

Rat-Marsh Watershed Integrated Watershed Management Plan - Water Quality Report

Prepared by:

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Water Quality Investigations and Routine Monitoring:

This report provides an overview of the studies and routine monitoring which have been undertaken by Manitoba Water Stewardship's Water Quality Management Section within the Rat-Marsh watershed. There is one long term water quality monitoring station (1974 – 2011) within the Rat-Marsh watershed. This includes the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne, which is sampled on a quarterly basis for general chemistry, nutrients, metals, bacteria, and pesticides. Historic data are presented in a separate document "Water Quality in the Rat River – St. Malo Watershed: Current Conditions, Historical Trends and Potential Actions" by Jennifer Stephens Sept 8, 2010.

The headwaters of the Rat River are located in the Sandilands Provincial Forest region of south eastern Manitoba. The river flows westward and north westward from its headwaters for a total distance of approximately 130 km before emptying into the Red River. Major tributaries of the river include the Sand River, Joubert Creek, and the Marsh River. The land use class in the Rat-Marsh watershed area is primarily agricultural, both crop and livestock, as well there are rural centres, and a portion of the Sandilands Provincial Park. All these land uses have the potential to negatively impact water quality, if not managed appropriately. Cropland can present water quality concerns in terms of fertilizer and pesticide runoff entering surface water. Livestock can present water quality concerns in terms of nutrient and pathogen runoff from feces, especially if they have direct access to surface water bodies. Rural municipalities present water quality concerns in terms of wastewater treatment and effluent discharge. Provincial parks present similar water quality concerns in terms of wastewater treatment and disposal.

Water Quality Index Calculations:

The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Water Quality Index is used to summarize large amounts of water quality data into simple terms (e.g., good) for reporting in a consistent manner (CCME, 2001). Twenty-five variables are included in the Water Quality Index (Table 1) and are compared with water quality objectives and guidelines contained in the Manitoba Water Quality Standards, Objectives, and Guidelines (Williamson 2002 and Table 1).

The Water Quality Index combines three different aspects of water quality: the 'scope,' which is the percentage of water quality variables with observations exceeding guidelines; the 'frequency,' which is the percentage of total observations exceeding guidelines; and the 'amplitude,' which is the amount by which observations exceed the guidelines. The basic premise of the Water Quality Index is that water quality is excellent when all guidelines or objectives set to protect water uses are met virtually all the time. When guidelines or objectives are not met, water quality becomes progressively poorer. Thus, the Index logically

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

and mathematically incorporates information on water quality based on comparisons to guidelines or objectives to protect important water uses. The Water Quality Index ranges from 0 to 100 and is used to rank water quality in categories ranging from poor to excellent.

- Excellent (95-100) - Water quality never or very rarely exceeds guidelines
- Good (80-94) - Water quality rarely exceeds water quality guidelines
- Fair (60-79) - Water quality sometimes exceeds guidelines and possibly by a large margin
- Marginal (45-59) - Water quality often exceeds guidelines and/or by a considerable margin
- Poor (0-44) - Water quality usually exceeds guidelines and/or by a large margin

Table 1: Water quality variables and objectives or guidelines (Williamson 2002) used to calculate Water Quality Index (CCME 2001).

Variables	Units	Objective Value	Objective Use
Fecal Coliform MF	Bacteria/100mL	200	Recreation
pH	pH Units	6.5-9.0	Aquatic Life Greenhouse
Specific Conductivity	uS/cm	1000	Irrigation
Total Suspended Solids	mg/L	25 (mid range)	Aquatic Life
Dissolved Oxygen	mg/L	5 (mid range)	Aquatic Life
Total or Extractable Cadmium*	mg/L	Calculation based on Hardness (7Q10)	Aquatic Life
Total or Extractable Copper*	mg/L	Calculation based on Hardness (7Q10)	Aquatic Life Drinking Water,
Total Arsenic	mg/L	0.025	Health
Total or Extractable Lead*	mg/L	Calculation based on Hardness (7Q10)	Aquatic Life
Dissolved Aluminum	mg/L	0.1 for pH >6.5	Aquatic Life
Total or Extractable Nickel*	mg/L	Calculation based on Hardness (7Q10)	Aquatic Life
Total or Extractable Zinc*	mg/L	Calculation based on Hardness (7Q10)	Aquatic Life
Total or Extractable Manganese	mg/L	0.05	Drinking Water, Aesthetic
Total or Extractable Iron	mg/L	0.3	Drinking Water, Aesthetic
Total Ammonia as N	mg/L	Calculation based pH	Aquatic Life
Soluble or Dissolved Nitrate-Nitrite	mg/L	10	Drinking Water, Health
Total Phosphorus	mg/L	0.05 in Rivers or 0.025 in Lakes	Nuisance Plant Growth
Dicamba	ug/L	0.006 where detectable	Irrigation
Bromoxynil	ug/L	0.33	Irrigation
Simazine	ug/L	0.5	Irrigation
2,4 D	ug/L	4	Aquatic Life
Lindane	ug/L	0.08	Aquatic Life
Atrazine	ug/L	1.8	Aquatic Life
MCPA	ug/L	0.025 where detectable	Irrigation
Trifluralin	ug/L	0.2	Aquatic Life

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

The Water Quality Index for the Rat River was typically 'Good', with the exception of 1993, 1994 and 1997 where the water quality was 'Fair' (Figure 1). This indicates water quality occasionally exceeded water quality guidelines for some variables. While numerous variables are used to calculate the overall Water Quality Index, the percentage of variables that exceeded their objective for the Rat River from 1992 to 2009 ranged from 9 to 35 per cent. Total phosphorus is typically responsible for driving down the Water Quality Index (to be discussed in greater detail below). While some water bodies contain naturally elevated concentrations of nutrients due to watershed characteristics, many human alterations impact nutrient loading to the Rat-Marsh watershed.

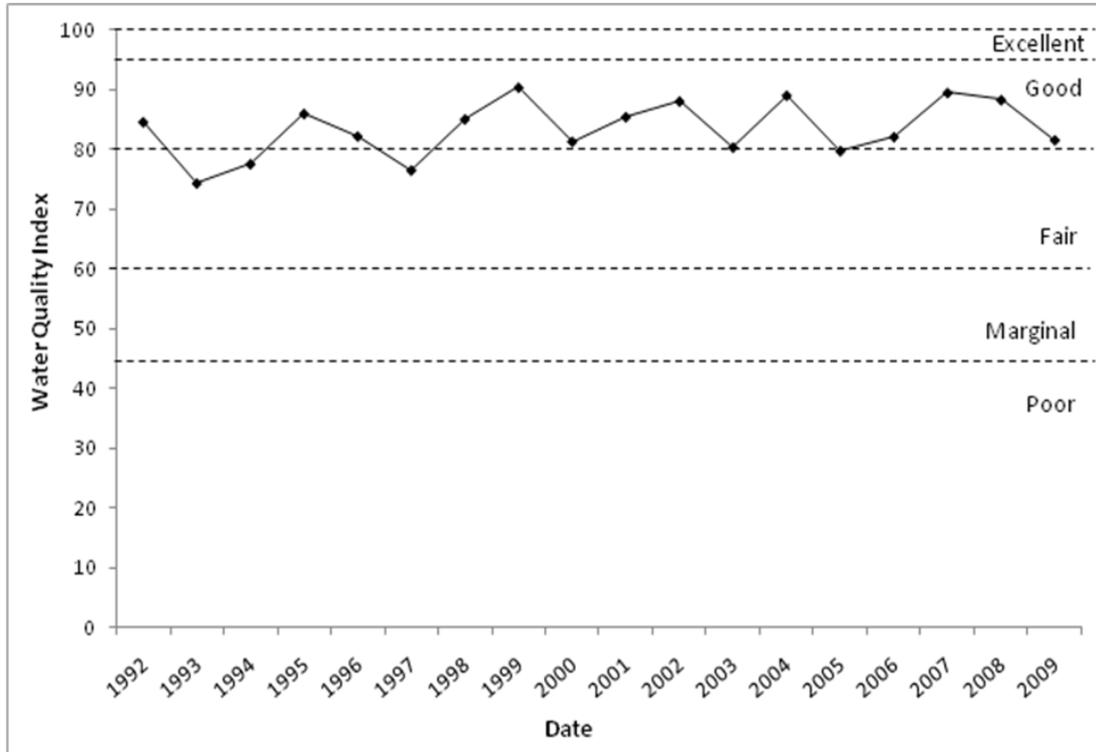


Figure 1: Water Quality Index calculated from 1992 to 2009 for the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne.

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

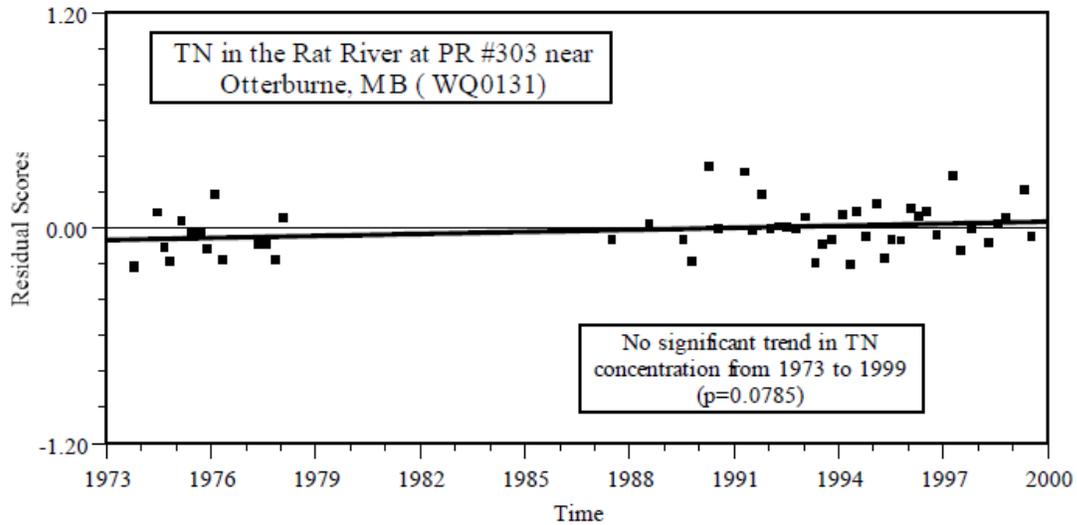


Figure 2: Trend in total nitrogen (TN) concentration in the Rat River at PR #303 near Otterburne, MB, 1973 to 1999 (inclusive). Dots are residual scores from the regression of TN with flow, while the solid line is the regression line of the residual scores with time, and represents the trend in TN after accounting for variation due to flow.

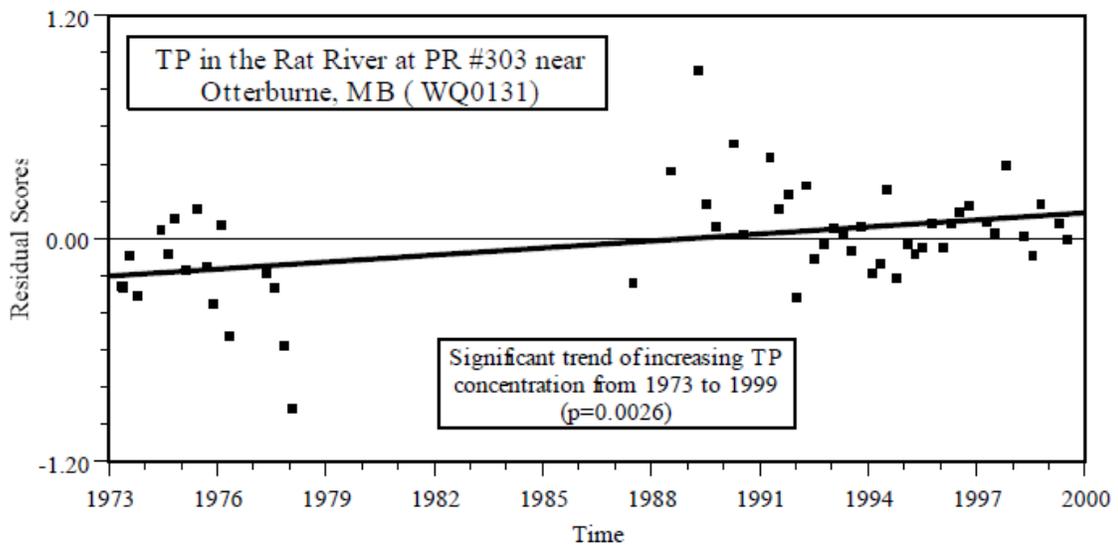


Figure 3: Trend in Total Phosphorus (TP) concentration in the Rat River at PR #303 near Otterburne, MB, 1973 to 1999 (inclusive). Dots are residual scores from the regression of TP with flow, while the solid line is the regression line of the residual scores with time, and represents the trend in TN after accounting for variation due to flow.

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

Data from the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne water quality sampling station were used in the trend analysis of total nitrogen and total phosphorus in the Rat River. Flow data for the trend analysis were obtained from the hydrometric station, located approximately 7.5 km upstream of near the confluence of Joubert Creek. The data set contains 51 data points for total nitrogen and 54 data points for total phosphorus. The data were collected over the period 1973 - 1999, with a 10-year gap in the data from 1978 to 1987. The *QWTrend* program could not be used to analyze the data because the sample size was too small. Therefore the alternate method of trend analysis involving simple linear regression was employed. The results of this analysis indicated that total nitrogen has remained fairly stable since 1973 ($p=0.0785$) (Figure 2). However, total phosphorus concentrations have increased significantly ($p=0.0026$) over the same time period (Figure 3).

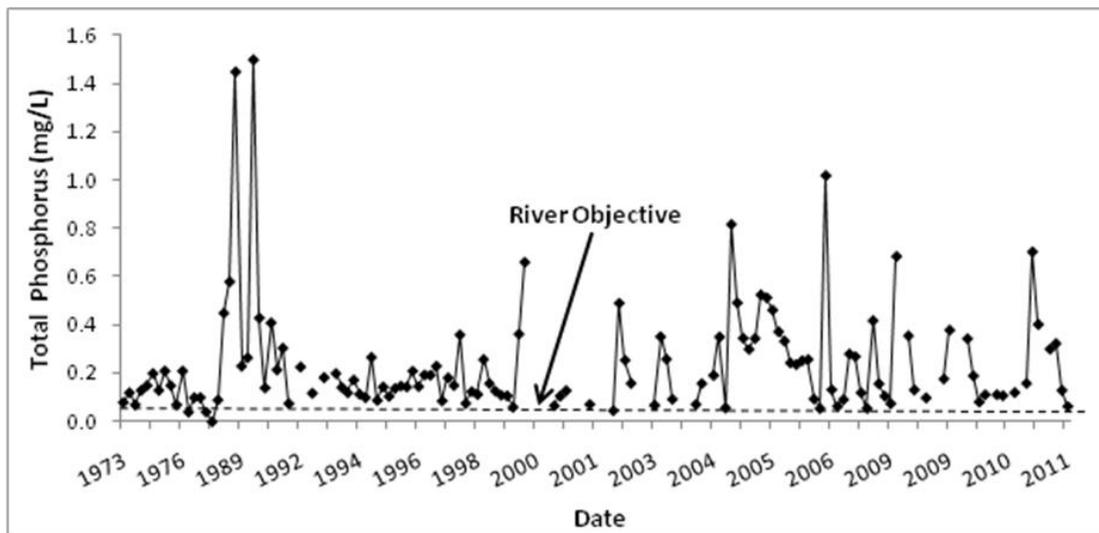


Figure 4: Total phosphorus (mg/L) concentrations from the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne in the Rat-Marsh watershed between 1973 and 2011.

Figure 4 illustrates total phosphorus concentrations in the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne. Typically, total phosphorus concentrations were well above the Manitoba Water Quality Guideline for rivers of 0.05 mg/L (Williamson 2002). As part of the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan, Manitoba is implementing several strategies to better manage plant nutrients. Part of this Action Plan includes the development of more appropriate site-specific or regional-specific water quality objectives or guidelines for nutrients. In the meantime, the narrative guidelines will be retained for nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus until more site specific objectives are developed. It is generally recognized, however, that narrative guidelines for phosphorus likely do not apply to many streams in the Canadian prairie region since other factors such as turbidity, stream velocity, nitrogen, and other conditions most often limit algal growth. As well, relatively high levels of phosphorus in excess of the narrative guidelines may arise naturally from the rich prairie soils. It should be noted that most streams and rivers in southern Manitoba exceed this guideline, in some cases due to the natural soil

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

characteristics in the watershed and/ or due to inputs from human activities and land-use practices.

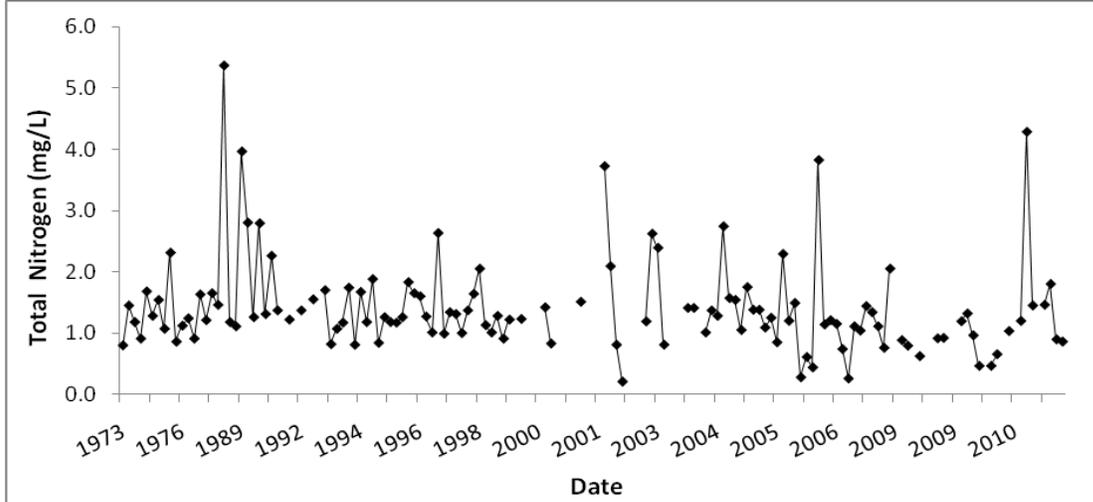


Figure 5: Total nitrogen (mg/L) concentrations from the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne in the Rat-Marsh watershed between 1973 and 2011.

The narrative objective for total nitrogen states nitrogen should be limited to the extent necessary to prevent nuisance growth and reproduction of aquatic rooted, attached and floating plants, fungi, or bacteria, or to otherwise render the water unsuitable for other beneficial uses (Williamson 2002). Nitrogen and phosphorus are two essential nutrients which stimulate algal growth in Lake Manitoba and its watershed. Figure 5 illustrates total nitrogen concentrations in the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne. Total nitrogen concentrations between 1973 and 2011 have remained relatively constant with the exception of seasonal peaks during spring melt runoff.

Maintenance of adequate dissolved oxygen levels is essential to the health of aquatic life inhabiting rivers and streams. The monitoring conducted in the Rat River (Figure 6) demonstrates dissolved oxygen levels oscillated between above the 5.0 mg/ L Manitoba objective and below (Williamson 2002). Overall, the majority of dissolved oxygen concentrations were above this objective but typically fell below the objective during mid-summer and mid-winter. Low oxygen levels under ice conditions are not uncommon in small prairie rivers, as the decomposition of plant material consumes oxygen from the water. As well, low oxygen levels are not uncommon after a summer of intense algal blooms consuming oxygen from the water column. Overall, there is typically adequate dissolved oxygen in this watershed to support healthy aquatic life.

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

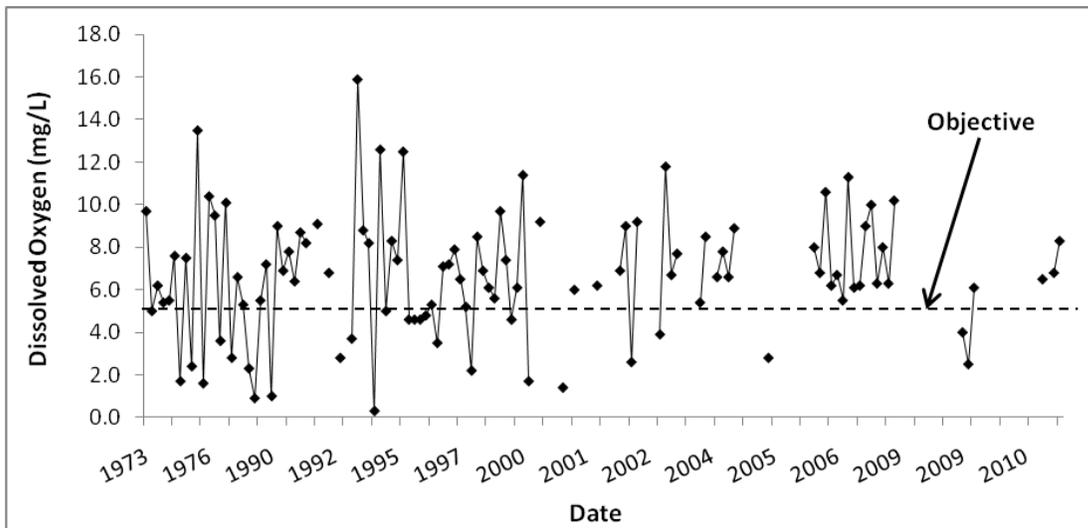


Figure 6: Dissolved oxygen (mg/L) concentrations from the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne in the Rat-Marsh watershed between 1973 and 2011.

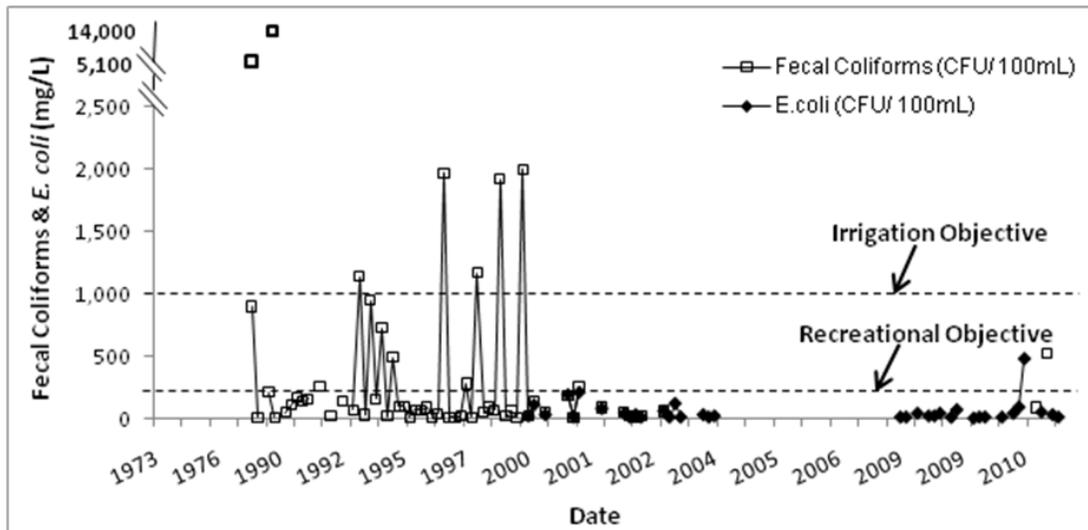


Figure 7: Fecal coliform and *E. coli* densities (CFU/ 100 mL) from the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne in the Rat-Marsh watershed between 1973 and 2011.

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) is one type of fecal coliform, which is a bacteria commonly found all warm-blooded animals including humans, livestock, wildlife, and birds. *E. coli* itself does not generally cause illness, but when present in large numbers the risk of becoming ill from other organisms is elevated. The most common illnesses contracted by bathers are infections of the eyes, ears, nose, and throat as well as stomach upsets. Typical symptoms include mild fever, vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps. Extensive studies were undertaken by Manitoba Water Stewardship in 2003 to determine the source of occasionally high *E. coli* counts and the mechanism of transfer to Lake Winnipeg beaches. Studies have shown large numbers of *E. coli* present in the wet sand of beaches. During periods of high winds, when water levels are rising in the south basin, these bacteria can be washed out of the sand and

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

into the swimming area of the lake. Research shows less than 10% of *E. coli* found at Lake Winnipeg beaches is from human sources, with the remaining percentage from birds and animals.

Figure 7 illustrates fecal coliform and *E. coli* densities in the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne in the Rat-Marsh watershed. Overall, the majority of fecal coliform and *E. coli* densities were below both the irrigation objective of 1000 MPN/ 100 mL, and the recreational objective of 200 MPN/ 100 mL (Williamson 2002). However, prior the year 2000, there were a number of years where the fecal coliform densities were well above both the irrigation and recreational objective. Since 2000 there have only been three instances (July 2001, May 2010, and July 2010) where fecal coliform and *E. coli* densities have exceeded the recreational objective, and have never since exceeded the irrigation objective.

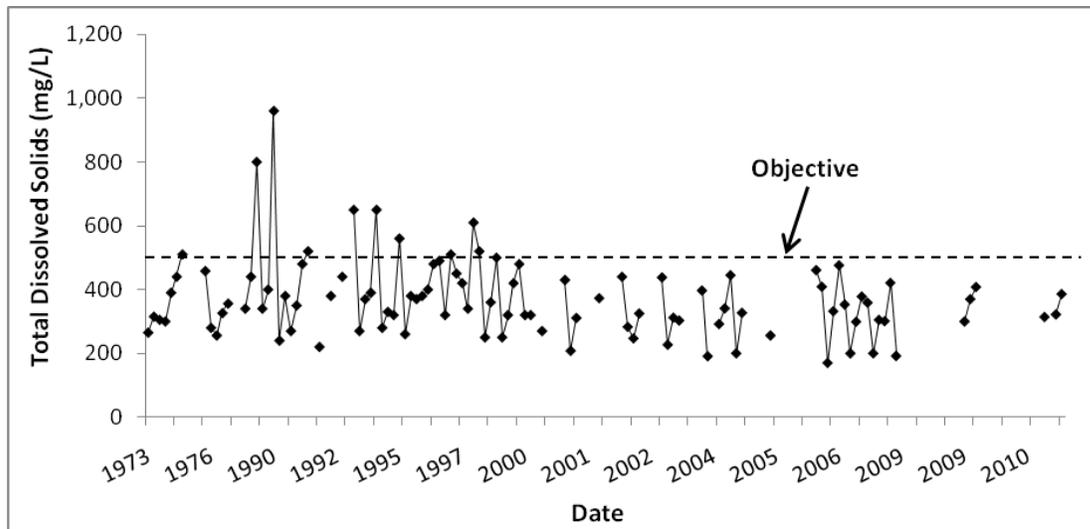


Figure 8: Total dissolved solids (mg/L) from the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne in the Rat-Marsh watershed between 1973 and 2011.

Drinking water variables of greatest concern are typically nitrates (objective value = 10 mg/L), arsenic (objective value = 0.025 mg/L), barium (objective value = 1 mg/L), boron (objective value = 5 mg/L), fluoride (objective value = 1.5 mg/L), uranium (objective value = 0.020 mg/L) and total dissolved solids (objective value = <500 mg/L) (Williamson 2002). It should be noted that the above stated drinking water objectives and guidelines only apply to treated, potable water. The data presented in this report however, are ambient natural untreated water quality samples, presented only for comparative purposes. At no time should raw untreated surface water be consumed for drinking water purposes, due to potential health concerns.

Drinking water variables for the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne were usually below the objectives, with the exception of total dissolved solids (Figure 8). Total dissolved solids typically were below the drinking water objective of 500 mg/L. However, there were a number of instances prior 1998 where this objective was exceeded. Total dissolved solids are a

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

secondary drinking water objective, meaning they are primarily an aesthetic concern, rather than an immediate health concern. Total dissolved solids are related to 'hard' water which can cause problems and increased costs to drinking water and hot water systems. In addition, high concentrations of total dissolved solids can be an indication of elevated concentrations of potentially harmful ions such as nitrates, arsenic, aluminum, lead, copper, etc. which can be detrimental to health if ingested.

Pesticide concentrations for the Rat River at PR 303 Otterburne was almost always below the level of detection, or very close to that limit, and typically did not exceed water quality objectives. The pesticides Dicamba, Simazine and MCPA occasionally exceeded the irrigation objectives of 0.006 µg/L, 0.05 µg/L, and 0.025 µg/L, respectively, at both locations. However, the aquatic life objective for Dicamba of 10 µg/L, Simazine of 10 µg/L, and MCPA of 2.6 µg/L were never exceeded.

Discussion

Nutrient enrichment or eutrophication is one of the most important water quality issues in Manitoba. Excessive levels of phosphorus and nitrogen fuel the production of algae and aquatic plants. Extensive algal blooms can cause changes to aquatic life habitat, reduce essential levels of oxygen, clog fisher's commercial nets, interfere with drinking water treatment facilities, and cause taste and odour problems in drinking water. In addition, some forms of blue-green algae can produce highly potent toxins.

Studies have shown that since the early 1970s, phosphorus loading has increased by about 10% to Lake Winnipeg and nitrogen loading has increased by about 13%. A similar phenomenon has also occurred in many other Manitoba streams, rivers, and lakes.

Manitobans, including those in the Rat-Marsh watershed, contribute about 47% of the phosphorus and 44% of the nitrogen to Lake Winnipeg (Bourne *et al.* 2002, updated in 2006). About 15% of the phosphorus and 6% of the nitrogen entering Lake Winnipeg is contributed by agricultural activities within Manitoba. In contrast, about 9% of the phosphorus and 6% of the nitrogen entering Lake Winnipeg from Manitoba is contributed by wastewater treatment facilities such as lagoons and sewage treatments plants.

As part of Lake Winnipeg Action Plan, the Province of Manitoba is committed to reducing nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg to those levels that existed prior to the 1970s. The Lake Winnipeg Action Plan recognizes that nutrients are contributed by most activities occurring within the drainage basin and that reductions will need to occur across all sectors.

Reductions in nutrient loads across the Lake Winnipeg watershed will benefit not only Lake

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

Winnipeg but also improve water quality in the many rivers and streams that are part of the watershed, including the Rat-Marsh watershed. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board's 2006 report "Reducing Nutrient Loading to Lake Winnipeg and its watershed: Our Collective Responsibility and Commitment to Action" (LWSB 2006) provides 135 recommendations on actions needed to reduce nutrient loading to the Lake Winnipeg watershed. However, reducing nutrients loading to the Lake Winnipeg watershed, including the Rat-Marsh watershed, is a challenge that will require the participation and co-operation of all levels of government and all watershed residents. Ensuring good water quality in the Rat-Marsh watershed and downstream is a collective responsibility among all living in the watershed.

Water Quality Management Zones

In June 2005 *The Water Protection Act* received royal ascension. This Act is intended to enable regulations to be developed for strengthening adherence to water quality standards, for protecting water, aquatic ecosystems or drinking water sources, and to provide a framework for integrated watershed management planning. The first regulation under *The Water Protection Act* — the *Nutrient Management Regulation* (see: www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/wqmz/index.html) — defines five Water Quality Management Zones for Nutrients to protect water from excess nutrients that may arise from the over-application of fertilizer, manure, and municipal waste sludge on land beyond the amounts reasonably required for crops and other plants during the growing season.

As of January 1, 2009, substances containing nitrogen or phosphorus cannot be applied to areas within the Nutrient Buffer Zone or land within Nutrient Management Zone N4 (Canada Land Inventory Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture Class 6 and 7, and unimproved organic soils). The width of the Nutrient Buffer Zone varies depending upon the nature of the body of water and is generally consistent with those contained in the Livestock Manure and Mortalities Management Regulation (42/98).

The *Nutrient Management Regulation* (MR 62/2008) prohibits the construction, modification, or expansion of manure storage facilities, confined livestock areas, sewage treatment facilities, and wastewater lagoons on land in the Nutrient Management Zone N4 or land in the Nutrient Buffer Zone. Further, the construction, installation, or replacement of an on-site wastewater management system (other than a composting toilet system or holding tank) within Nutrient Management Zone N4 or land in the Nutrient Buffer Zone is prohibited (Part 4: Section 14(1): f).

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

It is recommended that measures are taken to prevent the watering of livestock in any watercourses to prevent bank erosion, siltation, and to protect water quality by preventing nutrients from entering surface water.

No development should occur within the 99 foot Crown Reserve from the edge of any surface water within the rural municipalities. Permanent vegetation should be encouraged on lands within the 99 foot crown reserve to prevent erosion, siltation, and reduce the amount of nutrients entering surface water.

The Nutrient Management Regulation under *The Water Protection Act*, prohibits the application of a fertilizer containing more than 1% phosphorus by weight, expressed as P₂O₅, to turf within Nutrient Management Zone N5 (built-up area such as towns, subdivisions, cottage developments, etc.) except during the year in which the turf is first established and the following year. In residential and commercial applications, a phosphorus containing fertilizer may be used if soil test phosphorus (using the Olsen-P test method) is less than 18 ppm.

The Nutrient Management Regulation (MR 62/2008) under *The Water Protection Act*, requires Nutrient Buffer Zones (set-back distances from the water's edge) be applied to all rivers, streams, creeks, wetlands, ditches, and groundwater features located across Manitoba including within urban and rural residential areas and within agricultural regions (Table A1 in Appendix 1).

Drainage

Although it is recognized that drainage in Manitoba is necessary to support sustainable agriculture, it is also recognized that drainage works can impact water quality and fish habitat. Types of drainage include the placement of new culverts or larger culverts to move more water, the construction of a new drainage channels to drain low lying areas, the draining of potholes or sloughs to increase land availability for cultivation and the installation of tile drainage. Artificial drainage can sometimes result in increased nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus), sediment and pesticide load to receiving drains, creeks and rivers. All types of drainage should be constructed so that there is no net increase in nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) to waterways. To ensure that drainage maintenance, construction, and re-construction occurs in an environmentally friendly manner, the following best available technologies, and best management practices aimed at reducing impacts to water quality and fish habitat are recommended.

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

The following recommendations are being made to all drainage works proposals during the approval process under *The Water Rights Act*:

- There must be no net increase in nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) to waterways as a result of drainage activities. Placement of culverts, artificial drainage and construction and operation of tile drains can sometimes result in increased nutrient (nitrogen and phosphorus), sediment and pesticide loads to receiving drains, creeks and rivers.
- Synthetic fertilizer, animal manure, and municipal wastewater sludge must not be applied within drains.

Culverts

- Removal of vegetation and soil should be kept to a minimum during the construction and the placement of culverts.
- Erosion control methodologies should be used on both sides of culverts according to the Manitoba Stream Crossing Guidelines for the Protection of Fish and Fish Habitat.
- A strip of vegetation 1 to 3 metres wide should be maintained along drainage channels as a buffer. This will reduce erosion of channels and aid in nutrient removal.
- The proponent should revegetate exposed areas along drainage channels.

Surface Drainage

- Surface drainage should be constructed as shallow depressions and removal of vegetation and soil should be minimized during construction.
- Based on Canada Land Inventory Soil Capability Classification for Agriculture (1965), Class 6 and 7 soils should not be drained.
- There should be no net loss of semi-permanent or permanent sloughs, wetlands, potholes or other similar bodies of water in the sub-watershed within which drainage is occurring.
- Erosion control methodologies outlined in Manitoba Stream Crossing Guidelines for the Protection of Fish and Fish Habitat should be used where the surface drain intersects with another water body.
- A strip of vegetation 1 to 3 metres wide should be maintained along surface drainage channels as buffers. These will reduce erosion of channels and aid in nutrient removal.
- The proponent should revegetate exposed areas along banks of surface drainage channels.

Tile Drainage

- Discharge from tile drainage should enter a holding pond or wetland prior to discharging into a drain, creek or river.

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

Manitoba Water Stewardship is working towards the development of an environmentally friendly drainage manual that will provide additional guidance regarding best management practices for drainage in Manitoba.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

1. The Water Quality Index for the Rat-Marsh watershed is typically of 'Good' to 'Fair' quality. The majority of total phosphorus concentrations exceeded objectives, thus impacting the Water Quality Index.
2. Total phosphorus and nitrogen data indicate a steady increase in concentrations from 1973 to 2011. Because the Rat River is a tributary to the Red River management decisions should focus on nutrient reductions to the Rat-Marsh watershed to ensure the reduction of phosphorus and nitrogen loading to the Rat-Marsh watershed, and ultimately to Lakes Manitoba and Winnipeg.
3. Fecal coliform and *E. coli* densities post 2000 were always below irrigation and body contact objectives, but prior 2000 were above both objectives during a number of years. Thus, management decisions should ensure cattle are excluded direct access to water bodies. This will continue to minimize bacterial contamination and nutrient loading to surface waters in the Rat-Marsh watershed. As well, manure applications should follow provincial regulation.
4. Overall, strategies need to be implemented to protect and enhance the water quality and habitat in the Rat-Marsh watershed. Best Management Practices should be adopted to reduce nutrient loading to the watershed, and ultimately Lake Winnipeg. Consistent with the interim water quality targets set out in the Lake Winnipeg Action Plan, the Rat-Marsh watershed could consider setting a nutrient reduction goal of 10%.
5. Many steps can be taken to protect the Rat-Marsh watershed and its downstream environment. These include:
 - Maintain a natural, riparian buffer along waterways. Natural vegetation slows erosion and helps reduce the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus entering lakes, rivers and streams.
 - Where feasible, "naturalize" drainage systems to reduce streambed and stream bank erosion, and allowing opportunities for nutrients to be assimilated and settled out of the stream.

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

- Value and maintain wetlands. Similar to riparian buffers along waterways, wetlands slow erosion and help reduce nutrient inputs to lakes, rivers, and streams. Wetlands also provide flood protection by trapping and slowly releasing excess water while providing valuable habitat for animals and plants.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of phosphorus-based fertilizers on lawns, gardens, and at the cottage.
- Choose low phosphorus or phosphorus-free cleaning products.
- Prevent soil from eroding off urban and rural properties and reaching storm drains or municipal ditches.
- Ensure that septic systems are operating properly and are serviced on a regular basis. It's important that septic systems are pumped out regularly and that disposal fields are checked on a regular basis to ensure that they are not leaking or showing signs of saturation.
- Evaluate options for potential reduction of nutrients from municipal wastewater treatment systems. Consider options such as effluent irrigation, trickle discharge, constructed wetland treatment, or chemical treatment to reduce nutrient load to the watershed.
- Review the recommendations in the Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board 2006 report "Reducing Nutrient Loading to Lake Winnipeg and its Watershed: Our Collective Responsibility and Commitment to Action" with the intent of implementing those that are relevant to the Rat-Marsh watershed.

Contact Information

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And visit the Department's web site: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship>

Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

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Rat-Marsh Watershed Technical Water Quality Report

Appendix 1:

Table A1. The Nutrient Buffer Zone widths as outlined in the Nutrient Management Regulation (MR 62/2008) under *The Water Protection Act*.

Water Body	A ⁽¹⁾	B ⁽¹⁾
○ a lake or reservoir designated as vulnerable	30 m	35 m
○ a lake or reservoir (not including a constructed stormwater retention pond) not designated as vulnerable	15 m	20 m
○ a river, creek or stream designated as vulnerable		
○ a river, creek or stream not designated as vulnerable	3 m	8 m
○ an order 3, 4, 5, or 6 drain or higher		
○ a major wetland, bog, swamp or marsh		
○ a constructed stormwater retention pond		

(¹) Use column A if the applicable area is covered in permanent vegetation. Otherwise, use column B.

A healthy riparian zone is critical to river ecosystem health providing shade, organic inputs, filtering of nutrients and habitat creation (falling trees). Preserving space along rivers gives the river freedom to naturally meander across the landscape and buffers the community from flooding impacts. Reference to the Nutrient Buffer Zone and its significance can be coupled with **Section 3.1.8 – Environmental Policies** which identifies the goals of enhancing surface water and riverbank stability, and the importance of respecting setbacks.