



## **MEDIA RELEASE:**

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### **What to do with Springbank Dam – the 3.775 Million Dollar Question**

The Ontario Rivers Alliances (ORA) and the Thames River Anglers Association (TRAA), along with the support of groups representing over 250,000 members, including the WWF-Canada, Ontario Nature, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and numerous other local angling and recreation clubs, are speaking up for the decommissioning of Springbank Dam.

The Thames River is a Heritage River with one of the most ecologically diverse riverine ecosystems in Ontario, with over 90 species of freshwater fish, including 11 that are identified by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife Canada (COSEWIC) as threatened or at risk, and is certainly worth conserving and restoring.

*“The Springbank Dam falling out of service over 8 years ago was the best thing that could have happened to the Thames River and its wild inhabitants”,* said Linda Heron, Chair of the ORA. In that short time the river has rebounded, with the presence of Queen Snakes, Eastern Hog-nosed Snakes, Mudpuppies, Mussels, Silver Shiners, Spotted and Black Redhorse suckers, Northern Map Turtles, Snapping Turtles and Green Dragon perennial wildflowers that are re-establishing themselves within its ecosystem.

In 2015 the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority identified a record 214 nests holding over 3000 Spiny Soft-shelled Turtle eggs along the banks of the Thames. This puts London on the map as one of the only communities in North America that is actually reversing the decline of this COSEWIC identified threatened species. Flooding the river valley during the summer with a repaired Springbank Dam would destroy their nesting ground habitat and reverse the progress that has been made.

Dams and impoundments block natural river flow, where water temperatures rise, nutrients and sediments collect, and oxygen levels are depleted. These barriers also fragment fish habitat, and block access to prime spawning areas and key food sources. Such unhealthy ecosystems can significantly reduce fish populations, and seriously compromise the survival of sensitive species such as mussels and turtles.

As Robert Huber recently said while addressing the Urban League of London (ULL), *“We cannot claim to be one of Canada’s greenest cities in terms of sustainability and environmentally-friendly policies and decisions if community and civic leadership places a higher value on recreational use and perceived aesthetics of the river than the ecocide that damming it causes to the environment”*. The ULL subsequently voted to support the decommissioning of Springbank Dam.



To compound the problem, the City of London's wastewater reporting over the last 13 years indicate that the average annual volume of raw untreated sewage bypassed into the Thames River was 181,000,000 litres, as well as 574,000,000 litres of partially treated sewage. This, along with agricultural run-off, and the impacts of impounding this unpleasant brew, creates the perfect environment for toxic algae and E-coli to thrive.

Allowing water to degrade behind the dam, and then periodically flushing it downstream into Lake St. Claire and Lake Erie would not make a positive contribution towards the Canada and US agreement to reduce phosphorus loading into Lake Erie by 40%, nor would it be in alignment with the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

*"Healthy rivers contribute a multitude of social and economic benefits to local communities. So let's ensure the continuing recovery of the Thames River, where it's thriving ecosystem is drawing anglers and paddlers back to the river. We call on the Mayor and Council to decommission Springbank Dam",* said Heron.

Don't forget to come out to add your voice to those that want to see Springbank Dam decommissioned. The Public Consultation session will be held in Council Chambers on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, at 4:00 pm – more details [here](#).

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ORA is a Not-for-Profit grassroots organization acting as a voice for several stewardships, organizations, and private and First Nation citizens who have come together to protect, conserve and restore healthy river ecosystems. ORA has formed a strong network of environmental stewards to share, communicate, collaborate, and join our voices, experience and strengths in a coordinated effort to address policy, risky or threatening developments, and unhealthy river ecosystems. [www.OntarioRiversAlliance.ca](http://www.OntarioRiversAlliance.ca)



The Thames River Anglers Association is a dedicated organization of volunteers that have worked diligently since 1986 to improve the overall health of the Thames River and its tributaries. We accomplish this through stream rehabilitation projects, educational programs and actively working with landowners, agencies and various levels of government to protect and sustain a diverse multi-species fishery. [www.Anglers.org](http://www.Anglers.org)

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