

APAC Meeting Update – Niagara Irrigation Project September 25, 2020

November 2019

- Project approved (to end of December 2020) through the Niagara Region with additional cash contributions from each municipality (St. Catharines, Lincoln, NOTL) and the GGO/Tender Fruit grower organizations to continue the work of the 2017 Irrigation Strategic Business Plan Recommendations focusing on the 3 priority areas

Deliverables were;

- work with growers in Zone B, the City of St Catharines and OPG to determine grower buy in, acreage involved and feasibility of conveying water from sources above the escarpment at Decew Falls to the farmland at lower elevations.
- work with NOTL Drainage System Superintendent and the NOTL irrigation committee on needs for improving the capacity, reliability and coverage areas of the open irrigation system in Zone C.
- engage growers involved in independent existing water systems in Zone A (Lincoln) to determine synergies and efficiencies that could be realized with possibly one common intake, one common pumping system and the additional coverage that could be serviced. This would involve working with Lincoln's manager of environmental services.
- assess and make recommendations to the steering committee on what tools are needed beyond year 2020.

January 2020

- Committee of the whole met on January 14th and agreed to the establishment of a steering committee with representatives from the Region, OMAFRA, Ag Canada, municipal reps from each of the 3 priority zones, GGO, Tender Fruit to give direction to the consultant (Hugh Fraser)
- Steering Committee met January 31st, established Terms of Reference and agreed upon workplan

March 3, 2020 – in person meeting

Hugh Fraser update on initial assessments in Lincoln and NOTL including;

- Tour of the existing Lincoln system and interviews with the grower operator;
 - obtained the operational and economic data of that system
 - determined the recommendations of any expanded system
- Tour of the NOTL system with Irrigation Superintendent;
 - determined costs of current system
 - challenges of current system (open ditch)
 - determined future needs – expansion, repairs, regulatory pressures
- Plan to provide assessment of St Catharines for the next update

March 17, 2020

- State of Emergency declared in Ontario – shutdown of non-essential businesses, all residents encouraged to stay home

- Interviews and groundwork unfortunately stalled and planned meeting for April 6 of steering committee cancelled

Late April – May

- Hugh continued to do interview and groundwork for St. Catharines at the direction of the steering committee and in the May report provided very positive progress on making municipal connections and setting the potential overarching parameters for a closed pipe system, feeding from below the escarpment in St. Catharines, (not gravity fed from above and not open ditch)

June – consultant report without meeting

- Lincoln – determined ownership of land west of Victoria Avenue
- NOTL – attendance to irrigation meeting
- St Catharines – maps, classes of land, exploration of concept of water from Lake Moodie, technical help from OMAFRA, City of St Catharines
- Beginning work on the overall capital costs of a system on a per acre basis

July report and zoom meeting of steering committee

- St. Catharines- proposed concept outlined with approx. 18 km of pipe, acreage, number of tap- offs and approx. cost of each tap-off
- Lincoln- determined potential adjacent land access to the St. Catharines model
- Grower interviews started for buy in and other industries outside of tender fruit and grape (greenhouses, construction companies)

September report and meeting of steering committee

- Lake Moodie water quality analysis
- Data obtained on how much NOTL compensation payments are to OPG for access to water
- Analysis on flow rates, hours per day irrigated, tap – offs per 100-acre farm
- More grower interviews (11)
- Established 4 distinct growing areas in Lincoln

Consultant Next Steps

- Complete grower interviews for 80% of landownership in St Catharines (some of these growers also have land in Lincoln)
- Newsletter article drafted for inclusion in commodity organization newsletters to advertise additional interviews
- Attend any NOTL irrigation meetings
- Set up meeting with consultant, OPG, City of St. Catharines, Bill Schenck
- Follow up meetings with entrepreneurs in the construction industry
- Need to determine if an engineering feasibility study is required and how much it would be

Industry Next Steps

- Project is anticipated to be underspent by end of the project deadline (December 31st) due to interruption and slow-down of activities due to COVID 19
- If the project plan is going to change (i.e. no engineering feasibility study) then meetings will need to be moved up and a request for change of project deliverables will need to be sent to region along with rationale sooner rather than later
- Planned meetings right now are;
 - Steering Committee meeting November 3rd
 - Meeting of Committee of the Whole November 17th
- Need to determine;
 - willingness of partners to continue project into 2021 and if yes
 - request to the Region for extension on project end date to complete deliverables