

Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association of First Nations

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.

OCWA representatives visited three of the four communities of Waabnoong Bemjiwang Association of First Nations (WBAFN). The Magnetawan community was visited on March 6, 2001, and the Henvey Inlet and Dokis communities were visited on July 26, 2001. The Wahnapiatae community was not visited.

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 WBAFN is comprised of four communities: the Dokis community is located 50 km southwest of North Bay; the Wahnapiatae and Henvey Inlet communities are located 29 km northwest and 60 km south of Sudbury, respectively; and the Magnetawan community is located 60 km north of Parry Sound. Based on the Capital Asset Inventory System (CAIS) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) reports, the total WBAFN on-site population amounts to 436 people, and there are 182 houses of which:

- 83% of the houses are serviced by communal water systems including in-ground distribution, and 17% of houses have other water services; and
- 16% of houses are serviced by communal sewage systems, 26% are serviced by individual sewage septic tanks, 13% are serviced by individual holding tanks, and 45% have other sewage service.

The water treatment facility in the Magnetawan community is a Class II facility. Dokis and Henvey Inlet have Class I water treatment facilities.

Magnetawan has a Class II sewage treatment facility.

Risk Assessment

Operators informed OCWA that there has been no Boil Water Advisories placed on Henvey Inlet, Dokis and Magnetawan communities in the past year.

OCWA's assessment identifies the following location to have potential high risk issues:

- Henvey Inlet communal water – no disinfection.

OCWA's assessment identified the following location to have potential medium risk issues:

- Dokis communal water – operator training needed.

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 design and capacity assessments, 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 sewage holding tanks, 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.