



Otter Lake Landowners Association

Otter Lake News

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Winter 2026

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There is a lot of information to provide in this issue so I'm keeping this short.

Jeff

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Sponsor Spotlight

Submitted by Deb McVean

Founded in 2002 by Trevor Strickland, TS Computing was built on a lifelong passion for technology. After working in Ottawa's high-tech sector and earning a Computer Systems Technology degree along with A+ certification, Trevor set out to bring professional, reliable IT support to the local community.

Today, TS Computing has grown to a dedicated team of three, with technicians who share the same degree and certification, ensuring consistent, knowledgeable service for every client.

We proudly provide both residential and business on-site support, as well as services in internet reselling, VoIP solutions, and security camera installation, and everything in between regarding computers and networks. While we no longer live on Otter Lake, we deeply value our friends and clients there, and continue to serve the wider region—including Lanark, Leeds, Grenville, Ottawa, and surrounding areas.

For over two decades, our mission has remained the same: helping people and businesses stay connected, secure, and supported with technology they can trust.

Message from the President

Happy New Year!

So far this has been a strange winter as far as the weather goes. Warm for quite a few days and then back into the freezer. The lake froze over on December 30, 2025. The temperature rose during the week of January the 12th and almost the entire lake had a layer of water on top of the ice. Today, January 15th, the temperature has dropped to minus double digits and the snow is falling so heavily we can't see across the lake. As the old commercials used to say – "Only in Canada!".

The Board of Directors is currently busy getting ready for the new year. Plans are underway for a website upgrade (including the return of the historical aerial photos of the lake), a Lake Plan Update, the next AGM and a number of other activities which you can read more about in this, and upcoming, Newsletter(s).

Project Update from the Bass Spawning Team

Submitted by Dr. David P. Philipp

We have had a meeting with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) Head Office personnel...and they were quite positive too, although they really wanted to hear what the MNR thought before jumping in fully.

We have had several meetings with the OMNR, making a detailed presentation (>1.5 hrs) at the Fisheries-wide annual data meeting with biologists from across the Province...and they were interested in what OFAH thought. Importantly, we had a great open discussion that quelled virtually all of their concerns, with a number of the attending biologists expressing a real desire to become involved with the project, which is great!!! They were even open to discussing potential changes in the opening day schedules and ways to make tournaments better for the angler, the fish, and the cottagers. I feel that having the OMNR biologists fully on board and excited about the project is a fabulous step forward.

That all said, it became very clear that the study as we envision it, cannot get started until spring of 2027. Even if we could have had the public consultations completed, it is too late to get the regulations changed...the 2026 version has already gone to the printers. We realize that many of you may be frustrated by that apparent delay, but let me assure you that this delay will result in a better overall study.

It will give us more time to hone in on the most biologically advantageous sites for Bass Spawning Sanctuaries and to vet them across the lake communities.

It will also give us two years of Pre-implementation data collection instead of one, which is a much better standard for using a BACI design to assess the impact of the BaSSs through time – and that is a good thing.

So, what are the next steps:

We will continue to work with the various lake teams to select the best set of proposed sites for the BaSSs in each of the now 18 lake/lakes groups (plus another four lakes that will serve as controls without any BaSSs) – and determine how much of each lake's shorelines (10-20%) will be protected. That will serve as the basis for the overall proposal to be submitted to the OMNR by late winter that will drive the public comment/consultation processes to be conducted next spring – in time to have changes made in plenty of time to be included in the 2027 regulations.

We will work up and summarize the baseline data collected in 2025 for each lake, which will let us focus on where we need to bolster data to collect in 2026.

We will work with the lake teams to collect 2026 baseline data (aggression, growth rates, age at maturation and recruitment success.

We will produce a bunch of outreach materials to explain the needs for and goals of the project for extensive distribution to the angling and cottager communities in these lakes to help with acceptance and compliance...and that may lead to some in person Q&A sessions.

In preparation for the BaSS implementation (in 2027), we can put up signs in 2026 (would especially be good in areas that will become BaSSs in 2027 and common access points like boat ramps, marinas, locks, etc.) that explain the season as it stands now and how bad it is to catch and release nesting bass. See below for a design (blessed by OMNR) that would work – this was sent to us by Dave Counter from Upper Rideau Lake.

Our bottom line: We are VERY positive about how things are shaping up, and to be honest, starting a well-organized study in 2027 rather than a rushed one in 2026 will be WAY better in the long run.

Member Moment

Submitted by Betty Large

Wendy and John McKenney built their home on Otter Lake in 1999. Wendy (nee Hann) grew up in Smiths Falls and is retired from Hydro One. John's a retired teacher, and his family has lived in Rideau Lakes Township for almost two hundred years. John's mother also resides on Otter Lake and is an OLLA member.

Wendy is an accomplished wildlife and landscape artist (the moose painting in the picture is hers) and her work has been commissioned by organizations and private collectors. John is a writer of fantasy fiction. He's published two award winning YA books, Eon's Door and The Book Knights, and he just released a new epic fantasy, The Blademaster's Call.

Wendy and John love Otter Lake and feel incredibly lucky to live here.



Aquatic Plant (aka Weed) Management

Submitted by Betty Large and Shona McDiarmid using references from the Provincial Government and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association (FOCA).

As part of being good lake stewards of Otter Lake we need to be knowledgeable about aquatic plant management. OLLA has some good information and helpful links on our website. We would like to highlight some of that important information in our newsletters in 2026.

Key Messages

Aquatic plants are essential for healthy lakes.

Removal of unwanted native and invasive aquatic plants directly in front of your property should be done in compliance with the Public Lands Act and Regulations and under the authority of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). The rules for removal of aquatic vegetation without a permit can be found at the following site <https://www.ontario.ca/page/remove-native-aquatic-plants>.

These rules provide, for example, that landowners may only work within a specified area directly in front of their property and any plant material removed should be disposed of on dry land to prevent it from re-entering the water. The rules also provide that work should not be carried out in fish spawning season. **For Otter Lake this means that work should not be carried out between May 1st and July 15th.**

You can use devices like rakes or a cutter bar but do not dredge the bed of the lake.

The use of aquatic herbicides and algacides is highly regulated in Ontario, especially in and around water. Misuses can result in charges under the Pesticides Act.

Let's keep our lake healthy and be mindful of how we interact with it. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us at info@otterlake.org.

For more in-depth information consult FOCA's [Understanding the Underwater World of Plants: A FOCA Guide for Waterfront Ontario](#)

Disclaimer: Information in this article should not be taken as a replacement for professional, legal or scientific guidance about any specific situation, management advice, or permitting requirements. This article serves as an introduction to the topic of aquatic plants. It is intended to provide a starting point for understanding your specific circumstances.



!!! THE OLLA PHOTO CONTEST Returns!!!

Submitted by Betty Large

With minor changes.

This year we would love to see the youth on the lake get more involved. Youth 18 and under can submit pictures until July 17th 2026! All other entries must be submitted by June 30th 2026.

This year the 19 and older photos will be judged in 3 categories – 1) activities on the lake, 2) wildlife (plant, insects, animals) and 3) landscapes. There are no categories for the 18 and under entries.

To find more details about the photo contest go to the OLLA website. There is a dedicated button on the home page to take you to the contest details. We look forward to another year of amazing submissions.

In Passing

The Otter Lake Landowners' Association extends its sincere condolences to:

- The family of OLLA member Robert Truman who passed away May 7th 2025 (<https://erbgood.com/tribute/details/17609/Robert-Truman/obituary.html#tribute-start>)
- The family of long-time member and supporter, Glen "Tank" McKenney who passed away December 27, 2025 in his 93rd year. (<https://blairandson.com/tribute/details/7026/Glen-Tank-McKenney/obituary.html>)

In Memoriam

- Reflecting sadly on the passing of OLLA Board Member Deb McVean's husband, Dale Eastman, on January 26, 2023. He really loved Otter Lake.



Splake in the Lake?!!!

Paul Edwards from Sandy Beach caught a 26.5 inches long splake in Sandy Beach Bay on Otter Lake in mid January. He was in just a few feet of water and it took him 20 minutes to land the fish! OLLA will follow up with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry about re-stocking Otter Lake with Splake. Stay tuned.



Environmental Corner - Shorelines

Submitted by Betty Large

Natural shorelines rich in native trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers are critical to lake health. Some of their many benefits are described below.

Water Quality Protection

Surface water runoff can contain pollutants like fertilizers, soil particles, excess nutrients, bacteria and chemicals. Planted shoreline buffers help to absorb and trap these pollutants before they enter lakes and rivers where they can cause poor water quality, excessive plant growth and algae blooms.

Erosion Protection

Shorelines are a dynamic, ever-changing environment where some amount of erosion will always be occurring. Wind, waves, fluctuating water levels and other disturbances can accelerate this erosion leading to unstable slopes, loss of land and excessive sedimentation into lakes and rivers. Shoreline plants reduce this erosion by helping to keep soil in place, stabilize banks and absorb wave energy. Deep rooted native trees and shrubs often provide the best protection.

Wildlife Habitat

Shorelines provide critical habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Natural shorelines provide food, shelter, and safe travel corridors for animals. Fallen trees provide basking logs for turtles and refuge for fish. Tree canopy and overhanging branches provide shade and help keep water cool creating a more favourable environment for many fish species.

This information is from Watersheds Canada's Lake Protection Workbook - A Self-Assessment Tool for Shoreline Property Owners. It is an education tool drawing attention to important aspects of lake protection. To find out more you can download a copy for free at: <https://watersheds.ca/lake-protection-workbook/> , or order a physical copy for \$2.00+shipping from Watersheds Canada using their on-line store link [Watersheds Canada](#)

Watersheds Canada - Love Your Lake Program

Submitted by Betty Large

Watersheds Canada had been using a modified shoreline assessment protocol for over a decade to generate personalized property reports for each shoreline property owner on a given lake. These reports contain key observations and recommendations for a more natural property, which benefits the overall health of the lake. Otter Lake was assessed in 2015. If individuals want their reports, email Terri-Lee at info@loveyourlake.ca.

and she can help you access the assessment done on your property in 2015.

Save These Dates!

July 11 th	Lake Litter Roundup (Rain Date July 12 th)
July 25 th	OLLA Annual General Meeting

Otter Lake History #3

Submitted by Ron Doering

Fish Story

As we all know most fish stories involve some degree of exaggeration, but this isn't one of them. If anything, it is an understatement to say that fishing has been central to Otter Lake history from the beginning.

The Thomas Family scrapbook that we referred to in the last episode has multiple articles on fishing in our lake. In the beginning, the local farmers relied heavily on fish for their sustenance; in 1871, for example, 17 farmers took over 14 bushels of fish from Otter Lake. By the 1920's ice fishing for trout nearly wiped out the trout population on Big Rideau resulting in a massive shift to fishing in our lake. The population has never really recovered due, presumably, to several factors.

Most of the articles are accompanied by pictures of strings of lovely trout or bass held up by men with smiling faces. There are also strange fish stories of unusual things. For example, there is a picture from 1986 of Eugene Gordon of Smiths Falls holding a 16 pound, 33 inch long "salmon". The article says that old-timers on the lake insist that our lake had a large population of natural, landlocked salmon.

Several articles over the years describe efforts at stocking. One from the 50's, describes an experimental release of 4,200 Kamloops trout fingerlings that had been raised at the Westport Fishery Station. Another article from 1986 recounts that the natural resources office in Brockville was to release 15,000 splake over three years to make up for the serious decline in lake trout.

As President Jeff Neal reported at our recent AGM, OLLA continues to pursue opportunities for stocking but there are several technical requirements still to be met.

Another article in the Thomas Family scrapbook recounts that cottage owner Bill Buchanan was organizing a ling fishing derby for the coming winter to cut down on the number of these predatory fish to "allow more food for the splake and the lake trout". Trapping of ling cod was not new. Nets were first used to catch them in 1909. See the picture at right from a 1951 article that shows a major operation to trap ling organized by the government and the Smiths Falls Hunt Club and Fish and Game Protective Association that resulted in catching hundreds of ling over two weeks.



While our iconic lake trout population appears to be seriously stressed and continues to be the subject of much discussion, our bass and northern pike have always been the most common fish species for local anglers. In the picture below from 1975, James Fiander (who built one of the first cottages on Frayn Road), proudly displays his bass and pike catch for the day.



Do we still have ling? Are many trout being caught today? We would love to hear your fish story or any history story that would be of interest to our readers.

Please send it to me at ronald.doering@gmail.com



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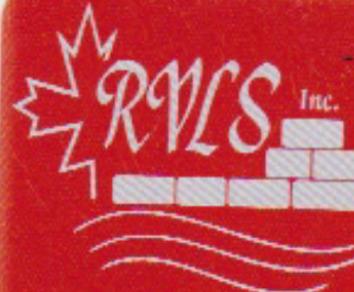


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Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations

Reminder: OLLA members receive FOCA membership. FOCA supports members with a wide range of services, programs, events and special offers.

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