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WATERSHED STUDIES PROVIDE ENCOURAGING RESULTS

Recent studies of two watersheds in the Thunder Bay area indicate they are in good health.

Through the Student Summer Experience Program, the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority (LRCA) studied the Welch Creek Watershed in Shuniah during the summer of 2006 and the Brule Creek Watershed in Conmee during the summer of 2007. Each study involved taking water samples and field measurements at several locations along the creeks.

The overall health of Welch Creek was found to be excellent with water samples well below the Provincial Water Quality Objectives (PWQO) with the exception of Total Phosphorous which was slightly above the criteria. Field measurements indicated pH levels in Welch Creek were all within the PWQO criteria. Both the benthic (organisms that live in or on a body of water) life and aquatic vegetation appeared to be dynamic and the species found along the watershed indicated a healthy ecosystem.

Data collected during the assessment of the Brule Creek Watershed suggests it's a relatively healthy watercourse that is not being affected by surrounding activities such as forestry or residential use. Water samples did determine iron, aluminum and phosphorus levels were above PWQO but that this was likely due to natural sources such as iron rich rocks and vegetation at the testing sites. Field measurements found pH levels within PWQO criteria. Both benthic life and aquatic vegetation appeared to be dynamic and the species found along the watershed indicated an overall healthy ecosystem.

The information gathered in these two studies can now be used as a bench mark for future monitoring of the watershed.

This summer, the LRCA plans to conduct a similar study of the Slate River Watershed while plans for the summer of 2009 call for a study of the Wolf River Watershed.