

Source Protection Plan Approval: Questions and Answers January 2015

KEY MESSAGES

- The South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan is the culmination of many years' work and public consultation. The South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Committee has developed a sound plan to protect our municipal drinking water systems.
- The Clean Water Act ensures communities protect their drinking water supplies through prevention — by developing collaborative, watershed-based source protection plans that are locally driven and based in science.
- Local leadership has played and will continue to play a key role in protecting our drinking water sources now and in the future.
- Protecting our local drinking water sources is part of Ontario's award-winning drinking water safety net. Thanks to our strong framework with safeguards at every step of the process, Ontarians can be confident in the quality and quantity of their drinking water.

Q1. What is the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region?

The South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region is comprised of four watersheds (Black River, Lake Simcoe, Nottawasaga Valley, Severn Sound), three source protection areas (Lakes Simcoe and Couchiching / Black River, Nottawasaga Valley, Severn Sound) which all flow ultimately into Lake Simcoe or Georgian Bay. The area measures approximately 10,000 square kilometres, and is home to over 700,000 residents.

The entire Source Protection Region includes 52 municipalities, 3 First Nations, and has 16 municipal surface water systems, including one first nation system and 277 municipal supply wells (many of which are clustered) and approximately 50,000 private wells.

Q2. How was the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan developed?

The plan was the result of many years' work and public consultation. We congratulate the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Committee for creating a plan that safeguards local drinking water sources.

This Source Protection Committee was one of 19 Committees established through the Clean Water Act. Each Committee assessed potential risks to local water supplies. Members then led local discussions with municipal partners about the best way to address these risks, using the



South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region

input to develop a source protection plan. Advice was sought from sector experts throughout the plan development.

The committee in this region consists of a Chair and 22 members speaking for the local interests of the region (municipal, public, health, business, agriculture). Rama First Nations participated in the development of the plan, and their drinking water intake is included within the plan.

Q3. Was the public consulted in the development of the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan?

Community engagement is very important to plan development.

The South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Committee consulted with the public throughout the entire process. Full details about our consultation process can be found in the chapter on our consultation process (Chapter 7) in the Source Protection Plan.

The committee went above and beyond their public consultation requirements. Examples include holding extra public Open Houses, and providing longer public comment periods.

Q4. What's the news?

The municipalities and conservation bodies in our area have received provincial approval to implement the Source Protection Plan beginning July 1, 2015. These plans, developed locally, set out actions to address contamination threats to the lakes, rivers and underground aquifers that supply water to the municipal drinking water systems in our area.

Source protection planning and implementation is all about protecting existing and future sources of drinking water. Protecting local drinking water sources is part of Ontario's award-winning drinking water safety net that starts at the source and continues until you turn on your tap.

Q5. What areas are identified in the plan?

The policies in the Source Protection Plan protect the lakes, rivers and underground aquifers that supply water to municipal drinking water systems. The plan outlines actions to protect our region's 16 municipal intake systems and 277 municipal well systems.

Q6. How serious are the risks to my drinking water supply?

The South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region identified significant risks that could occur in protection zones of our area’s drinking water systems. However, these areas where risks could be significant only make up about 10 per cent of the total source protection region. Risks relate to activities such as:

- waste management
- sewage and stormwater
- agriculture
- road salt application and storage
- snow storage
- chemicals, organic solvents and fuel handling and storage
- water taking
- pesticides, commercial fertilizer and manure application

The plan calls for actions to manage or restrict these activities.

Q7. Why are you taking extra steps to protect source water through the Clean Water Act?

We learned from the tragedy in Walkerton that the first step in ensuring safe drinking water is to protect the local supply of drinking water at the source.

The Clean Water Act ensures communities protect their drinking water supplies through prevention — by developing collaborative, watershed-based Source Protection Plans that are locally driven and based in science.

Source protection planning and implementation helps to ensure that local drinking water is protected in communities across the province.

Q8. What does the plan cover?

Protecting Ontario’s sources of drinking water is a shared responsibility. The locally developed Source Protection Plan gives responsibilities to municipalities, several ministries and conservation authorities to address risks to sources of municipal drinking water.

Q9. How were the First Nations involved?

South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Region

There are three First Nation communities in our Source Protection: Chippewas of Georgina Island; Chippewas of Christian Island; Rama First Nation. While all three have been invited to engage throughout the process, Rama First Nation has been the only one to actively participate in the process for many years. In fact, their drinking water system is now part of the Source Protection Planning process.

Q10. Recently, Ontario gave money to municipalities for source protection. Did anyone in our area get a grant?

The Ontario government gave grants to small, rural municipalities throughout Ontario to help offset start-up costs associated with implementing their source protection plans. In our Source Protection Region, many municipalities received funding in the range of just under \$20,000 to just over \$80,000 per municipality. When you consider that about 40 municipalities received money, this means our region received around \$2.5 Million.

Q11. When does the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan take effect?

The effective date for the South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan is July 1, 2015. This timing will allow source protection partners including municipalities, conservation authorities and other agencies to continue to work together and effectively prepare for plan implementation.

Q12. What about private wells?

As Justice O'Connor explained in the Walkerton Inquiry report, prior to the Walkerton tragedy, "... the Province focused on protecting water resources on the basis of the resources' ecological and recreational values, not on the basis of the critical public health goal of maintaining secure water supplies for public consumption." The CWA puts the goal of public health protection and preserving present and future sources of drinking water front and centre.

The CWA applies primarily to municipal residential drinking water sources. Maintaining safe and secure private drinking water systems is the responsibility of homeowners, institutions and businesses who own their own water systems. These are regulated separately under the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

The province had to make a decision to narrow the scope of source water protection to keep costs manageable. They targeted the majority of the population by focusing on municipal water supply (>80%), but have suggested there may be additional efforts in the future to address private water supplies.

Q13. Why did it take so long?



Source water protection is one of the five “barriers” that Justice Dennis O’Connor recommended be addressed in his “multi-barrier” approach to protecting drinking water. Four of the five barriers have already been implemented. They revolved around “end of pipe” issues relating to the operation and maintenance of the water treatment and distribution systems - like requiring better and on-going training for operators and enhanced monitoring and distribution systems.

Source water protection was the last barrier to be implemented. It was implemented last as it was the most complex and was to be done at the watershed level, with local input, through a highly collaborative process. Justice O’Connor saw it as a local planning process to be done “as much as possible at a local (watershed) level by those who will be most directly affected (municipalities and other affected local groups).”

The Province has invested over \$240 million in source water protection - to support the technical and scientific studies, develop plans and encourage early voluntary actions by landowners.

There are 19 source protection committees that are developing 22 source protection plans in the province of Ontario. These plans complete the multi-barrier approach to protecting approximately 154 intakes and 987 municipal wells across Ontario.

In 2014, 11 source protection plans were approved and the remaining plans are on track to be approved in 2015.