



Otter Lake Landowners Association

Otter Lake News

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Spring 2023

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Message from the President

Spring is back again and for many of you, it's time to start thinking of more time at the lake. Those of us that are here year-round have enjoyed a winter that wasn't really harsh, though, we too are looking forward to warmer days at the lake. We hope to continue many of our activities and plan to arrange the Second Annual "FloatOLLA" in support of the local food banks. Start thinking about how you'll decorate your boat!

While you're thinking about this coming season, please give some thought to your shoreline and whether you can make it more lake friendly. OLLA has free copies of Watershed Canada's Lake Protection Workbook which is a self-assessment tool for shoreline property owners. If you would like a copy, please contact me or one of the other Directors.

Last November, Ontario released Bill 23. I, along with Karl Fiander, our government liaison volunteer, and Presidents of other lake associations in our area,

dealt with a flood of emails and meetings. The Politicians just don't seem to grasp that what may be good for urban areas is not necessarily good for our lakes and lakefront properties. I suggest you take a close look at Karl's article later in this newsletter.

As I write this, the ice is still solid on the lake. Once it is gone, we'll get back to sampling the water around the lake in cooperation with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA). Our lake is still very healthy thanks to your efforts. Many people around the lake still rely on the lake for water for general purposes as well as for drinking. Safe water is essential for us as well as the local wildlife. You can read more about lake health and water testing in the update from the Lake Steward.

Spring will also see improvements to our Loon nesting platforms. Judy Hodgins, the project manager for this activity, will have more to say about this.

One thing we have been trying to do for a number of years is to form a Road Contact Committee. Unfortunately, it still hasn't happened. The Directors feel this is an important two-way communication tool. We'd like to hear about incidents of vandalism and theft, blue-green algae sightings and invasive species along the shoreline. And, we'd like to be able to quickly notify folks when we encounter high E. coli readings near their properties. We are looking for a single volunteer from each road around the lake. Please contact me if you are willing to help.

Jeff

ollapresident@otterlake.org

Loon Nests Platforms to be Relunched in May 2023

Submitted by Judy Hodgins

The two loon nests that were built and launched in 2022 will be relaunched in May 2023. Both platforms will have natural reed coverings installed on the canopies to improve and protect nests from birds of prey. One loon nest platform will again be installed in Toohey's Bay while the second one will be relocated to the north end of the boat launch bay. While the platforms were not made use of by our loons last year this is not unusual as it sometimes takes loons a couple of seasons to become familiar with them.

Lake Steward's Update - 2022

Submitted by Jeff Neal, Lake Steward

Note: The full Lake Steward's Report will be presented at the Annual General Meeting

2022 was another good year for Otter Lake. Water quality was consistently good with one exception, a high E. coli count for one test site off the shore of O4. The Secchi disk readings (water clarity) remain positive with readings consistently above 3 metres and in a couple of cases, exceeding 7 metres.

There was a potential blue-green algae sighting near the boat ramp, but we were unable to confirm that. As we mentioned previously, even a bloom of a non-toxic variety of blue-green algae can still have a significant effect on wildlife, pets and humans.

We also got some disappointing news regarding the dissolved oxygen levels in the lake. In the fall, they dipped down below the level required to support Lake Trout, but, we'll continue to monitor it.

Membership Reminder

Submitted by John McKenney

We are continuing our efforts to grow our membership, and we appreciate the ongoing support of our returning members.

Annual memberships are due to be renewed on or before our Annual General Meeting (Saturday, July

22, 2023), and those needing to renew their OLLA memberships will receive a friendly reminder by email ahead of the AGM.

The \$30 annual membership fee can be paid via e-transfer at otterlakeassociation@gmail.com. If your personal information hasn't changed, you don't need to submit another membership form. If your information has changed, or you want to mail your membership fee to us, you can find the form and payment instructions on our "Membership" page at www.otterlake.org.

An OLLA membership offers benefits that some residents of our community may not be aware of. We encourage you to talk to your lake friends and neighbors about our association in the hopes they will consider joining us. To help them find out more about OLLA, we've posted signs on our roads with our website address.

Thank you for your continued support.

Reminder – Send in Your Fish Diary

Submitted by Judy Hodgins

Please remember to submit your completed 2022 Otter Lake Fish Diary via mail to OLLA Lake Steward, 32-O10, Lombardy, ON or by email to info@otterlake.org. If you have any pictures of the fish you caught please provide them as well.

A record of all fish caught, regardless of species or size, will be shared with and evaluated by the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Natural Resources & Forestry. This will enable us to enhance fishing opportunities and provide for healthy, sustainable fish populations.

If your fishing diary is in your tackle box at the lake, no worries ... you can send it in to us whenever you are next at Otter Lake. Thanks and may 2023 provide you with a good fish story!



Tourist Campgrounds Land Use Study

Contributed by Jeff Neal

Over the last couple of years, a study of tourist campground land use, led by a company called Fotenn, has taken place. There were numerous meetings held, both public and private. As well, literally hundreds of emails flew back and forth among the interested parties. The details and the recommendations made by Fotenn are available on the Township's website (<https://www.rideaulakes.ca/component/edocman/studies/final-tourist-campground-land-use-study-july-2022>). Out of all that, there were recommendations made to Council by the Township's Planning Advisory committee. These include:

- Proposed Official Plan Amendments
 - Create policy encouraging shoreline improvements for any new development or development to existing campgrounds under section 3.8.5.2;
 - Increase water setbacks by requiring Hutchinson Evaluations for new or expanding campgrounds;
 - Require Lake Impact Studies for all tourist campgrounds requiring a zoning by-law amendment or site plan control amendment and further review applicability of Lake Capacity Assessments;
 - Require campgrounds to conform with Section 2.6 of the Official Plan to reduce light spillover through site plan control;
 - Require a Traffic Impact assessment for new or expanding tourist campgrounds;
 - Require Hydrogeological Assessments for new or expanding campgrounds that require Planning Act approval;
 - Establish seasonal dates for campgrounds to permit usage only between May 1st and November 1st.
- Proposed Zoning By-Law Amendments
 - Increase existing yard setbacks by 10m when abutting a residential or agricultural use;
 - Specify requirement for landscaped/naturalized strip of 5m when abutting a residential use;
 - Prohibit certain water encroachment exceptions currently permitted from applying to campgrounds;
 - Prohibit marine facilities below the high water mark on a narrow channel;

- Refine/add the following definitions: Tourist Campground, Water Frontage, Water Setback, Narrow Channel, Trailer Types, Lot Coverage, Planting Strip;
- Amend section 3.22 to include a shoreline occupancy area of 10 metres for Tourist Campgrounds;
- Add Site Coverage maximum of 30% for Tourist Campgrounds
- Revise lot coverage definition or add site coverage definition to include trailers/RVS/park model trailers
- Proposed Site Plan Control By-Law Amendments
 - Introduce the requirement for the Township to collect securities for on- and off-site works through the site plan control process;
 - Amend Section 4 (g) as it relates to expansions or additions to trailers to be per campsite and not the entire campground unless related to a communal campground amenity; and
 - Require Campgrounds to capture changes in future site plan modifications.

The majority of these recommendations were enacted as By-Laws at the October 3, 2022 Regular Meeting of Council. The minutes of this meeting can be found at: <https://www.rideaulakes.ca/town-hall/council/archived-agendas-minutes/2022/2022-council-meetings/2022-10-03-council-agenda-package/viewdocument/1883>

Thank You from SFCFB!

Contributed by Deb McVean

The Smiths Falls Community Food Bank (SFCFB) sent OLLA a note of appreciation for the contribution made from the donations collected during our 1st Float OLLA.



**Smiths Falls
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613-283-6695

Website: www.smithsfallscmmunityfoodbank.org
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Otter Lake Landowners Association

We at the Smiths Falls Community Food Bank
wish to thank you for your support.

Contributions of all sizes and types
- time, money, food or other supplies -
are always greatly appreciated.

*111 lbs of food
& 50.00 cash.*
Board of Directors

Boating – Rules of the Road

Submitted by Jeff Neal – with excerpts from DiscoverBoating.com

Boating, even more so than other sports and activities, has an etiquette, which is defined as “the customary code of polite behavior among members of a particular profession or group.” In boating, etiquette is not only about social norms but also about safety, so it’s best to learn a few rules before you untie the dock lines. One of the most important for the good of the lake relates to SPEED. Excessive speed near shore is a danger to swimmers and erodes the shoreline. It is also illegal! When boating in Ontario please observe the unposted speed limit of 10 km/h (6 mph) within 30 meters (100 ft.) from shore. This limit applies on all waters within the province except where other limits are posted.

Boat wakes are another issue. Heavy wakes can erode the shoreline and damage boats along the shore. Speed is the biggest factor most of the time. But, some boat types produce even larger wakes when they slow down. These boats have to slow down even more to avoid producing damaging wakes. If in doubt, turn around and look behind you!

Rules of the road are the accepted system of right of way, which you must follow to be courteous and safety-minded. These rules are numerous and detailed but if you learn just a few, you should be covered in most recreational boating situations. In the following, the “stand-on vessel” has the right of way, and the “give-way vessel” needs to accommodate the other.

- In a situation with two boats coming head on, if possible, both vessels turn to starboard and pass port to port. That way, there’s no guesswork about the intentions of the other captain and a collision is avoided.
- A sailboat under sail has the right-of-way over a powerboat. If the sailboat is running with an engine, it’s considered a powerboat regardless if the sails are up.

- If you’re being overtaken, your responsibility is to maintain course and speed. If that scenario puts anyone in harm’s way, just slow down and let the other pass because the first job of any captain is to avoid a collision regardless of who has the right-of-way.
- If a vessel approaches you from the right, they’re the stand-on vessel.
- Human powered vessels (kayaks, SUPs, canoes, etc.) have the right-of-way over any other vessel including a sailboat.
- If another vessel is restricted in its ability to maneuver (due to its size, draft or any other reason) it’s the stand-on vessel and you should accommodate it.
- When two boats are under sail, the one on the starboard tack (wind coming over the starboard side of the deck) has the right of way over the one on the port tack. If both are on the same tack, the leeward (downwind) boat has the right of way.

Enjoy safe boating this summer!

Cottage Rentals

Submitted by Judy Hodgins

According to a survey by the Federation of Ontario Cottagers’ Association (FOCA), overall less than 10% of survey respondents are renting their waterfront property as short-term rentals. However, those who have owned their property for less than 5 years are more than twice as likely to rent, and are renting for more days each year.

The reasons for renting cottage properties are of course due in part to the spike in increased purchase prices, increased mortgage rates and high taxes.

FOCA has compiled a summary report about Short-Term Rentals (STRs) in cottage country which contains an overview of the issue, what problems are being experienced by neighbours, examples of municipal responses to public concerns related to STRs, and examples of education materials that might help to bridge some knowledge gaps for visitors new to rural living.

Some of the highlights of the report are:

- educate and inform guests about cottage country living and etiquette
- work with neighbours to promote harmonious relationships
- be environmental stewards by ensuring the sustainable use of cottage properties, recognizing the limits of the existing septic system, road capacity and other community considerations
- inform cottage country visitors about emergency prevention and extreme weather preparedness.

A sample Guest Information Sheet is available on OLLA's website: <https://otterlake.org/community-recreation/guest-information-cottage-rentals/>.

If you are a member of OLLA, a copy of the 16-page report is available for download at <https://foca.on.ca/rental/> however you will need to contact OLLA at info@otterlake.org to get the login information.

Bill 23 Impacts on Cottage Country

Submitted by Karl Fiander

In October 2022, the Ontario Conservatives introduced first reading of Bill 23, "The Housing Supply Action Plan". Municipalities, lake associations and community groups were surprised by these changes and were challenged to provide a response in the time period allotted. Consequently, there was a final reading in November with few changes.

The intent of Bill 23 is to encourage the construction of 1.5 million homes over 10 years and the impact of the legislation is to assist in this goal by streamlining or eliminating certain bureaucratic and environmental conditions mostly in place at the municipal level. For example, it overrides some municipal powers related to planning which are in place to protect natural areas, shorelines, and wetlands. In short, it is intended to reduce the planning obstacles for development of new housing. While this may have minimal environmental impact in Toronto or Ottawa, the same can't be said for cottage country.

Here are some of the changes now in place as a result of Bill 23:

- The role that Conservation Authorities play as 'Environmental Experts' in the Rideau Lakes planning process is very much restricted to natural hazards such as issues of drainage, erosion, and flooding. Comments about water quality, fish habitat, shoreline buffer zones, aquatic health, and many others, are now forbidden. Although the Planning Act still requires planners to consult with experts on environmental issues, it cuts off the Conservation Authorities from offering this service. Ironically, it is the municipal taxpayer that funds the vast majority of the Conservation Authority budget....not the province which only supplies 6% of their revenue.
- Registration of Site Plan Agreements on title, which was just recently instituted in Rideau Lakes, is now eliminated by Bill 23. These agreements are in place to ensure that vegetative buffers protecting shorelines are maintained by successive owners. Eliminating this important planning tool means that shoreline buffer zones are no longer protected by municipal bylaws.
- The Bill puts strict limits on development charges and fees which will eventually impact taxpayers. In Rideau Lakes, as with most communities, costs for Planning and Development Services were covered by development fees. The loss of revenue from Site Plan application fees results in revenue that will have to be recovered in other ways. Bill 23 offered no alternate grants to cover the deficit, so this puts the burden squarely on the taxpayer.
- Third party appeal rights are eliminated for minor variances and consent. This means that if your neighbour wants to erect an addition or deck that requires a minor variance, and you wish to object, your appeal rights right up to the Ontario Land Tribunal are eliminated.

While much of the media coverage has been on the Toronto area Green Belt, this bill has a huge impact on how rural municipalities like Rideau Lakes, govern themselves. Conservation Authorities, who have most of the environmental brain-trust in lake country,

cannot offer opinions on natural heritage planning issues any longer. Municipal planners and lake associations equally relied on Conservation Authorities for unbiased environmental opinions, so this is a huge loss for all parties in the planning process.

Housing Minister Steve Clark (our very own MPP) is the government point person responsible for rolling out Bill 23 and is 100% behind the changes despite protests from many municipalities, Conservation Authorities, and lake associations. A request for a meeting with the Minister by a few members of the Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee, were ignored. As the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations has commented: "This legislation is intended and designed for urban development and is completely out of place in waterfront areas."

Since the municipalities were not consulted by the government prior to the introduction of Bill 23, there really wasn't a Plan B in place. On January 11, 2023, Brittany Mulhern, Manager of Development Services at Rideau Lakes Township, presented a range of potential options for a Site Plan Control replacement to the Rideau Lakes Planning Advisory Committee. These options were again discussed at the March 2, Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee, and include:

- Develop a Site Alteration Bylaw. This would cover removing or moving soil and vegetation.
- Develop a Shoreline Preservation Bylaw. This could cover all activities in the 30m setback from the shoreline and could include cutting of trees.
- Institute a Development Permit System.
- Zoning Bylaw Amendment to add a requirement for planting strips between the development and the water body.

These alternatives would require changes to the existing decision-making process. At this time, the municipality favours a Shoreline Preservation Bylaw and/or changes to the Zoning Bylaw to cover some of the issues previously protected by Site Plan Control

and other measures. Further development of these ideas will continue.

Lake Associations and Rideau Lakes Township agree that Bill 23 has not been kind to rural waterfront communities like ours. Building new homes is a worthwhile goal but eliminating the municipal environmental tools that protect the water quality of lakes is misplaced and poorly designed.

If you wish to comment further to our MPP, Steve Clark, you can reach him at:

steve.clark@pc.ola.org or call him at 1-800-267-4408

Municipal By-Election - Ward 1

Submitted by Susan Thum

Otter Lake spans Wards 1 and 2 in the Township of Rideau Lakes, as shown on the map below. On May 15, 2023 a By-Election will be held for Ward 1 Bastard and South Burgess to elect 1 Councillor to fill the vacancy left after the death of Cathy Livingston in December 2022. This By-Election affects the Otter Lake residents and property owners in the area shown in blue. Election information can be found on the Rideau Lakes elections website <https://election.rideaulakes.ca/>



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Membership benefits can be found at the following link <https://foca.on.ca/member-services/benefits/>