



NEWS

Environmental groups concerned about Erin wastewater plant

Mayor says environmental assessments address concerns over effluent and fisheries

By [Joshua Santos, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter](#) Orangeville Banner

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With plans underway for Erin's new wastewater treatment plant, some community groups have expressed concern about the impact it will have on fish wildlife in the West Credit River.

A change.org petition garnered 13,146 signatures, at this time, against the plant. The Izaak Walton Flying Fish Club is one of many, along with the Belfountain Community Organization, concerned about the impact it would have on the fish, a number of which have been identified including Brook trout, a cold-water dwelling fish.

It needs cold water to survive and spawn.

Erin's proposed wastewater system is expected to emit up to 7.2 million litres of treated effluent into the river daily at a regular temperature of 19 degrees Celsius, according to Banner archives.

"The problem is, it's a very narrow temperature range (the trout) like," said John Moncka of Trout Unlimited.

Anything over 19 degrees Celsius will start to stress how the fish behave and live, he said.

“We feel that is a really crucial number to have to have the plant comply with,” said Moncka.

Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club’s treasurer Dean Latham’s concern with temperature is that in the environmental study report, consultants calculated a mixed river temperature — determined by the river water at low flow and the effluent from the plant which is hotter — using one year of data at a similar sewerage plant on a colder than average year.

“To me, that’s not really doing their due diligence of getting the background information that the fish will be OK,” said Latham.

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Mayor of Erin, Allan Alls, believes the water quality for the fish will meet compliance measures and actually improve the water.

“The province and Credit Valley Conservation Authority have all agreed, we are building a stringent waste treatment plant. It will improve the water in Credit River,” said Alls.

“During the environmental assessment, which was a long process and took almost 10 years to finish, Hutchinson Environmental ensured the quality of the plant we are going to build, will put that kind of water back into the river.”

Alls said no taxpayer dollars would be allocated to the establishment of the plant and the developer would pay for it, entirely with their own funds.

“We are building the plant, but they are paying for it,” said Alls. “Not the residents.”

“As far as I know, right at the moment, we will not be able to hook up any of the current and old infrastructures until we get some money and grants from the federal and provincial governments, which I’m optimistic will come. But I don’t know when.”

“In the meantime, the developers have bought the land. They have the right to build and the province wants growth. We are getting the plant built for and paid for by development.”

The Belfountain Community Organization is working at increasing awareness of people in neighbouring Caledon, so they understand the potential impact of the effluent on the East and West Credit.

They would like to garner support from residents, once they’ve spoken with the towns of Erin and Caledon to find ways to mitigate their environmental concerns.

“Right now, we are at the point where we are hoping to engage municipally and regionally, to secure some changes,” said Judy Mabee, president of the Belfountain Community Organization.

“They are building a wastewater treatment plant in Erin and are piping the effluent right to the border of Caledon, and emitting it, right into Caledon,” said Latham. “None of the downstream Caledon residents, who directly receive the effluent were properly consulted. That’s why people in Belfountain are very upset. They don’t feel like they were involved in the process, weren’t consulted and are learning this late.”

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: *As plans progress for Erin’s wastewater plant, the Advocate wanted to check in with concerned community organizations to see if their voice was being heard in the process and what they thought the impact this new facility might have in the community.*

Joshua Santos is a Local Journalism Initiative reporter for the Orangeville Banner, covering municipal affairs. His reporting is funded by the Canadian government through its Local Journalism Initiative.

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