



Wanatango Falls, Frederick House River

Oil on Canvas by Aleta Karstad

ONTARIO RIVERS ALLIANCE

2014 – 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

17 October 2015

Prepared by:

Linda Heron, Chair



Letter from the Chair

It's amazing to me that ORA is about to enter into it's 6th year of working to protect, conserve and restore Ontario rivers. We have accomplished a great deal in a short period of time.

ORA started with a grass-roots movement to right a wrong - to stop a rash of 87 hydroelectric facilities that were proposed, under the Green Energy Act, on rivers all across the province. In our opinion, many of these facilities would have negatively impacted upon communities, water resources, fisheries, the environment, and our democratic rights.

Our work has been very challenging, and at times you could say overwhelming, but our team has met every challenge, and feel great satisfaction with the progress we have made. All this in spite of being told by the proponents that it was "a done deal".

Just the same, we moved forward, determined to follow policy and process, to collaborate and build relationships, and to do everything in our power at each turn to ensure that if these projects were built that we would have done our very best to influence strong mitigation measures to lessen the impacts. At the same time, ORA has taken every opportunity to comment on water related legislation and policy with the goal of strengthening protection and consultation, and ensuring more environmentally sustainable operating strategies.

In the end, only a small fraction of the original 87 facilities were built. Many never received FIT Contracts; but as a result of ORA actions, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change rejected 4 Environmental Reports. We are still awaiting decisions on 5 of our Part II Order requests, but these and many of the others will likely never see the light of day. Many rivers have been protected – at least for now.

A big thank you to ORA's Board of Directors, members, and volunteers for your continued support and dedication to our organization! You are ORA!!

Yours in Conservation,



Chair, ORA

About ORA:

Ontario Rivers Alliance (ORA) is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization with a focus on healthy river ecosystems all across Ontario. ORA is a voice for a number of member and partner organizations, stewardships and associations, as well as many other private and First Nations citizens. We have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems, and to ensure that development affecting Ontario rivers is environmentally and socially sustainable and responsible.

ORA has a broad overarching perspective in our approach to conserving and protecting Ontario's freshwater resources. We collaborate with other organizations, individuals and First Nation citizens throughout the province to share, communicate, assist, and join our voices, experience and strengths in a coordinated effort to address risky or threatening developments and unhealthy river ecosystems. ORA's success and accomplishments are entirely the result of the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

Since our beginnings early in 2011, ORA has worked tirelessly to address risky developments, influence policy, process and legislation, to improve the environmental assessment and approvals process, to increase public awareness of the impacts development is imposing, and the importance of protecting, conserving and restoring riverine ecosystems.

ORA works to raise awareness through our website, E-newsletter, Action Alerts, public speaking engagements, and other communication and outreach initiatives and campaigns in order to build a strong engaged network of like-minded individuals and organizations.

ORA has assisted numerous individuals and groups in advocating for river protection, conservation and most recently, restoration, with the assistance of our network of volunteers that provide scientific and technical expertise and advice.

ORA has a solid track record of providing evidence-based and reasoned advice on policy and development that affects Ontario rivers.

Challenges to Ontario Rivers:

ORA is concerned with all issues affecting Ontario rivers and lakes, including the cumulative and ongoing negative effects of hydroelectric and waste water treatment facilities, mining and industry releasing effluent into our waterways, diminished water quality and water quantity, forestry impacts, blue-green algae, invasive species, overdevelopment of our shorelines, endangered species, threatened fisheries, old dams no longer serving any useful purpose that block our waterways, and the most daunting challenge of all, climate change.

Healthy rivers provide drinking water, food, flood protection, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, and economic benefits to local and First Nation communities. They are a vital part of our heritage and are sources of community identity and pride. In an era of global warming, effective long-term protection for rivers must begin at the headwaters and encompass the entire watershed.

For an overview of what ORA has achieved since our inception in 2011, you can check out our previous Annual Reports and Blog, located on our website here.

ORA Activities - November 2014 to October 2015:

1. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) Grant:

In December of 2013, ORA received a \$34,871 capacity building grant from MEC. This grant was to help in the creation of a strategic plan, branding, website development, and strategies to help ORA increase its capacity to protect, conserve and restore healthy Ontario river ecosystems.

Our MEC grant allowed ORA to complete several key initiatives designed to project a more professional profile, increase public awareness of the work we do, and to provide opportunities for the public to get involved. These initiatives also helped ORA to better understand how we can best serve the needs of our membership, and continue to build our organization.

ORA now has a new look - a new logo, website, brochure, quarterly River Run E-Newsletter, and a 5-year Strategic Plan to provide a strong foundation and direction for our organization into the future. Click on the links below to check out our:

- [ORA 5-Year Strategic Plan](#)
- [ORA Updated Website](#)
- [River Run - E-Newsletter](#)
- [ORA Brochure](#)

A big thank you to MEC for our new branding and website, and for making our 5-year Strategic Plan and quarterly E-Newsletter possible. The Final Report was submitted to MEC on 1 December 2014.

2. ORA Comments on EBR Postings:

ORA commented on water related EBR postings as follows:

- Nov 2014 - EBR Application for Review – Alternative Bypass Reporting Procedures
- Dec 2014 - EBR 012-2835: Provincial Bait Policy Review – Bait Use & Commercial Harvest in Provincial Parks & Conservation Reserves
- Dec 2015 - EBR 012-2836: Provincial Bait Policy Review – Angler Use & Movement of Baitfish in Ontario
- Mar 2015 - EBR 012-3452: Discussion Paper on Climate Change
- Jul 2015 - EBR 012-4222: Provincial Bait Policy

3. Other Submissions:

- Dec 2014 - Draft Large Renewable Procurement Comments
- Jan 2015 - IESO – Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) and MicroFIT
- Feb 2015 – National Energy Board Intervener Funding Application
- Apr 2015 - Comments on OEB Part 2 – Energy East Pipeline Proposal
- May 2015 - ORA to MOECC, Re: Proposed North Bala Small Hydro Project – Request for Addendum
- Aug 2015 - Comments to Environment Canada on Phosphorus Reduction Targets for Lake Erie
- Aug 2015 - Water Crossings and Pipeline – online survey, Canadian Energy Pipeline Association
- Aug 2015 – ORA to MNRF – Re: Eramosa River, East Channel, Eden Mills

4. **Joint Submissions:**

- Apr 2015 - EBR 012-3523: Bill 66 – Great Lakes Protection Act
- May 2015 - Coordinated Land Use Planning Review, May 2015
- Jun 2015 - NGO letter, Urgent Call to Action on Lake Erie Nutrient Crisis
- Jul 2015 - NGO letter, Urging Government Action on Triclosan
- Aug 2015 - NGO letter, Phosphorus Reduction Targets for Lake Erie
- Sep 2015 - NGO letter, Bill 66 – Proposed Great Lakes Protection Act

5. **Potential Dam Removal Projects:**

- Jun 2015 - Springbank Dam, Thames River, London
- Aug 2015 - Upper Dam, East Channel of the Eramosa River, Eden Mills

6. **River Updates:**

ORA has engaged in the Environmental Assessment (EA) process of several proposed waterpower developments moving through the environmental screening and approvals process to determine the potential impacts and risks to the environment, as well as public health and safety.

We have not addressed any new hydroelectric proposals in the last year as there have only been a few and they were of minimal concern. However, below you will find the status of our Part II Order requests as follows:

❖ **Marter Township GS – Blanche River**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. is proposing to construct a 2.1 MW hydroelectric generating station on the Blanche River in Marter Township. The project site is located on the Blanche River at the Krugerdorf Chutes, approximately 9 km north of the Town of Englehart, upstream of the Misema and Englehart Rivers. An important set of rapids, known as Stuart's Rapids, is located approximately 3.7 km downstream of the proposed dam site, as it contains one of the few gravel/sandbar habitats in this portion of the Blanche River, and downstream of the rapids is a confirmed spawning habitat for Lake Sturgeon and possibly Walleye.

ORA made a part II Order request to the Minister of Environment. A visit to the MOECC public file revealed the **ER did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower.**

- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, Mar 2014
- ORA Part II Order Request, Mar 2014
- **MOECC to ORA – ER did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower - proponent sent back to do more studies, Jul 2015**

❖ **Wabagishik Rapids Waterpower Project – Vermilion River**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. proposes to construct a 3.4 MW modified run-of-river hydroelectric power generation station at Wabagishik Rapids, on the Vermilion River. Wabagishik Rapids is the site of a significant walleye spawning habitat, and Lake Sturgeon were discovered immediately below the proposed dam location.

ORA and 21 others made Part II Order requests to the Minister of Environment (MOE) asking the Minister to elevate the ER to an Individual EA. MOECC public file reveals the Environmental Report (ER) had numerous deficiencies. Awaiting MOECC disposition.

- ORA to Xeneca – Comments on ER, Oct 2013.
- ORA to MOECC – Part II Order request, Nov 2013

- ORA to MOECC – Follow-up, Feb 2014
- ORA to MOECC – Request for Meeting, Jun 2014
- MOECC to ORA - Response, Jun 2014
- Met with MOECC staff and made presentation – Wabagishik Rapids Heavy Metal Contamination, and discussed merits of the ER, Jul 2014
- **Awaiting a decision by MOECC, Oct 2015**

❖ **Ivanhoe River GS ER – The Chute and Third Falls**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. is proposing to build two hydroelectric generating stations at The Chute and Third Falls sites located 44.2 km apart along the Ivanhoe River. The proposed "Modified Run-of-River" Project would have a total Installed Capacity of 2.9 MW at The Chute and 3.8 MW at Third Falls.

ORA initially made a Part II Order request on the proposed Ivanhoe River - The Chute ER in 2011, asking the MOECC to elevate the ER to an Individual EA. The MOECC ruled that the ER did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower, and sent the proponent back to do additional studies. 2 ½ years later the ER was again issued for comment.

- ORA Comments on ER, Sep 2011
- ORA Part II Order Request, Sep 2011
- MOECC to Xeneca - Decision - ER did not meet requirements of Class EA, Mar 2012
- ORA Comments on Final ER, May 2014
- ORA Part II Order Request on Final ER, May 2014
- **Awaiting response from MOECC on Part II request, Oct 2015**

❖ **Frederick House GS ER – Wanatango Falls**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. proposes to construct a 3.7 MW hydroelectric power generating station at the site known as "Wanatango Falls" on the Frederick House River, located in Mann Township, approximately 26 kilometres (km) northwest of the Town of Iroquois Falls and 22 km south of the Town of Cochrane.

In 2011 ORA commented on the proposed Frederick House River Generating Station ER, and made a Part II Order request to the MOECC to elevate the ER to an Individual EA. The proponent withdrew the ER when the Ivanhoe River ER was rejected by MOECC.

The proponent has again issued the ER for comment and ORA has made another Part II Order request as in our opinion the ER still does not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower. Awaiting MOECC disposition.

- ORA Comments on ER, Nov 2011
- ORA Part II Order Request, Nov 2011
- MOECC to ORA – Xeneca withdraws ER, Apr 2012
- ORA Comments on Final ER, Aug 2014
- ORA Part II Order Request on Final ER, Aug 2014
- **Awaiting response from MOECC on Part II request, Oct 2015**

❖ **Serpent River GS**

Xeneca Power Development Inc. proposed to build the Four Slide Falls GS, a modified run-of-river hydroelectric generating station, with a total installed capacity of 7.3 MW. The project would be located on the Serpent River, approximately 15 km east of Elliot Lake, 7 km downstream of Pecors Lake and 4 km upstream of McCarthy Lake.

This ER and Notice of Completion, along with the Frederick House River GS, were withdrawn by the proponent in 2011 when the Ivanhoe Project was rejected by MOECC because it did not meet the requirements of the Class EA for Waterpower. The developer was sent back to complete additional studies. There has been no activity on this proposal, and assume it has been dropped.

- ORA Comments on ER, Sep 2011

- Part II Order Request, Sep 2011
- MOECC to ORA – Xeneca withdraws ER, Apr 2012
- A visit to the public file revealed **no activity**, Oct 2014
- **This proposal appears to have been dropped by the proponent.**

❖ **Trout Lake River GS – Big Falls**

Horizon Hydro Operations Ltd. proposed a 3 to 4 MW run-of-river waterpower facility at Big Falls on the Trout Lake River. Kiishik Community Association requested ORA's assistance.

ORA and Kiishik Community Association made Part II Order requests to the MOECC, and 3 years later we are still awaiting a decision.

- ORA Comments on Notice of Inspection, Dec 2012.
- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, May 2013
- ORA Part II Order request, May 2013
- A visit to the MOECC public file revealed **no activity**, Oct 2014
- A visit to the MOECC public file in Mar 2015 showed proponent is trying to move process forward, but still no disposition
- **Awaiting MOECC decision on Part II Order request, Oct 2015**

❖ **Kabinakagami River Hydroelectric Proposal**

A joint venture partnership of Constance Lake First Nation and Northland Power Inc., proposed to jointly construct, own and operate four strict run-of-river hydroelectric facilities on the Kabinakagami River, with a combined generating capacity of 26 MW. Wahpeestan, Wapoose, Neeskah and Peeshoo would have a total of 200 hectares of headponds. A Fort Albany First Nation citizens' group requested ORA's assistance.

ORA made a Part II Order request on this ER, and almost 3 years later no decision has yet been made on our request.

- ORA Comments on Notice of Inspection, May 2012
- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, Feb 2013
- Part II Order request, Feb 2013
- A visit to the MOECC public file revealed **no activity**, Oct 2014
- A visit to the MOECC public file revealed **no activity**, Mar 2015
- **Awaiting MOECC decision on Part II Order request, Oct 2015**

❖ **Enerdu GS Expansion & Redevelopment, Mississippi River**

Enerdu Power Systems Inc. proposed to expand and redevelop its existing run-of-river hydroelectric waterpower facility to increase capacity from 300 kW to approximately 0.95 MW. This expansion was being operated as a peaking facility, and yet they were referring to it as a run-of-river.

Mississippi RiverWatchers requested ORA's assistance, and consequently ORA and Mississippi Riverwatchers made Part II Order requests to the MOECC to elevate this ER to an Individual EA – a much more rigorous EA.

The MOECC denied our requests to elevate, and approved the proposal with conditions that the proponent must address before permits and approvals are issued.

- ORA Comments on Environmental Report, Jan 2013
- ORA Part II Order request, Feb 2013
- MOECC to Enerdu – Part II Order requests denied, Nov 2013
- **Awaiting permits.**

❖ **Bala Falls**

Swift River Energy Limited proposed a 3 to 5 MW “run of river” hydroelectric facility near the south end of Bala's existing north dam, located in the Town of Bala, Township of Muskoka Lakes, Ontario.

ORA, Save Bala Falls, and others, made Part II Order requests to the MOECC in 2011. We and others appealed the Director's decision in 2012. The appeal was denied and the Statement of Completion issued in 2013. The project is now being contested by First Nations on the grounds that duty to consult was not properly fulfilled. There is ongoing and strong advocacy by Save Bala Falls.

- Part II Order request, May 2011
- Comments to Muskoka Lakes, Aug 2011
- Comments to MOECC, Apr 2012
- ORA to MOECC, Re Addendum, Jun 2012
- Request to Review Director's Decision, Oct 2012
- Request denied by MOECC, Jan 2013
- Request for Addendum, May 2015
- **Awaiting permitting; however, recent developments look promising. It has come to light that crucial land is owned by the Town of Bala – so stay tuned.**

7. Key ORA Meetings/Events:

- Feb 2015 - ORA - Special Energy East Pipeline Forum
- Apr 2015 - Chair attended a United Walleye Club Conference, Sudbury
- May 2015 - Chair attended Ontario Trillium Foundation Workshop, New Funding Program
- May 2015 - Chair attended a Clean Economy Alliance meeting in Toronto
- Jul 2015 - Chair attended Ontario Climate Change Lab in Toronto
- Jul 2015 - Robert Huber attended Environment Canada Consultation on Proposed Bi-National Phosphorus Load Reduction Targets for Lake Erie, London
- Oct 2015 - Chair attended Consultation on Conservation Authority Discussion Paper, Sudbury

8. Miscellaneous:

- Jan 2015 – Book by Noah Cunningham, It's Nice to See the Light and the Shoes – endorsed by ORA

9. Presentations:

- Energy East Pipeline, Al Hepburn presented at:
 - Jan 2015 - OEB Stakeholders' Forum
 - Feb 2015 - ORA Energy East Pipeline Forum
 - Apr 2015 - Petawawa Town Council
 - May 2015 - Pembroke City Council
 - Jun 2015 - County of Renfrew
- Jun 2015 - Chair - Blue Water Day, Royal Bank, Sudbury, ON

In Conclusion:

ORA is in a transition phase now, and beginning to expand into the restoration side of our mandate. We have two new organization members that have asked for ORA's assistance on prospective dam removal projects, so stay tuned.

ORA is also awaiting approval on our Intervenor Funding Application to the National Energy Board on the Energy East Pipeline proposal.

ORA will continue to build on its successes, and explore innovative ways to increase our capacity to better serve our membership and Ontario Rivers.

A big thank you to all those who have assisted ORA by way of membership dues, donations and volunteer work! We couldn't do what we do without your continued support!

Yours in Conservation,



Linda Heron
Chair
Ontario Rivers Alliance
OntarioRiversAlliance.ca