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NEWS

Erin Waste water treatment plant review forthcoming from federal government

Protest signs will be displayed along river until May 28

By **Joshua Santos** Orangeville Banner

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A decision is imminent

tment plant.

Jonathan Wilkinson, minister of environment and climate change, has until May 26 to issue a decision on the facility. This would be 90 days after conservation groups submitted a 28-page request.

“The coalition’s careful review of the Erin wastewater treatment plant environmental study report (ESR) determined that a federal Impact Assessment was our best chance at making real and meaningful change to protect the West Credit River’s coldwater ecosystem and its sensitive brook trout, endangered Redside Dace, and reintroduced Atlantic Salmon,” said Linda Heron, chair of the Ontario Rivers Alliance.

The coalition – consisting of the Belfountain Community Organization (BCO), West Credit River Watch (WCRW), Izaak Walton Fly Fishing Club (IWFFC), Trout Unlimited Canada - Greg Clark Chapter (TUC), Ontario Streams (OS), and Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) – submitted the request on Feb. 26.

They are concerned the temperature of the proposed effluent being pumped into the West Credit River will have a warming effect on the spawning grounds, which negatively threatens the Brook Trout's reproductive future in the river.

A visual public protest is set to run until May 28. Residents will display about 700 signs in Erin, Caledon, and along the West Credit River.

The town backed the plant, deeming it necessary to accommodate 14,500 new residents. Under the Wellington County official plan, the town is expected to grow by up to 10,000 by 2041.

“We support the Town of Erin’s desire to grow and recognize the need for a sewage treatment plant,” said John Monczka of Trout Unlimited Canada, Greg Clark Chapter. “We have been asking for sustainable growth, meaningful design changes, and the investigation of alternatives that will ensure the protection of this important coldwater habitat and its thriving brook trout population.”

The town approved the plant with consultation from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and all stakeholders, including the Credit Valley Conservation Authority (CVC). It has been in the works for over a decade, with progress expediting in 2019. They plan to move the project ahead by any means working with federal authorities as required.

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engineers and scientists are prepared to respond to and work with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC).

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Researchers at the time determined that it was not necessary to reduce the effluent temperature. The town says they will monitor the effluent's temperature after construction to ensure it meets the required environmental requirements.

If it is deemed necessary to reduce the effluent temperature in the future, staff will incorporate suitable mitigating actions at that time.

Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seeback presented a 500-signature petition in the House of Commons in support of federal intervention.

This is an effort to address some resident's concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed plant on the West Credit River, a spawning ground for native Brook Trout.

It is rare Ottawa steps in to override provincial approvals, especially for municipal projects. The coalition notes there was no impact assessment act or mechanism in place allowing the residents to appeal a provincial minister's decision after a Part II Order request was denied.

"We are fully committed to ensuring that the protection of our environment remains at the forefront as this project moves forward while making it a viable and sustainable solution for Erin and our residents who call it home," said Dixit. "

The plant is expected to discharge up to 7.2 million litres of treated warm temperature effluent into the West Credit River daily. The trout needs cold water to survive and spawn.

Joshua Santos is a reporter for the Orangeville Banner, covering municipal affairs.

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