

United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin

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 February 2001 a representative from OCWA traveled to each of the six communities within the United Chiefs and Councils of Manitoulin (UCCM) and met with the facility operators. At five communities 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 UCCM communities and are generally located on Manitoulin Island. Based on the Capital Asset Inventory System (CAIS) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) reports, the total on-site UCCM population amounts to 1,910 and there are 582 houses of which:

- 77% of the houses are serviced by communal water systems, including in-ground distribution, 16% are serviced by holding tanks and trucked water, and the remaining 7% have other services; and
- 18% the of houses, are serviced by communal sewage systems, and 82% are serviced by individual septic tanks.

The water treatment facilities for Sheshegwaning and Whitefish River have Class II facilities. M'chigeeng, Sucker Creek, Sheguiandah, and Zhiibaahaasing have Class I water treatment facilities.

M'chigeeng has a Class I sewage treatment facility.

Risk Assessment

It was reported that up to seven Boil Water Advisories had been placed on five of the UCCM communities in the past year on the water holding tanks with trucked water.

One Boil Water Advisory was placed on the Sucker Creek communal water system.

Community water systems have been assessed high risk if there was a Boil Water Advisory in effect at the time of the OCWA visit, there is a history of repeated Boil Water Advisories, a Boil Water Advisory has been issued in the last 12 months, and, in the absence of any information, the reason and the corrective action taken to address the Boil Water Advisory.

OCWA's assessment identifies the water supply systems for the following facilities high risk:

- M'chigeeng Village communal water system – needs repairs to pressure tanks, needs separate chemical storage area, and requires a complete review of the water system.
- Sucker Creek communal water system – filters need repairing, operator needs additional training, exceedances in lead and copper, previous Boil Water Advisory, and requires professional review of system
- Sheguiandah communal water system – needs repairs to pressure filter, and requires professional review of system.
- Zhiibaahaasing communal trucked water system – no filtration.

The sewage collection system is identified high risk because of bypassing basement flooding, and requires repairs to control panel.

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 on immediately.

The report also identifies medium risk issues that should be attended to in the short term. These issues include design and capacity assessments, record drawings and manuals, backup power supplies and the proximity of sewage effluent discharges and water intakes.

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 water holding tanks, septic systems, and other individual systems 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.