

**Subject: Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study**

**File Number: ACS2023-PRE-EDP-0019**

**Report to Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee on 4 May 2023**

**and Council 10 May 2023**

**Submitted on April 17, 2023 by David Wise, Acting Director, Economic Development and Long Range Planning, Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development**

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**Ward: Orléans East-Cumberland (1) and Orléans South-Navan (19)**

**Objet : Étude sur le sous-bassin hydrographique du ruisseau Beckett**

**Dossier : ACS2023-PRE-EDP-0019**

**Rapport au Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales**

**le 4 mai 2023**

**et au Conseil le 10 mai 2023**

**Soumis le 17 avril 2023 par David Wise, Directeur intérimaire, Développement économique et Planification à long terme, Direction générale de la planification, des biens immobiliers et du développement économique**

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**Quartier : Orléans-Est-Cumberland (1) et Orléans-Sud-Navan (19)**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee recommend that Council approve the Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study, attached as Document 1.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité de l'agriculture et des affaires rurales recommande au Conseil d'approuver l'étude sur le sous-bassin hydrographique du ruisseau Beckett, présentée en pièce jointe comme document 1.**

## **BACKGROUND**

The City of Ottawa initiated the Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study to examine the existing conditions of the area and to identify any needed actions to improve its environmental health and condition over the long term. Natural hazard mapping of flood plains and unstable slopes was completed independently from this subwatershed study by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) in 2018. With the completion of the Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study, all eastern subwatersheds within the City of Ottawa that drain directly to the Ottawa River, will be covered by a subwatershed study or a stormwater management retrofit study.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Beckett's Creek subwatershed drains to the Ottawa River just east of the Village of Cumberland. The study area also includes four adjacent unnamed creek catchments that drain directly into the Ottawa River. The total study area is approximately 6,453 hectares in size. Crop farming is the predominant land use, followed by natural areas (woodlands, wetlands and valleylands). Settlement areas include portions of the villages of Cumberland and Sarsfield and various rural estate subdivisions.

City staff initiated background research for the Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study in 2014 with support from the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) and other regulatory agencies. Research and monitoring in 2014 and 2016 by City staff, along with the RVCA's City Stream Watch reports from 2011 and 2017, provided information on existing conditions across the study area. A draft existing conditions report was prepared in late 2018 and presented to members of the technical working group and local residents. Environmental issues and opportunities for improvement were identified in early 2020 and presented as draft preliminary recommendations to the working group and local residents.

Several events, including flooding of the Ottawa River in spring 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic and a by-election in Cumberland ward in fall 2020, resulted in delays to the

subwatershed study's progress. The release of the City's new Official Plan in late 2021, and its approval by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in late 2022, also prompted further review and alignment of all policy references within the study.

The Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study provides guidance on future planning decisions within the study area and includes recommendations for the identification of the natural heritage system, the management of natural hazards, the protection of groundwater features and surface water quality, the restoration of natural habitat, stormwater management and monitoring. It recognizes the primarily agricultural nature of the study area and promotes potential stewardship opportunities through existing City and RVCA programs (e.g., Ottawa Rural Clean Water Program, Green Acres).

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

The subwatershed study area is located entirely within the rural transect. The study includes recommendations that will be triggered by future *Planning Act* applications, but which will not affect existing uses.

With the exception of severances, any proposed development within 120 metres of a wetland that lies within the Natural Heritage System (core areas or linkage areas) may require a wetland evaluation to determine whether the provincial criteria for significance are met. Other recommendations are related to the need to evaluate hazards associated with retrogressive landslide risks and inferred karst topography prior to development. Similarly, additional study requirements have been identified for any future developments proposed near hydrogeologically sensitive areas (e.g., Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers, areas with potential or inferred karst topography and/or thin soils).

The study also identifies opportunities for voluntary landowner stewardship activities to preserve and enhance natural features, to protect and improve surface water and groundwater quality and to implement agricultural best management practices (e.g., tile drain control structures, vegetated buffer strips). Such activities would be promoted through existing City and RVCA initiatives, and landowners within the subwatershed may be eligible for funding through existing grant programs.

## **CONSULTATION**

The Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study included two formal opportunities for public consultation. An in-person public open house was held in December 2018, following the completion of the existing conditions report. An online public consultation was held from January to March 2021 to gather feedback on the draft preliminary recommendations. Residents within the study area were notified of the public consultation opportunities by

leaflets that were mailed out, posters that were displayed across the communities, and online on the project webpage and community association notices.

Approximately 45 participants attended a joint public open house on the subwatershed study area and the RVCA's natural hazards mapping project on December 4, 2018 at the R.J. Kennedy Arena and Community Hall in Cumberland. City and RVCA staff were on hand to explain the display boards for both studies, answer questions and solicit feedback. Following the open house, these materials were also made available on the project webpage for residents to review and provide comments.

An online public consultation period, consisting of display boards and a survey, was held from January 25 to March 15, 2021. Residents without access to the online materials were invited to contact the project lead by phone to receive hardcopies by mail. Thirty-seven residents completed the online survey, and an additional nine individuals submitted comments by phone or by email.

Information about the 2018 and 2021 public consultation process, including copies of the display boards, survey questions and a summary of all comments received, is provided in Appendix A of the subwatershed study report (attached as Document 1).

### **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

The Ward Councillors are aware of this report.

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

Comments and/or recommendations from Advisory Committees are not required for this report.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to implementing the recommendations of this report

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are risk implications. These risks have been identified and explained in the report and are being managed by the appropriate staff.

The subwatershed study has identified potential risks associated with natural hazards (e.g., unstable slopes, retrogressive landslides, inferred karst topography) and hydrogeologically sensitive areas (e.g., Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas, Highly Vulnerable Aquifers, areas with potential or inferred karst topography and/or thin soils). Recommended measures to reduce these risks are discussed in the subwatershed study (Document 1).

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no significant assessment management implications resulting from the recommendations of this Study. No additional funding is being proposed, and the lifecycle renewal of structural and drainage assets will continue to be based on a City-wide risk and criticality assessment with input from regularly scheduled inspections.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications; the works can be completed from within existing resources.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

The subwatershed study will be made available on the City's website as an accessible PDF and will comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The public consultation materials were provided as accessible PDFs, and all web content for this project was developed in accordance with applicable standards.

## **CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

The Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study fosters resiliency to climate change by supporting the protection and restoration of natural heritage features and by promoting agricultural best management practices across the subwatershed. This Study also supports the following two priority actions for 2020-2025 from the Climate Change Master Plan:

- Undertake a climate vulnerability assessment and develop a Climate Resiliency Strategy; and
- Apply a climate lens to the new Official Plan and its supporting documents.

Although this Study was developed prior to the new Official Plan direction to include climate considerations in subwatershed studies, relevant climate projections for the National Capital Region are described and preliminary risks to the Beckett's Creek subwatershed are identified. Future studies in support of development applications (e.g., water budget assessments, environmental impact studies, development adjacent to flood plains) will be required to consider future climate conditions.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Beckett's Creek Subwatershed Study provides guidance on future planning decisions within the study area and includes recommendations for the identification of the natural heritage system, the management of natural hazards, the protection of

groundwater features and surface water quality and the restoration of natural habitat. It promotes good environmental stewardship and identifies opportunities for stormwater management improvements, erosion control and tree planting on City property. These recommendations, if implemented, will result in environmental benefits.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 A – Beckett’s Creek Subwatershed Study (held on file with the City Clerk)

Document 1 B – Figures

Document 1 C – Appendix A

Document 1 D – Appendix B

Document 1 E – Appendix C

Document 1 F – Appendix D

### **DISPOSITION**

Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department to:

1. Post the approved subwatershed study on the City’s website;
2. Notify project stakeholders and relevant City departments of the study’s approval.