

Year in Review Summary
December 2020
Alton Community Liaison Committee (CLC)

The following Project Update provides information on activity for 2020 regarding Alton.

- Engineering review and Continuous Improvement
- Follow-up from 2020 Court decision– Sipekne’katik vs. Alton Natural Gas Storage LP
- Site activities
- Ongoing biological research re: the Shubenacadie River Estuary
- Alton natural gas pipeline
- Alton website
- Alton community investment
- Alton CLC Terms of Reference

Overview

This year has been a challenge as we have all adapted to new ways of working and living together. In 2020, the project advanced key engineering and technical studies to improve environmental and operational performance. Local engineering and technical firms, Dalhousie University researchers and experts from across Canada have contributed their expertise.

Engineering review and Continuous Improvement

In 2020 work concluded on the engineering review of the Alton Natural Gas Storage Project (The Project). The purpose of the review was to assess our systems and to make improvements where such opportunities exist. Third party engineering firms conducting the review have provided helpful external perspectives on project plans and modelling. Based on the engineering review, we are considering modifications to improve the environmental and operational performance of the Project, including a significantly lower level of salinity at the point of brine release and a barrier to prevent fish from accessing the brine release area in the tidal Shubenacadie River. The changes may include:

- Pre-mixing the brine prior to release, to reduce the salinity levels at the end of pipe from 260ppt to 38ppt at the point of release.
- Design of the mixing area to more effectively exclude fish, ensuring a fully protective barrier between the mixing area and the Shubenacadie River.
- Increasing on-site storage of water and brine to increase retention times and provide improved operational capability to slow or shutdown the intake of water and release of brine as needed.
- Reducing the number of caverns that would be developed, thus reducing the overall time required to complete cavern development.

The proposed changes are informed by 10 years of river research, past feedback from community members and stakeholders and our internal engineering review. Any such changes

to the project would need to be reviewed and approved by government agencies before construction could begin.

2020 Court decision – Sipekne’katik First Nation appeal of Alton Industrial Approval

The Industrial Approval (amended on April 8, 2019) for the activity of a Brine Storage Pond at Alton was set aside by the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia in a decision March 24, 2020 to allow for additional consultation of 120 days between Sipekne’katik First Nation and the Crown regarding the Band’s Aboriginal title claim. A [copy of the Court decision](#) is available on the Alton website. Alton Natural Gas Storage will continue to comply with the Court’s decision and order.

Until the government-led consultation process is completed, only limited activity can take place at the project’s river site. We understand this process is ongoing and as such we do not have a firm timeline for restarting activities.

Alton Natural Gas Storage remains committed to ongoing, open dialogue with the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia about the Alton Project. We continue to be supportive of Mi’kmaw involvement in the Project including an active and ongoing role on environmental protection and project benefits with the community.

Site activities

Planned activities at our site are minimal and consist of care and maintenance to ensure the safe and proper upkeep of our facilities. Over the summer months we placed safety signage along the dike to remind the public to exercise caution because conditions along the riverbank are changeable and the ground is uneven.

Ongoing biological research re: the Shubenacadie River Estuary

The river monitoring research led by Dalhousie University continued this year funded by an annual grant we provide to the university. The research has been ongoing since 2008, and continues to amass significant data on the Shubenacadie River, and seasonal variation in flows, salinity, and fish utilization of the river.

River data has been published in peer reviewed academic journals. These include [Transactions of the American Fisheries Society](#) and [Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology](#). The articles can be accessed on the Environment section of the Alton website.

This spring, researchers identified the first Striped bass eggs on May 23, 2020. This date is important as it would trigger the shut-down period when no brine is released for protection of this important Striped bass life-stage. A new presentation on the Alton website, [Alton and the Environment - Baseline Monitoring and Research on the Tidal Shubenacadie](#), describes the Dalhousie research.

Alton natural gas pipeline

An Environmental Assessment (EA) of the Alton natural gas pipeline was approved with conditions by the Nova Scotia Minister of the Environment in 2013. Once constructed, the 10KM pipeline will connect the natural gas storage facility near Stewiacke, NS to the Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline system.

The work to cut the one to two metre wide “centre line” along the 10 km pipeline route took place in the first quarter of 2020. Design for the pipeline was completed by an engineering firm in Halifax.

Future work related to the Alton pipeline will include geotechnical work, applications to NS Environment and the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board and confirmation of a compensation plan with Nova Scotia Environment (Protected Areas Division) for any impact within the 20m wide pipeline right of way crossing the proposed wilderness conservation lands.

Alton website

The Alton website was updated in July 2020 to a mobile-friendly platform with improved navigation and new content. Please visit www.altonnaturalgasstorage.ca

Alton community investment

Alton continues to support non-profit organizations, projects, and initiatives that help build and enhance the community. In early 2020, the Project provided funds to support the Colchester East Hants Health Centre Foundation for their COVID-19 campaign and to the Stronger Together Nova Scotia Fund to help families and communities in Colchester County with immediate and long-term needs, resiliency and capacity building.

Alton CLC Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the CLC were confirmed by the members as of December 14, 2020. It was noted that due to the pandemic, quarterly meetings were not held in person, rather updates were shared with CLC members by email and telephone calls.