

Chemical spill in Rabbit Bay tributary receives swift and thorough response from authorities

In late September there was a chemical spill associated with the highway improvement work on Hwy. 35, resulting in toxins being released into the creek that feeds into Lake of Bays at the Rabbit Bay landing. Aecon has the contract for the roadwork but one of its subs was actually responsible for the spill.

These toxins have had an adverse effect on water quality in the creek and particularly on soils; tests are ongoing to determine the nature and extent of the damage and remediation is planned.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and the Department of Fisheries (DFO) have been actively involved in assessing the damage caused by the spill and designing appropriate rehabilitation measures, including replacing contaminated soil and sections of stream bed, adding fish ponds and even a fish ladder towards the highway to assist trout with re-establishing themselves well in this habitat.

The spill is unfortunate in that it has certainly contaminated the stream and did kill a few fish but, given that it happened, the situation appears to be well-handled...

- preventative measures, combined with low suspension rates for the toxins, have resulted in no or negligible contamination entering Rabbit Bay (and note that the Lake of Bays Association will monitor this through its water quality testing program)
- the MNR and DFO have worked quickly to assess the damage and to design an effective rehabilitation strategy for the creek and its trout population
- the work done by the Andrew Daniels Fish Stewardship Program (and supported by the Lake of Bays Association) to rehabilitate the trout habitat in the section of stream adjacent to the landing will be repaired and even improved upon
- the situation is being directly monitored by ADFSP and the Lake of Bays Association and we are all very fortunate that the landowner adjacent to the Rabbit Bay Landing (and creek) is closely monitoring the situation and is reporting to both the Association and ADFSP

The chemical spill is bad news but ... lake water appears to not have been impacted, the situation is being dealt with and the prognosis is for complete recovery of the fish habitat ... all good news.

Reported by the Lake of Bays Association Environment Committee