

## **Some information on the Gull Lake situation**

### **What is in the Gull Lake Area:**

- Located 60 km north of Winnipeg on Highway 59
- Gull Lake and Gull Lake Community – proposed gravel pits are within 1 km of the Lake
- Brokenhead Wetlands (40,300 ha) – proposed gravel pits are within 1-2 km of the wetlands
- Brokenhead Wetlands Ecological Reserve (1240ha) – proposed gravel pits within 1 km of the ER
- Brokenhead Wetlands Interpretive Trail – proposed gravel pits and active pits within 1 km of the trail
- Brokenhead Ojibway Nation – relies on groundwater associated with the Brokenhead Wetlands
- Patricia Beach Provincial Park

### **Background:**

- Gull Lake area consists of a forested hilltop, with a recreational lake, and about 300 cottages.
- Approximately a dozen active and abandoned gravel pits surround Gull Lake. The abandoned gravel pit areas have never been rehabilitated or reclaimed.
- Quarrying has been going on around Gull Lake for over 60 years.
- The area is the water source area for Gull Lake and the Brokenhead Wetlands.
- Area residents are actively trying to protect the water supply and water quality of Gull Lake.
- Gull Lake has a very small watershed that comes from the gravel hills that surround it. Without those gravel hills which are groundwater aquifers, there would be no lake.
- The lake is contained by a natural clay layer that could be impacted by quarrying activities.
- There has been a lot of extraction activity going on in the main pits owned by the RM of Alexander. Chabot has moved their operations from north of Highway 12 and 59 to south of Highway 12.

### **Gull Lake Concerns:**

- The residents of Gull Lake are worried about potential impacts to groundwater including contamination and supply, the drought that is causing lake levels to drop dramatically, as well as increased traffic, noise, and dust from huge gravel trucks and quarry operations. Not least are concerns around the aesthetics of the area with gravel pits that just keep consuming and scarring the landscape.
- In the case of the Ecological Reserve and the Interpretive Trail, concerns centre around impacts to the wetlands. The wetlands are dependent on the aquifer or source area where the water originates which are unprotected. Further quarrying in the area has the potential to inflict serious impacts on the source aquifer for the Brokenhead Wetlands and destroy it.
- In 1999 the Manitoba government denied the approval of an Environment Act License for a well to supply Gull Lake, which was located across the road from the proposed site. It was shown that this well would have affected the aquifer supplying the wetlands. This denial set a precedent for not allowing disturbance of the source water due to potential impacts on the wetlands and marl springs.
- There are two quarry leases coming up for renewal in 2022. These are on Crown Land which are leased to a numbered company from Toronto and to Nelson River Construction. These quarry leases happen to cover the source area of water supply for the Brokenhead Wetlands.
- Pits in the area are already going down to the water table.
- The government collects royalties to reclaim gravel pits. In 70 years of mining there has been no reclamation.

- RM of St Clements is proposing to build a new quarry for road gravel on land which they own. In their proposal they describe how, in glowing terms as “best practices”, they promise to turn it into a park some time after 2055. Debwendon and the Gull Lake Ratepayers Association has met with the RM Mayor and Council on December 14 and presented their comments on the Gull Lake Stakeholder Engagement Report, which was presented to Council at that meeting. No decision has been made by the RM as to whether they will proceed. The report recommended that a Cumulative Impact Assessment be conducted in collaboration with the RM of Alexander and the Province of Manitoba.
- Despite efforts by various stakeholders to raise concerns regarding these impacts, area residents appear to have little say over land development in the area.
- Despite efforts about 10 years ago to develop a watershed plan for the area, this has still not happened. Requests for a cumulative effects environmental assessment have also gone unmet.
- Residents have asked repeatedly for a moratorium on new gravel pits in the Gull Lake area, to no avail. At the moment there is a “hold” on new quarry leases and renewals, but there is no indication how long that will be in force, and it could be removed at any time.