



June 9, 2016

Property Inquiry Services

In the agenda package you will find a Property Inquiry Form. This is a new form that we have introduced to better assist landowners, potential landowners and/or their agents (real estate agents or contractors) with their inquiries on specific properties. We are frequently inundated with requests for information on properties as it pertains to our watershed jurisdiction, regulated area and our policies. The information we provide is useful in decision making and future planning to the interested parties. We were however looking for a more efficient and documented method of dealing with these inquiries.

To that end we researched the methodology of other Conservation Authorities to deal with this situation and discovered that the majority of them had a “Property Inquiry Service” listed on their website. The service consists of a form that is filled out by an individual interested in a property for any number of reasons. The form allows the individual to describe the property, what features are on it or near it and then give details on a project they are interested in or ask questions about the property and what, if any, regulatory restrictions there may be as a result of O.Reg 159/06. The form is submitted to the CA who then is able to respond to it appropriately with an individualized reply specific to the questions or projects that were laid out on the form. The service provides landowners with a written answer to their queries and allows the CA to manage their time more efficiently by setting aside their own staff time to handle the volume of responses. Most importantly, the service allows for inquiries to be tracked which leads to a myriad of benefits for the CA. Aside from measuring the volume of inquiries we will now also be able to see how many inquiries turn into permit applications. We will be able to recognize repeat questions from individuals and potentially create a more effective communication plan for our Regulations and Planning Program. The service also creates consistency to our responses and ensures that each inquiry is given the appropriate amount of information in a response and also that the same information is given if there are multiple inquiries on a single property. We anticipate that while there may be some bumps at the initiation of this service, particularly from individuals who are used to getting “on the spot” information, we believe this service will be a beneficial addition to our programs and to the workload management of staff.

It is important to note that every Conservation Authority that offers this service has fees associated with the response to varying degrees. We are not proposing any fees at this time. The intent of the service is to provide individuals with an avenue to ask questions while ensuring that staff can work efficiently.

This service is NOT for individuals who have been sent to us by a Municipality after they have been “pre-screened” and determined to be in or near our regulated area. Very often individuals meet with Municipal staff to submit a Building Permit Application and are informed that they should contact us for a permit as well. These people will not be directed to the form, they will be dealt with immediately and directed to our permit application process. As these are individuals who have been made aware of our regulatory area and have a project planned there is no need to put them through an unnecessary inquiry process.
