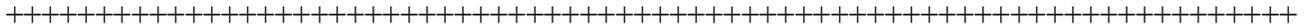


KEEP STORMWATER PONDS OUT OF THE FLOOD PLAIN!



Issue

The draft Official Plan Amendment tabled on June 25, 2013 included a new policy clarifying that stormwater ponds should not be located in the flood plain -- the areas of land along watercourses that tend to get filled with water during heavy rains or spring run-off. Locating a pond in the flood plain runs counter to what flood plains are supposed to do. Naturally, developers always push for it as it leaves more land to build houses.

This new policy would clarify the City's position. There is a lot of push-back against this proposal. Council needs to hear that concerned citizens support not allowing stormwater facilities in the flood plains of our watercourses.

Background

The Ministry of the Environment, in its *Stormwater Management Planning and Design Manual* (March 2003), states that, as a general rule, stormwater facilities should be located outside the flood plain. Only under very special circumstances and if a number of requirements are met, would using up part of the flood plain be acceptable.

Constructing stormwater ponds in flood plains robs the floodplain of its natural storage function. When more intense storms occur in the future, as is widely predicted, greater demands will be placed on existing flood plain storage. By avoiding flood plains for stormwater facilities we avoid creating situations that would in future require retrofits just to maintain current flood levels and risks.

Not allowing stormwater ponds to be located in flood plains is the general practice -- not only in Ottawa but broadly throughout the Province -- but the Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority has gotten into the habit of going along with developers' proposals to do otherwise. Conservation Authorities play an important role in the approval process for stormwater facilities.

The City's position is, at present, nowhere explicitly stated. The new policy (Under Generally Permitted Uses - Public Utilities and Municipal Services, page 3-3 of the June 25 draft) would remedy that by saying:

- 11. Stormwater management facilities are defined as infrastructure that stores and/or treats surface water runoff but does not include storm outfalls or outfall channels. Notwithstanding policy 10, stormwater management facilities that are authorized under the requirements of the *Environmental Assessment Act* may be permitted in all land use designations of this Plan provided that the facility is located entirely outside the limits of the regulatory floodplain identified in mapping approved by a Conservation Authority or the limits of any regulatory floodplain delineated by the developer of the proposed facility and approved by the Conservation Authority.

### Points for written or oral interventions

- The Ministry of the Environment wisely prescribes that stormwater facilities should be located outside the flood plain of our watercourses. Flood plains should be left to do what nature has designed them to do. At the same time, stormwater facilities should be able to perform their functions without being impacted by flooding or being subject to damage as a result of flooding.
- Council should stand up against the pressure from developers to maximize their developable land at the expense of the natural functioning of our watercourses. The costs associated with flood damages to infrastructure are completely avoidable. We support the clarification of the policy as proposed by staff on June 25.
- With the increase in extreme weather, consistent with climate change, it is even more important that we not impede the natural functioning of our creeks and rivers.

### References

- Ministry of the Environment, *Stormwater Management Planning and Design Manual*, March 2003; see esp. pages 4-5 to 4-7.  
[Download the Manual from: [http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/en/resources/STD01\\_076363.html](http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/environment/en/resources/STD01_076363.html)]