

# 'It would be a shame to let gravel pit ruin the land'

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Dwight Neufeld is concerned about the animal and plant life if a Greenock Twp. gravel pit were to be zoned commercial.

Neufeld told council at its Feb. 5 meeting that "it was a health hazard" living on Conc. 8 and 9 beside the site. The licence for the gravel pit, zoned extractive industrial, expired last summer. Until then the township had used the site as a wayside pit, which meant only a limited amount of aggregate can be removed. Owner Lillian Zister wants to make it a Class A commercially zoned gravel pit, which would mean a higher extraction limit.

Neufeld said he owns part of the wooded area adjacent to the pit and an environmental impact study has found there are 130 different species of plants and a variety of animals which call the bog home. The study stated there were several ways the gravel pit would affect the bog. Run off from the fields keeps the bog from drying out, thereby killing the plants that are there because of the moisture. Toxic fumes from diesel driven machinery are an environmental issue and settling dust would smother the



Dwight Neufeld, who lives in Greenock Twp., wants to protect his woodlot and farmland from the hazards of a gravel pit. (Slosser photo.)

plants. The fields also provide a "protective buffer" around the bog and loss of the buffer would increase stress on both flora and fauna.

He is also concerned about the possible damage to productive fields neighbouring

the pit.

"It's a shame that permanent damage be allowed on such farm land. If the elevation is removed, it will compromise the productivity of the fields," Neufeld said.

The land on the edge of the

Greenock Swamp is Teeswater loam, and he said it's the best because of its natural drainage and structure. Removing the gravel, which serves as natural drainage, would change the structure of the fields making the drainage "not so good."

The remote, dead end road on Conc. 9 is also not properly fenced, he said.

Though he realizes the township needs the gravel for road work, Neufeld asked what guarantee there was that Greenock would even get the

gravel once the zoning was changed.

"I don't believe the residents of the township and those on Conc. 8 and 9 have anything to gain by the change, yet we have everything to lose," he said.

Cyril Zister, speaking on behalf of his mother, said in a telephone interview they are applying for a commercial licence for the township's use and are doing so at its urging.

"The township is going to spend a lot more money on trucking and gravel costs by having to go further [to get gravel] and will wear out more roads. It's a saving for the township and the taxpayers. The township is pushing us to do this, otherwise we wouldn't bother," Zister said.

The pit is the only one in the south end of the township and he said the northern ones are getting low.

"It's the ideal location. Traffic wise, it wouldn't cause a lot of hassle because there's not a lot of people on that road," he said.

A wayside permit for 1993 and 1994 saw both Greenock and Brant use the site, but Zister said the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) will only re-issue waysides "three

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or four times.

"If we're not granted a commercial licence, [the land used for extraction] has to be restored by the township to agricultural."

Dave Munro, aggregate resources officer for the MNR, said as a rule of thumb it will issue up to four wayside permits on a property. The permit is good for the length of road work being done or 18 months, whichever comes first, although he said circumstances may vary.

"[Wayside permits] are meant to be only a temporary inconvenience to the public. If there are more than four permits worth [of gravel] we recommend pursuing a commercial licence," Munro said.

A wayside permit is held by the township and a commercial licence is issued to the landowner. This is the second time Zister has pursued a commercial licence. The township withdrew its support last time.

"Neighbours objected to the noise and wanted me to far and chip the road. When I said "no way," the township backed down. This is egg on their face and poor planning as far as I'm concerned," he said.

The MNR just started reviewing the application earlier this month and Zister said Neufeld is "jumping the gun by making a big stink now."

"The wheels have just started turning and we're at the initial stage. We need approval from the appropriate agencies," Zister said, adding they have spent a lot of money to have the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority and the Department of Agriculture address any environmental or rehabilitation concerns.

Reeve Roland Anstett told Neufeld council was not in the position to address the bylaw change yet but assured him when the zoning change got on the agenda it would make him aware of it.

In a telephone interview later, Anstett said although the township did need gravel, Zister pursued getting a commercial pit on his own.

"All we said was that we couldn't get another wayside pit. But that it was up to him," Anstett said.

He said council will wait for background from the appropriate ministries before it takes another look at the bylaw and make a decision after listening to the ratepayers' concerns.