

Staff Report

Report To: Operations Committee
Report From: Bryce McDonald, Manager of Water and Wastewater
Meeting Date: March 20, 2025
Report Code: OP-25-001
Subject: DWQMS Audit Report – January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024

Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report OP-25-001 respecting DWQMS Audit Report – January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, the Operations Committee recommends that City Council receive the report for information purposes.

Highlights:

- The external audit process is prescribed by the Ontario Drinking Water Quality Management Standard. It is undertaken annually.
- The subject Audit is notable as it satisfies a component of the renewal requirements of the City's Drinking Water System License and Drinking Water Works Permit.
- The external audit took place January on 16th and 17th.
- One (1) Minor Non-conformance related to document and records control and one (1) Opportunity for Improvement related to clarification of critical control points (CCP) in our Risk Assessment was identified.
- One (1) Minor Non-conformance and One (1) Opportunity for Improvement were identified

Strategic Plan Alignment:

This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

Climate and Environmental Implications:

This supports the objectives of the City's Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan by considering climate adaptation in the development of the City's strategies, plans, and policies.

By ensuring that regular monitoring is undertaken, minute trends can be detected and potential adjustments, such as to policies or operations, can be made before climate impacts affect service beyond the point of such small changes.

Previous Report/Authority:

The Operations Committee receives the DWQMS Management Review report annually. Staff anticipate that the Operations Committee and Council may be interested in seeing the results of the external audit, which has not typically been provided in the past.

Background:

One of the annual activities required by the Drinking Water Quality Management System (DWQMS) Operational Plan is an annual third-party audit. In preparation for this external audit, the City first undergoes an audit lead by a consultant that represents the client's interests to look for potential issues that may be revealed as non-conformities during the external audit. The internal audit results are included in the management review, an analysis of which was provided to the Operations Committee in February 2025.

The external audit took place on January 16th and 17th, 2025. The City elects to undergo an in-person audit annually as it tends to be a more thorough and, therefore, valuable process for identifying areas of opportunity. In many jurisdictions, it is now common for only the recertification audit (every three years) to be in person; the interim audits are undertaken remotely.

This year was a recertification audit. A recertification audit is associated with the renewal year for the municipality's Drinking Water License and Drinking Water Works Permit. In the City's case, the application due date is April 1st, 2025. As an audit of broader scope, it must include interviews with individuals representing Upper Management (Director, City Manager, Council).

Analysis:

The audit was based on the provincial Drinking Water Quality Management Standard version 2.0. The Auditor identified numerous system strengths, including:

- Staffs' commitment to DWQMS
- An evident continual improvement culture
- Strong communication processes
- Thorough internal audit processes

For the minor non-conformance identified, a root cause analysis was conducted with staff, a corrective action plan was submitted and approved by the Auditor. The efficiency of these improvements will be confirmed in the 2026 audit. The Opportunity for Improvement will be addressed during the annual risk assessment review, at which time the focus will be on critical control points.

Financial Implications:

As this report is provided for information, there is no direct financial impact.

Communication Strategy:

As this is an internal operational procedure, there is no requirement for public engagement. Communication is limited to the DWQMS team and conveying that information to Upper Management (including Operations Committee and Council).

Consultation:

The Minor Non-conformance and Opportunity for Improvement will guide DWQMS activities in 2025. Approval from Committee and Council will be sought if applicable, per prevailing policies.

Attachments:

1. DWQMS External Audit Report

Recommended by:

Bryce McDonald, Manager of Water and Wastewater

Lara Widdifield, Director of Public Works and Engineering

Submission approved by:

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Bryce McDonald at bmcDonald@owensound.ca or 519-376-4274 ext. 3224.