

June 15, 2007

My name is Jan McCambley

I am a resident of Danford Lake.

I would like to speak to you about the Wood Turtle.... a species that is present in and along the shores of the Picanoc River.

The wood turtle is a species that is classified as vulnerable in Quebec and is protected by several Quebec laws.

We had expected that Dr. Raymond Saumure, a leading authority on the Wood Turtle, would to be here today to speak to you but unfortunately he had to cancel.

Dr. Saumure was born in Gatineau, Quebec. He received his Ph.D. in Wildlife Biology from McGill University for his research on the ecology and conservation of the Wood Turtle in Quebec.

He conducted much of his research along the Kazabazua River, on property that I own. This property is located near Danford Lake.

As a result of his research, we, as landowners, have made considerable effort to set aside this land for the preservation of the turtles.

Distribution

Wood Turtles are known to inhabit several rivers in Québec. The Kazabazua and Picanoc Rivers are among several inhabited by Wood Turtles in Pontiac County, Québec. The first specimens were reported from the Kazabazua River in the Danford Lake area in August 1946. In June of 1953, an adult male specimen was collected from the same area and deposited in the Canadian Museum of Nature herpetology collection. The first sighting of Wood Turtles in the Picanoc River occurred much later, reported to the Canadian Museum of Nature in May 1987. Thus, the presence of Wood Turtles in these two rivers has been documented officially for at least 18 years.

It should be noted that the Kazabazua River is directly connected to Johnson Lake, which is located very close to the site of the proposed landfill. If untreated leachate should make it's way into Johnson Lake and into the Kazabazua River, the turtles aquatic habitat could be seriously affected.

I have here a copy of the historical record of an official sighting of the wood turtle on the Picanoc. This record is registered in the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa. The sighting was made by Mr. Saumure's father and brother.

The following is some specific information about the wood turtle and the Quebec laws that protect them.

The North American Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*) is a disturbance-dependent species that requires openings in the forest canopy for thermoregulation, egg incubation, and some foraging. The species is semi-aquatic, with populations centered upon small meandering rivers and streams characterized by sand or gravel substrates, relatively clear waters, and slow to moderate currents. Wood Turtles require the aquatic component of their habitat for hydration, mating, and hibernation. Being only semi-aquatic, they are also known to frequent various types of forests, meadows, bogs, swamps, fields, and pastures.

Historically, Wood Turtle populations were likely confined to open areas created by beaver activity and/or forest fires. Today, most Wood Turtle populations now appear dependent upon agriculture and logging operations and other man made clearings, which create suitable foraging and nesting habitats.

The proposed landfill site would be a man made clearing to which the turtles would be attracted for nesting.

Conservation Status

Today, the tendency to occupy man made clearings exposes Wood Turtles to significant risk. Wood Turtle populations are declining throughout their range as a direct result of such human activities as habitat destruction, vehicular traffic, and collecting for the pet trade. For millennia, turtles have relied on the protection afforded them by an armoured shell; an adaptation quickly becoming obsolete in a world of motorized vehicles. Consequently, Wood Turtles now rely on a number of laws to protect them.

In Québec, the Wood Turtle is protected as a non-harvestable reptile under law L.R.Q., c. C-61.1. Thus it is illegal to capture, hunt, and/or keep in captivity all turtle species native to Québec, regardless of their origin. Article 26 also specifies that one cannot disturb, destroy, or damage the eggs or nest of an animal. The Wood Turtle's aquatic habitat is also indirectly protected under law L.R. 1985, ch. F-14, a law that specifically protects fish habitat. Moreover, Québec law L.R.Q., c. Q-2 includes a decree concerning the protection of riverbanks and adjacent floodplains, the Wood Turtle's primary habitat.

To further protect the Wood Turtle in Québec, the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune initially listed the Wood Turtle as a species "likely to be designated threatened or vulnerable". In March 2005, the Wood Turtle was officially listed as a vulnerable species and is now afforded special protection by the Québec government. When we look specifically at the potential threat of the proposed landfill to the wood turtle, there are several areas of concern:

1. There is the potential for contamination of their eggs through runoff and groundwater.
2. Racoons are known predators of the wood turtle. The landfill would attract racoons leading to an increase in local populations. Racoons would pose a

significantly increased threat to the wood turtles that would be attracted to this man made clearing for nesting.

3. Seagulls are also known predators of the wood turtle.
4. A study carried out in the Outaouais has confirmed specifically that heavy trucks are the greatest cause of highway mortality of the wood turtle.

I have here an article on the mortality of turtles on the routes in the Outaouais. It specifically refers to incidents of wood turtle mortality where the Kazabazua River cross 105 highway in the village of Kazabazua, and also on route 301 where the river crosses the highway near Danford Lake. The increase of 122 heavy trucks per day as a result of the proposed landfill would pose a significant increased threat to the wood turtle.

The environmental impact study submitted by LDC indicates that effort was made to locate wood turtles. This search was conducted in June 2005. Dr. Saumure indicates that it is almost impossible to locate wood turtles in June because they are nesting and that only an expert on the species would have the specific knowledge as to where to look to confirm whether or not the species was present. The month of May is the correct time of year to conduct a search for wood turtles.

Therefore before any decision could be made on this project it would be necessary to conduct a thorough search for the species by an accredited specialist at the correct time of year.

I also have a copy of a 2005 newspaper article describing where the presence of wood turtles stopped the development of a proposed sports playing field in New Jersey.

The wood turtle is a fully protected vulnerable species in Quebec and North America.

I would like to submit to the commission copies of the articles that I have mentioned.

Dr. Raymond A. Saumure, maybe contacted at insculpta@gmail.com

Website: www.woodturtle.com

Thank you.

Species Clemmys insculpta No. NMS Cat. No.
Station No. Accession No.
Field No.

Observations only Mark-release by G.M. Saumure
Locality Picnoco River, Canton de Normandie
County/Dist. Pontiac Province Qué Country

Date 18 May 1987 Time (start)

1	2	0	0
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 dawn day
Time (finish)

1	5	0	0
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 dusk night

Collector(s) R.A. Saumure Sr., G.M. Saumure

Weather Sunny + Moderate winds; had rained

Habitat (vegetation, water type, human impact, temp, topography):
Area closed to sandy bank on picnoco river,
Pontiac Co., Québec

Capture data Not captured

Other species observed common

Large *Clemmys insculpta* chasing a smaller specimen, right up to shore. Larger specimen was approx 9 inches as seen underwater, smaller specimen was approx 6". Both specimens were scared by observers before capture attempt was initiated.

Have pictures of habitat taken at a latter date.

Lat. $46^{\circ}06'10''N$
Long $76^{\circ}31'21''W$

Grid: (31^{k/a}) 18TUF 810.063

National Museum of Natural History : Branch of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560

Main Identity

From: "Raymond A. Saumure" <insculpta@hotmail.com>
To: <bobwilson649@hotmail.com>
Sent: December 28, 2005 12:07 PM
Subject: FW: Woodies Win in New Jersey

>Madison Eagle (New Jersey)

>Max Pizarro

>21 December 2005

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>Worried Wood Turtles Win

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>Madison: The shy, retiring, and threatened Wood Turtle [*Glyptemys insculpta*], easily overlooked and facing an uncertain future as its habitat is developed, appears to have driven a stake into the heart of plans by Chatham Borough and Chatham Township to develop two playing fields on the Woodland Park property off Woodland Road, adjacent to the Independence Court neighborhood in Madison.

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>In a long-awaited decision released Monday, December 12th, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) classified a portion of the site as "exceptional" wetlands for their habitat value, requiring a 150-foot buffer from any development, and effectively blocking the plan to install two playing fields on the 6.6-acre site.

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>Officials in the Chathams indicated Wood Turtle sightings filed by a consultant for Madison neighbors prompted the DEP's decision, and the wider wetlands buffer would make it impractical to develop more than one playing field on the property.

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>In a letter to the engineering consultant for the Chathams, Mark Godfrey, supervisor for the Bureau of Inland Regulation, said information submitted to the DEP on behalf of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township by Joseph Koelher of the engineering firm Hatch, Mott, MacDonald, was accurate in its delineation of the wetlands area on the wooded property.

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>Then, in fateful words Chatham officials had been anticipating for months, Godfrey went on: "The department has determined that the wetlands designated as 'C' and 'CA' are of exceptional resource value and require a 150-foot transition area or buffer."

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>He added, "All other wetlands on site are of intermediate resource value and require a 50-foot transition area or buffer."

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>Thomas Ciccarone, the Chatham Township administrator, said two reported sightings of a Wood Turtle, one near the tract in a utility right-of-way, and the other on the Woodland Park property itself, convinced the state to designate the wetlands as "exceptional," requiring a much wider buffer from disturbance. The Wood Turtle is considered threatened in New Jersey.

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>Chatham Township and Chatham Borough, which jointly own the tract, had planned to develop two recreation playing fields on the site, but the required-150-foot-wide buffer zone renders that plan impossible, local officials said.

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>"We could put one field in there," Chatham Borough Mayor Richard Plambeck reacted after reviewing Godfrey's letter.

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>"We'll have to look at it," Plambeck said, adding, "The whole issue is related to Lum Avenue," a reference to a private group, the Chatham Athletics Foundation, that is pursuing a partnership with residents and officials to develop an artificial turf field in Chatham Borough, relieving the wear and tear on the playing field and enabling greater use.

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>The proposal to install artificial turf on the Lum Avenue field in Chatham Borough, however, is encountering opposition from that neighborhood over concerns about year-round use and traffic.

>"We are definitely stretched for field space," remarked Mayor Plambeck. "The question is, which projects are we going to first. We are about 25 percent below what we need."

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>Township Administrator Ciccarone noted the Chatham Township Committee and the
>Chatham Borough Council "can petition to have that (wetlands classification) changed."
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>But informally, officials conceded it was unlikely the DEP would change the classification
>following biologist Blaine Rothausers filing of reports of two Wood Turtle sightings, one in
>the vicinity of Woodland Park and the second on the property itself.
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>"It was in October," Rothausers said of the second sighting. "It was traveling up a rivulet on
>the property."
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>Rothausers, a Florham Park resident and an employee of Thonet Associates, environmental
>consultants in Pittstown, undertook a site assessment on behalf of Madison residents
>whose back yards are adjacent to the Woodland Park tract.
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>For nearly two years, the Madison residents have argued the Chathams did not appreciate
>the extent of wetlands on the tract when they jointly purchased the property in 2002, and
>altered their original plans to push the proposed location of the playing fields to just 40
>feet from back yards on Independence Court in Madison. The residents said that was too
>close to shield their homes from the fields and associated lights and parking lot and
>protested the loss of a quiet woodland. "This is a victory for the environment," Rothausers
>said Tuesday, December 13th, on learning of the DEP's response to the municipalities.
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>The biologist said he believes the preservation of areas like Woodland Park is important
>because they serve as travel-ways for wildlife between larger wetlands resources, such as
>the Passaic River floodplain and the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.
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>Rothausers said the future of the state's wildlife habitat hinges on such connecting points
>-- "greenways as well as flyways."
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>The Chathams jointly purchased the former residential property off Woodland Road in
>2002, splitting the \$1.6 million cost equally, with the help of a \$250,000 open space grant
>from Morris County, state Green Acres funds and the open space funds of the two
>municipalities.
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