

Environment Minister gets clear look at Sackville River silt



Darrell Oake photo

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Department issues emergency stop-work orders on developments

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Walter Regan has been involved with the preservation, restoration and enhancement of the Sackville River watershed for 22 years.

Despite his continued work with the Sackville Rivers Association, it seems for every step forward there has been a step back in their ongoing mission to keep the Sackville Rivers clean and healthy. Last week a positive step was made when province's Environment Minister visited Sackville to see for himself the damage being done. While there, Sterling Belliveau witnessed the large amount of silt flowing into the river.

"They, (the Sackville Rivers Association) helped me understand what's happening in their area from a development perspective," said Belliveau.

Silt is a very fine soil particle that is easily carried away by water and wind and deposited into the river. It decreases the stream velocity causing stagnant pools. It fills in the space between and around the river bottoms essential for healthy breeding and spawning grounds for fish and smothers existing eggs and bottom dwelling species. Even small deposits of this material are dangerous. Silt can effect salmon and trout populations thus affecting all wildlife that rely on the river. There are really no safe levels of silt release.

Following his visit, Regan received a letter from the minister's office stating that staff in Bedford had inspected two locations at the head of the little Sackville River and Jackladder Brook. Following this inspection, ACL Construction Limited, Armco Capital Limited and 3102479 Nova Scotia Limited were issued an emergency stop work order. These sites are currently under investigation by the department and the halting of all construction activity – with the exception of the installation of erosion and sedimentation controls – has been made. The letter stated that the work order will remain in place until such time as the department is satisfied that an appropriate sedimentation and erosion plan is in place. It went on to say that staff will continue to work with property owners and contractors in the area to reduce silt releases from their properties.

Regan is hopeful, but he is still concerned that people don't understand the serious impact this type of pollution has on the river. He also has his own ideas about what should be done to ensure the silt is eliminated.

"No matter what we do or how hard we work, when there's a heavy rain, raw sewage and water from storm drains pollute the river," he said. "I want to see better enforcement. I want a bylaw that tells contractors if they don't follow that bylaw they will be charged. I would like to see every individual lot owner, builder and contractor have to put up a \$5,000 bond. If they follow proper procedure and no silt comes back down the river they get the money back. If there is silt damage that money should be used to clean it up. I want them to be responsible."

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