

Bala Falls Hydro- electric Power Station

Environmental Screening Report Review

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Bala Falls

Hydro-electric Power Station Proposal

Update: Environmental Screening Report



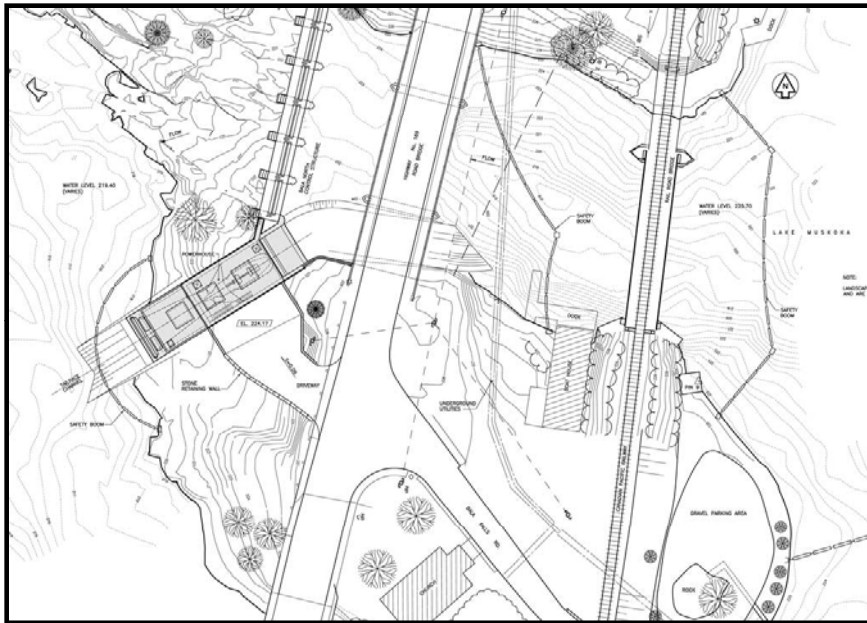
Environmental Screening Report: Big

- Main Report: 261 pages
- 33 appendices: 357 pages
- Total: 618 pages
 - Even the appendices have appendices!
- Highly technical, much information
 - Benthic invertebrates, frazil ice formation, fugitive dust, fish entrainment mortality, aquatic biota, lithic scatter, Hess sampler, riverene, cyprinids, electrofishing...

But...

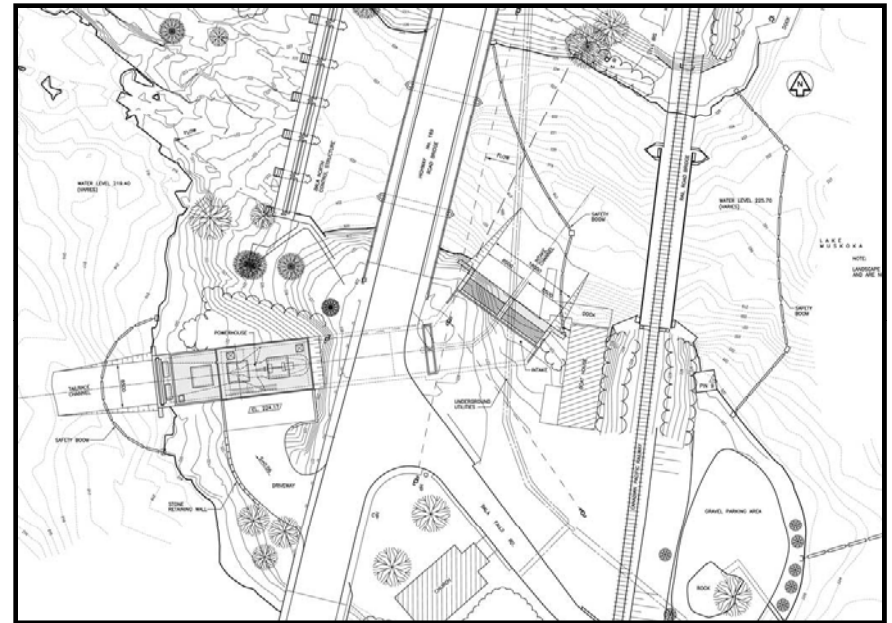
- On cursory review we continue to have major concerns associated with:
 - Public access
 - Public safety
 - Noise and vibration
 - Pollution to the Moon River
 - Economic impact
 - Tourism impact
 - Appearance
- Our main questions remain unanswered
- Our main concerns unaddressed

Option 1 and Option 2



Option 1

- On MNR land (?)
- Directly south of north dam



Option 2

- On MNR and District land
- Moved south
 - 10 m at the water
 - 23 m at the road

How Did We Get Here?

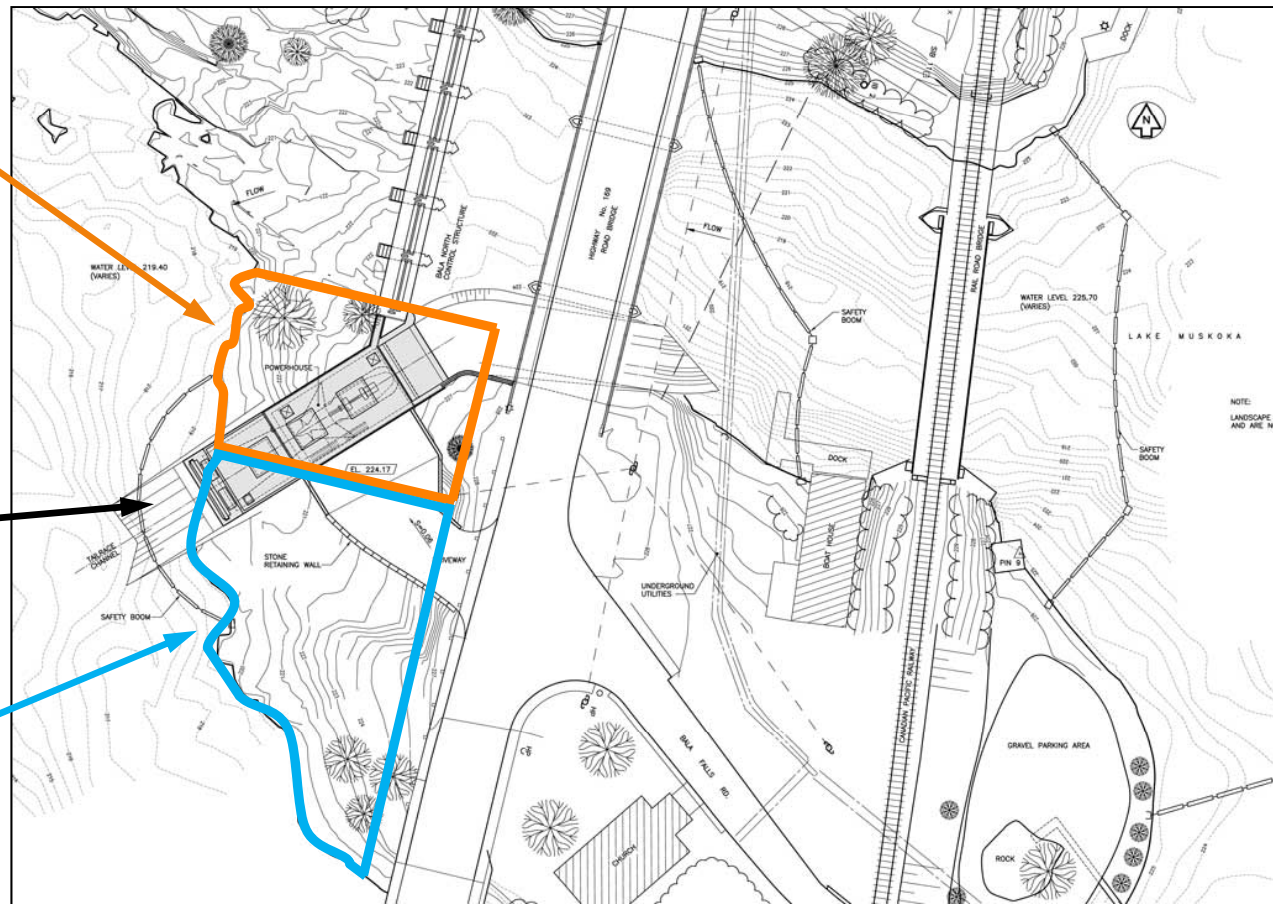
- Option 2
 - Apparently responds to public concern about access to the south side of the north falls
- Proponent offered Option 2, but said if not approved they could/would implement (much maligned) Option 1

Option 1: Also Needs DMM Land

Ministry of Natural Resources land

Option 1 Power Station

District Municipality of Muskoka land



District Council Has Full Control

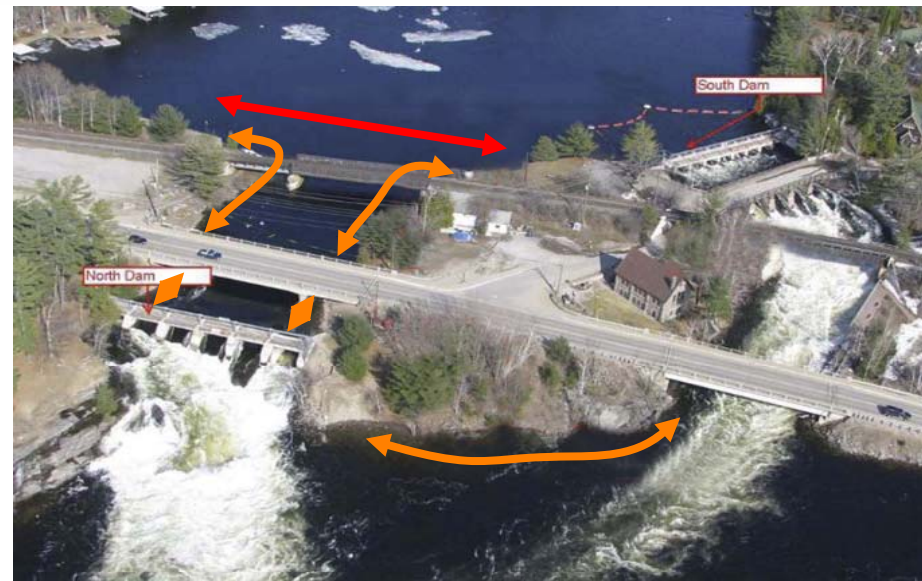
- If this is the case then Option 1 would **also** require approval from District Council
- District therefore has complete control
- Could stop project as:
 - Being inconsistent with the public use of the land as green space and **parkland**
 - **Public access and safety are vital** to the future tourism draw of the Bala economy
 - Needing **more information** on pollution, noise, public access to the water, and public safety

Have all Impacts been Mitigated?

- Proponent is obligated to mitigate all environmental impacts identified through the review process
- An elevation to an *Environmental Review* or *Individual Environmental Assessment* is required if environmental concerns have not been mitigated

Effective Mitigation: Public Access?

- Cannot mitigate for loss of use, and in particular loss of enjoyment and access to the falls



↔ ≡ No Public Access

- There isn't much publicly-accessible shoreline in Bala – and the power station would take most of this
- As an observation, all three of the power stations at and north of Bracebridge have barbed-wire fencing

Effective Mitigation: Public Safety?

- At the inflow side:
 - Water modeling per the report confirms that it would be extremely dangerous to overshoot docking at the town docks.
- At the outflow side:
 - Tailrace brings the fast water from the south channel 160' closer to the base of the north falls and the area of public access
 - Two fatalities this past summer
 - Possibly due to fast water from the south falls
 - Portage suggestions:
 - Dangerous, hazardous to canoes, or just unworkable

Effective Mitigation: Public Safety?

- “Appropriate safety signage and booms will be installed to warn of site hazards”, so the “Longer term operational risk minimal”.
 - Putting in signage doesn’t remove the danger.
 - The fact is, this is putting a dangerous industrial facility in a recreational area.
 - This is creating new dangers, and signage isn’t a solution.

Effective Mitigation: Public Safety?

- Rescue Scenario?
 - Water intake will be as fast as spring freshet (runoff)
 - Fast enough that swimmers may have difficulty and stalled boats may be held against the proposed safety booms.
- How much time would it take to get the **unattended plant shut down?**
- What group would have skills for a rescue?
- Response to date from proponent: **“Please check with OPP to see if there is an existing plan”**

Effective Mitigation: Pollution?

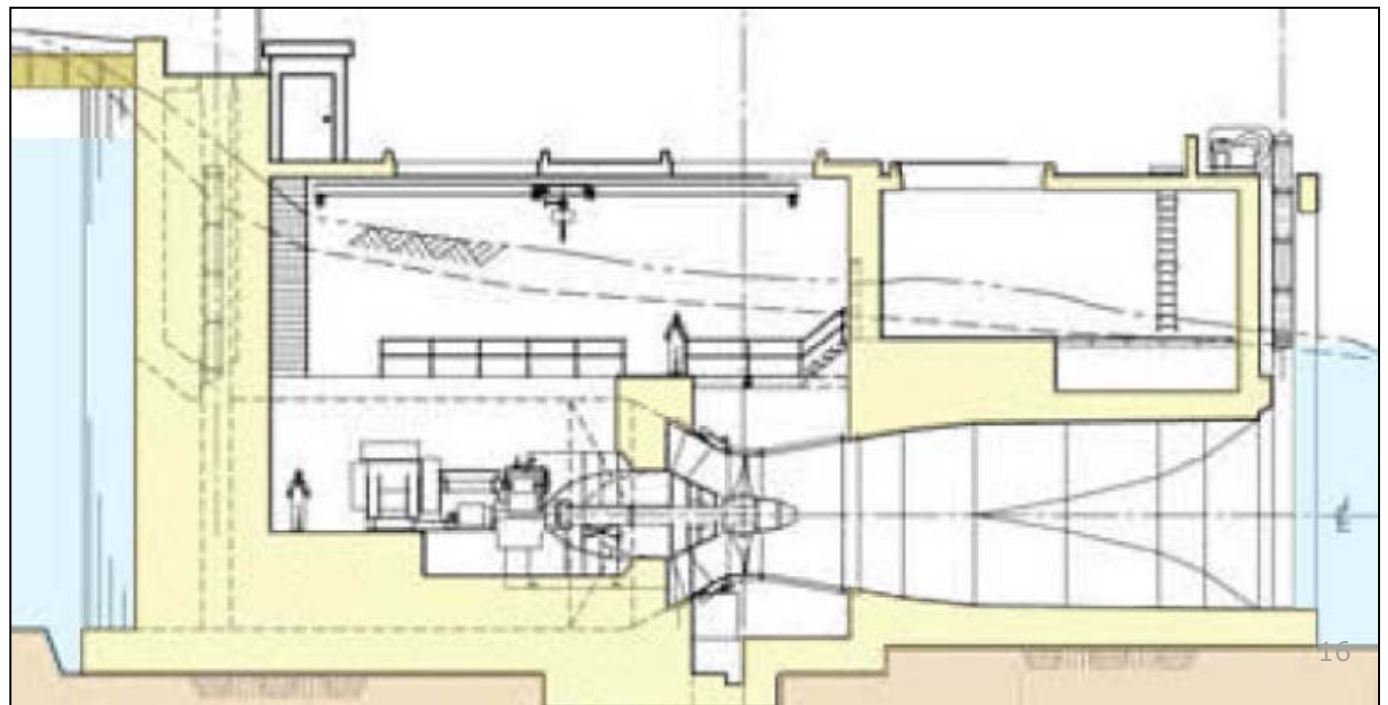
- 288,000 litres of water per day used to cool machinery, building sump, wash sink
 - Same as 260 homes
 - Few details on how this is treated before being dumped into Moon River
- Everyone else must use sewage treatment plant

Effective Mitigation: Noise?

- Estimates only for generator cooling fan and transformer noise
- But ignores noise and vibration from:
 - Turbine, gearbox, generator, and transformer cooling fan
 - Back-up generator will require regular testing
- Assumes sound will be masked by Bala's "urban hum" which isn't present in Bala
- Background noise of falls would be gone
 - Replaced by the industrial hum and drone of machinery and cooling fans

Effective Mitigation: Vibration

- Huge rotating machinery results in vibration
 - It won't feel like you're in a park, more like you're standing in a factory



Effective Mitigation: Tourism?

- **Tourism today**
 - Completely free and accessible scenic vistas provided by the Bala Falls
 - Accessible from the park, the shoreline or water
- **Tourism tomorrow?**
 - From the highway:
 - 81'-wide concrete and fenced water intake on one side
 - Huge noisy cooling fans blasting hot air on the other side
 - From the lookout:
 - The sound of water pouring over the falls will be reduced to a relative trickle, and instead visitors will hear the hum and drone of machinery
 - Vibration at your feet

Effective Mitigation: Economic Impact?

- In response to the query “Will project have negative effects on the economic base...” the proponent’s response was “short-term positive effect”.
- Report claims a net positive overall effect because **one person** will need to visit the power station periodically
- Reality is an overwhelming long-term negative economic impact to the seasonal and tourism industries that are the base of the Bala economy

Effective Mitigation: Economic Impact?

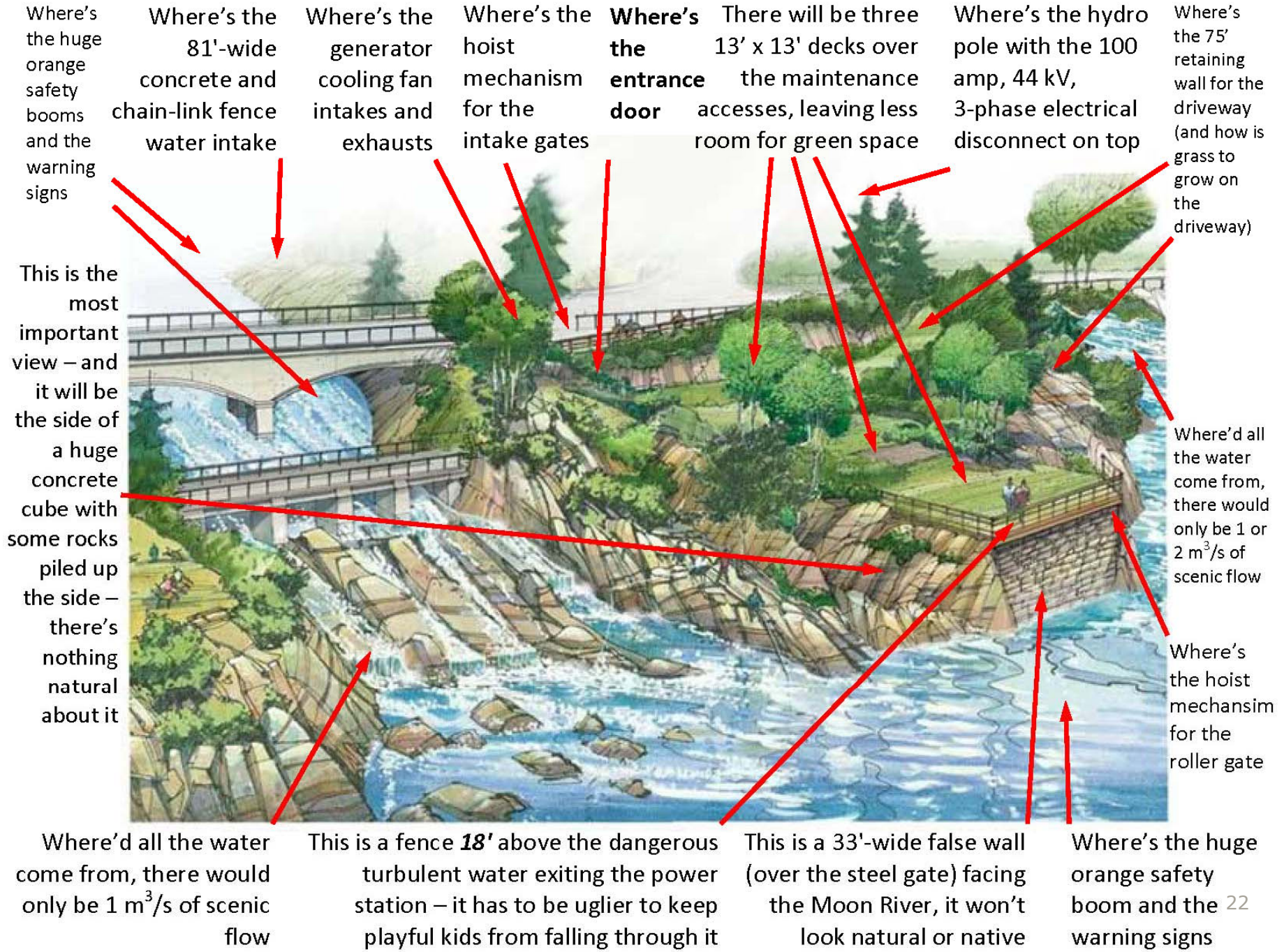
- Adjacent businesses will be significantly and permanently affected
 - How will Purk's Place or the antique store in the Stone Church be able to stay in business?
 - How about the other businesses in town that won't have any tourism to support?
 - During construction:
 - Bala will lose through-traffic
 - Site being used for construction staging for two summer tourist seasons
 - Buildings subjected to a huge amount of nearby rock blasting

Effective Mitigation: Performance Bond?

- What assurances and guarantees does the District have that the work on its own land will be fully completed?
 - SREL is a single asset company with no cross guarantees from any other company
 - Proponent is building a highway bridge over a 41' deep culvert, dumping tons and tons of rocks into the north falls channel and Moon River

Effective Mitigation: Appearance?

- Building permits require side elevation and top plan views and these plans have not been included in the ESR
- No new information—artist's rendering, referred to by proponent as preliminary, remains unchanged
- Need to see this key information while we still have assurance input will be accepted



Where's the huge orange safety booms and the warning signs

Where's the 81'-wide concrete and chain-link fence water intake

Where's the generator cooling fan intakes and exhausts

Where's the hoist mechanism for the intake gates

Where's the entrance door

There will be three 13' x 13' decks over the maintenance room for green space

Where's the hydro pole with the 100 amp, 44 kV, 3-phase electrical disconnect on top

Where's the 75' retaining wall for the driveway (and how is grass to grow on the driveway)

This is the most important view - and it will be the side of a huge concrete cube with some rocks piled up the side - there's nothing natural about it

Where'd all the water come from, there would only be 1 or 2 m³/s of scenic flow

Where's the hoist mechanism for the roller gate

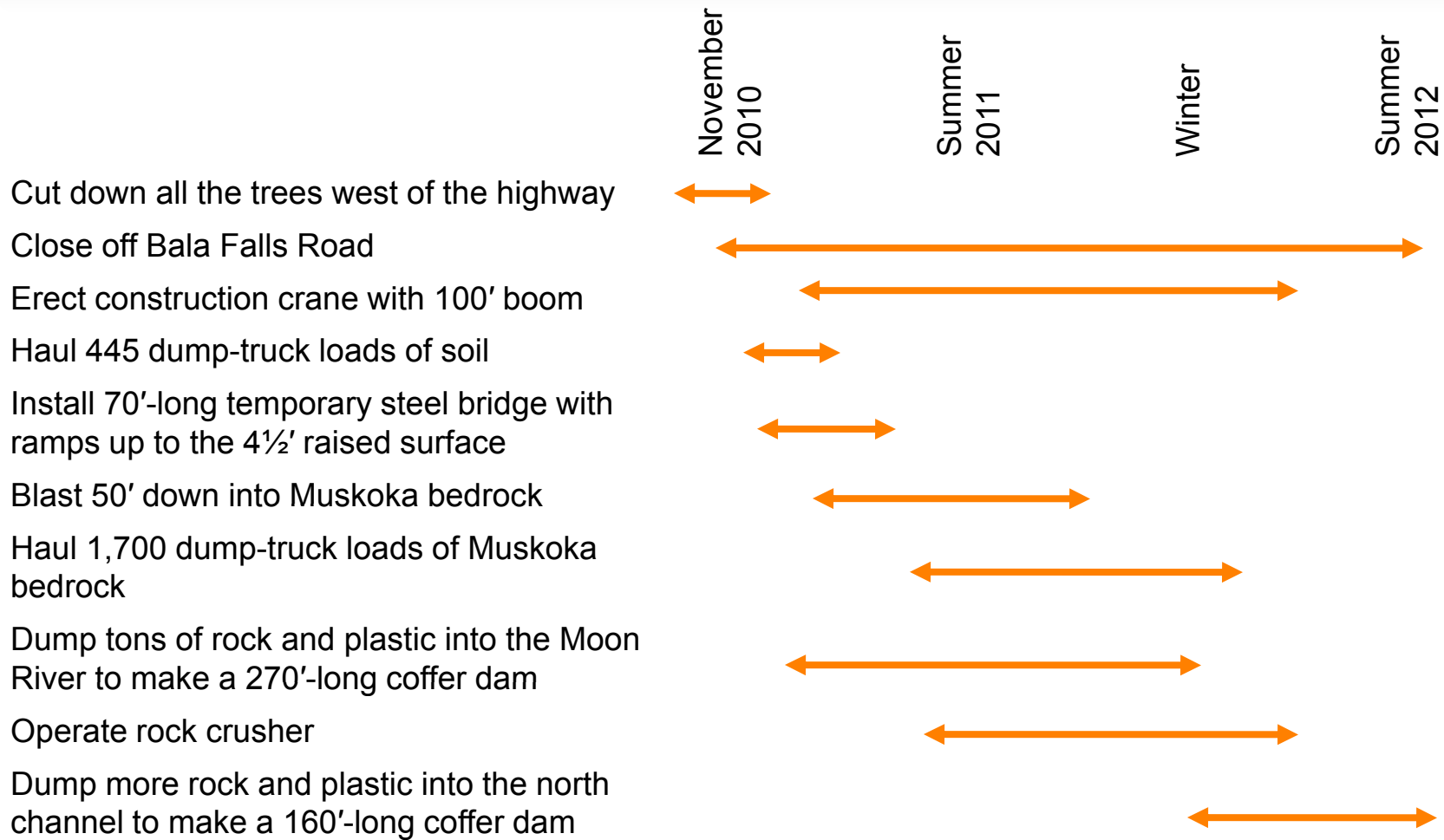
Where'd all the water come from, there would only be 1 m³/s of scenic flow

This is a fence 18' above the dangerous turbulent water exiting the power station - it has to be uglier to keep playful kids from falling through it

This is a 33'-wide false wall (over the steel gate) facing the Moon River, it won't look natural or native

Where's the huge orange safety boom and the 22 warning signs

What is the Schedule?



Effective Mitigation?

- An elevation to an *Environmental Review* or *Individual Environmental Assessment* is required if environmental concerns have not been addressed
- We need to do more investigation
 - But it is immediately clear that there are significant unmitigated impacts relating to access, safety, economic development, tourism, appearance, noise and pollution

Has the Proponent Mitigated?

- Cannot mitigate for loss of use
- Has not mitigated for safety
- Has not mitigated for economic impact to specific individual stakeholders or the community at large
- Has not mitigated the broader social environmental values relating to access, noise, pollution, and cultural and recreational values

Ask of District Council

- District to:
 - Request that Township prepare a detailed staff report
 - Prepare a detailed staff report
- If concerns remain, formal request from District to elevate to an *Environmental Review* or an *Individual Environmental Assessment*
- Extension of Review Period to 120 days
 - To reflect the complicated and serious issues being reviewed