



SMC plans new tests

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St. Marys Cement (SMC) plans to resume pumping tests at its proposed quarry in northeast Flamborough in the coming year. Details of the pump testing aimed at proving that a Groundwater Recharge System will mitigate impacts on neighbouring wells and waterways will be outlined in the company's Permit to Take Water (PTTW) application to be submitted early in the new year to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

In a press release issued last week, the company's vice-president, John Moroz, said the goal of the testing is "to further demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed Groundwater Recharge System and to ensure that we provide stakeholders with the technical information that will help to make an informed decision about our (aggregate licence) application." SMC applied for an aggregate licence early in 2009.

Details of the testing program proposal are currently being assessed by technical experts and reviewed by various stakeholders, including the City of Hamilton's Combined Aggregate Review Team (CART) and the anti-quarry group, Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE).

According to Carl Slater, technical support manager of the MOE's West Central Region headquartered in Hamilton, the testing program is at its draft stage. "We are certainly looking forward to seeing how St. Marys is going to address technical matters that we and other stakeholders have brought forward," he added.

Noting that water protection is a central concern for the community and that SMC recognizes that concern, Moroz said, "We remain committed to continuing to work with the stakeholders throughout the ongoing review of our Aggregate Resources Act application. Our goal is to address and resolve the technical concerns that have been raised."

In the summer of 2008, St. Marys conducted one round of three proposed pump tests on the quarry site at 11th Concession Road East and Milborough Line. But the remaining rounds of testing were abruptly cancelled when the company disputed the MOE's assertion that the results of the first round were skewed by heavy rainfall during the testing. The MOE ordered that the testing be redone, but St. Marys balked, saying that repeating the tests wouldn't yield any new information.

Since then, officials from both the MOE and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) have said that an aggregate licence shouldn't be granted until St. Marys proves it can operate a quarry on the site without harming the surrounding groundwater system. Hamilton, Burlington, Milton, Halton Region and Conservation Halton have also asked for the same assurance.

Slater declined to say when the PTTW will be granted. "It would be speculative to say how long it will take." The last application filed by St. Marys took over a year to process.

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