



ONTARIO
RIVERS
ALLIANCE



15 May 2017

Warden Dennis Lever
Councillor Neil Driscoll
Councillor Andy Lennox
Councillor Kelly Linton
Councillor Allan Alls
Councillor Chris White
Councillor George Bridge
Councillor David Anderson
Councillor Gregg Davidson
Councillor Gary Williamson
Councillor Lynda White
Councillor Rob Black
Councillor Shawn Watters
Councillor Don McKay
Councillor Doug Breen
Councillor Pierre Brianceau
County of Wellington
74 Woolwich St.
Guelph, ON
N1H 3T9
By Email to Donna Bryce, County Clerk: DonnaB@Wellington.ca

Re: Hillsburgh Dam and Bridge, Town of Erin

Dear Warden Lever:

Trout Unlimited Canada and the Ontario Rivers Alliance wish to thank you for your 4 April 2017 response to our 29 March 2017 letter. We appreciate your candid perspective on the Hillsburgh dam and pond, and would just like to clarify a few important points.

To be clear, we are not suggesting the pond should be eliminated because, as we communicated in our Part II Order request and in our previous correspondence, our preferred alternative has always been to decommission the dam and construct an off-line pond to maintain that important esthetic and natural heritage feature. We feel this is a balanced approach that would have many esthetic, environmental, and public safety benefits, as well as satisfy and improve on natural heritage issues identified in the EA.

Thank you for making us aware of the heritage of the dam and pond, as well as the West Credit River's long history of use for important recreational purposes such as gatherings, swimming and brook trout fishing. We understand that this pond's history and heritage carry a very high value with the County. However, decommissioning the Hillsburgh Dam and creating an offline pond is not



choosing brook trout habitat over the social and cultural interests of local residents, but instead it would create a win, win situation that would benefit both the community and the brook trout fishery.

Removing Hillsburgh Dam and creating an offline pond would not only create a beautiful esthetic feature for the County Library, but it would also improve water quality in the stream and pond, cool instream temperatures, and reduce sediment in-filling within the pond. These mitigation efforts would increase the health and longevity of this important brook trout fishery and habitat, and would in turn benefit all life within the pond and river ecosystem.

Another crucial consideration is our rapidly changing climate, and the compelling need to increase resilience for the protection and safety of our communities. This is not only an opportunity for both the Town and County to demonstrate leadership in protecting cultural heritage values AND restoring natural heritage values, but most importantly to mitigate and adapt to the extremes of climate change. Paul Beckwith, who works on climatology in the Department of Geography at the University of Ottawa said, "We're getting a lot more extreme weather events around the planet, whether that be torrential rains leading to flooding, or really hot and dry temperatures leading to drought. These extreme weather events are much more severe, much more intense, they last longer, they're happening more frequently, and they're happening in areas where they didn't happen before."¹

Increased intensity of rain and melt events is already challenging manmade infrastructure such as dams like never before, and there is acknowledgement that old on-stream dams will become enormous liabilities, and significantly increase the risk to public safety. Anything we can do now to reduce that risk and any corresponding liability will be a positive for both local communities and the natural environment.

Trout Unlimited and Ontario Rivers Alliance ask that the County of Wellington's Warden and Council reconsider decommissioning of Hillsburgh Dam, based on the importance of the health and resilience of the West Credit River, as well as the socio-economic and safety risks that the dam and pond pose to downstream residents in the event of failure in this uncertain and quickly-changing climate of extremes.

We thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

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Cc: The Honourable Glen Murray, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Minister.MOECC@ontario.ca
The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Minister.MNRF@ontario.ca
Dianne Saxe, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Commissioner@ECO.on.ca
Mr. Paul Ziegler, Triton Engineering Services Limited, Pziegler@TritonEng.on.ca

¹ National Observer, 8 May 2017, [Here are the climate science benchmarks of the Quebec floods.](#)