

## **Blue Mountain Watershed Trust Foundation**

*"The Watershed News" Fall 2003 Issue.*

### **Castle Glen Resort Community Sub-Committee Report**

The Castle Glen Resort Community Sub-Committee to the Wetlands Action Group Committee was formed at WAG Committee Meeting #02/03 on April 1, 2003. The CGRC Sub-Committee mandate is to deal with the interests of the Trust and issues that should be raised with The Town of The Blue Mountains, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, etc. and used as a basis of political action during future elections. Sub-Committee members are:

Norm Wingrove (Chair)  
Hans Eijssenck  
Peter McDonald  
Greta McGillivray  
Len Popp

#### Castle Glen Resort Community - Proposed:

On March 13, 1975, the Township of Collingwood's (now part of The Town of The Blue Mountains) Official Plan Amendment No. 7 to the Official Plan ("Castle Glen Secondary Plan") for the Beaver Valley Planning Area was approved by the Minister of Housing. O.P.A. #7 gives approval to a development in Castle Glen. The potential development was 1,720 resort residential units and approximately 300 lodge units, together with commercial and recreational uses. Services were to be communal wells and sewage lagoons.

The Castle Glen project predates the 1984 Niagara Escarpment Plan, and is thus "grandfathered" into the Plan. However, in the words of Greta McGillivray, BMWTF Co-President and former member of the Niagara Escarpment Commission "If the Castle Glen Resort Community proposal came before the Niagara Escarpment Commission today, it would not be allowed."

A Plan of Subdivision was approved in 1976 comprising 354 resort residential units, two golf courses and one ski facility. The Town subsequently amended their requirements to include a sewer trunk line to the Craigeith works. The Ministry of the Environment issued their Final Certificate of Approval in 1988. In 1990 an agreement was entered into between the Town and Castle Glen that the trunk sewer would provide hook-ups for the existing Thunder Hill subdivision. The existing sewage lagoon would then be de-commissioned.

In 2000, the Ministry of Environment issued a Permit to Take Water (PTTW) to Castle Glen for up to 1,300,000 liters per day from two wells. The MOE confirms that a Class Environmental Assessment is required for the water treatment and distribution system.

The Town of The Blue Mountains proposed new Official Plan and Amendment No. 1 and No. 2 were discussed at a public meeting on December 11, 2002. Official Plan Amendment No. 3 to update the Town's policies for the Castle Glen Resort Community was presented at a public meeting on December 18, 2002. BMWTF representatives attended both meetings.

#### O.P. Amendment No. 3 (Castle Glen):

The purpose of the Amendment is to re-designate the lands in the vicinity of Castle Glen in order to permit the development of a resort residential community on *full municipal services*. The developer is expected to finance the required service facilities.

The proposed development includes 1,634 new residential units, 300 hotel rooms, 5,000 square meters of retail/commercial space and three golf courses.

In addition to attending the public meeting on December 18, 2002, the BMWTF submitted written comments on May 12, 2003 prior to the Town Council's discussion and vote on O.P.A. #3. We support fully the concept of full municipal services financed by the developer. Our concerns are the absence of any requirement for a sub-watershed study of the Silver Creek watershed as recommended by the AEMOT Groundwater Management Study. We also have apprehension about the impacts on the cold-water fisheries of Silver and Black Ash Creeks. Source water protection for the people drawing their drinking water from Georgian Bay and the Guelph-Amabel Aquifer should also be considered. Concerns with the high density permitted, minimal setback requirements and visual impacts are also outlined.

#### Ontario Municipal Board:

In October 2002, the developers appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board "Council's refusal or neglect to enact a proposed amendment to the Official Plan for the Town of the Blue Mountains to re-designate lands ... to establish detailed policies to permit the development of the lands within the Castle Glen Secondary Plan area as a four seasons recreational resort in the form of 1,720 residential dwelling units, together with commercial and recreational development with golf related uses."

The BMWTF attended the first Pre-hearing Conference on November 5, 2002 and received Participant Status. Several residents of Thunder Hill and the Castle Glen Area and the Castle Glen Ratepayers Association took Party Status.

Subsequent Pre-hearing Conferences and Mediation Sessions have been held, with the objective of resolving all issues and avoiding a full O.M.B. Hearing. BMWTF Sub-Committee members have attended all sessions, but as Participants, we are excluded from the confidential negotiations between the Parties. One of the Parties, Ken Crompton, withdrew from the mediation on July 25, 2003.

The Mediation Sessions continue until the end of August.

#### BMWTF Position:

The CGRRCSC prepared a brief outlining the BMWTF position on the Castle Glen proposal, supported by an excellent Power Point presentation prepared by Mike Robbins, one of the O.M.B. Parties. We have presented it to the Niagara Escarpment Commission, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, Town of Collingwood and The Town of the Blue Mountains. Delegations have been requested to the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, County of Grey and Chippewas of Nawash First Nations. The brief was also submitted to the Western Ontario Region Smart Growth Panel.

Our concerns are Headwaters (Water Quality and Quantity), Density (High), Setbacks (Inadequate) and Servicing/Water Taking (Full Municipal Services Protect the Aquifer). Key issues include the approval of this "grandfathered" development under the 27-year-old O.P.A. in the face of the protection of the natural values embedded in the Niagara Escarpment Plan; potential for damage to the cold water fisheries in this sensitive headwaters area (See Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority 2001 Watershed Health Monitoring Summary, March 2001); the developers location of the Escarpment Brow is too low on the slope; use of Lake of the Clouds as a storm water storage facility and golf course irrigation reservoir; location of a large portion of the proposed development in the vulnerable karst area above Lake of the Clouds (this should remain a green belt); the potential

for detrimental effect on the groundwater table level in the event that Castle Glen starts pumping the 1,300,000 liters per day as approved by their PTTW; the extensive tree clearing required which will cause habitat destruction and species disruption and the visual impacts of the proposal which extend well beyond the area being considered by the developer's consultants.

The Niagara Escarpment has been designated as a World Biosphere Reserve. This development is in one of the most sensitive areas of this internationally significant natural heritage area. The development must be brought up to today's standards. The precautionary principle must be used. More studies are needed. In fact, studies commissioned by the O.M.B. Parties at their own expense have called into question many of the findings of the developer's consultants.

#### Where Do We Go From Here?:

We are not against development and golf courses, only golf courses on the sensitive slopes of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve. Golf courses do not require such slopes to be functional. The BMWTF continues to support the Parties and is lobbying the Federal government, the Province of Ontario and the Approval Agencies to make sure the development is changed and brought up to today's standards.

We have supported financially the August 5, 2003 Castle Glen Karst Reconnaissance Study commissioned by The Town of The Blue Mountains, and continue to insist on more detailed karst studies.

The BMWTF has also been co-operating with the Castle Glen Ratepayers Association Inc. in the planning for a public information/fund-raising event designed to raise the profile of this important issue with the public. We had our display at their yard sale in June.

A copy of the BMWTF Brief and other materials can be obtained by contacting Norm Wingrove at 705-445-1117 or [bmwt@bmts.com](mailto:bmwt@bmts.com).