

Town has plans to perk up the old mill pond

Asphodel-Norwood

The Township is making good progress with Norwood Millpond/Ouse River Remedial Action Plan

Over this past summer much has been a lot accomplished to further the goal of creating the Norwood Mill Pond/Ouse River Remedial Action Plan.

A number of faculty and summer research students from Trent University have been involved with the Township of Asphodel-Norwood to determine the health of the Norwood Millpond. The Trent Science Committee, with representatives from the Township of Asphodel-Norwood, the Otonabee Region Conservation Authority, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and interested residents of Asphodel-Norwood met in June 2005 to discuss and address local concerns about the declining state of the Millpond. Their goal is to restore the pond and create a healthy ecosystem, creating an environment suitable for recreation, swimming and wildlife observation by local residents.

Tom Hutchinson, a Professor of Environmental Sciences at Trent University and a resident of the Township, together with summer students Shalin Abbott, Andrew Ramesbottom, and Debra Byrne organized sampling and measurements of the water and sediment quality in the pond and in the inflowing and out flowing waters, as well as in the stream passing through Norwood. Samples for chemical analysis, for bacteriological counts and pond weed identifications were taken in July and August 2005. The samples are being analyzed in laboratories at Trent University.

A major concern in recent times has been the heavy use of the pond and surrounding open lawns and pastures by Canada Geese. The goose population at the pond in early July was about 30-40 birds and that number had risen to several hundred by late August. The bird population has continued to increase as adults and their young arrive from the surrounding area and congregate at the pond.

The summer was, as we all know, extremely hot and very dry. By late August the flow into the pond from the Ouse River had ceased altogether. This has the effect of heating up the water and favouring bacterial and algal growth while reducing the dissolved oxygen levels. Preliminary results including bacterial counts from the Ministry of Health, showed elevated bacterial counts and high levels of phosphorus in the pond. The analysis is ongoing and should be finished in the next few weeks. Salt levels, nitrogen and heavy metals are all being assessed in sediments and in the water column at five locations in the pond. The inflow from the dump and upper Ouse River is also being looked at.

This preliminary study is intended to be part of a yearlong study of the pond to address and identify the seasonal problems and fluctuations prior to considering what option or recommendations for restoring the pond to its former state and recreational value for the Township's residents. It already seems probable that the geese present a significant challenge for management.

The Trent University Science Committee along with local partners will provide reports available on an ongoing basis.

The Otonabee Conservation Foundation has made a \$2,000 grant available to help cover laboratory expenses related to water and silt analysis.

The Otonabee Conservation Foundation is a leader in environmental conservation, working in partnership with Otonabee Conservation and community groups to advance the protection of environmentally sensitive areas, the stewardship of natural resources, heritage conservation, outdoor recreation and conservation education in the watershed community.

“We are pleased to see the initiative taken by municipal leaders and volunteers in the Asphodel-Norwood area trying to investigate the causes of pollution in the source water areas of the Ouse,” says Ron Scott, President of the Otonabee Conservation Foundation. “It is only with this approach that we can truly understand the problem and thereby find workable solutions. The Norwood area has been a strong supporter of the work of the Foundation over the years and we are thus very happy to invest in the initiative.”

Another research project being planned involves the study and documentation of the land use of the area around the pond. It will include a review of literature and archival records noting historical and present commercial and residential establishments. The project will also involve the collection of historical aerial photographs, as well as research into the history of the original dam and milling operations, and the history of the railway, landfill and spillway construction. There will also be a review of the Norwood Historical Society holdings, along with interviews of residents to acquire oral history and anecdotal information.

This study will be an important component of the overall research of the problems at the pond and assist in the analysis of water and soil by providing clues to what has transpired around the pond. It will also be an important historical record and reference for the municipality.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Community Stream Steward Program (CSSP) has been assisting with addressing the long time concerns of the overall health of the Norwood Mill Pond and will be actively implementing and supporting various aspects of this ambitious, yet achievable, restoration.

The CSSP is a multi-partner initiative that is focused on creating a sense of community and individual awareness of the need for each of us to do our part in restoring and preserving such an integral part of our natural heritage - the coldwater stream. They work with dedicated individuals and community groups to form a network, or web, of Stream Stewards located on coldwater streams throughout the project area. This network will allow for significant steps, large or small, to be taken towards achieving our goal of coldwater stream restoration and preservation.

Over this past summer the CSSP performed stream monitoring both up and downstream of the Mill Pond. In conjunction with data collected from Otonabee Conservation and Trent University this will allow for the determination of key water quality issues. The data will also help the Township understand the effects of upstream land practices and their impact downstream and on the pond. The explosive Canada goose population that is apparent within Norwood and the Pond itself will also be addressed by the various agencies, including the CSSP. Tara Borwick, coordinator of the CSSP, stresses that it is important to devise a long-term goose management plan, not just a short-term band-aid that ultimately will not meet the community goals. The CSSP, in cooperation with other agencies, will provide Canada goose management options to the town of Norwood and will be a key player in implementing specific aspects of the plan. How the community can best manage this [Mill Pond] valuable natural resource and the 'best management' practices required for a healthy shoreline and therefore improved water quality.