



**ONTARIO  
RIVERS  
ALLIANCE**

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Nancy Matthews  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Ministry of the Environment  
135 St. Clair Avenue West  
Toronto, ON  
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Email: [Nancy.Matthews@Ontario.ca](mailto:Nancy.Matthews@Ontario.ca)

Dear Ms. Matthews:

**Re: EBR Application for Review (14EBR004.R) of  
Alternative Bypass Reporting Procedures**

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a voice for the French River Delta Association, CPAWS-Ottawa Valley, Kiishik Community Association, Food & Water First, Whitewater Ontario, Vermilion River Stewardship, Friends of Grassy River, Mississippi Riverwatchers, French River Stewardship, as well as many other stewardships, associations, and private and First Nations citizens who have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems all across Ontario.

ORA is writing in support of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper's Application for Review of Alternative Bypass Reporting Procedures, and applauds the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) decision to review the issues related to public reporting of water quality issues during severe weather events.

There are numerous Waste Water Treatment Facilities (WWTF) across the province releasing treated, untreated and partially treated effluent into streams and rivers that run through large and small communities that also rely on river water for their public and private drinking water and general household uses. Increasing incidences of extreme rain events are making overflow and bypass of sewage a common and necessary strategy for many WWTF's in Ontario. ORA understand that in the short-term this is done in order to avoid back-ups into their treatment facilities as well as individual residences; however, in the long-term there must be a province-wide strategy to avoid untreated and partially treated releases of sewage effluent into the environment.

For example, in the Greater City of Sudbury, there are nine wastewater treatment facilities releasing treated, partially treated and untreated effluent into the Vermilion River watershed. On 13 and 14 April, 262,999 m<sup>3</sup> of partially treated sewage was released, and again on 15 May, 59,778 m<sup>3</sup> was released into the Vermilion River and its connecting lakes. During 2013, 427,235 m<sup>3</sup> of partially treated sewage was released through bypass and overflow from one Sudbury facility alone. Many residences rely on the Vermilion River for their drinking water and



general household water usage, and public health and safety is placed at risk if untreated and/or partially treated sewage is present in their private water intakes or children and adults are swimming in affected river water. There must be a standardized policy in place that sets out when and how the public is to be alerted when their water supply has been compromised.

ORA is confident that this is not an isolated problem, as very few WWTF were made to handle the extreme rain events that are becoming more and more prevalent with the effects of Climate Change. The cumulative effects of numerous bypass and overflow events on the creeks and rivers feeding the Great Lakes also contribute to the prevalence of Cyanobacteria blooms on area lakes, as well as the Great Lakes.

As you are aware, the City of Kingston has a great model for other municipalities to follow through their Sewage Alert System and on-line Bypass Log which reports bypass and overflow incidents on their [website](#). Facebook and Twitter communications could also be utilized in an effective strategy.

The bottom line is that local downstream residents need to be notified at the earliest possible moment of any potential risk to their water source and/or their health and safety. When an overflow or bypass is reported to the MOECC and local health unit, at the same time the public must also be notified through an alert so that precautions can be taken.

ORA is very pleased to know that the MOECC is considering this important issue. We are requesting notification of any opportunities for consultation and/or input, and look forward to your review and final decision.

Respectfully,

Linda Heron  
Chair, Ontario Rivers Alliance  
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