
Southern First Nations Secretariat

Tribal Council Report Phase II - Executive Summary

Introduction

The Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA) was retained by the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC) to carry out an overall general assessment study of existing water and sewage facilities in First Nation communities with regard to the magnitude and scope of existing and potential problems in terms of health and safety risks.

In March 2001, a representative from OCWA traveled to four of the six communities within the Southern First Nations Secretariat and met with the facility operators. Two other communities were not visited. At the community visits the Tribal Council Technical Services Advisor was also in attendance.

From interviews with the operators and the completion of questionnaires, information was collected by OCWA and compiled into individual Community Reports, included in Appendix "A". At the time of the visits, walkthrough tours of the facilities were conducted by OCWA and observations were recorded in the reports. This Tribal Council Report summarizes the findings from the Community Reports.

Community Services

The six Southern First Nations communities are generally located between 50 km west/southwest of London. Based upon the Capital Asset Inventory System (CAIS) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) reports, the total on-site Southern First Nations population amounts to 5,360 and there are 1,575 houses of which:

- 83% of the houses are served by communal water systems, 16% are serviced by individual wells and the balance of 1% are serviced by other means; and
- 18% of houses are serviced by communal sewage systems, 76% are serviced by individual septic tanks, and the remaining 6% are serviced by other means.

Risk Assessment

It was reported that no Boil Water Advisories were placed on any of the four the communities visited.

The water treatment facility in the Chippewas of Kettle and Stoney Point is a Class II facility. Chippewas of the Thames, Moravian of the Thames, and Oneida Nation of the Thames have Class I water treatment facilities.

Chippewas of Kettle and Stoney Point and Chippewas of the Thames have Class II sewage treatment facilities. Oneida Nation of the Thames is a Class I sewage treatment facility.

OCWA's assessment identifies the water system to be high risk because of plant capacity limits are being reached, and THM's, iron, aluminum, sodium, colour, and total dissolved solids are exceeding GCDWQ.

The sewage collection system for Oneida Nation of the Thames is identified as high risk because of sewer, effluent bypassing lack of backup power and service disruptions.

Chippewas of the Thames communal water supply is high risk because of the Thames River flooding over the well supply, and the Oneida Nation of the Thames is high risk because the sewage treatment facilities is not operational.

Definition of Risk

High risk issues may include non-compliance events, broken or malfunctioning equipment, lack of necessary monitoring equipment, inadequate sampling/testing/reporting, safety issues and lack of operator training. These items should be acted upon immediately.

The report also identifies medium risk issues that should be attended to in the short term. These issues include record drawings and manuals, and backup power supplies.

Long term planning objectives have also been identified in the report. These objectives are to ensure that a support structure is put in place to not only bring the facilities into compliance with approved operating standards, but also through operator training, testing and reporting protocols, planning and capital improvements, to maintain that level of operational excellence. This approach will ensure the long term health and safety of both the communities and the operators while also maintaining the value of the capital assets.

Recommendations

The report recommends immediate action be taken on the high risk issues with attention being given to the medium risk issues. Concurrently, the long term planning issues should be formulated and implemented.

From OCWA's observations in the communities, it is recommended that consideration be given to further studies of the water distribution systems and the sewage collection systems. In addition the individual wells, septic systems, and other individual services should also be reviewed on a continuing basis.

The information available through the CAIS and INAC reports was found to be not up to date and/or in agreement. It is recommended that these reports be updated and reconciled.

The foremost recommendation would focus on operator training programs together with a reporting structure to ensure both operating compliance and effective response to changing conditions.