



Outside Water Use By-Law Review

Discussion Guide - Winter 2013



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Managing Our Water Together

Guelph is a community that depends on groundwater to meet our drinking water needs. As our City grows and changes over time, it is important that we work together to conserve water for future generations and to protect against the impacts of drought—particularly during dry summer periods.

Typically, water demands increase during the summer months as people use more water for things like washing the car, watering gardens and lawns, and filling swimming pools. In 2003, City Council approved an Outside Water Use By-law to help manage periods of low water supply and high water use. The by-law was also a necessary step for the City to meet Provincial requirements for water management outlined in Ontario's Low Water Response Plan.

Today, Guelph's Outside Water Use Program (OWUP)—which includes the by-law noted above—is one of the most successful and recognized water conservation programs in Ontario. It outlines the steps that residents and businesses need to take during drought conditions to help protect our water supply, the natural environment and ensure we all have access to the water we need.

Through community support and participation, the Outside Water Use By-law and Program has decreased our daily annual peak day demand. Our water conservation efforts have also:

- 1) Extended the sustainability of local groundwater resources;
- 2) Delayed the need for the City to spend money on new water infrastructure that would be used to meet water supply requirements during peak periods of use (summers); and
- 3) Helped the City meet Provincial regulations for taking water for City use from local groundwater sources.

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Why Conduct a Review?

The Outside Water Use By-law and Program has been in place in Guelph for nearly 10 years. During prolonged periods of drought in 2012, the City of Guelph implemented enhanced water use restrictions under the Outside Water Use By-law to ensure that there was enough water to support both the needs of the City and the local environment. At the time, both residents and businesses expressed some concern over aspects of the by-law, including permissible water uses during extreme periods of drought.

In response to recent concerns about the by-law and to ensure that we manage our water needs in the best way possible, the City of Guelph Water Services Department is initiating a review of the Outside Water Use By-law and Program to:

- Discuss successes and explore aspects of the Outside Water Use By-law and Program that are working well; and
- Examine opportunities for refinements to the OWUP and by-law that could help the City better manage our water resources into the future.

Benefits for Guelph's Environment

The Outside Water Use Program has beneficial effects for Guelph's water resources. By reducing water demand during peak periods, Guelph pumps less water from its water supply aquifer. By pumping less, more water remains in the aquifer and is available for future supply demand. Pumping less water from the aquifer also means that less recharge (i.e., infiltration of precipitation into the subsurface) needs to flow into the aquifer to sustain the pumping rate. This means more water is available for shallow groundwater-dependent ecosystems. Wetlands, streams and rivers all benefit from reduced pumping of water supply aquifers. With less groundwater pumping, more water is available to flow through the groundwater system and discharge into streams and rivers and thereby supporting aquatic ecosystems, including fish and aquatic plants. All told, the OWUP and By-law are good for our environment.

Meeting Provincial Regulatory Requirements

Ontario Low Water Response

Ontario Low Water Response (OLWR) is intended to both coordinate and facilitate provincial and local efforts in managing "low water conditions". The City of Guelph is a member of the OLWR team for the Grand River Watershed, which meets periodically to review watershed conditions and other information. Based on the available information, the team may declare a "low water condition" for all or part of the Grand River Watershed. The OLWR Team is made up of water users and stakeholders in the Grand River Watershed including: the Grand River Conservation Authority, municipalities, First Nations, farmers, golf courses, gravel pits, other levels of governments, private industry, as well as others.

Since implementation of the Outside Water Use By-law and OWUP began in Guelph, daily annual peak day demands have decreased by more than 11,800 m³/day. This reduction in consumption translates directly to reduced water takings, which contributes to the sustainability of local groundwater resources. Other benefits include deferred construction of water taking infrastructure and operating investments in that new infrastructure as well as deferred costs as related to source water investigations.

Permits to Take Water

The purpose of the Permits to Take Water (PTTW) is to ensure fair sharing of water, promote stewardship (conservation/efficient use) of Ontario's surface and groundwater resources and to safeguard ecosystem functions and natural variability. Provincial legislation requires a permit for any water taking that is greater than 50,000 L/day. Water takings above this threshold are regulated under the Ontario Water Resources Act (OWRA) and its regulations. Each PTTW has a condition that stipulates that the Director (of the Ministry of the Environment) may require a non-voluntary reduction in taking should such a reduction be required. To avoid regulated reductions, the City of Guelph voluntarily conforms to the requirements of the OLWR. PTTW have permit specific renewal dates. Whenever a PTTW is renewed, changed or when applying for a new permit, it must include a water conservation best management and practices plan (among other conditions). This water conservation plan includes the Outside Water Use By-law, the OWUP and related programs, as part of the regulatory requirements of the PTTW.

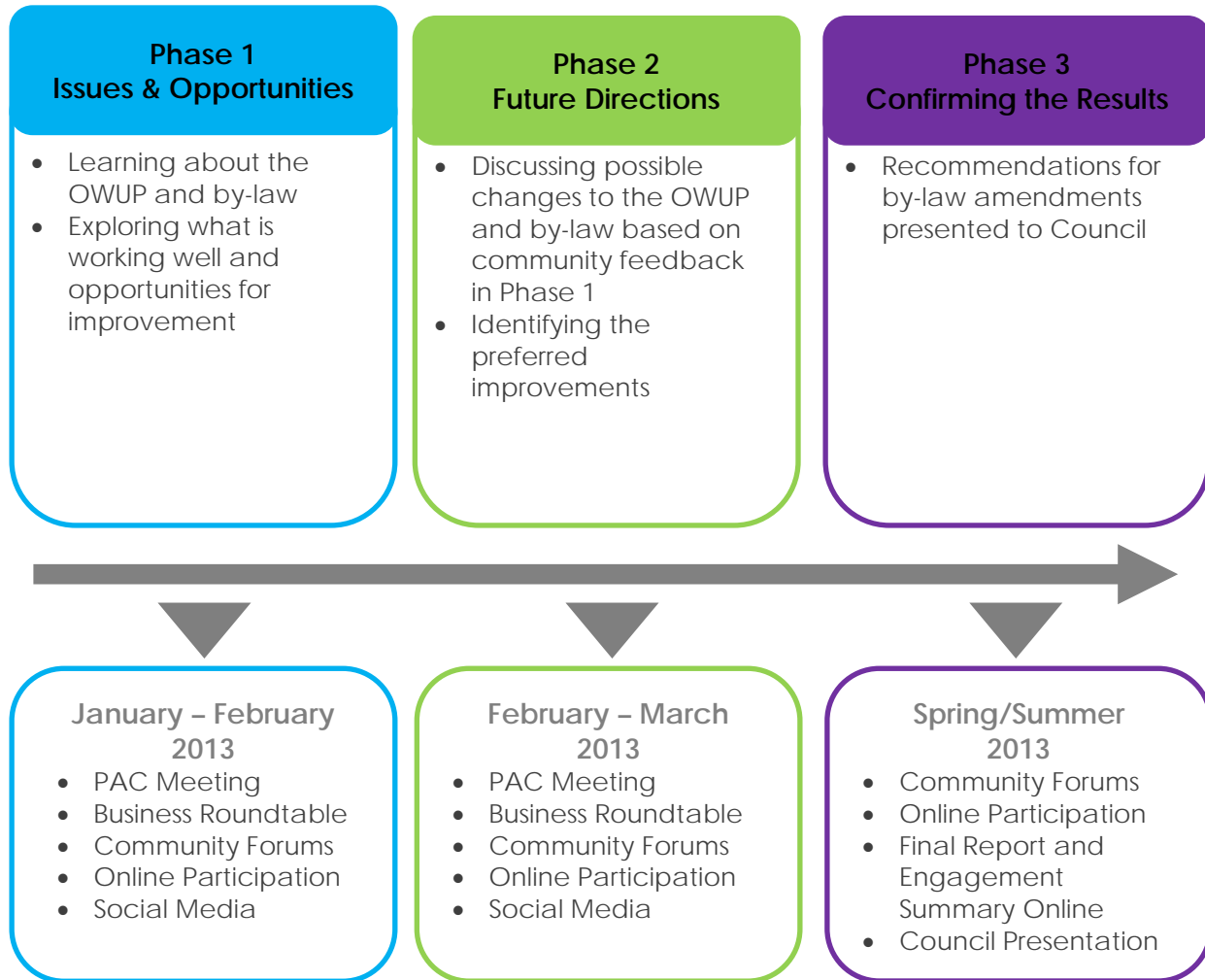
A Conversation for Everyone

Managing our water supply is the responsibility of everyone in Guelph—including local residents, businesses, institutions, industry and the City itself. As a result, we need as many people and organizations as possible to join the conversation. We need your help to understand how best we can manage our local water resources and what the impacts will be of any proposed refinements to the City's Outside Water Use By-law and Program.

The Outside Water Use By-law review process has been set up as a three step process (please see the process overview on the next page) with multiple ways to participate in order to ensure that everyone can get involved. The community engagement process includes diverse opportunities to participate, including:

- Meetings with the **Water Conversation and Efficiency Public Advisory Committee**
- **Business and Industry Roundtable Discussions**
- Engaging residents in two rounds of **community forums**
- Opportunities to participate online through the **project webpage** using our online discussion guide and reading background resources
- Discussing and listening to the community via **Twitter** and **Facebook**
- Talking with you directly by **phone** or **email**.

Process Overview



Highlights of the Outside Water Use By-law

The Outside Water Use By-law applies to every person/building/facility that uses water supplied by the City of Guelph. Below are highlights of the City of Guelph's Outside Water Use By-law and Program as they look today¹:

Providing Public Notice

- By-law restrictions for each program level come into effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the date of advertisement.
- The City provides notice to the public of changes in Outside Water Use Program Changes through:
 - Press releases sent to newspaper, radio, and television outlets and use of social media to spread the word;
 - Roadside signs noting current program levels within each Ward within the City; and
 - A telephone hotline providing pre-recorded information.

No Wasting of Water

No person is permitted to waste water outside a building by using more than is required, including:

- Irrigating during a rain event
- Causing or permitting water to pool on or around or run off from any lawn, boulevard, sports field, outside tree, shrub, flower or vegetable bed
- Operating a decorative fountain/pond without water recirculation
- Washing a vehicle, trailer, boat, or outside of building without a shutoff valve at the discharge end of the hose
- Using flowing water instead of sweeping to remove loose debris from a driveway or other hardscapes.

Exemptions to the By-law

- Using water for recreational purposes such as filling baby pools or sprinklers to help cool down children
- The outdoor use of water from an alternate water source other than the municipal water supply, such as a rain barrel, cistern or private well
- Individuals who have obtained a Time-Shift Permit, New Lawn Permit or Treated Lawn Permit and follow the detailed requirements outlined in the Outside Water Use By-law for such permits

¹ Please note, the summary below has been provided for the purposes of the community engagement process only. To review the detailed regulations outlined in the by-law please visit: http://guelph.ca/uploads/PDF/By-laws/outside_wateruse.pdf.

Alternate Day with Time Restrictions

Program Level 0 (Blue) and Program Level 1 (Yellow)

- Watering of lawns, boulevards, or sports fields is permitted on even numbered municipal addresses or boulevards on even numbered days between 7-9 a.m. and 7-9 p.m.
 - Odd numbered municipal addresses or boulevards are permitted to water during times listed above on odd number days

Program Level 2 (Red) – Lawn and Boulevard Watering Restrictions

- Watering of sports fields or any outside tree, shrub, flower, vegetable plant, or other outside plant is permitted on even numbered addresses or boulevards on even number days between 7-9 a.m. and 7-9 p.m.
 - Odd numbered addresses or boulevards can water during times listed above on odd number days
- Washing of any vehicle, trailer or boat located on a residential property is permitted on even numbered addresses or boulevards on even number days between 7-9 a.m. and 7-9 p.m.
 - Odd numbered addresses or boulevards can wash vehicles, trailers, or boats on residential properties during times listed above on odd number days

Program Level 3 (Black)*

- Watering of lawns, boulevards, and sports fields is not permitted
- Washing of vehicles, trailers, or boats on residential properties is not permitted
- Using water for sprinklers or City-owned splash pad for recreational use is banned
- Filling any outside pool, hot tub, decorative fountain, or garden pond is banned
- Watering of any outside tree, shrub, flower, vegetable plant, or other outside plant at any time using any means is not permitted

*Note: Program Level Three is reserved for Emergency Response Purposes only, including but not limited to, declaration of Level 3 by the Province of Ontario through the Low Water Response Program and/or the failure of critical infrastructure which may limit ability of the municipal water supply system.

Outside Water Use By-law at a Glance

Water Response Level



When does it come into effect?

Blue is our standard Outside Water Use level. Blue indicates there are no serious storage, rainfall or stream flow issues.

Yellow can occur when:

- Less than 80 per cent of historical average of precipitation occurs over one and/or three months;
- Two weeks without rain;
- Eramosa River flow is less than 70 per cent of minimum low flow;
- Water storage level is less than 75 per cent of average

Red can occur when:

- Less than 60 per cent of the historical average over one and/or three months
- Three weeks without rain;
- Eramosa River flow is less than 50 per cent of minimum low flow;
- Water storage level is less than 65 per cent of average.

Lawn Watering

Alternate day and time restrictions. Permits are required for watering new lawns and treated lawns outside guidelines.

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Lawn watering is not permitted. Permits are required for watering new lawns and treated lawns outside guidelines.

Watering Plants

No restrictions

No restrictions

Alternate day and time restrictions

Recreational Sprinkler Use

No restrictions

No restrictions

No restrictions

Filling Pools, Ponds, etc.

No restrictions

No restrictions

No restrictions

Fountains

Must recirculate water

Must recirculate water

Must recirculate water

Vehicle Washing

Anytime. Must have shut-off nozzle on your hose.

Anytime. Must have shut-off nozzle on your hose.

Alternate day with time restrictions. Must have shut-off nozzle on your hose. Permits are required for watering outside guidelines.

Community Forum Agenda

Start Time: 6:30 p.m.

End Time: 9 p.m.

6:30 p.m.	Open House
7:00 p.m.	Welcome and Opening Remarks
7:10 p.m.	Overview Presentation
7:30 p.m.	Conversation #1: What is Working Well Now? Participants will work together at roundtables to discuss aspects of the Outside Water Use Program and By-law that are working well and should be kept.
8:00 p.m.	<i>Table Reports</i>
8:15 p.m.	Conversation #2: What Can Be Improved Moving Forward? Participants will work together to discuss potential areas for improvement to the Outside Water Use Program and By-law.
8:45 p.m.	<i>Table Reports</i>
8:55 p.m.	Wrap Up and Next Steps

Discussion Topics and Questions

Managing our precious water supply is not an easy task. Although the current Outside Water Use By-law and Program have been successful at conserving water, both are now 10 years old and changes in our environment (including climate change) and the growth of our City suggest that a review of the by-law and OWUP is the right thing to do.

Some aspects of the by-law and OWUP that are on the table for discussion include:

- If changes to the format of day/time lawn and garden watering restrictions by level of program should be undertaken (i.e. shifting of 7-9 permitted water times to alternate time period such as 6-8 within the morning and evening, once per week watering, or other formats)
- What are appropriate terms for car washing by level of the program
- What are appropriate terms for pool/hot tub filling by level of the program
- If exemptions to the by-law should be created to support watering of food producing gardens
- If enforcement activities supporting the by-law should be increased. (i.e. more immediate fines for non-compliance)
- If fines associated with non-compliance with the by-law should be increased (i.e. increase fine amount for non-compliance, implementation of increasing fine values for repeated non-compliance)
- If exemptions within the by-law should be created for tree watering to protecting our urban forests during periods of drought
- If terms for pressure washing should be considered through the by-law
- A discussion about the feasibility/impacts of business based restrictions (i.e. requirements to use alternatives than municipal water for dust control in construction projects)
- If pool covers should be considered under the by-law for owners of pools/hot tubs to limit water loss from evaporation
- If another level to the Outside water use program should be introduced to allow minimal outside water use contingencies prior to a total ban on use (i.e. implementation of a level orange)
- If new permitting practices should be implemented to support local business (i.e. such as bulk permitting for condominiums opposed to individual permits by individual residential dwelling)
- A discussion about current communications channels and ways to increase awareness about changes to program level and public requirements

Providing Your Ideas

The following two sheets include the discussion questions for Phase 1 of the engagement process. **Once completed, please tear off the sheets and submit it to the project team at the end of the meeting or via the project website.** All feedback received during the community engagement process will be used to prepare recommendations for refinement to the Outside Water Use By-law and Program and will be included in the Consultation Summary Report for the project.

When answering the questions below, please think about the following:

- Are the current terms by level of the program sufficient or what should be changed?
- Are the current program terms achieving meaningful results?
- Are communications under the program effective or what could improve?

What aspects of the Outside Water Use Program and By-law are working well now and should be kept to help residents, businesses, and the City to do their part to manage Guelph's water supply?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

What changes to the Outside Water Use Program and By-law would help our community meet our water needs while also helping to manage Guelph's water supply in a responsible manner?

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, providing a template for handwriting practice or general note-taking. The margins are consistent on all sides.

Do you have additional feedback or ideas that we should consider?

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