

2018 Hamilton Harbour RAP Fact Sheet

BUI 11 Degradation of Aesthetics

IMPAIRED

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Delisting Criteria: The waters are free of any substance due to human activity which produces a persistent objectionable deposit, unnatural colour or turbidity, unnatural odour (e.g. oil slick, surface scum, algae) for a period of three consecutive years.



Note: A change in the delisting criteria to remove the term algae will be proposed in 2019. Algae is already assessed under BUI 8 Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae.

Did you know?

The Harbour is monitored for four aesthetics indicators: clarity, colour, odour, and debris.

An aesthetics monitoring program began in 2012 at the centre of the Harbour and the Fishway. In 2018 it expanded to include the northeastern shoreline, La Salle Park, Pier 8, and the Waterfront Trail.



K. O'Connor

The Harbour does not have the same severe persistent aesthetic issues as in the past, such as oil slicks, although incidents affecting aesthetics happen occasionally.

Algal blooms last weeks to months and affect clarity and colour of Hamilton Harbour's water. In 2018 vacuum trucks removed floating masses of decaying algae in the West Harbour.

Oil sheens have been reported in Strathearne Slip; one of the source areas has been identified. An oily Canada Goose was found in 2018; however, the source was not located in the Harbour.

Localized litter and debris accumulates in marina corners, but this issue is not uncommon in urban areas and non-AOC marinas. Litter is removed by the City of Hamilton and businesses reliant on recreation.

Rain events can flush unnatural debris (e.g. plastics) from watersheds and storm sewers; while large rain events can occasionally result in combined sewer overflows.



J. VandenByllaardt

What Was the Original Problem?

Aesthetics was deemed impaired in 1992 with the causes listed as occasional oil sheens, algal blooms, objectionable turbidity, floating scum, debris, and putrid material (HHRAP 1992). “Algae” was added into the delisting objective in a 2012 update.



Other AOC Comparisons

Most AOC targets are similar to Hamilton Harbour’s with two exceptions: Hamilton Harbour is the only AOC that includes algae directly in the delisting criteria (i.e., it overlaps with the Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae BUI) and has a qualifier that the conditions must be maintained for three consecutive years. The St. Clair River AOC dropped the two year qualifier to avoid a single event causing an issue. Some AOCs rely on lack of public complaints as proof of delisting. The Hamilton Harbour aesthetics monitoring follows the quantitative approach of the Toronto and Region AOC.

How are Improvements Being Made?

1. Randle Reef Remediation project is underway to cap and contain the coal tar pollution and eliminate the black tar-like “blobs” reported floating on the nearby surface in the early 2000s. Navigational restrictions were put in place as well to restrict boat traffic and minimize stirring up the material from the sediment.
2. Improvements to wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) and real-time control of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) improves aesthetics in the Harbour through reduction of nutrients that stimulate algae growth and suspended solids that affect clarity. Skyway WWTP upgraded to tertiary treatment in 2016 and Woodward WWTP upgrades are underway.
3. Spill regulations and industrial pollution prevention plans (e.g., Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, MISA) helped dramatically improved industrial discharges to Hamilton Harbour.
4. Yellow Fish Road™ teaches “Only Rain Down the Drain” helping to prevent oil/materials pollution.
5. Localized debris in shoreline corners is removed by the City of Hamilton and businesses reliant on recreation/tourism.
6. The City of Hamilton’s “Own Your Throne” campaign is educating the public on proper disposal of non-flushable items (e.g., tampon applicators, needles, wipes) that can otherwise end up in Hamilton Harbour through the combined sewer system.

What Still Needs to Happen?

- A status update, including a public perception survey was started in 2018.
- The Remedial Action Plan will make a recommendation regarding the inclusion of algae in the delisting criteria.

Where Can I Learn More?

[City of Hamilton](http://hamilton.ca/home-property-and-development/water-sewer/flushables-own-your-throne). 2018. Flushables – Own Your Throne: hamilton.ca/home-property-and-development/water-sewer/flushables-own-your-throne

[BARC](http://hamiltonharbour.ca/yellow_fish_road). 2018. Yellow Fish Road: hamiltonharbour.ca/yellow_fish_road

[BARC](http://hamiltonharbour.ca/reportcard). 2017. Toward Safe Harbour Report Card: hamiltonharbour.ca/reportcard

Most references can be provided as a PDF upon request. Visit hamiltonharbour.ca