

December 4th, 2017

Calling Lakes Ecomuseum
2255 Cross Place
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 4C8

Attention:
Anna Kessler
Project Manager
Rainer and Northern Region
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency

Sent by email: anna.kessler@ceaa-acee.gc.ca

Re: Common Ground Drainage Channel Division Project proposed by the Quill Lakes Watershed Association.

Dear Anna

Thank you for your email dated November 17th, 2017 inviting the downstream community to comment on the Quill Lakes Watershed Association #14 proposal called the Common Ground Drainage Channel Division Project. We will provide input in the following five areas:

1. Who we are and how we came to be.
2. Work we have completed to date.
3. Concern we have for our livelihoods.
4. Comments on the 7,000,000 cubic meters of water flow noted.
5. Solutions.

Who we are and how we came to be

We are the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum, a volunteer advocacy group. We were recently awarded the highest honor with the status of “Outstanding Flagship” by the United Nations University. We work very closely with the United Nations University Regional Centre of Expertise for Education on Sustainable Development at the University of Regina.

Our Goal – Our goal is to increase the quality of life (jobs, environment, health, culture and social values) in the Qu’Appelle watershed.

Our Vision - The vision of the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum is to create a culture borne out of action, awareness, communication, and trust (AACT), as a means of contributing to and strengthening the integral well-being of the Qu’Appelle Watershed by ensuring

the four pillars of sustainable development including environmental, economic, social and cultural values of the community are upheld.



How we came to be

On July 1, 2014 we had 28 beaches closed in the Calling Lakes region due to high levels of E coli. The City of Regina was permitted by the Saskatchewan Department of Environment to bypass raw and partially screened sewage into the Wascana and Qu'Appelle River System. For seven days the Department of Health posted warnings that the water was unsafe to enter.

On August 20, 2014 a community meeting was organized at the Treaty Four Governance Centre in Fort Qu'Appelle. This meeting was organized by the working group consisting of the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council, the Calling Lakes District Planning Commission and the Friends of the Katepwa Park. The first thing we did was to connect with the University of Regina.

Long Term Goals of the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum:

Goal #1 Youth Engagement

Goal #2 Communication Strategy

Goal #3 Educate - Becoming Water Friendly Users

Work we have done to date

On October 20, 2017 we learned that the Government of Saskatchewan Department of Environment had sent a letter to the Quill Lakes Watershed Association #14 on September 8, 2017 that stated they did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Common Ground Project. The best way to describe how we felt was disbelief. We were taken off guard that the Government would not do their due diligence and ensure they understood the impacts of this project. The letter dated September 8, 2017 is attached for reference.

The following is an outline in chronological order of the work and communications we have been a part of to date:

2015

Our communities were asked to respond to the Kutawagan Project to move the water from the Quill Lakes Basin into Last Mountain Lake. We learned through that experience of the toxicity of saline water to ecosystems that are not naturally saline themselves. The Calling Lakes Ecomuseum, working with the Calling Lakes Planning Commission helped to educate our community on what we had to lose.

We organized a petition and we shared dates and times of scheduled open houses via email. We have learned that our email communication is very effective and it resulted in 74% of those that attended the WSA open houses in 2015 rejecting the proposal. See article from the Leader Post Friday, September 18, 2015 **[Flooding Quill Lakes proposal dead in the water](http://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/quill-lakes-proposal-dead-in-the-water)** by Natascia Lypny. <http://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/quill-lakes-proposal-dead-in-the-water>

2016

On July 14, 2016 we were very happy with the CTV media release noted below regarding unapproved drainage works in Saskatchewan. *Released on July 14, 2016*

The Water Security Agency (WSA) will be enforcing regulations to close unapproved drainage works that currently contribute water to the Quill Lakes.

“Our government introduced new drainage regulations last fall and the Quill Lakes is a priority area where impacts to landowners around the lake need to be addressed,” Minister responsible for the Water Security Agency Herb Cox said. “This is a very complex water management situation and, while there are no easy solutions to this issue, this is one step that will help us lower the lake level and prevent future flooding.”

All landowners with unapproved drainage works that drain into the Quill Lakes are being asked to close those works before October 1, 2016. Starting immediately, WSA will be focusing on the largest unapproved drainage works in the area which cause the greatest impact. WSA will work with landowners directly to undertake inspections to confirm unapproved works and ensure plans for closure take place.

From this media release the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum began in November trying to find out if WSA had done what they had said they would do. We reached out to Alice Davis of the Lower Qu'Appelle Watershed Stewardship group to see if they could

provide us with an update of the progress. We could not get an answer from that group or from the WSA. In December 2016, working with the Calling Lakes Planning Commission we organized a meeting for February 14th, 2017 with WSA.

2017

The February 14, 2017 meeting was attended by Bryan Osborne, Manager Quill Lakes Basin Project Office, Aron Hershmillier WSA – Yorkton EC Manager, Kerry Holderness-Chair of the Quill Lakes Watershed Association and MLA Don McMorris. (Please see agenda attached scan 00012)

At this meeting we learned that zero illegal ditches had been closed. Bryan shared stories of how he had been chased off the land by a farmer in his tractor. He also shared that WSA had not done a very good job. Don McMorris told us that the Federal Government will not let the saline water come down but that the Quill Lakes flooding issue is no one's fault as it is an act of God. Kerry Holderness asked our group to send him a letter of support for his Common Ground project. (Please see the Common Ground Notes scan 0008)

On March 22, 2017 we held our Calling Lakes Ecomuseum AGM and discussed the Common Ground Proposal. Dr Garth Pitchard presented on behalf of the United Nations Regional Center of Expertise on Educations for Sustainable Development. (Please see the Fort Times Article April 7, 2017 scan 0010)

On April 27, 2017 At the Raymore meeting where Kerry Holderness presented to a group about the Common Ground proposal we met other concerned individuals from Last Mountain Lake and Peepeekisis First Nations.

We reached out to Alice Davis from the Lower Qu'Appelle Watershed Stewards to see what their position with regard to the Common Ground proposal. Please see Alice's email (scan 0011)

On June 15th, the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum wrote a letter to the Minister of Environment with concerns for the divisive approach the Common Ground project was causing. Please see attached our letter to the Minister and his reply.

On Tuesday July 11, 2017 the Calling Lakes Planning Commission organized a meeting for a presentation from the Quill Lakes Watershed Association #14. (Please see attached Fort Times Article.)

At this meeting, groups from Last Mountain Lake, Round and Crooked Lakes and the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum asked Cathy Sproule MLA and Environment critic if we could meet with her. We all drove up to Saskatoon on August 4, 2017 to meet with Cathy Sproule to discuss our concern over the Common Ground proposal.

October 20, 2017 we learned that there would not be an EIA process for the Common Ground project.

On October 23, 2017 we brought together a group of concerned citizens from Last Mountain Lake to Round Lake. The Calling Lakes Ecomuseum became part of this larger group.

Our first task was to open a Facebook and organize an online discussion with the Candidates running for the Saskatchewan Party leadership and the NDP Party leadership. We called the Facebook page ***Calling for a Sustainable Quill Lakes Solution***. This page has generated a great deal of discussion and has exceeded 30,000 views.

On October 30, 2017 we met again to plan a Pipe Ceremony at the Treaty Four Governance Center for November 7, 2017. Please see attached News articles about the Pipe Ceremony. At this meeting we called our group Saskatchewan Alliance for Sustainable Water (SAWS). We launched an online petition and hard copy petition. (please see attached).

Concern we have for our livelihoods

In your letter we are asked to respond to the potential environmental effects to the fish and fish habitat, migratory birds, species at risk, federal lands and Ingenious People.

At the Pipe Ceremony the File Hills Qu'Appelle Treaty Four Elders spoke of how our water is causing the animals to be sick. They spoke of how they do not encourage their children to swim in the lakes. They spoke of how the chemicals from farming are causing the waters to be sick.

If you travel through the Qu'Appelle Valley from Last Mountain Lake to Round Lake you will see a strong tourism industry which includes golf courses, ski hills, cycling trails, hiking trails, restaurants, over 30 festivals in the area, several provincial parks as well as a \$20,000,000 fishing industry.

If you travel through the Quill Lakes Basin these industries are not found. It is a farming and ranching area.

Our industries are tied to the health of the water, the health of the fish and the health of the birds.

As we are not scientists but are a group of concerned citizens, we cannot comment on the effects of the salinity, nitrate and phosphate pollution that the Quill Lakes may add to our system and that is why we need an Environmental Impact Assessment. We can share with you that our system is already stressed as mentioned by the Elders and documented by Dr. Peter Leavitt of the University of Regina. This is why we have worked so hard to press the Saskatchewan Department of Environment to reconsider

their decision to not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Comments on the 7,000,000 cubic meters of water

We are not hydrologists but the KGS Engineering Quill Lakes Flood Mitigation report commissioned by WSA states that closing illegal drainage could reduce inflows into the Quill Lakes by as much as 38%, a far greater result than the 3% predicted to result from the Common Ground Project. The KGS report also states that there is over 143,000 dams³ of storage available within the watershed that could be restored. Focusing on restoring these areas would provide significant hydrological and environmental benefits and more importantly remove the need to send any saline water to Last Mountain Lake and would have a significantly higher impact on Quill Lake water levels.

Solutions for the Quill Lakes Flooding Issue

At the Calling Lakes District Planning Commission meeting on February 14, 2017 we learned that zero unapproved drainage works had been closed. Sadly our government is not following through with their own solutions for the flooding issue of the Quill Lakes.

We believe there are solutions. The first solution starts with rethinking the Provincial Government's methodology for solving problems. Premier Brad Wall and the Minister of Environment Scott Moe met with the farmers of the Quill Lake basin and asked them to form a Watershed Association. This method of asking one industry to solve a problem that will affect the entire province is cause for concern.

We believe in the methodology of forming a Commission to review the problem and recommend solutions as they do in Alberta. The concept of a commission would bring together the following:

1. Five levels of government – federal, provincial, municipal, First Nations and Metis
2. Universities and polytechnics – especially the Global Institute for Sustainable Water at the University of Saskatchewan, and the United Nations University Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development at the University of Regina
3. Industries that use water – Oil and Gas, Potash, Farming and Tourism

We believe we need to have the discussion about irrigation at the north end of the Quill Lakes basin. We need to have a discussion about bio- mimicry and using trees to vertically store the water as well as the possibility for the use of biofuels to reduce Saskatchewan's very heavy carbon footprint. We need to have discussions about unapproved drainage works not just in the farming industry but with the department of highways, cottage country and new developments in our growing cities.

We believe that our Universities and polytechnics will bring creativity and innovation to this discussion. We believe in the knowledge that the First Nations and Metis people will bring to the discussion. We believe in our culture of Saskatchewan where we work

together to ensure success for our farmers, health for our environment and building a bright future for our children. It is imperative that we do this right and it starts with the small shift of coming together to solve our problems. We have an opportunity before us to solve the Quill Lakes issue but any proposed solution will first require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

We are hopefully that your department will find our comments useful and order a full Environmental Assessment.

Sincerely,

Aura Lee MacPherson

Chair of the Calling Lakes Ecomuseum