

# GREEN & Aggregate Extraction

## BACKGROUND

It is typical for any rhetoric on aggregate resources to begin with statements on how essential it is to our modern lifestyle. Aggregates are a fundamental ingredient in construction materials, such as concrete or asphalt.

Virgin aggregates are extracted from either a gravel pit or a quarry depending on the type of rock. Extractive operations require use of heavy equipment (ie crushers) or blasting to extract the resource. Operations may also require large volumes of water to wash and process the materials. Materials are stockpiled until transported to market most often via heavy trucks.

Given their weight, transportation typically accounts for much of the expense. Through its legislation, the province encourages pits and quarries to be located as “close to market” as possible. This often pits communities against developers as the issues associated with extraction are sited adjacent to residential areas.

Unlike other development, provincial legislation prioritizes aggregate extraction above almost everything, including protecting prime farmland, source water areas, and even endangered species. The province, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), oversees operations through the *Aggregates Resources Act*. The province is also the largest consumer of aggregate resources, consuming an estimated 60% of materials used the province. Social and environmental advocates often recognize the conflict of interest in favouring industry interests.

## NEW LICENCE APPLICATIONS

An application for a new pit or quarry may require multiple levels of approvals, including:

- Official Plan Amendment
- Zoning By-Law Amendment
- ARA Licence
- Permit to Take Water (PTTW)

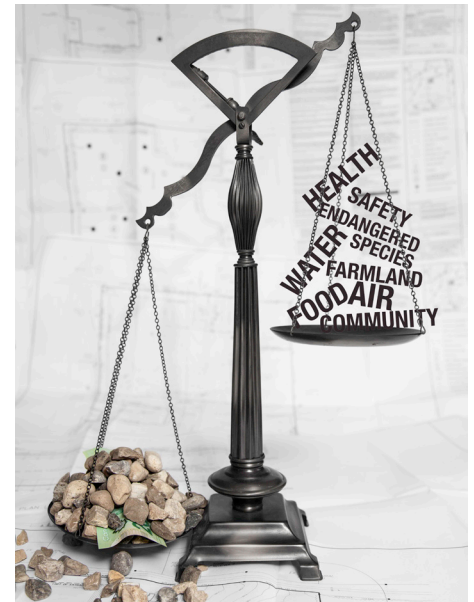
Applications are differentiated by being above or below the water table. Appeals are referred to the Ontario Municipal Board.

## VOLUNTARY STANDARDS

New voluntary standards are under development. Known as the Cornerstone Standards, certified sites are intended to supply “green” materials.

## REHABILITATION

Pits and quarries are required to have a rehabilitation plan, which can be costly. Many sites remain “abandoned” across Ontario - still licenced but without any activity. Other sites face environmentally-destructive proposals that seek to re-define “rehabilitation”. Oxford County faces an application to convert a mega-quarry into what would be Canada’s 4th largest landfill. Other sites face becoming dumps for “excess soils”, subdivisions, solar farms, or industrial areas. To observers, it appears rare for prime agricultural lands to be restored.



## SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Health and Safety
- Hydrology / hydrogeology (groundwater and surface water)
- Soils, Sand and Gravel
- Landscape
- Noise
- Air Emissions and Air Quality
- Transportation
- Agricultural Lands
- Social and Cultural Impacts
- Financial Costs to Taxpayers
- Natural Heritage
- Site Plans and Licence Conditions
- Cumulative Impacts and Appropriate Studies
- Rehabilitation
- Enforcement by Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Ministry of the Environment (MOE)
- Exportation of Ontario Aggregate
- Public Notification and Consultation
- Processing Construction Waste (“Recycling”)

## ACTION ITEMS - LOCAL

The Grand River watershed is stressed, with aggregate operations' accounting for significant portions of water taken.

Locally, GREN can advocate to strengthen official plans and zoning by-laws, and support local community organizations by efforts such as attending public meetings or media outreach.



## SHARED VALUE ORGANIZATIONS

**Gravel Watch Ontario**  
gravelwatch.org

**Food & Water First**  
foodandwaterfirst.com

**Ontario Soil Regulation Task Force**  
osrtf.ca

## NOTEWORTHY LOCAL CASES

**Concerned Residents Association of North Dumfries (CRAND)**  
crand.org

**Bridge Keepers**  
bridgekeepers.ca

**Conestogo-Winterbourne Residents Association**  
(now dissolved)



## ACTION ITEMS - PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION

Multiple pieces of relevant legislation are undergoing review. GREN could further protect the Grand River watershed by commenting or remaining vigilant on:

**1. The Aggregate Resources Act**

**2. The Ontario Municipal Board Act** - To begin review soon

**3. Land-Use Planning Legislation** (Greater Golden Horseshoe Growth Plan; Oak Ridges Moraine; Niagara Escarpment Plan; Greenbelt Plan)

**4. Waste-Free Ontario Act** (EBR #012-5832 - Comment Deadline February 29, 2016)

**5. Draft Strategy for a Waste-Free Ontario: Building the Circular Economy** (EBR #012-5834 - Comment Deadline February 29, 2016)

**6. Excess Soils Management** (EBR #012-6065 - Deadline March 26, 2016)

**7. Conservation Authorities Act** - Public comment provided in fall 2015.

**8. Endangered Species Act** - Weakening of the act being appealed by Ecojustice & Ontario Nature.

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