

SNC asks residents to conserve water

Level 1 low water condition has been declared for the region

BY LIANNE LAHAIE

llahaie@thereview.ca

The South Nation Conservation (SNC) is asking people to use their water cautiously as the region has been listed under a level 1 low water condition.

According to Jason Symington, environmental technologist with the SNC, a level 1 low water condition means a potential low water supply problem has been identified.

He said the low water condition was declared "as a result of minimal amounts of precipitation since February of this year."

After record-breaking high temperatures this spring, parts of the province are now facing record-breaking low water levels. Thanks to the province's Low Water Response Program, implemented several years ago, there is now a system in place to determine the severity of a situation, based on the extremity of dry conditions that will necessitate certain actions and/or advisories. It is part of a three-tiered advisory system used in Ontario to inform the public of local low water conditions.

Symington said a level 2 condition involves conservation and restriction on non-essential water use, while a level 3 condition could mean restrictions and regulations to reduce water use all around.

"Low water conditions have adverse effects of groundwater and that could mean wells will run dry," he explained. "Surface water will also be impacted resulting in poor fish and water quality due to reduced flows."

The goal of a level 1 condition is to reduce water use by about 10 per cent through voluntary water conservation, Symington noted.

Residents can help conserve water by

fixing leaks around their homes, watering their lawns early in the morning or late in the evening, watering plants with water collected in a rain barrel and avoiding running their taps for too long.

Naomi Langlois-Anderson, a senior fish and wildlife technician with the SNC, noted there would be issues with fish not being able to reach nesting grounds as a result of shallow water conditions.

The weather forecast indicates the region is not expected to receive any significant amount of rainfall over the next two weeks.

Low water conditions a trend across Ontario Environment Canada said that warmer weather and a dry winter have played a role in low water levels across the province this spring. "Due to the fact that we didn't see a lot of snow this winter, there wasn't much of a snow pack to melt so we didn't really replenish a lot of the rivers and streams and reservoirs with what we'd normally expect to see in a spring runoff or spring melt," said Geoff Coulson, a warning preparedness meteorologist with Environment Canada in a recent media release. Environment Canada reported dry conditions in some areas of the province throughout the month of April as well, a month that saw only 25 millimeters of precipitation. The weather agency says the normal level for April is 85 millimeters of total precipitation – a breakdown that includes 80 millimeters of rainfall and five millimeters of what is the equivalent of melted snow.

Last week, dry conditions sparked a number of forest fires across the province, with 11 new fires being confirmed on Wednesday, May 16 alone.

The Ministry of Natural Resources reported that as of Thursday, May 17, there were 26 active fires in the province, nine of which were listed as not under control.