

Health of bay tied to health of community

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Scott Koblyk says the day is coming when further improvements to water quality in Hamilton Harbour will be up to individuals living in communities around the bay.

Koblyk, president of the Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC) for the last three years, says big industries have cleaned up, there is a commitment to deal with toxic sediment on Randle Reef and the city has a solid plan for the remaining improvements needed in its sewage system.

Now the focus will shift to upstream watershed issues, things like reducing silt washing into streams that flow into the harbour and cutting run-off of lawn and farm fertilizer, actions that depend on the general population, not a handful of corporate bosses or municipal councillors.

BARC is a non-profit organization set up in 1991 as part of the harbour Remedial Action Plan (RAP) process to provide a community balance to work being done by the government-led Bay Area Implementation Team or BAIT. It's grown to more than 700 members, including individuals, educational institutions and industries big and small.

In its 2007-2008 annual report released this week, Koblyk said: "As the 'big-ticket,' institutional-scale RAP tasks start to move increasingly from the 'to-do' list to the 'done' list ... we know that the margin of RAP victory will be in the households, schools and small businesses of our community. It will be not just in and near the bay, but upstream, throughout our watershed.

"I believe that the health of our bay and its watershed will become increasingly central to the health, image, vitality and prosperity of our community."

Koblyk, a writer who ended his six years on the BARC board at Monday's annual meeting, said Hamilton can be proud of the \$1 billion already invested in efforts to remove the harbour from the International Joint Commission's list of Great Lakes pollution hot spots, efforts so successful that officials hope for delisting in 2015.

"We are on a countdown to the delisting date. As volunteers, that gives us a real sense of purpose. It's a really exciting time for BARC."

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