



Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee



Climate Change Conference-
Steve Szabo Environment Canada



Eroding bank at the Cave-In

The year 2000 has been a very busy and rewarding year for the Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee. Along with our regular slate of programs, MREAC accomplished some monumental tasks. The highlights of the year have definitely been the restoration of the "Cave In" and hosting the Atlantic Canada Climate Change Conference.

Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee MREAC Newsletter

MREAC's History

The Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee (MREAC) began in 1989 in response to a community concern around a local pulp mill expansion. The committee remained intact following this initial phase to address other environmental issues on the Miramichi watershed. In 1992, MREAC tabled a state of the environment report on the Miramichi watershed, including recommendations that identified an

ongoing community role of watch-dog. A year later MREAC joined the Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) joining the family that consisted of 13 other community initiatives throughout Atlantic Canada. This allowed MREAC to establish an office and hire a full time coordinator. In response to the ACAP affiliation and with the support through the federal green plan, in 1996 MREAC tabled

a plan with the title Miramichi Watershed Environmental Management Plan – Reaching 2002. This plan identified twelve different program initiatives and multiple actions within these programs to advance environmental objectives. Since this time MREAC has addressed these actions and adopted another series of initiatives. MREAC will soon move toward rewriting its management plan to reflect its current and future objectives.

Mission Statement

The Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee is a community based multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to the continual improvement of the environmental quality of the Miramichi River ecosystem with emphasis on the Miramichi watershed.

"In an ideal world...all user groups must work together. Everyone must grasp hold of the broader picture of being stewards of the resources that we have been given to manage."

Debbie Norton

("Shifting Sounds", Inka Mouloski, 2001)

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Atlantic Canada Climate Change Conference

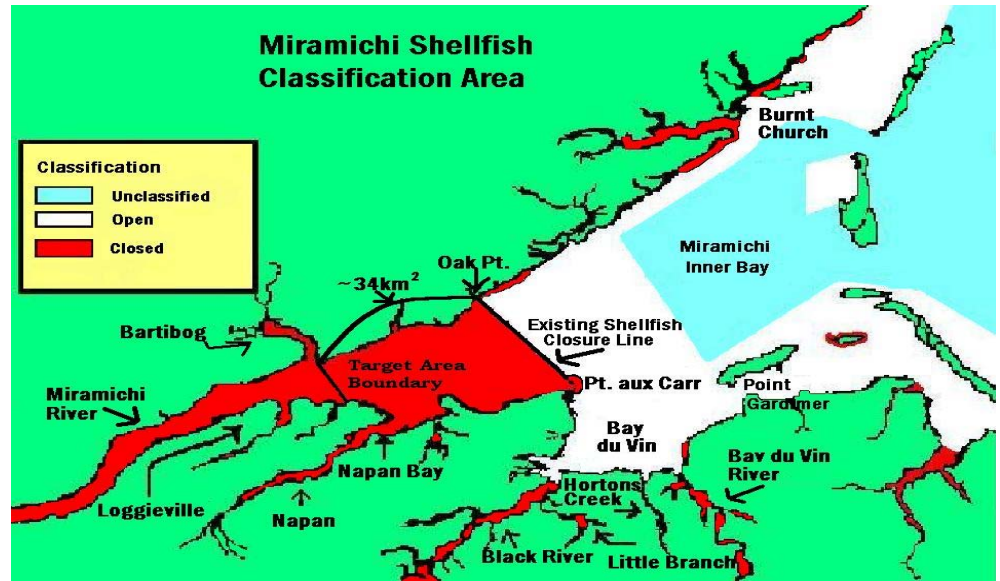


In October 2000, the Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee hosted the Atlantic Canada Climate Change Workshop – A Community Forecast. In targeting communities throughout the region, the 147 delegates returned home better prepared to advance environmental and sustainable development initiatives in anticipation of climate change within their watersheds and coastal communities. The agenda developed the science, adaptation and mitigation of climate change. Opportunities for community-based actions were featured highlighting existing regional initiatives and other success stories.

For workshop proceedings check out the web site at:
http://www.alt.ec.gc.ca/community/acap/index_e.html

Miramichi Sanitary Shellfish Project

Water quality problems are expressed in the current location of the shellfish closure line from Oak Point to Point aux Carr on the Miramichi estuary and extending upriver from this line. MREAC identified this issue in 1992 and has now developed a strategy to address the problem with the intent of opening up 34 square kilometers of now closed shellfish growing area. The economic benefits of opening formerly closed shellfish areas will far outweigh the investment of time and resources. Water quality standards for shellfish are understandably rigorous due to the health and safety issues associated with them. The current closed area on the Miramichi limits economic activity in a



potentially valuable resource sector. Within this program, MREAC will assist with the reduction of bacteriological impacts from the agricultural, rural and municipal sources of contamination. With preliminary assessment work in hand, the follow-up remediation of point source discharges will hopefully result in the relocation of this line as an indicator of improved water quality.

Derelict Vehicle Program



Derelict Vehicle

This year the New Brunswick Department of Environment and Local Government is conducting a derelict vehicle removal program on the Miramichi.

The Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee is assisting in the removal of these vehicles. If you have any vehicles that would qualify as derelict or

know where such vehicles are located, give us a call and we will be happy to come and assess them for possible removal.

There are no monies paid to the owners of these vehicles; just the satisfaction in knowing that these vehicles will be removed free of charge and recycled.

Cave-In Project

The Little Southwest Miramichi River is one of the most beautiful and pristine tributaries of the Miramichi River. It offers a wide range of human (cultural) heritage, natural heritage and recreational values.

A longstanding problem with the Little Southwest Miramichi has been a site known as the “Cave-In”. This site is found approximately nine kilometers upstream of the river’s mouth adjacent to the community of Matthews Settlement. The problem was the erosion of a bank of fine clay/silt that discolors the river and smothers the river’s bottom, destroying fish and benthic habitat.



Problems at the “Cave-In” began in the 1830s as mill boggan was re-routed to provide more water to a sawmill. With the complex forces of river hydrology, the river soon carved its way into this hand-dug channel. During subsequent decades the river continued to erode the clay filled banks of the Little Southwest Miramichi.

Despite many attempts to restore the “Cave-In”, it wasn’t until 2000 that a successful partnership was formed to remediate this site. The partnership included the Miramichi River Environmental Assessment Committee (MREAC), Atcon Construction Inc., and Wood River Enhancement.

MREAC was the coordinator and administrator of the project. Ten thousand dollars was secured for the surveying of the site in 1997.

In 1998, Wood River Enhancement volunteered their services in designing the river restoration work to be carried out. They also received insight for the design from Dr. Robert Newbury, a world-renowned hydrologist and Mr. Denis Hache of the Department of Fisheries & Oceans.



The largest stumbling block to this project was the overall cost, estimated to be \$ 250,000 - \$ 300,000. Fifty thousand dollars was awarded to the project through the Environmental Trust Fund. Atcon Construction Inc. donated the remainder in the form of labor and heavy equipment.

The project was attempted in the winter of 1999 but the D-10 bulldozer was of little use in this harsh environment. The project was thus delayed until the summer of 2000.

Overall, the restoration project took the entire month of August. A stretch of 350 meters of the river was remediated and at one point shifted over 50 meters towards the original channel. Five thousand tons of armour stone was used as deflectors, riffles and berms while an estimated 10,000 tons of granular material was used as backfill.

Following the first ice flow after restoration, the site remains in excellent condition. There are no signs of the clay/silt in the river, all the armour stone remained in its original position and there was only a slight loss of granular material.

This summer (2001) MREAC is planning a re-vegetation phase of the site in hopes of stabilizing the banks while providing shade to the river and improving aesthetics.



Remediated Cave In Site after spring ice flow

Programs 2001/2002

River Watch Air Watch

The River/Air Watch has been operative since 1993. This program allows concerned citizens to contact MREAC if they see anything that concerns them about the environmental health of the Miramichi region. Calls are confidential and the concerned party will be kept informed of the resulting actions. The toll free # is 1-800-56RIVER and the local number is 778-8591.

Watershed Mapping

Watershed mapping applies to all of MREAC's field related programs. With greater use of Geographical Positioning System (GPS) technology, MREAC has a greater need to incorporate the Geographic Information System (GIS) computer mapping tool within the organization. GIS is of tremendous assistance for all our programs as a visual aid especially in public presentations.

Fish Habitat Protection

MREAC is continuously involved in specific issues of fish and shellfish habitat on the Miramichi watershed and estuary. Four areas of interest and involvement that will be pursued in the next year are the stabilization and monitoring of the newly remediated Cave In site, work on Stripped Bass initiatives on the Northwest Miramichi river, continued involvement in the dredging operations due to historical data on contamination in sediment, and monitoring potential consequences of stream flow siltation which can be damaging to fish habitat and the benthic environment.

Sub Watershed Monitoring

Since 1997 MREAC has selected a sub watershed from the Miramichi to determine the water quality. This is completed by a combination of many factors including water sampling and benthic invertebrate sampling. This year MREAC will be looking at the Bartholomew River and the Cains River to determine the overall water quality of the sub watershed. Advanced monitoring will take place on the Napan watershed.



(MREAC Staff water sampling)

Site Environmental Management Plans

MREAC undertook this program from 1995 through 2001. As a result there are now 32 small to medium size businesses on the Miramichi with Environmental Management Plans (EMPs). MREAC will now continue this program in a maintenance mode, following up with support for the implementation of existing plans.

Swim Watch

MREAC, in partnership with the Department of Health and Wellness, samples 21 different beaches and swimming holes on the Miramichi watershed for bacteriological contamination. This program provides insight on recreational water quality. For further information contact MREAC.

Climate Change and Air Quality

We are continuing to operate the Air Watch Program in association with River Watch. In addition to this ongoing program we are working in cooperation with NBLung, EC, and NBDOE to promote improved wood burning technology on the Miramichi.

Environmental Monitoring and Research

MREAC continues to play a role in coordinating, monitoring and promoting Miramichi watershed based science as it applies to the environmental needs of the Miramichi. MREAC recruits monthly speakers, mostly from the scientific community, to address and inform the committee at our monthly meetings. MREAC will be hosting its annual Miramichi Science Day in the fall of 2001 to showcase current activities on the Miramichi watershed.

Waste Stream Management (Industrial, Municipal, Rural, and Agricultural)

MREAC works closely with local industries, municipalities, governmental departments and local residents to move towards eliminating or aiding in the improvement of the management of discharges in order to meet environmental standards and to improve or maintain the health of the watershed. Within these partnerships MREAC continues to monitor these sites for problems and search for ways to improve them through education, partnerships, and technology.

Community Land Use Planning

MREAC attempts to take a proactive approach to community and land use planning issues as these pertain to land use developments and their environmental impacts at a local or watershed level.

Sanitary Shellfish Project

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Funding Sources



Environment Canada

Environnement Canada

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