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Friday, April 2, 1999

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A new plan for the Credit River

A steering committee has spent the past year devising a plan that will protect and enhance the Credit River for the next 20 years

Planning for fish management may not sound like a hot topic, but if the recent Credit River Fish Management Plan Open House is anything to go by, it is a subject that generates a great deal of interest with many local citizens.

More than 80 people— anglers, private landowners, environmentalists, tour operators, biologists, developers and other interested individuals— packed the board room of Credit Valley Conservation recently to hear about this initiative.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and a steering committee have been working for the past year to create a plan that will guide the protection, enhancement and allocation of the aquatic resources of the Credit River for the next 20 years.

This plan is based on an ecosystem approach to managing the watershed and looks at many issues including water quality and quantity, habitat, the distribution of fish species, education, enforcement and regulations, public access and other related issues.

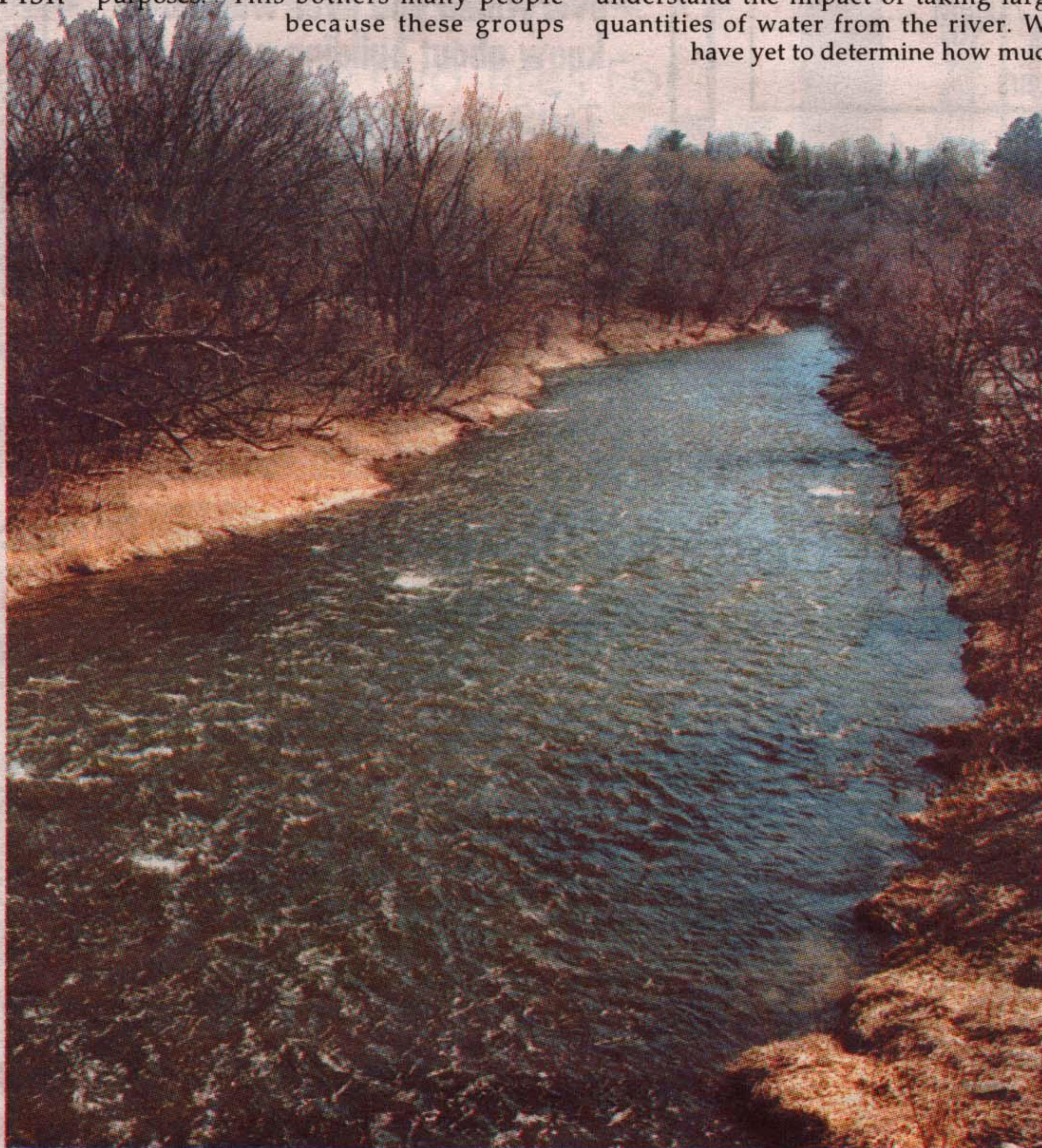
Participants brought up a number of issues during the open house but habitat protection was their primary concern. They were concerned about human impacts on habitat, such as development.

Charley Worte, manager of Watershed Planning for the CVC and vice chair of the steering committee explained, "Permits are

issued by the Ministry of the Environment to take water, but currently there are no fees charged for the removal of large volumes of water for commercial purposes. This bothers many people because these groups

are using the resource without helping to pay for maintaining it.

"Tied in with this is the need to better understand the impact of taking large quantities of water from the river. We have yet to determine how much



water we can extract without seriously affecting the Credit River ecosystem, the river itself, and, of course, even the groundwater," said Worte.

Participants also discussed the issue of allowing rainbow trout further up the Credit River. Currently the Norval dam acts as a barrier to these fish. By allowing rainbow trout access to more of the river, the plan's creators hope to offer increased fishing opportunities north of Norval. However, a feasibility study is needed to see if another control barrier can be put in place to prevent the rainbow trout from moving upstream into the prime habitat for brook and brown trout where they might create unfavorable competition.

The new proposals will help to manage and improve the health of the Credit River for fish and other watershed residents by reflecting the ecosystem approach to planning while respecting the concerns of the many individuals and groups that have taken part in the plan's development.

But a plan is only a plan, and the next stage, implementation, was a concern for many audience members in these days of shrinking budgets and limited staff resources.

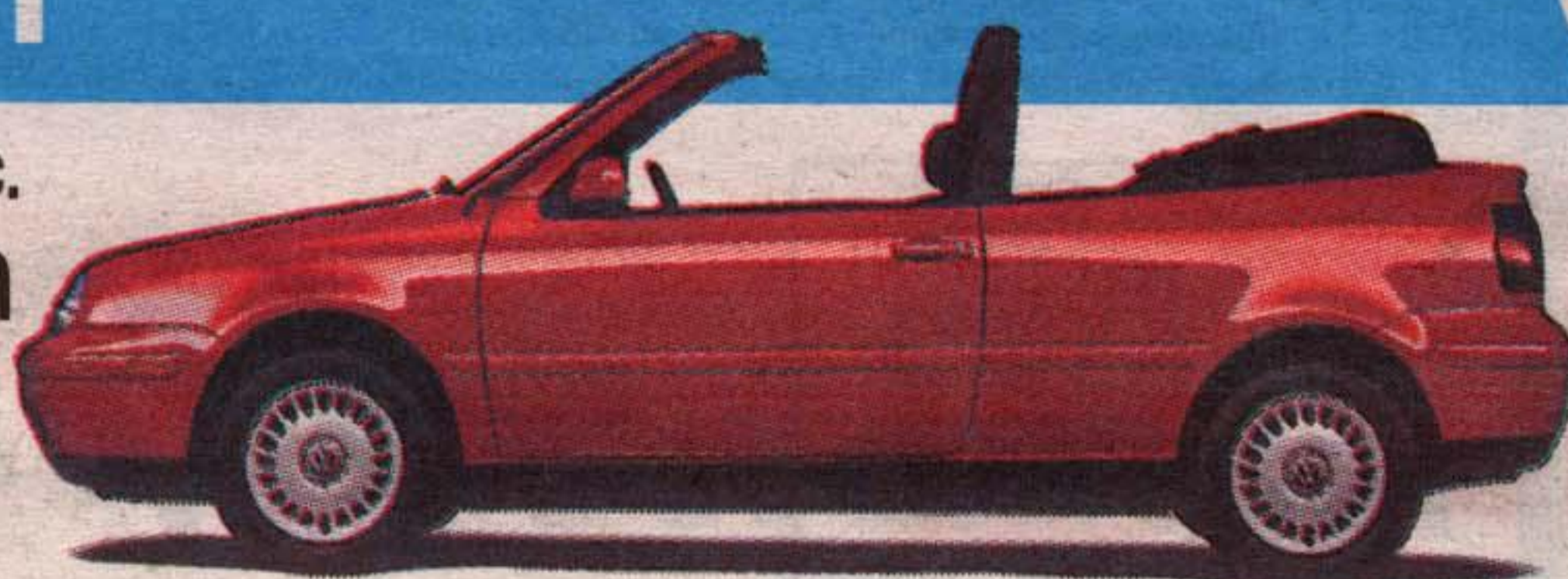
The Fish Management plan is scheduled for completion in late 1999. For more information about the plan contact: MNR's Aurora office at (905) 713-7400 or Credit Valley Conservation at 1225 Old Derry Road, Mississauga, ON, L5N 6R5, or by phone at (905) 670-1615 or 1-800-668-5557 or visit the new Website at www.creditriverplan.com

Photos by Christine Smyth

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