

Locals co-operate with MNR to protect environment

By Monica Wenzlaff
The News

The new Aggregate Resources Act has brought about major changes in the way people obtain sand, gravel and top soil.

The act, which was proclaimed on January 1, 1990, replaces the Pits and Quarries Act, the Beach Protection Act and Part VII of the Mining Act. The thrust of the new legislation is environmental control, regulation and enforcement.

Pit sites used to extract aggregate material must now be rehabilitated. Under the act, commercial permit holders are required to pay eight cents per tonne extracted to ensure that the rehabilitation is completed after the site is no longer being used.

"It's their money still. We just hold it for them," said Ken McWatters, a Senior Lands

Technician with the Ministry of Natural Resources. "When they're finished, we want them (the pit sites) back in production in some form." The sites must be in a condition acceptable for such uses as forestry, industrial or commercial development or parklands.

In the past, aggregate resources were free to commercial operators as well as individuals. A permit from the Ministry of Natural Resources was required before any extraction could take place, and permits were issued to individuals free. Commercial operators only paid a \$10 permit fee and extraction conditions were minimal.

Yet now, everyone must purchase a permit from the Ministry in order to obtain any aggregate resources from Crown land, and there is a charge for any material

extracted. Commercial permits cost \$100 and a personal permit can be obtained for a fee of \$25.

To be issued a permit, a site plan must be constructed, specifying the exact dimensions of the pit that will be used to extract the resources. Length, width, and depth measurements are necessary.

Anyone operating a pit without a permit, or not complying with the site plan or any part of the new legislation faces serious penalties. The minimum fine is \$500 daily until the damage caused by the offence is corrected, and fines can run as high as \$30,000 daily. Previously, the maximum fine for an infraction was \$500.

"You just can't be going out making these holes in the ground anymore," said McWatters.

McWatters said he was predicting problems while changing to the new system, because of the stricter guidelines. Yet Ken McWatters said that local contractors have been very co-opera-

tive.

"We were anticipating a difficult time, but contractors have reacted well," said McWatters. "I'm really happy with the operators I have down here."



This site, operated by Dave Desrosiers Aggregates Ltd., is one of the largest aggregate pits in this area. Photo by Monica Wenzlaff

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accommodate local boaters. Removal of the rock at the mouth of the river would provide better access to larger boats.

Other possibilities for improvement are an organized parking area, the installation of washrooms, a picnic area, a playground and a concession stand. Access to the falls and the gorge, as well as an emphasis on the Slate Islands could be features that would easily be promoted.

Young and Crompton pointed out that there is only a small amount of money presently available for development. They suggested that the town begin with improvements at the beach to promote what is already there. Once the tourists become interested, further development can then take place through government

grants.

In the long term, the study looked at the possibility of using Hydro Bay to develop a full-service marina.

"What we've got so far is just concepts and ideas," said Town Clerk Dave Fulton. "It's not carved in stone."

More than 40 local people attended the presentation, and were given a chance to voice their opinion on what was suggested.

Before any final decisions on the project are made by the town, more studies must be done. These will be detailed and will take the cost factor into consideration to help determine which route will eventually be taken.

Council plans to consider specific plans in the near future, and hope to begin development by 1991.

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