



# Otterlake News



November 2011

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## From The President's Desk

Welcome to all residents of Otter Lake and members of the Otter Lake Landowners Association! My name is Philip Mayhew and I am honoured to have been voted in as the new president of OLLA. I have a long association with Otter Lake, as most of my childhood summers were spent on this lake.

Fourteen years ago, my wife and I built our home here, making Otter Lake our permanent residence. We have both been involved with OLLA over the years, and have directed our energies into sustaining the health of the lake and the quality of the water. It is my hope to encourage the Association in activities that will promote sustainability of the fish habitat, monitoring of the natural shorelines and wetlands, while still providing opportunities for seasonal recreational activities. Your ideas and suggestions are welcome, and can be forwarded by email to me at [bridgeman123@yahoo.com](mailto:bridgeman123@yahoo.com). or to OLLA ([olla@otterlake.cyberus.ca](mailto:olla@otterlake.cyberus.ca))

I would like to thank Marcia Maxwell for the 6 years she has given to the organization as president. Because of her busy schedule, she decided to step down from this position, but has agreed to stay on as a board member. The Board of Directors on behalf of all our members would like to thank Marcia for everything she has done to help keep our lake in it's current pristine condition.

We also have some new board members who are bringing forth new ideas for consideration. In this newsletter, information on the current Septic System Inspection Program, carried out by the Township of Rideau Lakes, is more fully explained.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and find it useful. We would greatly appreciate feedback on what you would like to see in the newsletter, and we look forward to your response.

## IN THIS ISSUE

From the President's Desk. . . . .	1
The Passing of the Torch.. . . .	2
Septic System Reinspection.. . . .	2
It Has Been a Hot Dry Summer. . .	3
Hutton Marsh Water Levels. . . .	5
Future Issues of the Newsletter. .	6

Philip Mayhew

## **The Passing of the Torch**

Our founding President Frank Soural was President of OLLA for most of the past 20 years; Doug Aldridge was President for one year and I have held the position for the last 6 years. I am proud of the accomplishments we have made as an organization over the years. These include the water sampling that we conduct, the detailed reports that result give us a history of the water quality of Otter Lake, our website and the newsletters that we produce throughout the year providing information for the property owners around the lake. This all happens only through a group effort and for the most part with a small group of people, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the directors past and present who have assisted with OLLA projects and the day to day business of the Association. I also would like to thank all of the members of OLLA for your support both financially and attending meetings. Also special thanks to all the volunteers for their efforts on special projects over the years, from helping to set up meeting halls, the individual road representatives and all those that have worked on the Lake Plan.

Now with a very busy schedule, I don't have as many volunteer hours available to continue as President and certainly not for the number of years that Frank Soural held the position for. We are very fortunate that Phil Mayhew volunteered to take on the role of President at our organizing meeting following our AGM this year.

I will continue on now as Past President and will attempt, if time permits, to try and get the Lake Plan project back on track as it is still an important tool for the Otter Lake Community to have for the future.

Marcia Maxwell  
Past President

## **Septic Reinspection Program for Otter Lake**

The Township of Rideau Lakes (TwpRL), in conjunction with Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) and Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA), has implemented a plan to reinspect septic systems throughout the TwpRL, from 2008 through 2012. The term "reinspect" is used, as it is assumed that the septic systems in question were inspected when they were initially installed. The actual septic inspections are performed by the MVCA who have their own septic inspection department, and are contracted by TwpRL to perform the septic inspections. There is no charge to the septic owner. All charges are paid for by TwpRL. Some inspections have been completed on Otter Lake, primarily on roads O2, O4, O5, O7 and O8. Results of these inspections will not be available until the MVCA submits their report to TwpRL council, early in 2012.

If you received a letter from MVCA requesting an inspection on your septic system, you either complied or decided to forgo an inspection. If you did not get a letter or decided to forgo an inspection, you can rest easy until 2013. At the end of the 2012 inspections, all parties concerned will analyze the results and TwpRL will decide if they want to continue performing septic inspections. I personally believe they will, as the program appears to be working very well so far. Otter Lake is completed so far as the 2008 through 2012 plan is concerned. There will be no more septic inspections for Otter Lake until at least 2013. If, in the meantime, you still want your septic system inspected, you need to use the services of a private contractor at your expense. (see TwpRL website)

At this point, submitting to an inspection is voluntary. I have been advised however, that future plans may be obligatory. Some townships in Ontario already subscribe to obligatory inspections.

For more information, go to [www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page9236.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page9236.aspx). To get information from the TwpRL website, go to [www.twprideaulakes.on.ca](http://www.twprideaulakes.on.ca). Click on "Services", click on "Building/Development, then click on Septic Reinspection Program.

By Bob Langstaff  
[bob.langstaff@on.aibn.com](mailto:bob.langstaff@on.aibn.com)

### **It Has Been a Hot, Dry Summer**

Based on stream flow and precipitation indicators, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) declared a Level 1 Low Water Condition in the Rideau River watershed in late September. Under this condition, all residents and industrial water users are encouraged to voluntarily reduce their water use by at least 10%.

Precipitation amounts in the Rideau River watershed for the months of July - September have been less than the Level 1 indicator of 80% of normal for this date. Parts of the Rideau watershed have had less rainfall than others through the summer but the rainfall amount recorded at four of the five climate stations that RVCA refer to for data reached an average of 70% of the long term normal for late September.

Two stations on the Jock River and Kemptville Creek are used to estimate the impact of the dry conditions on stream flow in streams that do not have flows supplemented from reservoir lakes as the Rideau Canal does. Flows at the two stations were, respectively, 66% and 85% of the 30 day indicator for Level 1. A further indication of dry conditions is the water level in the Ottawa River, which is presently close to the lowest recorded since 1950.

The absence of significant rainfall since the middle of June has also had an effect on Otter Lake. Water levels in September were measured at 40 inches

from the top of the Otter Lake Road culvert, the lowest seen for this time of year since September 2008. However with the rainfall we have received in October the water level has risen 2 inches.

According to RVCA the October rains are not expected to significantly improve flow and overall water level conditions in the Rideau River watershed. Prolonged low rainfall has caused several minor streams and wetlands to dry up which will have impacts on both the plants and animals resident in those areas particularly if conditions persist into the winter. The declining water levels will cause more obstacles to navigation to be exposed on watershed lakes. Boaters need to proceed with caution.

The Conservation Authority advocates wise water use and conservation measures at all times and particularly during these dry periods.

Authority staff will continue to monitor conditions and work with the local Water Response Team to respond to new information. The Water Response Team, consisting of municipal, provincial and federal government representatives responsible for water management operations and regulation in the Rideau River watershed, will be meeting to share information and coordinate action to avoid problems associated with low water conditions, if and where possible.

Several minor streams and wetlands have dried up because of the dry weather said Patrick Larson, Senior Water Resources Technician with RVCA which will negatively affect the plants and animals in those areas. The Jock River is especially thirsty, with stream flow down 66 per cent from normal levels over the past three months.

Shrinking water levels create problems for fish, Larson explained, as the water temperature rises and fish become “trapped” in pools in many smaller streams. Frogs that usually burrow under the mud of the river or lake bed to escape the winter chill are also in danger, since if the water level does not rise, the water might freeze through, killing the amphibians. The lack of precipitation is particularly hard on farmers whose livestock typically drink from the creeks and lakes and now must find other sources of water.

Reducing water use at home and work will ease the strain on the area’s wells and aquifers, which will in turn help the critters in the creeks. “It’s all connected –

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it does go back to individuals and their taps,” Larson said.

RVCA staff will continue to monitor water levels and coordinate their response with the tri-government Water Response Team responsible for water management operations and regulation. The only real solution, however, is for the raindrops – a whole lot of them – to fall. Larson can’t say for sure when that will happen. “I don’t have a crystal ball,” he lamented, though he hopes the autumn rains that typically arrive at this time of year don’t dawdle much longer. “If (the rains) don’t come, there could be some trouble,” he said.

To learn more about Ontario’s Low Water Response program visit:

[http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Water/2ColumnSubPage/STEL02\\_164583.html](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Water/2ColumnSubPage/STEL02_164583.html). Also, visit the RVCA website at <http://www.rvca.ca/> for local conditions.

Any individuals or business in the Rideau Watershed who may be experiencing unusual problems or hardships due to low water are encouraged to contact the Water Response Team by calling 613-692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504, ext. 1128 or 1132.

By Doug Franks  
OLLA Lake Steward

## Hutton Marsh Water Levels

Since its construction in 1952, the Motts Mills Dam has played an important role in maintaining an artificially controlled water level on about 300 hectares of the Hutton Marsh that is part of the much larger Otter Lake-Hutton Creek wetland complex, which is classified as a Provincially Significant Wetland, and has been well-known in the past as excellent waterfowl habitat. Over time, certain vegetation species in the wetland have become dominant, and the amount of open water area in it has diminished, so the diversity of habitat types and wildlife within the wetland has also diminished.

Those who have traveled by the dam located in the vicinity of the hamlet of “Motts Mills” on Leeds and Grenville County Road 1, in the Township of Elizabeth town/Kitley about 9.5 kilometers south of Smiths Falls may have noticed that water levels in the Hutton Marsh wetland, above the Matts Mills Dam have dropped by about 74 centimeters (29 inches) in recent weeks.

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On three occasions since mid-August (most recently sometime between Monday, September 19 and Thursday, September 22), stop logs in the dam have been lifted and destroyed by unknown, unauthorized persons, resulting in these reduced water levels.

The condition of the 60 year old Matts Mills Dam has been deteriorating for several years, and it is in need of major rehabilitation. Recently completed inspections by independent engineering consultants indicate that operator and public safety measures at the structure do not meet current standards, and further investigations are needed to confirm the structural stability of the dam.

Over the past two years, Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has been working with the Leeds-Grenville Stewardship Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and local landowners to develop a long term plan for Dam and wetland restoration and management.

In light of the findings of the recent engineering report, RVCA was already (i.e. before the recent vandalism) considering the removal of two stop logs from the Dam, on an interim basis, as an appropriate way to manage risks until such time as the dam's structural stability can be confirmed and measures to improve operator safety can be implemented.

RVCA's intent had been to consult with local landowners and its partners in the wetland and dam restoration initiative before adjusting the Dam to the interim settings. In the present circumstances, (after the recent vandalism at the site), the RVCA is now planning to leave the Dam in its current state (with three stop logs removed), and encourages anyone with an interest in how water levels above the Dam are being managed to contact the Authority's office in Manotick to express any concerns or comments they may have.

The local detachment of the OPP has been made aware of the recent vandalism at the site. RVCA field operations staff continue to monitor the site. The RVCA continues to work with landowners, the local Stewardship Council, DUC and OMNR on the creation of a long-term restoration and management plan for the Hutton Marsh Wetland and the Matts Mills Dam, and on the challenge of securing the necessary funding for its implementation.

By Charles Billington  
RVCA

### **Future Issues of the Newsletter**

All Otter Lake landowners on our records should have been receiving the OLLA newsletters that were sent to you by mail. Hopefully you have enjoyed reading the Lake Steward's reports regarding the nutrient levels and water quality of the lake, green cleaning and other eco-friendly tips, as well as other

up-to-date information and informative articles affecting the lake, it's environment and property owners. Due to the increasing costs involved in printing and mailing of the newsletter using funds derived solely from membership dues, effective with this issue of the OLLA newsletter, only paid up members will be receiving the OLLA newsletter by mail. The Newsletters however, can still be accessed on-line from the OLLA website at <http://www.otterlake.cyberus.ca>.

The OLLA Board of Directors encourages all Otter Lake property owners to consider becoming a member of OLLA. The membership fee is only \$30 a year and is used to help our efforts to improve and maintain the health of the lake. Studies have shown that lakes that have an active lake association, often enjoy higher property values. Not only would your dues be helping to improve and maintain a healthy lake, you would also be contributing to protecting the value of your property. You may access and print a membership form at the following link, [http://www.otterlake.cyberus.ca/membership\\_form.html](http://www.otterlake.cyberus.ca/membership_form.html). Please complete the form and mail along with a cheque of \$30 payable to "OLLA" to the address indicated on the membership form.



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