

Hobson Pond will remain untouched

Hamilton Port Authority committed to environmental protection, cleanup

MARILYN BAXTER

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The Hamilton Port Authority's ongoing plans to develop Pier 22 were the subject of a recent article on this page by Jim Howlett.

Some of the information presented may have left readers with an inaccurate impression of the history of this particular project and the Hamilton Port Authority's overall environmental stewardship. As the manager, environmental for the port authority, I am pleased to have an opportunity to clarify the picture.

First some history.

The area of Pier 22 that has been depicted in newspaper articles as Harris Inlet is, in fact, a large tract of reclaimed land that was created in the late 1960s by then owner Stelco. The image that accompanies this article shows what the shoreline in this area looked like in 1943.

As the reader will see, what we believe to be a former inlet was located at the southeast corner of what is now the Hamilton Port Authority's (HPA) property, and extended almost to Burlington Street.

Much of it was covered over many years ago, but it appears that 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 present natural state. The snapping turtles will not be disturbed.

Returning to the reclaimed northern portion of Pier 22, before commencing the work now under way, the HPA conducted an environmental assessment using internationally recognized consultants including Stantec and Earth Tech.

Further, we consulted with all relevant regulatory agencies, such as 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 Pier 22 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 (HCA). They indicated that the HCA's potential concerns would be addressed through the involvement of the federal agencies and have offered to advise us further on the project; we are appreciative of their continued involvement.

It is not correct to suggest that community stakeholders did not have a full picture of the land uses for the Port of Hamilton.

During the preparation of the HPA's 2002 Land Use Plan, principles were developed and reviewed through significant consultation with local stakeholders, a community visioning workshop and a public open house.

The plan was reviewed by the agencies and individuals who participated, including the City of Hamilton, Bay Area Restoration Council, Hamilton Conservation Authority and others.

Essentially, the 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.

As a result, Hamilton can point to the success of the waterfront trails and the excellent work of the Hamilton Waterfront Trust, which received its initial funding, along with subsequent contributions, from the Port Authority.

Hamilton now is in the enviable position of having found an appropriate balance between nature, recreation and the economy in what had been, only some 15 years ago, an industrial harbour with virtually no public access.

The Hamilton Port Authority is committed to environmental protection and remediation.

We are a lead partner in cleaning up Randle Reef, one of the Great Lakes' most toxic hot spots. We have supported and participated in the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan (RAP) since its inception in 1986. We continue to work closely with the local agencies on the Sherman Inlet Revitalization -- a project that will remove contaminated sediment, improve fish habitat and involve new plantings and appropriate public access in the area.

Our Harbour-West Marina achieved the highest designation level possible in the Clean Marine program developed in conjunction with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. There are many other examples of the HPA's commitment and financial support to 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 of Hamilton to diversify its shipping base and to create jobs and prosperity in the region.

The key to success is maintaining a healthy balance between economic growth and preserving our environment for generations to come, and we are constantly working to achieve this balance.

For more information on the port and Hamilton Port Authority activities, readers are invited to visit the website at www.hamiltonport.ca.

Marilyn Baxter has been promoting the revitalization of Hamilton Harbour since 1992, and joined the Hamilton Port Authority as manager, environmental in 2006.



Courtesy of Hamilton Port Authority