such as Christie Lake, Hutton Creek and the Rideau Lakes Watershed Plan.

