

"Inspiring a Healthy Environment"

August 14, 2023

City of London,
Civic Works Committee

cwc@london.ca

RE: Springbank Dam

The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) can provide the following science-based information in response to the delegation request by the Thames River Group to the Civic Works Committee on August 15, 2023.

The UTRCA supports the preferred alternative of Stage 1 of the One River Environmental Assessment (EA). Background Information previously provided to inform the EA process included a report prepared by the UTRCA in 2015 and a monitoring report in 2016 clearly outlined the beneficial changes of a free-flowing river, without Springbank Dam.

Continued, annual monitoring has compared habitat and species assemblages before and after the dam was operable have shown a significant increase in at-risk turtle observations, as well as new and improved habitat availability and quality. Without the influence of Springbank Dam, the substrate, shoreline contours, sediment dispersal and water depth along this section of the Thames River have become functional and important for at-risk reptiles and various other native species.

The number of Endangered Spiny Softshell Turtle observations, as well as nests now located within the area in question, has increased. While the Dam was functioning, no nests were discovered due to the lack of appropriate habitat. This year, 54 nests were located representing over half of all known nests within the City of London in 2023. These nesting sites would be lost if Springbank Dam were to be put back in operation.

Over the time since the dam has been non-operational (2006), an entire generation of Spiny Softshell Turtles have reached reproductive maturity and adapted to the new environment (17 years). Further background information has been provided as an attachment. However, it should be noted that turtles are not the only group of animals that would have benefited from the river flowing naturally.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact the undersigned at extension 253.

Yours truly,

UPPER THAMES RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracy Annett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tracy Annett,
General Manager, MCIP, RPP

TA/ta

c.c.
Ashley Rammello, arammelo@London.ca
Scott Gillingwater, gillingwaters@thamesriver.on.ca

Attachment:
Springbank Reservoir Reptiles At Risk Study, Scott Gillingwater