

Trout Unlimited Canada



Truite Illimitée Canada

Re: One River Stage 1 Master Plan Environmental Assessment Report- Spring Bank Dam

Dear Mayor Brown and Council Members of the Civic Works Committee,

Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC) has completed a review of the One River Stage 1 Master Plan Environmental Assessment Report (EA), with respect to the preferred options for the Springbank Dam.

After careful examination of the EA, we are in support of the preferred recommended option of a “Free-Flowing River,” through the decommissioning of Springbank Dam. This is an enormous opportunity for the City of London to become part of an international movement to rebuild healthy river corridors in urban areas for its citizens and for the wildlife and fish communities that are part of the natural heritage of London, the Thames River and Ontario.

TUC is a national not-for-profit conservation charity that is science-based and volunteer-driven. Partners and volunteers are paramount to the numerous successful river restoration projects we implement every year. Our work protects and enhances water quality, water flow, aquatic life and community health, creating additional benefits of a healthier living environment for people as well. TUC is proud of the critical role our organization has played in the protection of Canada’s aquatic resources for over 40 years and the value of this work to the lives of Canadians.

As stated in a previous letter, in 2006, TUC conducted a study to examine water quality upstream, within and downstream of the Springbank Dam impoundment area from June to October 2006. The data suggested extremely poor water quality for humans and for the environment within the reservoir as well as downstream of the reservoir. Though some of these issues could be partially moderated by changes in a dam operation, the findings suggested that real benefits to water quality, environmental health, fish and wildlife populations would only occur if the river was free-flowing year round as it has been these last several years. The last several years have demonstrated how well the river, its fish, water quality and animal community have responded to the interim open and free-flowing condition of the river.

Also, as the EA mentions, the presence of species at risk (SAR) needs to be an important consideration. Several SAR have been listed to occur within the One River study area. Silver Shiner was found during fish community surveys in 2017. The finding of Silver Shiner at this location indicates that their range has expanded as habitat became more suitable as the result of the non-operation of the dam. The expanding range of Silver Shiner, a sensitive species to habitat health, could suggest that the overall health of the river is improving, and would continue to improve if the river is permitted to flow freely.

Given the level of detail in the EA, TUC is hopeful that the preferred overall river management strategy to be explored in Stage 2 will ensure a successful final outcome for the overall health of the Thames River, not only through the City of London but for the benefit of communities downstream as well. We believe that we all need to prioritize true long-term environmental and human health benefits for the community over short-term, limited recreational benefits.

The decommissioning of Springbank Dam would demonstrate that the City and community understand the value and importance of protecting our fresh water, improving and restoring the diverse number of

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species that inhabit the Thames River Watershed, and the importance of this protection and restoration to the well-being of people that live along this river.

With these thoughts in mind, TUC strongly urges the Civic Works Committee to recommend the preferred "Free-Flowing River" option to City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input at this stage of the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelly Mason". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Mason

Ontario Biologist, Trout Unlimited Canada

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