

Hamilton Port Authority committed to the environment

Stoney Creek News

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The Hamilton Port Authority's plans to develop Pier 22 have been the subject of media attention recently. Some of the information presented may have left readers with an inaccurate impression of the history of the project and the HPA's environmental stewardship.

The area of Pier 22 depicted in newspaper articles as Harris Inlet is in fact, a large tract of reclaimed land created in the late 1960s by then owner, Stelco.

The image that accompanies this article shows what the shoreline looked like in 1943. What we believe to be a former inlet was located at the southeast corner of what is now the HPA's property and extended almost to Burlington Street. Much of it was covered over many years ago, but it appears some open water, known as Hobson Pond, remains. This pond and the adjacent natural habitat are not included in the Port's development plan and will remain in their natural state. The snapping turtles will not be disturbed.

Before commencing the work now underway, the port conducted an environmental assessment using internationally-recognized consultants. Further, we consulted with all relevant regulatory agencies, including Transport Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), Environment Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service. All offered their best advice on the environmental aspects of the wharf development, which was incorporated into our environmental assessment report.

We continue to consult with DFO on fish habitat issues and whatever that agency advises will be complied with fully. We also conferred with the Hamilton Conservation Authority, who indicated their concerns would be addressed through the federal agencies and further offered to advise HPA on project elements. We are appreciative of their continued involvement.

It is incorrect to suggest community stakeholders did not have a full picture of the land uses for the port. In drafting the HPA's 2002 Land Use Plan, principles were developed and reviewed through significant consultation with stakeholders, a community visioning workshop and a public open house. The plan was reviewed by agencies and individuals, including the City of Hamilton, Bay Area Restoration Council and the Hamilton Conservation Authority.

Community-wide consensus was that the west harbour would primarily support habitat, recreation and commercial uses, while the east harbour would be reserved primarily for industry and economic development.

Hamilton can point to the success of the waterfront trails. Hamilton now is in the enviable position of having found an appropriate balance between nature, recreation and the economy in what had been an industrial harbour with virtually no public access.

We are a lead partner in the remediation of Randle Reef, a top Great Lakes toxic hot spot and have participated in the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan since its inception in 1986. We are working with local agencies on the Sherman Inlet Revitalization - a project that will remove contaminated sediment, improve fish habitat and involve plantings and appropriate public access. Our Harbour-West Marina achieved the highest designation possible in the Clean Marine program developed in conjunction with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

As proud as the Port of Hamilton is of its environmental record, the HPA also takes seriously its role as a vital support to the local economy. The Port catchment area supports a significant proportion (30 per cent) of the regional economy and is home to tens of thousands of jobs. Pier 22 is a continuation of major development plans that will allow the port to diversify its shipping base and create jobs and prosperity in the region.

For more information on the port and HPA activities visit www.hamiltonport.ca.

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