



**Regional Watershed Advisory Board  
MINUTES  
November 8, 2017**

**PRESENT:** Walter N. Regan, Chair  
Kelly Schnare, Vice Chair  
Russell Dmytriw  
Rose Featherstone  
Tim Boudreau  
Kevin Hooper

**REGRETS:** Jennifer Rocard  
Derek Vallis  
Aaron Ezekiel (leave of absence)

**STAFF:** Shannon Miedema, Energy and Environment Program Manager  
Cameron Deacoff, Environmental Performance Officer  
Sharon Chase, Legislative Support

*The following does not represent a verbatim record of the proceedings of this meeting.*

*The agenda, reports, supporting documents, and information items circulated are online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca).*

*The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. and adjourned at 6:57 p.m.*

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Walter Regan called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Maxine Tynes Room, 2nd floor, Alderney Public Library, 60 Alderney Drive, Dartmouth.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 11, 2017**

MOVED by Rose Featherstone, seconded by Russell Dmytriw

**THAT the minutes of October 11, 2017 be approved as presented.**

**MOTION PUT AND PASSED.**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS AND APPROVAL OF ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

The agenda was approved as distributed.

**4. CALL FOR DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS – NONE**

**5. CONSIDERATION OF DEFERRED BUSINESS – NONE**

**6. CORRESPONDENCE, PETITIONS & DELEGATIONS – NONE**

**7. INFORMATION ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD – NONE**

**8. REPORTS/DISCUSSION**

**8.1 STAFF**

**8.1.1 Discussion re: Water Quality Monitoring Review**

The following was before the Board:

- HRM 2017 Beach Monitoring Protocol
- HRM 2017 Beach Closure Summary
- Guidelines for Canadian Recreational Water Quality, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 2012

Cameron Deacoff, Environmental Performance Officer, informed the Board that Regional Council has given direction to staff to prepare a report on Pollution Source Control for Lake Banook. The Board is being asked for their input as the beach monitoring program is being reviewed in connection with this study and subsequent report.

Questions for the Regional Watershed Advisory Board's consideration:

- Is HRM's current beach monitoring program adequate?
- What changes would you make to improve the current beach monitoring program?
- Should HRM link the beaches monitoring program with a larger corporate monitoring program, and if so, for what purposes and how?

Cameron Deacoff summarized the data on beach closures for the last eight (8) years. They also reviewed the existing program where E. Coli testing is conducted once a week for eight (8) weeks over the summer, at 19 locations most of which are supervised beaches. Additional testing for Enterococci is conducted at Birch Cove Beach to meet the standards necessary for its Blue Flag Beach designation.

The Board suggested that the current beach monitoring program was inadequate. There are many swimming locations in HRM that are not covered in the testing. It was recognized that the swimming season is much longer than just July and August. They recommend that the Municipality provide the necessary resources to expand and include the shoulder seasons. There was discussion about when the testing occurs and if it takes into consideration levels of heavy activity. It was noted that Environment Canada also recommends testing after rain events. Having storm outlets mapped and alarms installed on storm sewers and outlets, especially those near beaches, would impact the response times for any overflows. It was suggested that there should be a greater effort to determine the source of any contamination, not just identifying the issue and waiting for the return of safe levels. Preventative measures and triggers for automatic testing based on historical data should be considered. In addition to considering human health, there should also be an emphasis on how humans interact with and impact the water quality. Beaches are an important part of the greater watershed and this program should be tied to water quality testing and the goals of the Green Network Plan.

Establishing objectives of what the program is trying to achieve will make it much more effective. These objectives can have outcomes set, to measure against and make it easier to expand, make recommendations, analyze, etc. The Board suggested some objectives to include: diagnosis of sources, data collection, public education and human impact on the health of the environment. The relationship between the parameters also needs to be understood. The Board reviewed what is presently monitored and what data is presently collected. It was suggested that expanding the data lifeguards report such as number of swimmers and rain events could be valuable. Coliform testing might also be considered as it can provide additional information on the impacts of ducks, dogs and animals. They reviewed the threshold for keeping/losing the Blue Flag designation; there are 33 parameters measured. Public education is crucial to engage beach users who can then minimize or mitigate source concerns and help remediate and correct problems. The Board discussed how the public might see this information: at the beach, online, social media, and public statements on the causes of beach closures. This educates and engages citizens where all users are responsible for healthy beaches. Swim Guide App provides water quality results and other information on local beaches as provided by the Municipality; there is potential to expand the information provided and promote the use of this app to the public. Another way to engage users could be the sponsorship of a beach as is done in Toronto. It was agreed that HRM should be more actively promoting and celebrating our beaches acknowledging their recreational value and tourism potential.

The Board viewed that linking the beach monitoring program to HRM's Water Quality Monitoring Program would help address the issues raised and could expand the scope of the beach monitoring program. It was clarified that linking did not mean combining the two programs but sharing of data and information collected. This database of information could be used to find correlations and trends. The information on beach testing results and water quality must be shared publically. The two programs have different objectives; one a localized beach focus and the other aiming to achieve a water quality functional plan for the Municipality. It was noted that there are many recreational uses for water beyond beaches and swimming and that this should be addressed. Businesses that do their own water quality monitoring should be required to share their results with the Municipality. Cameron Deacoff clarified that this data is reported to Nova Scotia Environment and that Halifax Water will provide information to HRM upon request. The Board suggested that the Stantec Report be re-visited and their recommendations implemented.

The Board reviewed the existing data collection process which follows 2012 Health Canada recommendations. Beach management was conducted on single sample results until 2016. 5 samples are now taken and the criterion for a beach closure is based on the geometric mean of these samples. The Board questioned whether the increase in beach closures, particularly at Lake Banook, in 2017 is related to this change. Cameron Deacoff explained that the Pollution Source Control Report has been requested specific to Lake Banook as it has the highest number of swimmers year over year.

The roles and responsibilities for water and water quality were discussed. Local citizen's interests are protected by local government working with the province and other stakeholders. Lakes and waterbodies are under provincial jurisdiction while HRM has responsibility for the adjacent land and beaches.

Sediment testing of the beach sand could also be done alongside the water testing. It was noted that there are many beaches near service areas and storm water systems particularly in urban settings. Any pumping station overflows on lakes are reported by Halifax Water to Nova Scotia Environment. Any public health risks are also reported to HRM. The Board discussed how storm water and septic systems are mapped and monitored. HRM has no regulatory authority but there are some areas of intervention such as mandatory pump outs and they can notify Nova Scotia Environment of any issues requiring investigation. The Board suggested some things to consider when looking ahead to next season to prevent a re-occurrence of 2017's closures. The need to correlate closures to other environmental data as well as the need to correlate existing data from other services would be important and should be included in the objectives of any program.

The Board summarized their feedback:

- It is important to proactively investigate the source of beach closures
- A robust and comprehensive database is needed to get a full picture
- Our beaches and lakes are a source of pride that should be promoted
- The public can add knowledge and value in any program
- Putting effort and focus on water quality shows the HRM cares about the environment

The report on Pollution Source Control for Lake Banook is targeted to go the Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee on January 4, 2018 and staff will propose having the project budgeted to begin in April 2018.

**9. ADDED ITEMS – NONE**

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – no meeting in December; January 10, 2018**

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

**INFORMATION ITEMS – NONE**

Sharon Chase  
Legislative Support