

Subject: Russell Lake Water Quality  
From: <smawdsley@ns.sympatico.ca>  
Date: Mon, 19 Jan 2004 15:36:10 -0500  
To: Timmes

First of all, I would like to extend my thanks to you for maintaining such an informative web site.

I live on Russell Lake and am very concerned about storm water, protection of the buffer zone, and ultimately water quality. I am quite frustrated by HRM's response to our concerns and lack of watershed stewardship.

Currently, as you know, the eastern shore of Russell Lake has only a fifty foot buffer zone, is quite steep, and contains erodible Wolfville soil. I have noted significant improvement in the water quality over the past few years, but recently we have had significant sediment contamination from the Evergreen Development. Regular lake water samples have been performed as part of the Home Depot development agreement, but we have been told by HRM that the results are "confidential".

Currently, Parks and Recreation is intent on developing a trail system along the lake. As you well know, the primary function of the buffer zone is lake protection, and any sort of trail system that is not well studied prior is concerning. We feel that secondary use of this area should only be allowed if the primary function is not diminished. The existing path through this area is used by hikers, and we would like to maintain it, but are concerned about a "formal trail" particularly given the proposed development across Russell Lake and predicted heavy useage of the trail.

If you would like to see an example of our concern go to the head of Sprucewood Court in Portland Estates. HRM recently developed a public access route to the "proposed" trail, but has now been forced to declare it a failure and intends on covering it with "bark mulch". Basically, they "paved" a thirty foot straight path down the hill, and then made a windy trail out of thick crusher rock. As I'm sure you can predict, the impervious surface promoted excess storm water drainage and washed out all the crusher rock. The area is now a disaster. We predicted that in writing to HRM before and after construction, and requested a more environmentally friendly "natural" trail, but basically were ignored. The rest of the trail has not been developed so we still have time.

The citizens along the buffer zone would like to have the environmental impact of any trail considered and incorporated into planning. This has not happened, and in fact, the regional trails coordinator told us that "an environmental study is not necessary, and HRM can do what it likes on it's own property". We are not opposed to a trail and all use the small trail that exists now. What we are concerned about is overuse, erosion, plant and animal habitat, and diminished capacity of the buffer zone to provide it's filtering function. No one seems to understand or care about watershed management principles or the primary function of a buffer zone.

The eastern side is a particular fragile area and perhaps a formal trail could bypass these areas and thus preserve the buffer function. Do you have any suggestions? I would be happy to meet you and show you the area in question, and look forward to your opinion and suggestions. If you feel a trail is feasible in this area, we would also value your opinion in regards to best construction techniques etc, and how to encourage HRM to follow those Guidelines. Our only concern is maintaining lake water quality for all residents and I feel that the buffer zone plays an important part. Thank you.

Scott Mawdsley