

# Sauble Wells Clean

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By Rob Gowan

A pollution study in Sauble Beach has found no evidence of widespread pollution of the community's wells and is enough to convince at least one councillor that water and sewer services aren't needed in the community for environmental reasons.

"Environmentally, in my opinion, we do not need water and sewers in Sauble Beach at this point in time, based on what I have seen back from the test results," said Coun. Jay Kirkland, who also sat on the Sauble water and sewer report ad hoc committee.

The study was carried out after South Bruce Peninsula established the committee to gather information to help council determine if sewers are needed at Sauble Beach. It was started after council received an environmental study report about a proposed Sauble sewer project from consultant Genivar more than two years ago.

The pollution study covered an area identified in what is known as Option 5A in the environmental study report, completed in 2010 for the last council, which would see the town begin with a \$27.8 million sewer system that would serve 719 lots. The system would expand over three subsequent phases to eventually service 2,435 lots.

Hutchinson Environmental Services Ltd., which conducted the latest study, carried out tests in August and September. A total of 100 wells were sampled, as were shallow groundwater and surface water in the beach drains. Surface water samples from Lake Huron and at the mouth of the Sauble River were taken as well. Of the 100 wells sampled, E. coli bacteria were detected in two, "and these were present at a very low level," according to a summary of the report. Caffeine, which indicates the presence of dissolved sewage-related compounds, was detected in one well, but bacteria was not detected in that well.

The committee "definitely wanted to look at whether there was an environmental need and whether our below the surface water was (contaminated) or whether there was a problem and so far the study has come back that things are looking pretty good at Sauble Beach, which is nice to know," said Kirkland. "We didn't know that in the past and now we do, that the water table water at that point in time is looking pretty good."

Kirkland said the beach drain results are more concerning.

According to the study summary, shallow groundwater in the beach drains contained measurable concentrations of caffeine, but no E. coli bacteria. Surface water in the beach drains contained both caffeine and E. coli bacteria. The presence of caffeine suggests that the water in the beach drains has been in contact with human sewage effluent. Potential sources of the E. coli include bacteria brought to the beach through surface runoff from storm water, non-human sources such as pets or waterfowl or from Lake Huron wave action, the report states.

"The storm drains coming down from all the properties, we had some bad tests in the ditch runoff," said Kirkland. "That is something we don't want to turn a blind eye to, that is public safety. I think we should be trying to find out where that is coming from."

The ad hoc committee made six recommendations to council based on the pollution study and on Tuesday council went through the recommendations and decided how they wanted to proceed on them.

One of the recommendations was that the town continue with a septic reinspection program. Inspections are to begin elsewhere in South Bruce Peninsula later this year.

Recommendations that the town begin an aggressive septic system and home water treatment education program, that the town sample the beach drains for DNA to determine if the bacteria is human or animal and the town look for ways to manage storm water at the beach were sent back to staff for more information. Council wants more details on the the work required and the cost to do the work.

Recommendations that the town continue to work with the Grey Bruce Health Unit to monitor water test results both from private wells and beach seeps and that the town approach Saugeen First Nation to determine if they would be willing to participate in water testing and the ongoing monitoring of water test results are both recommendations town officials plan to move forward on. They intend to meet with the health unit and ask Saugeen First Nation to participate.

"This committee was set forth to give council an aid for making a decision," said Kirkland. "I think they have given a big bonus and help on the work they have done in telling us whether we do or don't (need sewers)."

Now that the pollution study and recommendations from it have been received, the town still must decide how it wants to proceed in regards to sewers at Sauble Beach. The Sauble environmental study report was on the agenda for discussion on Tuesday, but council deferred making any decisions on how to proceed until Coun. Janice Jackson, who was absent from Tuesday's meeting, is present. The matter is expected to be back before council at its next meeting on Feb. 5.