

Carp River model fudged figures: files

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Numbers caught,
never used for
anything, city says

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Engineers trying to fix a flawed model of how the Carp River floods in bad storms manipulated figures to make the river's flow seem slower at critical points, newly released documents say.

The figures were rejected by other experts before anything was done with them, said a city manager working on the file, Don Herweyer, but he wasn't sure why they'd been worked up in the first place. "Maybe it was just a modelling exercise to get the effects of different changes," he said. "I don't know."

The documents, released under orders from the province's information commissioner after a three-year fight over private consultants' proprietary information and legal concerns, shed light on the tortured process of fixing a major engineering mistake.

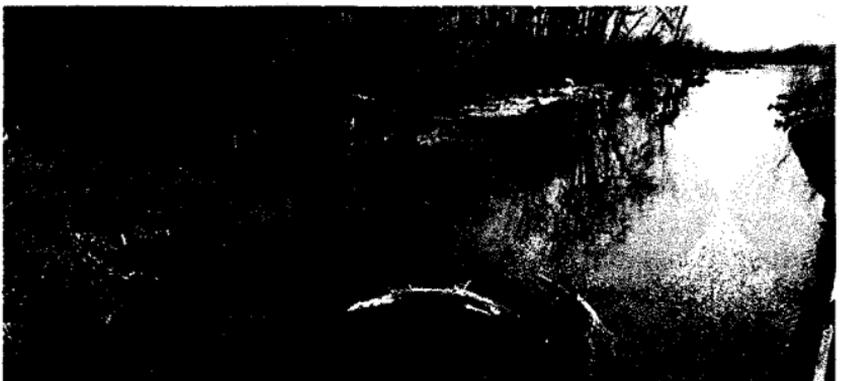
Flooding along the Carp River in western Kanata has been a shemuzzle for the city and developers trying to build

on land between Kanata and Stittsville, and farther north near Scotiabank Place. Construction plans had to be put on hold for a year in 2008 when city engineers Darlene Conway and Ted Cooper, defying their bosses, found a mistake in a detailed model of the Carp: It didn't account for all the extra water expected to run into the river from new pavement on its banks.

At its heart, the problem was that flood model, a supremely complex set of formulas and figures that assesses how quickly water would run into the Carp, how quickly it would run out the north end into the Ottawa River, and where it would back up along the way. It affects how close new buildings can go to the river and how crossings — such as bridges for Hwy. 417 and Hazeldean and Maple Grove roads — need to be built so they don't get swamped or washed away.

The Carp's headwaters are in Glen Cairn in south Kanata, which has flooded repeatedly in bad storms. If the math is wrong, water ends up in places it's not supposed to be.

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Flooding along Carp River has been a problem for the city.