

Crystal Lake Transfer Station Question and Answer Fact Sheet



1. What role does the Provincial Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) play in the management of the Crystal Lake Transfer Station?

Answer:

The MOECC is responsible for the administration and enforcement of legislation and policies related to the management of all waste transfer stations and all open and closed landfill sites in Ontario.

MOECC staff conduct routine inspections at sites and often make recommendations/actions required and/or Orders related to the management and operation of sites, including bear/human interactions.

2. What is the role of Provincial Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) in the management of the bears at the transfer station?

Answer:

The MNRF has wildlife management staff that provide recommendations for deterring bears from feeding at waste management sites and for the reduction of bear/human interactions in general for the safety of the people.

3. The bears have been at the Crystal Lake Transfer Station for years and there have been no incidents, why is there all of a sudden a problem?

Answer:

Actually there have been many "close calls" over the years and we have been very fortunate that there has never been a serious incident.

4. What happened at the Crystal Lake site that caused all the changes with the need to deter the bears?

Answer:

The MOECC did a routine site inspection on June 22 at the Crystal Lake Transfer site. During the inspection, a bear was on site and didn't show any fear of the inspector, the transfer station staff or the general public at the site. The Ministry and the Officer are concerned about the site staff's and general public's health and safety. Bears should not be allowed to mingle with the general public.

5. What action did the MOECC Inspector take:

Answer:

The MOECC Provincial Officer prepared a letter and issued an Order to the Municipality of Trent Lakes indicating they take immediate action on the following:

- Remove factors that may be encouraging bears coming to the site
- Staff need deter bears from entering the site, using bear bangers for example
- Staff shall temporarily close the site to the public when a bear is present and not open the site until the bear has left the site.

The Officer also requested the Municipality provide an action plan to address the nuisance bears. A consequence of non-compliance could result in the permanent or temporary closure of the transfer station and/or steep fines.

6. What is the Action plan / resolution the Municipality proposed?

Answer:

Trent Lakes prepared a Report with a resolution plan to address the bear/human conflict

- Guidance on this plan was agreed to by MNRF and MOECC
- Plan includes use of bear bangers, air cannon, paintball guns,
- Removal of trees/brush in bin areas
- Also includes plan for bin lids and possible fencing
- Staff have been instructed to close site if bear(s) can't be deterred

7. Where did Lyndsy and Marlene go, was this related to the handling of the bears?

Answer:

Marlene has happily retired. Lyndsy is now working at the Buckhorn Transfer Site and is happy with her new role and the increased responsibility and hours. Neither of these staffing decisions had anything to do with the MOECC inspection or their handling of the bears...just a coincidence on timing.

8. What is the problem with the bears feeding at the Transfer Station?

Answer:

The natural food for bears is not human garbage (including soiled baby diapers). A bear's natural diet consists of berries, fruit, insects and seeds. Bears that are overfeeding in the bins reproduce at unnatural rates causing a spike in the bear population which leads to additional risks of human/bear interactions.

9. Why are the Transfer Site attendants using paint ball guns and noise cannons to scare the bears?

Answer:

The Municipality was ordered by the MOECC to eliminate the incidence of bear/human interactions, and use of paint ball guns and noise cannons are the recommended approach to deter the bears.

These tactics are proven deterrents by MOECC and MNRF to discourage the bears from entering the transfer station while staff and general public are present. These tactics appear to be working well at the Crystal Lake site and the number of bears entering the site has been greatly reduced.

10. What did the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) say about the bear problem and the resolution plan prepared by the Municipality to deter the bears?

Answer:

They are pleased with the actions that Trent Lakes has taken to deter the bears and prevention of bear/human contact and use of air horns and bear bangers, and further to install bin lids.

Also, the paint balls do not hurt the bears as the attendants have been instructed to only aim at the rump.

11. Why were the trees removed at the Transfer Site? Who removed the trees? Who authorized the removal?

Answer:

It was identified that the tree cover adjacent to the disposal bins be removed in order to reduce the bear habitat close to the bins and to discourage the bears from taking refuge in the treed areas.

As part of the compliance to deter bears from the site the Municipality hired a third party tree removal company to complete the tree removal process.

12. Is the Municipality planning to landscape the area in front of the waste transfer station?

Answer:

Currently staff are removing the accumulated garbage from the formerly treed area as required by the MOECC. Additional work on site is planned for 2016 which will see further improvements to the overall appearance of the site including further work in this area.

13. Are there going to be lids put on the bins at the waste transfer station?

Answer:

Yes, the current bins at the transfer sites will have lids later this fall or winter. These lids should be in place at all transfer stations in the Municipality for 2016. The Municipality had the option of fencing every site or placing lids on the bins. Lids were selected not only due to the lower cost but also because they will prevent birds (turkey vultures and crows) from accessing and spreading the garbage. The lids will also greatly reduce the amount of snow, ice and rain that previously accumulated in the bins which will reduce the final disposal costs as we will not be paying to dispose of the rain, ice and snow.

14. Where are the bears going to go to feed once the lids are put on the bins?

Answer:

It is expected that the bears will return to feeding on their natural diet of berries, fruit, insects and seeds. The MNRF have indicated that spring after hibernation is when the bears will likely change their habit of feeding in the bins and return to a more natural source of food.

15. What can I do if bears begin coming to my cottage?

Answer:

Firstly, ensure that you do not attract bears to your property; do not store garbage or any other food source outside at your cottage, clean your BBQ and remove bird feeders until winter.

MNRF has suggestions on how to deal with bears, please go to the following link for information on the Bear Wise Program:

<http://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/report-bear-problem-bear-wise>

Also, if a bear causes an immediate threat call 911 or local police or for non-emergency call Bear Wise at 1-866-514-2327

16. Is the MNRF or the Municipality going to "cull" the bear population?

Answer:

No, neither the MNRF nor the Municipality have any intention of carrying out a "cull" at the Crystal Lake transfer station site. Only if the bear is posing an immediate threat to people (i.e. stalking or charging) or damaging property (breaking into buildings or vehicles)

The normal bear hunting season begins annually around September 1st in this area.

17. Is this current action being taken related to the Waste Management Study being conducted by the Municipality?

Answer:

No, the Waste Management Study is a completely separate item, the outcome of this study will answer questions related to such things as; Hazardous Waste, recycling, reuse, electronic waste, brush, wood chips etc.

18. Who do I contact if I have concerns about the changes at the Crystal Lake transfer station?

Answer:

Please call the Municipal office at 705-738-3800 or individual staff contact information can be found on our website at:

www.trentlakes.ca