

Sandy Lake, Manitoba  
R0J 1X0

January 3, 2016 *BW*

Mr. Bruce Webb, Environmental Engineer  
Environmental Approval Branch  
Conservation & Water Stewardship  
123 Main Street, Suite 160  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3C 1A5



Dear Mr. Webb,

Re: RM Harrison Park Sandy Lake Water Level Control Project - File 5804.00

Having read the above several times, I am flabbergasted that it represents an acceptable level of professionalism for a proposal being put forward to a provincial government licensing department. One only needs to check out [http://cripe.civil.ualberta.ca/Downloads/17th\\_Workshop/Lindenschmidt-et-al-2013.pdf](http://cripe.civil.ualberta.ca/Downloads/17th_Workshop/Lindenschmidt-et-al-2013.pdf) to realize how weak this Sandy Lake Water Control Project proposal actually is.

In my personal opinion, this proposal rather than presenting "technical information" is a load of bull-pucky riddled with faulty logic, inconsistencies, personal opinion masquerading as fact and out-and-out disregard for concerns identified by both the Federal and Provincial governments and Ducks Unlimited. Unfortunately for you and whoever else has to read this letter, I intend to point out in painful detail the concerns I have with the information presented in this proposal.

I would like to make it perfectly clear that I'm not writing this to insult your intelligence; I'm certain that all of these points have already occurred to you. Knowing as I do though the approval process behind proposals like this, government hands may be tied during decision-making if they do not receive written feedback from the general public.

I will also point out that while I am not directly affected by the project, the implications of what at first glance seems to be a "minor" project could have far-reaching ramifications for the entire western & southwestern regions of Manitoba, implications which both RM Harrison Park and G.D. Newton & Associates have effectively brushed aside in this proposal.

Where oh where to begin?

1) THE OVERALL LOGIC (OR LACK THEREOF) BEHIND THIS PROPOSAL

- a) *"It is proposed that a historical outlet from the Lake be RE-OPENED to allow regular outflow from the Lake*

*(page 2, Executive summary)*

*"The EXISTING 600mm CMP is proposed to be replaced with a 120mm x 600mm concrete box culvert"*

*(page 5)*

I'm confused. Is this proposal talking about a project where the EXISTING "temporary outlet" (paragraph 2, page 5) is to be upgraded or is this proposal about a completely different scenario where a separate, "historical" outlet is re-opened? I am assuming that this historical outlet is a totally different scenario than the upgrading the present culvert because the proposal talks about an outlet being RE-OPENED. Which is it, an existing culvert or a totally different "historical outlet"? Council can't just throw out a blanket application and hope that it slips by the review process so they can do whatever they want.

- b) *"The effect on the cabins (especially on the east side of Sandy Lake) is the PRIMARY DRIVER for initiating the*

*request to lower the water levels" (p. 4)*

Basically Council is trying to shut up what I estimate to be not more than 10-12 cabin owners. They are definitely NOT doing this for the benefit of the majority of Sandy Lake cabin owners around the lake. As I personally know, Council through the decades has repeatedly tried to push through questionable proposals that benefit only a few people namely their friends, buddies, relatives or whoever can squawk the loudest. (see my personal experience with Council's "logic" in the Managing + Operating section below)

- c) *"The effect of high water on the main pier has rendered it unusable. Since 2011, the pier has been under water for a majority of the time"*

Is a pier being under water for 4 years a strong enough reason to start tinkering with the water levels on the lake, directly affecting downstream drainage? This is "NIMBY" (Not in My Back Yard) to an entirely new and creative, deliberately blinkered level i.e. *"let's save a few cabins on Sandy Lake from high water damage while sending the excess water into someone else's land where we can't see any adverse affects"* I'm astonished that such a weak reason would be presented to justify this proposed project. A new pier is ready to be launched in 2016 and I can only hope that Council exercised even an iota of common sense when designing it and concluded that it's far more cost effective and far less environmentally damaging to be able to MOVE THE DAMNED PIER.

- d) *"Lowering the water level is intended to prevent damage to the cabins AROUND the lake and restore a portion of the previous beach area in front of cabins" (p. 4)*

- It is inconsistent for Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. to say in paragraphs 1 & 2 on page 4 that it's cabins on the east side of Sandy Lake driving this proposal and then in paragraph 5 on the same page to say this proposal is for ALL cabins around the lake. With the exception of the cabins on that afore mentioned east side of Sandy lake, the majority of cabins are well back from the high water mark, many cabins even protected by a town road between the cabin & the lake. I know this because I had the unenviable job to enumerate the cottages stretching west from the Sandy Lake Golf Course straight around the lake to the development on the NW side of the lake for the 2006 Census. There are a LOT of stairs separating many of those cabins from the waterfront.

This proposal does not give factual evidence about how many cabins on the shoreline of Sandy Lake are being affected by high water levels and what percentage this is of all the cabins around the lake. In my opinion, the structural integrity of the majority of cabins around the lake is not being affected by high water levels. It is a minority (~10-12 cabins) on the east side which were built either before stringent regulations regarding the placement of buildings above the high water mark on the lake were in effect or by people who didn't give a damn about high water marks/ levels because they wanted to be right next to the lakeshore.

- Prior to the former South Riding Mountain Development District being in place, I suspect that inspection of new structures was difficult to keep up with. Now that SRMPD is no more, the field is wide open for the unauthorized construction of structures on Sandy Lake's shoreline. Neither RM Council nor cabin owners can be relied upon to follow the government rules. Council has proven on at least three past occasions that they are more-than-willing to turn a blind eye to a *fait accompli* erection of a structure or development without planning approval.
  - i) a garage (Yarushki??) knowingly built without proper planning approval that infringes on a town road. One Council took the matter to court & was close to winning when a municipal election was held. The new council including some of those who have "graduated" to the amalgamated RM, dropped the entire issue and allowed it to be "legalized".
  - ii) The Last Resort Campground which didn't have a Conditional Use permit issued at the beginning (2010?) and has now illegally blossomed to 50 sites when only 28 sites were planned for. As well, the owner filled in a swamp, built a road and installed a culvert all without permission. All was "legalized" by Council.
- It is also inconsistent that these cabin owners on the east side of Sandy Lake who are identified as the "primary drivers" behind this 2015 proposal are also the SAME cabin owners several years ago who fought tooth and nail when Jack Burton, owner of the Sandy Lake Golf Course, proposed

drawing water from Sandy Lake to irrigate the golf course. Their reason???? The level of the lake would drop drastically because of what the cabin owners "thought" would be a significant amount of water being used to irrigate the golf course. There would be TOO MUCH beach area in front of their cabins.

They can't have it both ways; are they to be allowed to pick and choose just how much beachfront they have?

d) Are boat sheds/sheds/unknown structures as shown in the photos appended to the proposal even allowed along the shoreline?? If they are so heavily damaged as to be unusable, do present regulations allow a replacement structure to be placed in the same location?

## 2) WATER FLUCTUATIONS

*"There is no data available regarding water level fluctuations for Sandy Lake"*

*"It is believed that the variations in water levels for Thomas Lake provide a good indication of.... In recent years"*

I do not deny that even based on my personal observations, water table levels are at a significantly higher level than I have seen in 15 years. The movie title "A River Runs Through" takes on a whole new meaning in our 68-year-old house situated on much higher ground than the nearby lake. Lacking a sump pit, tendrils of water slither west to east across the concrete basement floor in a wet summer.

What I AM saying is that for a proposal being submitted to MCWS licensing department, fact-based evidence, such as static water levels in wells in Sandy Lake area, should be used to bolster the proposal not:

a) questionably accurate data from Thomas Lake which is in a different drainage sub-basin with possibly different environmental / ecological features

Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. made NO effort to compare the two drainage basins therefore everything in this proposal about water fluctuation is THEIR personal opinion/conclusion; this opinion is based not on reliable data based on day-to-day observation (i.e. government "historical high water" information) but on readings taken at "varying intervals" and which are incomplete.

b) a "description" by (i.e. the personal opinions of) the Municipal Council that the long term average level is about 4" below the top of the pier and that this is now being exceeded hence the proposal?

- Isn't it a conflict of interest for Councilors to use their own personal opinions to bolster their proposal which they very much want to go forward?
- there's NO indication how many years the "long term average" described by Council actually encompasses; there is absolutely NO indication how frequently measurements were taken and with what tools. Someone going out onto the pier with a tape measure after a heavy rain just does not cut it for reliable data on which to base a proposal such as this.

THIS then is the basis for this proposal meant to control water levels on Sandy Lake with it's accompanying environmental & downstream drainage implications: personal opinion and unscientific data collection plus coffee shop talk????

"Believed" is not good enough. Factual data including, but not limited to, the following should be used to make any conclusions about how the water level in Sandy Lake is managed:

- Why didn't Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. use data on the static water level in wells around Sandy Lake?
- What about Environment Canada records of precipitation for the area? I took readings for Environment Canada for decades so the data IS there. ([www.climate.weatheroffice.gc.ca](http://www.climate.weatheroffice.gc.ca))
- Satellite imagery, RADARSAT standard images, co-polarization data etc. etc. could have been used to factually back-up information in this proposal (Canada Centre Remote Sensing C-Core ([www.c-core.ca](http://www.c-core.ca)))
- Why wasn't gauge data from river/stream monitoring stations in Manitoba used (see some link below) There IS archived data for the Little Saskatchewan River, Minnedosa, Rivers etc to access

real-time and historical data on discharge rates, snow depth, redundant water level, provisional water level, water velocity etc. on monitored rivers in Manitoba.

Granted, it would involve some actual thinking to interpret the data however, an interpretation of scientific data which has been collected on a long-term, continuous basis by people who do so to a certain constant standard far better than data that is "believed" to validate a point in a proposal like this or has been "described" by Municipal Council.

Source data could be drawn from:

- a) Manitoba Hydro ([www.hydro.mb.ca/hydrologicalData/static](http://www.hydro.mb.ca/hydrologicalData/static) )
  - b) Environment Canada Water Office. ([www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/search/searchResult-e.html05MF001](http://www.wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/search/searchResult-e.html05MF001)), and check stations such as 5MF018, o5MG004 for information)
  - c) Environment Canada ([www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/search/searchRealtime-e.html](http://www.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/search/searchRealtime-e.html))
  - d) Water Survey of Canada (<http://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca>) has a wealth of real-time & historical data
  - e) Manitoba Government hydrologic forecasting centre - [www.gov.mb.ca/floodinfo/floodoutlook/river\\_conditions.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/floodinfo/floodoutlook/river_conditions.html)
- What about how winter snow pack levels in the area affect water fluctuations; data is available from the Water Survey of Canada? ([http://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/search/searchResult\\_e.html](http://wateroffice.ec.gc.ca/search/searchResult_e.html) = Little Saskatchewan River)
  - There is **TREE RING** data for heaven's sake from across the Prairies outlining hydroclimate in the province from as far back as 1409 A.D. (<http://ion.uwinnipeg.ca/~itardif/IMAGES/2009St.%20George%20Journal%20of%20Climate.pdf> )  
& [www.manitoba.ca/iem/geo/oflood/p\\_pdfs/hydroclimaticchange.pdf](http://www.manitoba.ca/iem/geo/oflood/p_pdfs/hydroclimaticchange.pdf))
  - Are both Sandy Lake and Thomas Lake dependent solely on runoff to maintain levels or are there springs which might feed the lakes?

"believe" and "described" just don't cut it. There's enough research on the Internet for Sarah Santiago to have researched water fluctuations so that a factual conclusion could be reached.

### 3) RUNOFF BASIN

*"The hydrology of the recharge of Sandy Lake has not been studied in a detailed manner"*

*"Underground recharge of the lake has not been reviewed"*

In other words, there is NO factual scientific research / evidence upon which Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. is basing her conclusions. WHAT exactly is there to show that this control gate is actually needed?

### 4) MANAGING & OPERATION OF PROPOSED GATE (just hang on a sec while I stop chortling...)

Some background here from on how Council works (personal experience & from RM Minutes

**Example 1:** In 2012 Larry Andreychuk proposed a 26-cottage development on Little Jackfish Lake. Aside from the fact that Little Jackfish Lake is a eutrophic lake (not an ideal area to situate cottages), the 26-cottage development proposal would have entailed taking about ¾ section of Class 4 agricultural land out of production. Council did NO due diligence and happily rubber-stamped Mr. Andreychuk's proposal through to the Planning District.

I happen to live on the north side of Little Jackfish Lake. I DID do my research including cross-referencing The South Riding Mountain Planning District plan and the Provincial Planning Act. At the public hearing I stood up and told them that the proposed cottage development blatantly violated more than 25 agricultural regulations and about 20 environment regulations.

My presentation was basically trying to educate the South Riding Mountain Planning District Board on what their own development plan said by going down the 25 agricultural violations. At violation #3, I realized that feathers were flying at the head table. I actually **HEARD** one of the RM Harrison councilors say to the

Board member next to them: “Where the HELL is she getting this from?” They didn’t even know what their own damned local planning document said!

**Example 2:** A number of years ago when the farmer owning land immediately adjacent to the north boundary of our property wanted better access to his fields, Council was out there with equipment building a new access road when I came out and asked what the hell they were doing digging on OUR LAND?? The Council of the time hadn’t even bothered to check property plans etc. but just went ahead constructing an access road on the basis of what the OTHER land-owner said. Enough said.

**Example 3:** In 2014, the September 10th RM minutes there was a public hearing about Kevin Lloy’s The Last Resort Campground within Sandy Lake. Phase I of the development was supposed to have up to 28 sites. It turned out that the LRC didn’t get a conditional use permit in 2010 to even start building. NOW the Campground has FIFTY sites. As well, Mr. Lloy took out trees and filled in a swamp WITHOUT permission to build a road. October 8, 2014 minutes show that Kevin Lloy didn’t think he was doing anything wrong and that he didn’t fill in any sloughs. He put in almost TWICE the number of sites that the original development plan was for and yet on November 5, 2014 Council passed No. 347-2014 which spinelessly accepted everything Mr. Lloy had done; Council legalized a *fait accompli* rather than being proactive and make an example of this kind of flaunting of regulations. Somewhere along the line this Council should be taking a stand on the way people in the area thumb their noses at the regulations.

**Example 4:** In the summer of 2015, Council “relocated” sections of Beach Road (behind a block of cabins). Speculation is rampant among the cottagers affected whether Council obtained the proper permits to build a new road and place culverts. Cottagers have told me that the new road was built on an inadequately prepared base to the extent that uprooted trees and shrubs were allegedly buried in the base and then covered over with fill and packed down. New culverts were dug in with seemingly little concern as to where exactly the water being discharged was going. In at least one case, on its uncontrolled race to the lake, runoff rapidly drained straight towards one cabin. The culvert was allegedly moved and now is causing problems elsewhere.

- Do you actually believe that the RM Councilors who don’t even know what their own development plan said, much less what any other provincial regulations might say, have the qualifications or ability to assess on a fact- and provincial regulation-based level when the control gate should or should not be used?
- Do you expect me to naively assume that, if left in charge of the proposed control gate, this same Council that readily agrees this proposal being submitted is in direct response to the “primary driver” of 10 or 12 cabin owners on the east end of Sandy lake, will NOT hop to the bidding of these same cabin owners who complain in future about lake levels i.e. that the control of Sandy lake water levels will NOT be done to please a minority???
- Am I to accept that Sandy Lake water levels are to be managed not in accordance with provincial regulations or any factual data but on the questionable standard of how far below the top of the main pier the lake level is? A more concrete reference point for measuring lake level fluctuations is needed than where the lake level is in relation to the top of the main pier.

Far more reliable, fact-based data IS available as I pointed out on page 4 above. Do you really think Council will actually bother to spend time accessing & analyzing such resources as I’ve listed above to reach a decision on how to control the gate?

My name may be “Virginia” but I don’t believe in Santa Claus, space aliens, Easter Bunnies nor in the ethical standards of Council to use reasonable data to manage the proposed control gate. They frequently don’t bother to do their due diligence beforehand and once their mistake is pointed out to them, they pass a motion to make their actions retroactively legal.

**The following to me shows that Council has no understanding of provincial regulations and how to apply them**

- a) The proposal indicates that the culvert can only be open on a month-to-month basis. July 3, 2014 (Motion 186/2014) Council declared a State of Local Emergency which allowed Council to manage the present control gate on a temporary basis (July 3, 2014 to August 3, 2014). However, there is NO motion in the minutes for August, September, October, November, December 2014 to allow Council

to keep the control gate open. It should have been CLOSED unless otherwise moved by Council. Fast-forward to May 12, 2015. Motion 172/2015 would lead one to the logical conclusion that the control gate was left open throughout the winter of 2014, which, without appropriate motions, is technically ILLEGAL without a proper motion.

All is well with Council making motions to keep the State of Local Emergency/managing the control gate active for another 30 days in May of 2015 (motion 172/2015), June 2015 (motion 207/2015), July 2015 (motion 246/2015) and August 2015 (Motion 263/2015).

In September 2015 Council "discussed" the termination of the State of Local Emergency but NO motion was passed to either extend the SLE for another 30 days or to declare the SLE over.

This illegal situation continues with no motion pro or con re: continuing the SLE in the RM minutes from September, October, November, December 2015.

- Council was in contravention of Provincial regulations in the winter of 2014 and is still in non-compliance with Provincial regulations through (so far) December 2015.

Given the Council's above track record on "managing" the control gate in 2014 through 2015, do you really expect me to think that they have the competence to monitor a new-and-improved culvert/control gate following Provincial regulations????

- Where is there ANY data presented in this proposal that shows the State of Local Emergency should have lasted not just mere MONTHS but from one year to the next over winter? How can anyone have confidence that Council has any justification for a new & improved control gate system and is not just using the high water levels of 2011 as an excuse to pacify certain cabin owners?
- How come in the annual review that MCWS is supposed to have done was the fact that Council is misusing it's powers under the State of Local Emergency and managing of the water control gate not picked up? Who is watching the watchers?

Having RM Harrison Park Council managing the control gate is akin to letting the fox manage the hen house.

## 5) INVASIVE SPECIES (like zebra mussels)

THE one and only creditable data source cited in this proposal, Bruno Bruerderlin, a Regional Fisheries Biologist for MCWS, is quoted as saying the following (and I sincerely hope his comments were taken completely out of context!):

*"According to Bruno, there are no known invasive species found in Sandy Lake or the Little Saskatchewan River so there are no threats of transferring species from one body of water to another as a result of re-opening the Sandy Lake outlet" (page 11)*

HELLO? Just because there are no invasive species **NOW** in Sandy Lake doesn't mean that in **FUTURE** an invasive species like zebra mussels can't spread into the lake! Page 37 of MCWS's own publication "Manitoba Water Protection Handbook: Everyone's Responsibility" states a survey conducted at border crossings showed that 93% of vehicles with boats come from places with zebra mussels. **93%!!** Zebra mussel larvae are not visible to the naked eye and can survive in very little water for 12 days or longer. As of 2013, they're already in Lake Winnipeg so there is a **high risk** that they will spread to other Manitoba lakes including Sandy Lake.

If zebra mussels are such a non-threat, why does Riding Mountain National Park have an extensive public education program on this invasive species including a newly built wash-down + inspection station? Why has the Province of Manitoba spent a significant amount of money to halt the spread of zebra mussels if they are a non-threat? Could it be because both the federal and provincial levels of government feel zebra mussels pose a creditable threat?

The RM wants to be able to manage the proposed control gate to, among other things, enhance recreational activities (like fishing) on Sandy Lake. However, based on no factual data, Council "believes" that there will be no future problems with invasive species (and downstream drainage, riparian zones etc.) In the Great Lakes, zebra mussels have caused millions of dollars damage including severely reducing recreational activities on the Lakes. Zebra mussels are an invasive species that could wreak havoc not only with the recreational-economic system driving Sandy Lake's economy but also with

the entire Little Saskatchewan River watershed and beyond past Brandon. (see Figure 3 below which shows the scope of the LSR watershed - all the way to Brandon)

For Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. to say (and for RM Harrison Park to sign off on this idea) that an invasive species like zebra mussels is not a threat because they are not YET present in Sandy Lake is criminally irresponsible.

**From: Little Saskatchewan River Integrated Water Management Plan (page 5)**

[http://gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/questionnaires/surface\\_water\\_management/pdf/connected\\_docs/lsr\\_iwmp.pdf](http://gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/questionnaires/surface_water_management/pdf/connected_docs/lsr_iwmp.pdf)

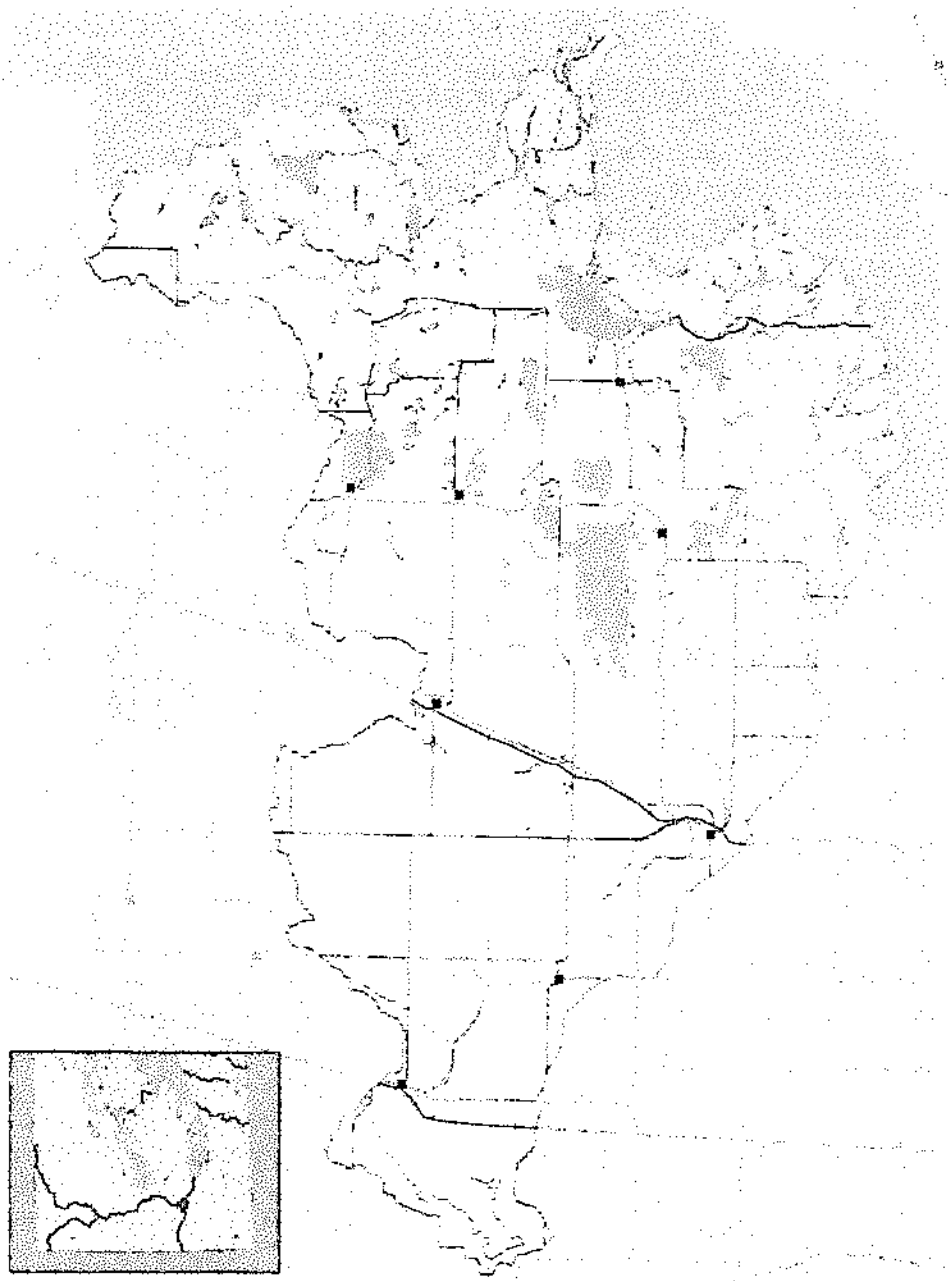


Figure 3 - Little Saskatchewan River Watershed

#### 6) HERON ROOKERY

Ah-h-h... the heron rookery, yet another “done deal”, boondoggle cottage project that Council (i.e. Doreen Stapleton) tried to push through in 2014 without doing any due diligence. Council was stopped cold in their tracks when concerned Sandy Lake citizens were able to prove that the heron rookery located smack

in the middle of the proposed cottage development would be negatively affected by development. Steps are being taken to protect the rookery.

Does Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. even **know** about the heron rookery because this proposal does **not** touch upon what impact hydrological manipulation might have on the rookery?

I did some research and found that fluctuating water levels may:

- Disturb heron nests on the shoreline and/or change nesting habits. Herons depend on relatively undisturbed sites for breeding.
- Reduce heron reproductive success thus causing smaller population sizes
- Destroy habitat or food sources
- Reduce the amount of time the herons spend at feeding areas and/or cause changes in their feeding & foraging behaviours
- Cause them to abandon the rookery entirely

Before any channel modification etc. is started or a new control gate installed, a baseline environmental impact study should be done particularly considering the uniqueness of the heron rookery.

And to add the icing to the heron rookery issue and its possible impact on the Sandy Lake Water Level Control Proposal, herons in northeastern US and southern Canada have **benefited** from the **recovery of beaver populations**. So Council should be careful about willy-nilly killing off the beavers that may start building by the culvert and have an approved plan in place that balances the management of the culvert versus the needs of the heron rookery. Might I suggest that RM Council & Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. **consult** with and **listen** to Ducks Unlimited suggestions about how to do this balancing act? Oh but wait.... I forgot: Ducks Unlimited won't touch beaver management of this proposed culvert with a 10-foot pole which is significant in and of itself.

## 7) DOWN STREAM EFFECTS & DRAINAGE ROUTE

- a) *"The downstream culverts may be at risk of becoming overloaded if outflow from Sandy Lake is combined with runoff from major storm events"* (page 7 - Ducks Unlimited concern)

*"... the drainage route should not experience flows that would cause flooding..."* and *"It is believed that the proposed water level control project will have minimal implications on the downstream environment..."* Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. reply to above concern

Ducks Unlimited, the experts on water management in Manitoba, have concerns about this water control project. What are the professional credentials that Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. bring to the argument that qualifies her to present a completely opposite opinion? Is it just a coincidence that Santiago's opinion just happens to be the opinion RM Harrison Park wants to hear?

A study is needed to adequately research this issue before any water level control gate upgrading is allowed.

- a) *"All crossings appear to have adequate capacity"*

*"Appear"* to have adequate capacity does not cut it. This is just the personal opinion of Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc.

- b) *"Alterations to the existing route have not been examined"* (page 9)

Why not? Is there going to be an "oops" moment on Council's part if some alteration of the route downstream has occurred in the past which could cause problems with changes to the culvert as proposed?

- c) *"The issue of how much inflow to Sandy Lake occurs as a result of groundwater has not been studied"*

Why not? That's a vital aspect of managing this proposed control gate.



- d) Whether or not the culvert remains open in winter **could** be an issue:
- If the Council does not make the situation legal by passing monthly resolutions regarding the control gate remaining open. As pointed out above, Council has not made any motions for the control gate to remain open in the winter of 2014 nor (as yet) a motion to keep the control gate open winter 2015.
  - A study is done to determine whether leaving the control gate open in winter has any affect on the fish population in Sandy Lake or (dare I mention it?) on the spread of invasive species like zebra mussels
- e) *“Additional flow along the drainage route from Sandy Lake may cause flooding on adjacent private and agricultural land”*
- From what the proposal says (page 12), only 4 property owners out of 16 affected raised any concerns. What I’d like to know is if ALL 16 property owners along the drainage route signed off on the proposal or was it only Mr. Misanchuk?
  - In particular, has Keeseekoowenin Reserve been specifically consulted because not only are a number of houses on the Reserve alongside the river but also the RM Harrison Park will face a lot of grief if they try to tinker with the drainage and the Reserve has flooding. **Note to Council:** it’s called “Cover Your Butt” people and learn from what happened in the Interlake with the Lake St. Martin Reserve.
- f) Has any research been done to actually show that *“the continuous flow water along the drainage route over extended periods of time”* won’t cause problems like habitat destruction, riparian zone degradation, stream- bed erosion? Or is this pure speculation on the part of Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. ?
- g) This proposal casually mentions the removal of sandbars (page14) as one of many “improvements” to be done on the drainage channel. It has been several decades since I took a geomorphology course so, unlike Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc., I did some research and found out that my memory had been correct on the following points:
- Sandbars continually change shape & location as a river (drainage channel) rises and falls which in turn may change the course of the channel. Has Council even considered that getting rid of sandbars might be a money-consuming dark hole in their budget?
  - Sandbars can play a role in the ecosystem for birds and insects as well as providing feeding areas for fish & other fauna in the eddies the sandbars create. A baseline study needs to be done to identify any ecosystems created by the sandbars on the Beaufort Lake drainage channel before any channel modification is done.
- h) *“...the drainage route has naturally established vegetation along the route that provides protection from erosion due to the flow of water”* (page 14)
- Is this the same vegetation (i.e. black poplar and spruce) the Council proposes to “clean up” in this project because the wetlands are *“not expected to be impacted and were not studied as part of this report”*?
- What will the removal of those black poplar and spruce do to the habitat and erosion of the riparian zone? G.D. Newton & Associate doesn’t bother to provide any concrete data from other areas but merely says that the trees “will be salvaged”. What the heck does that mean?
- i) *“Nutrients and sediments draining to Sandy Lake will be transferred downstream.....and beyond which will will contribute to deteriorating water quality ...”* Ducks Unlimited concern page 13)
- Once again concerns from outsiders are casually brushed off by Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. even though they admit that *“no monitoring has been done to confirm the contaminant levels in Sandy Lake....”*

One only has to look to the Interlake to see the chronic flooding problems occurring downstream from water control structures siphoning water downstream to Lake Winnipeg and Lake. St. Martin (see the

newspaper article at the very end of my letter) Rich hay land is now swampy and once-productive agricultural land has been lost. Houses are condemned and cemeteries unusable. All this because of the PROPER management of the water-control structures combined with unprecedented precipitation. Heaven knows what the scenario would be if our RM Council is left in charge of the proposed water level control gate!


In the past, the RM Harrison has relentlessly pursued a short-sighted, short-term, self-centred attitude in many of the projects they undertake. They frequently don't even do their due diligence to find out what Provincial regulations say. Three of the 6 councilors in RM Harrison Park are the same "full steam ahead and damn the torpedoes, we'll do what we want" Councilors from the former RM Harrison. They did obviously sign off on this sophomoric proposal which presents little if any concrete evidence to validate the need for this water control gate. It appears that they are trying their same mindless tactics with this 2015 water level control project; that same old crap governing method involving skirting of procedure and Provincial Regulations has been carried from the former council to the newly amalgamated council in my opinion.

The entire object of this Sandy Lake Water Level Control project seems to revolve around protecting some cabins on Sandy Lake from damage caused by high water levels on the lake. Council must understand that the water in Sandy Lake needs to be regulated in a way that respects ALL of the other issues which frequently are not directly in Council's backyard instead of just shuffling off the problem downstream for someone else to worry about.

Minimal evidence is presented in this proposal addressing whether the present high water levels are an aberration in the historical climate record or something that is here to stay. There's TREE RING data for crying out loud that could have been used!! Just in case this is not an aberration, and since the proposal itself admits that the "several cabins have had their crawl spaces below the cabins flooded" ( i.e. several cabins are not on permanent foundations) perhaps those among the affected cabin owners who are the "primary drivers" of this proposal should start considering moving their cabins back from the immediate Lake shoreline and not expect Municipal Council to provide the ENTIRE solution to this problem.

As I said at the beginning, this proposal is a bunch of bull-pucky. Sarah Santiago / G.D. Newton & Associates Inc. know exactly which side their bread is buttered on and have submitted a biased report tailored to validate and bolster the wishes of RM Harrison Park that is paying them.

Sincerely,



Virginia Shemeliuk

# Manitoba couple sees dreams washed away

<http://www.producer.com/2014/09/manitoba-couple-sees-dreams-washed-away/>

Posted Sep. 18th, 2014 by [Ed White](#)



Arnthor and Jackie Jonasson haven't been able to pasture their entire cattle herd at home since 2011, when the Manitoba government intentionally flooded farmland along Lake Manitoba. | Ed White photo

## Pastures purposely flooded | After three years of flooding, the couple plans to sell more cattle

SIGLUNES, Man. — Arnthor and Jackie Jonasson both practise meditation and other relaxation techniques. For them, it's a survival strategy because they are sick of being angry all the time.

After three years of having their farm devastated by chronic flooding, and then seeing this year's hoped for return to normal production swept away by another flood, they have forced themselves to enjoy the farming life.

"We didn't decide to put a farm in a bad spot. We picked a good spot. People farmed here for years," said Jackie, whose family has farmed here on the east side of Lake Manitoba for more than a century.

"I'm mad. It's turned into a swamp. And that's not our farm."

The Jonasson farm is one of dozens along the shores of Lake Manitoba intentionally flooded by the Manitoba government. Its decision in 2011 and 2014 to pour vast flows of water north from the Assiniboine River through the Portage Diversion into Lake Manitoba saved thousands of homes east of Portage La Prairie along the Assiniboine, but killed tens of thousands of acres of pasture, swept away fragile soils and caused an exodus of cattle from the once productive area.

The Jonassons have spent about \$120,000 between 2012 and today on buying hay and renting pasture for their refugee cattle.

They are now considering selling cows this winter, reducing herd size to 150 cow-calf pairs from the current 280. That is a 40 cow reduction from 2010.

It's not where the couple wanted to take the family farm.

"It's a beautiful part of the province," said Arnthor, who is descended from the Icelandic settlers who established the first farms in the Interlake region. "It's an ecologically sensitive part of the province. You have to go with the plants that live here. We pride ourselves on being pretty close to nature here."

The couple has four children: Bjorn, 27, Erika, 26, Stefan, 24, and Brynn, 17. They aren't encouraging any of them to come back and take over the farm, even though Bjorn feels honour-bound to keep the family farm going.

"We've always told them, 'get an education, go out and get a life, find your way,'" said Jackie.

"We said 'come back if that's really what you want to do.'"

But with the insecurity due to the repeated intentional flooding of the lake, they don't feel they can recommend a future here. Even if the government builds an exit channel for the excess water being poured down the diversion, it will only operate effectively once the pastures are already covered again.

The land along the lake has always been rich pasture and hay land, with a water table just a couple of feet beneath the surface of the soil supplying moisture for rich crops every summer.

Jackie's father had a city job until she was 13, but her summer holidays were spent at the farm operated by her grandfather, helping with haying. When they then moved onto the farm, she was involved all the time.

Arnthor's family farmed along the shores of the lake too, but further north. The couple both loved the ranch lifestyle.

They have taken great pride in their native prairie pastures and in how they've been able to protect their fragile land.

But that all changed in 2011, when the diversion poured so much water into the lake that it rose many feet, submerging almost all their pastures and hay land for almost a year.

Most of their cattle were evacuated, with some stranded on ridges. Only about 100 cow-calf pairs were able to stay on the farm that year. Some had to be put on pasture four and a half hours away, making it hard to keep them in good condition.

The next year was just as bad. The pastures and hay land were flooded until late winter and the grass died.

In the spring, it was too mushy for an all-terrain vehicle to get across, so it just sat there, drying, as the family paid others for hay and rented pasture.

The situation improved in 2013 and the family started bringing back the cattle. This year began with the land producing thick, lush crops of hay.

But late June-early July flooding along the Assiniboine resulted in the government again opening the diversion's floodgates and flooding their land.

"It doesn't matter if it's covered by four feet or one. It's underwater," said Arnthor.

They expect to produce about 800 bales less than normal this year.

"We aren't 25 any more. We can't bust our butts to get back to normal and have this happen again," said Jackie.

The Jonassons want government to leave lake levels alone and let the water, grass and wildlife return to the natural rhythms that seemed to keep everything in balance for a century.

January 6, 2016

To: bruce.webb@gov.mb.ca

BW

RE: Municipality of Harrison Park – Sandy Lake Water Level Control Project – File: 5804.00

As a cottage owner on Sandy Lake I would like to file an objection to the above proposal based on the information provided in this Notice. I would object that the discharge level stated is based on an arbitrary point of an existing manmade pier, a pier which is in the process of being removed this day (according to verbal information received from the municipal office on Jan 6/15). This pier removal negates the stated reference point and in turn would appear to remove any reference to what the water level in Sandy Lake will be maintained at.

It is assumed that a new pier will be constructed but no information is provided indicating a fixed geological elevation reference, versus an arbitrary pier that can shift or be removed. A fixed geological reference point for the lake level needs to be provided. The basis for this geological reference point needs to have an assessment process that would be based on engineering and environmental assessments as well as a public consultation process before this proposal proceeds and ultimately a fixed water level determined for Sandy Lake.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Brad Kelso

**Webb, Bruce (CWS)**

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**From:** Hfung  
**Sent:** January-07-16 12:41 PM  
**To:** Webb, Bruce (CWS) BW  
**Cc:** Harold Fung  
**Subject:** Sandy lake water level control project.file5804.00

Dear Bruce,

Thank you for being involved and working on the Sandy Lake Water level project. This letter is in support of the environment act proposal re: Sandy Lake Water Level Control Project , file 5804.00.

I own three lakefront properties on the southeast side of Sandy Lake on Serenuk Drive by the golf course.

My property at \_\_\_\_\_ is the major drain off for the golf course and farmlands on that side.

Over the past decade we have had significant recurrent flooding issues related to the rains and increased runoff from the farms.

This issue has effectively resulted in bringing the water close to my concrete footings and below my veranda. Most of my frontage has been lost, not reclaimed even after the infrequent and contested intermittent drainage procedures. I have also lost all my mature evergreens deciduous trees and even my hardy willows have all died. Water laps on my foundation from passing boats. With the high waters , the pre existing pier was totally submerged, limiting launching of my watercraft.

I enthusiastically laud and support the construction of the culvert as a permanent way to manage water levels.

Without this control our side of the lake would always be at risk from severe recurrent property damage.

I would hope that you will be controlling the water level to BELOW that of the PREEXISTING pier level, otherwise my neighbours and I will continue to experience water related problems and damage!

Thank you again for your help and support.

Regards,

Harold Fung

Sent from my iPad

Sent from my iPad

Sent from my iPad