

**Dufferin wants a bigger piece of the pie** *Continued from page 1*  
 ble aggregate close to, but not on, the Escarpment. "It appears that it's easier to let the aggregate industry destroy the Niagara Escarpment than it is to deal with private landowners," they state.

CONE will participate in the hearing with POWER and SaNE. "CONE is concerned about the local

impacts, such as the loss of wildlife corridors and habitat, and the impacts on wells and water," says Jason Thorne, executive director for CONE, "but also for the Escarpment as a whole, since it is regulated by one set of rules along the entire Escarpment. If a quarry of this magnitude and complexity is

permitted then it really removes all barriers to any quarries anywhere in the entire Niagara Escarpment Rural Area. This would set a huge precedent."

Fiona Reid, a biologist, has a particular concern with significant bird species at the Dufferin site. In 2002 she noted five species that are nationally at risk: the Acadian Flycatcher, Hooded Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Red-shouldered Hawk and the Red-headed Woodpecker. "For an area of roughly six square kilometres, this appeared to me to be a lot of species. I found no other site on the Escarpment that supported as many at-risk species of birds. Even at a provincial level this small part of the Escarpment is highly significant. The buffer zone for this area should not be a quarry."

MNR, the NEC and Halton Region are concerned about another nationally threatened animal, the Jefferson Salamander. The technical report of a Joint Agency Review Team (JART) names it as occurring in and near the proposed extension area, specifically as breeding in two wetlands in the eastern area, which would be eliminated with quarrying. As well, both MNR and JART have concerns about brook trout which are found close to the extension area in the Sixth Line Tributary. These trout require particular water temperatures and conditions, and could be harmed by changes to the stream's flow.

Another controversy involves the concept of an elaborate water management system. JART's report states, "The proposal involves extrac-

tion below the water table, which, if not mitigated, would affect the groundwater regime in adjacent wetlands and stream systems." The proposed system includes a series of recharge wells, a reservoir, a pumping system, and a supply and return pipeline.

"This application is one of the most technical, complex and detailed ever submitted," notes the NEC staff report. "The environmental management and manipulation required is detailed, through the necessity of perpetual pumping and monitoring. Engineering solutions of this magnitude run counter to the natural ecologic processes and principles encouraged and promoted in the Plan corridor." The water management plan is theoretical, having never been tested.

Barbara Halsall, president of POWER, warns, "This extensive experimental engineering will allow Dufferin to mine closer to wetlands and closer to headwaters than would normally be permitted. All wetlands across the province could then face the same threat of this unproven system."

The NEC staff report recommends that Dufferin's application not be approved, but as if staff expected the Commissioners to approve it regardless, or were instructed to do so, they offered an alternative. Conditions of approval include saving the Jefferson Salamanders' wetlands and ensuring that the water management system operates properly over the long term at no cost to the public. In fact, the NEC did decide to support

Dufferin's application, subject to revisions. Halton Region, the Town of Milton and the Town of Halton Hills approved Dufferin's applications with conditions that basically support those of the NEC, MNR and Conservation Halton.

To monitor the effectiveness of the water management system, the JART proposed an adaptive management plan "to ensure that any impacts to groundwater levels and natural features adjacent to the extracted areas are mitigated in each area before Dufferin proceeds through its various stages of extraction," as Conservation Halton's report states.

It is thought that the water management system should be assumed by Conservation Halton for the long term, and an agreement has been formulated with Dufferin. It specifies that "costs associated with on-going operation, maintenance and performance of the water management before, during and after extraction are borne by Dufferin, with no financial liability to the Region, Conservation Halton or the public."

In May 2001, Dufferin requested a joint board hearing to review all their applications at once. While the preliminary hearing will take place on November 17, the actual joint board hearing will begin on January 12, 2004, at 10 a.m. in the Milton Council Chambers, and will continue if necessary until January 30. Whatever the outcome, it's expected that this matter will then go before the provincial Cabinet.

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