

NEWS RELEASE

HUTTON MARSH WATER LEVELS AT THE MOTTS MILLS DAM

September 23, 2011, ELIZABETHTOWN-KITLEY — Residents and travelers in the vicinity of the hamlet of “Motts Mills” on Leeds-Grenville County Road 1, about 9.5 kilometres south of Smiths Falls may have noticed that water levels in the Hutton Marsh wetland, above the Motts Mills Dam have dropped by about 74 centimetres (29 inches) in recent weeks.

On three occasions since mid-August (most recently sometime between Monday, September 19 and Thursday, September 22), stop logs in the dam have been lifted and destroyed by unknown, unauthorized persons, resulting in these reduced water levels.

Since its construction in 1952, the Motts Mills Dam has played an important role in maintaining an artificially controlled water level on about 300 hectares of the Hutton Marsh that is part of the much larger Otter Lake-Hutton Creek wetland complex, which is classified as a Provincially Significant Wetland, and has been well-known in the past as excellent waterfowl habitat. Over time, certain vegetation species in the wetland have become dominant, and the amount of open water area in it has diminished, so the diversity of habitat types and wildlife within the wetland has also diminished.

The condition of the 60 year old Motts Mills Dam has been deteriorating for several years, and it is in need of major rehabilitation. Recently completed inspections by independent engineering consultants indicate that operator and public safety measures at the structure do not meet current standards, and further investigations are needed to confirm the structural stability of the dam.

Over the past two years, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has been working with the Leeds-Grenville Stewardship Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and local landowners to develop a long term plan for Dam and wetland restoration and management.

In light of the findings of the recent engineering report, RVCA was already (i.e. before the recent vandalism) considering the removal of two stop logs from the Dam, on an interim basis, as an appropriate way to manage risks until such time as the dam’s structural stability can be confirmed and measures to improve operator safety can be implemented.

RVCA’s intent had been to consult with local landowners and its partners in the wetland and dam restoration initiative before adjusting the Dam to the interim settings. In the present circumstances, (after the recent vandalism at the site), the RVCA is now planning to leave the Dam in its current state (with three stop logs removed), and encourages anyone with an interest in how water levels above the Dam are being managed to contact the Authority’s office in Manotick to express any concerns or comments they may have.

The local detachment of the OPP has been made aware of the recent vandalism at the site. RVCA field operations staff continue to monitor the site.

The RVCA continues to work with landowners, the local Stewardship Council, DUC and OMNR on the creation of a long-term restoration and management plan for the Hutton Marsh Wetland and the Motts Mills Dam, and on the challenge of securing the necessary funding for its implementation.

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