

## Amaranth gravel imports raise concerns about area ground water

By **JAMES MATTHEWS**, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A proposal to import construction materials to an Amaranth gravel pit has nearby Orangeville and Mono officials concerned about the continued safety of ground water resources.

Amarline Earthworks Inc. owns a gravel pit at 513151 2nd Line in Amaranth. The company wants the go-ahead to dump as much as 800,000 cubic metres of excavated construction materials from the Greater Toronto Area at the pit over three to five years.

That amount of fill will return the gravel pit to the ground level it was before aggregate extraction started in the 1930s.

Amarline is asking the township to grant them permission to dump more than the 20 daily truck loads as stipulated by the current bylaw.

It's become a contentious plan as the gravel pit is located within wellhead protection areas for some of Orangeville's municipal water supply. It's also close to Mono's Cardinal Woods Drinking Water Source Water Protection Zone.

So Amaranth Township held a virtual special council meeting to discuss the company's plans for the gravel pit.

Wellhead protection areas have been identified through studies as areas that are particularly susceptible to groundwater contamination. They're also particularly important for groundwater recharge to protect well capacity.

"While just outside the zone of groundwater influence, a project of this nature can have a long-lasting negative impact to the groundwater in the area," said Michael Dunmore, Mono's director of public works.

There's fear the dumped gravel will be detrimental to groundwater quantity and quality.

"The compacted non-native fill is a serious concern," said Dunmore in a letter to Nicole Martin, Amaranth's CAO.

In the missive, Dunmore highlights the fact the proposed dumping will be in or adjacent to Local Area A of the Subwatershed 19. That's the subject of the Joint Water Management Agreement between Amaranth and East Garafraxa and Mono and Orangeville.

"Protection of quantity and quality of municipal drinking water is a priority for this area," said Dunmore.

Gary Kocialek of Orangeville's infrastructure services department, informed Amaranth officials that Orangeville is strongly opposed to material being dumped at the pit.

Orangeville's water is supplied through groundwater wells, most of which are in or around the west end of Orangeville, Kocialek wrote in a letter of opposition sent to Amaranth's CAO.

"Our interest is in protecting both the quality and quantity of groundwater supply," he said.

Kocialek acknowledged the proponents have identified steps to reduce the potential for water contamination. But, Kocialek said, contamination is still a possibility.

"It seems nonsensical to even consider a proposal such as this in a location that is within a wellhead protection area and where the groundwater provides supply to a town of 30,000 people," Kocialek said. "Why not put a facility such as this in a location that is much more remote from a municipal wellfield?"

Eric Hood, senior engineer at Mississauga-based environmental engineering firm WSP Golder, said all fill delivered to the site will be regulated. And he said he hasn't been able to find many instances in which ground water has been contaminated by fill introduced to an area.

?If it's happening, it hasn't been widespread,? he said during the Aug. 10 council meeting.

Jack Kottelenberg of Amarline Earthworks said he was ?appalled? to hear concerns brought to council about the plan. He was surprised such concerns weren't expressed sooner in the process.

?I believe what we're doing here today is going to be better protection for the ground water,? he said. ?I don't know how much safer we can have this.?