

Flood potential high

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) issued a flood warning on April 11th advising that flows in the lower Nottawasaga River, downstream of the Minesing Wetlands and Wasaga Beach, were reaching critical levels and continuing to rise. The public and especially children were advised to stay away from waterways.

On Sunday, April 13th that warning was upgraded to include the middle and upper reaches of the Nottawasaga River, with the warning for the lower Nottawasaga still in effect. Municipalities, emergency responders and landowners in those areas were asked to monitor the conditions closely and take necessary actions as required.

Flood Warning Coordinator for the NVCA, Stephanie Durocher warned that streamflows in all other watercourses were very high. With temperatures of 20 degrees Celsius and up to 30 mm of rain forecasted last weekend, the concern that flooding would occur, in low lying and flood vulnerable areas on all parts of the Nottawasaga River, was very real.

In a phone interview Tuesday, Stephanie Durocher conveyed that there had been high waters in Hockley Valley with reports of basements flooding, but no overland flooding had been reported to the NVCA, although there had been news of road closures in Adjala.

The Flood Coordinator stated that it was a relief that the area had not received as much rain as had been forecast, and that the current change to snow was positive for conditions as it allowed the flood water to move down the system.

The NVCA watershed covers nearly 3,700 sq. km, with authority in 18 municipalities. Their jurisdiction includes the Boyne River, the Mad, the Pine, Willow Creek and Innisfil Creek. All these rivers ultimately drain into the Nottawasaga River. NVCA also has control over the Pretty River and the Bateaux River; however these drain directly into Georgian Bay.

Stephanie Durocher says the primary mandate of the NVCA, when there is potential for flooding, is to guard against damage to property and risk to human life. She says they are now watching water move downstream and that the flow is currently entering Minesing, north of highway 90, in Springwater Township where there are internationally significant wetlands. Durocher says that as the water exits the wetlands it will move toward Wasaga Beach, the ultimate end point in our system. It is here that the surging waters at last enter Georgian Bay.

Durocher says the Nottawasaga Conservation Authority continues to urge the public to stay away from all bodies of water. Freezing, fast flowing water in rivers and streams will continue to create a dangerous environment for the coming days. The NVCA will continue to monitor the river and stream conditions and issue statements as necessary. When this article was written, the current Flood Warning was in effect until 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 16th. For new information on conditions, visit the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority website at www.nvca.on.ca or call 705 424-1479.

By Marni Walsh