

From: Barry Wells
Sent: Wednesday, January 03, 2018 7:46 AM
To: Martin, Jackie <JMartin@London.ca>
Cc: csaunders@london.ca; kscheer@london.ca
Subject: For the Civic Works Committee Agenda (Springbank Dam)

Chair and Members
Civic Works Committee
c/o Committee Secretary J. Martin

Re: Springbank Dam Environmental Assessment Consultant's Report

REQUESTED ACTION:

Permanently decommission the costly and unnecessary Springbank ASAP by removing all of the broken dam's hydraulic gates and retain the remaining structure for a river lookout, OR remove the dam structure from the river entirely.

WHY A SEASONAL DAM IS NOT FEASIBLE:

The 5th paragraph in UTRCA Species-at-Risk Biologist Scott Gillingwater's report re: the Springbank Dam clearly states a seasonally reactivated dam would destroy nesting sites-essential habitat-mobility of the **endangered Spiny Softshell Turtle**.

In the EA consultant's report, the provincial Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry agrees:

<http://thamesriver.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/FloodStructures/SpringbankDam/SpringbankReservoir-ReptilesatRisk-execsummarywithconfidentialitynote.pdf>

GILLINGWATER REPORT'S 5TH PARAGRAPH: "Artificial compensation of habitat is not viewed as feasible with this species in this area, as a mosaic of interconnected habitat types are necessary for survival, some of which would be almost impossible to replicate in this area. **Similarly, timing dam operations around critical activities, such as nesting, cannot be effectively accomplished since nesting, incubation and hatching times can extend from May to October. Current nesting sites would not be available if the dam were in operation, and any nests laid before the water levels increased would be lost due to flooding. Nesting sites that have been established since the dam has been non-operable, have taken years to reach their current successional stage in some cases; if the dam is again used, these will be lost due to water level changes.** Additionally, the development and protection of animals at nursery sites can be disrupted by unnatural water fluctuations and long-term flooding. In such cases, turtles that currently use these habitats would be killed or displaced. Since brumation migrations can begin in August or September, areas affected by a functioning dam will likely not be appropriate due to unnatural water levels lasting well into the fall. If turtles were to locate an area to brumate/hibernate before water levels were reduced, they may not be able to survive the winter once water levels recede due to dam operations. These turtles show great fidelity to certain habitats, and changes to these areas could lead to mortality or decreased fitness/health. Overwintering physiology in Spiny Softshell Turtles requires very specific parameters, necessary to ensure survival during harsh Ontario winters. The available information suggests changes to water quality and prey availability during dam use could further limit the potential for robust and viable populations of Spiny Softshell and Northern Map Turtles in this area, and could limit downstream expansion of the respective ranges. Turtle migration routes that include passing through the current dam, have had since 2006 to become established and are based on current river conditions. Blocking these migration routes could result in mortality or displacement if habitat features are no longer accessible, or are lost due to increases in water depth. Spiny Softshell Turtles are extremely shy animals, and areas used for nesting, basking, and cover are generally away from high human use. Such areas are already scarce, so ensuring the areas of habitat that currently exist are maintained and protected, and possibly increased, will assist in the recovery of this species."

Barry A. Wells