



Otter Lake Landowners Association

# Otter Lake News

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Spring 2026

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## Message from the President

Happy Spring Everyone!

Spring is slowly gaining ground here at the lake although it was a bit of a challenge yesterday with a frost advisory in the news. Winter definitely seemed to drag on too long. Then, we would get a warm spell and get our hopes up only to have to get our heavy coats out again. But it is coming! The ice is off the lake (April 15th this year) and the lake water is up to just over 9°C. The loons, swans, herons and geese are back and of course we're all anxious to see the Hummingbirds return from their winter holiday in the south. There is very little activity on the lake yet, but a few of our neighbours have their boats in the water already. I've seen the odd fishing boat venturing out for the owner's to try their luck in the last week or so. Speaking of fishing, Otter Lake made the news when a fishing hut broke through the ice and sank to the

(fortunately shallow) bottom. It has since been removed with no apparent ill effects to the lake.

On a more serious note, I'm sure you have all heard about the proposed corridor for a high-speed rail line potentially impacting our area (and half our lake). Virtually every local person I have spoken too is not in favour of sacrificing forest and wetlands for a new line when not that far in the past many kilometers of track were ripped out. I encourage you to follow the dialogue on this plan and to make your opinion known to our municipal and provincial representatives.

On a much less serious, albeit still important issue, OLLA is in need of a Secretary. Betty Large, our current Secretary, will be stepping down when her term expires as of the AGM. Please think about it. Later in the Newsletter you will see the "Want Ad" for the post.

Another concern for our lake is the fact that Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), "owners" of the land where our only boat ramp sits, has decided to let properties like this go "natural" (i.e. no maintenance). Based on what we have heard, the concept is that it will be fine for canoes and kayaks! They have already removed the outhouse (not really a major loss as it was in pretty sad shape). The Township is in discussions with them. Many lakes are affected, but many also have alternatives for launching boats. We'll keep you informed as things progress.

Jeff

[ollapresident@otterlake.org](mailto:ollapresident@otterlake.org)

## Member Moment

*Submitted by Betty Large*

Laura and Steve Cashen purchased their cottage on Otter Lake in 2011. Laura, a former Federal Government employee and Steve a former City employee have been retired for eight years and spend their summers at the cottage. Both enjoy being on the water as much as possible. Laura spends her mornings kayaking around in her bright green kayak, keeping an eye out for litter in and around the lake and removing what she can. She has found a variety of items such as beer and pop cans, fishing line, deflated balloons, and even an inflatable watermelon raft! (By the way if it's yours, please let Laura know and she can return it).

For the past eight summers, Laura has also kept track of the loons and their chicks on Otter Lake and provides their numbers and lake locations so that it can be given to the CLLS (Canadian Lakes Loon Survey) which is part of Birds Canada. The loon population is on the decline, and providing stats on the numbers of loon pairs and chicks gives CLLS vital information for tracking in their Canadian database.

Steve and Laura spend the afternoons at the cottage relaxing on their pontoon boat. Steve enjoys fishing, and what he catches he releases to live another day! There is nothing better or more enjoyable than taking in all that nature offers on our beautiful lake!



## Otter Lake Boat Launch

*Submitted by Danika Burelle*

The Ministry of Natural Resources has declined to renew its Memorandum of Understanding with the Township of Rideau Lakes, leaving the Otter Lake boat launch without an active maintenance agreement and being transitioned to a "naturalized" state. In practical terms, this means that the Township will no longer be responsible for grass cutting, and the outhouse is slated for removal, effectively allowing the site to "naturalize".

What remains in place: Landowners and the public retain the right to use the launch and existing dock.

What will change: Without regular upkeep, a site that is already in poor condition will continue to decline.

Safety notice: Exercise caution when launching. Damaged cement slabs have been reported on the right side of the ramp. Please keep to the left of the markers.

The Otter Lake Landowners Association has formally raised our serious concerns with the Township and is actively advocating for safe, reliable water access for our community. We will continue to update you as we hear back from Township officials.

If you wish to share your concerns or ask questions regarding the removal of services and the "naturalization" of the boat launch, you can contact the Township of Rideau Lakes directly:

Steve Holmes, Manager of Facilities and Parks  
Email: [parksmanager@rideaulakes.ca](mailto:parksmanager@rideaulakes.ca)  
Phone: 1-800-928-2250 Ext. 245

## Lake Ice

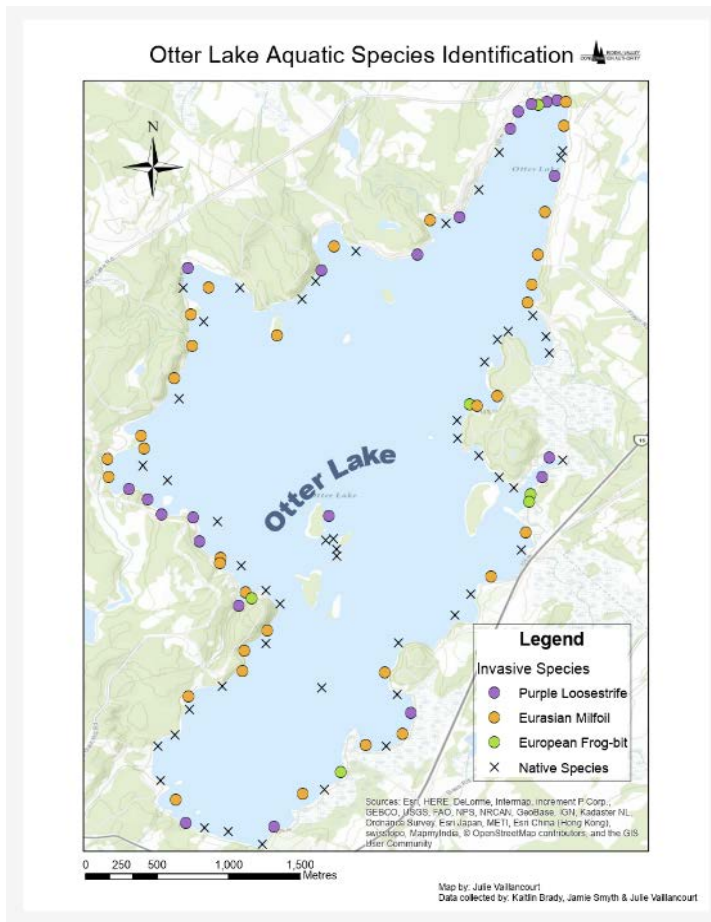
*Submitted by Jeff Neal*

Despite the warm summer and low water levels the lake was frozen over by the end of 2025 (December 30th). Ice was more active in many bays, perhaps due to low water levels causing more damage than normal. Ice stayed on the lake very slightly less than the average period (108 days) of our almost fifty years of data.

## Invasive Aquatic Plant Management

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

Unfortunately, Otter Lake has invasive aquatic plants in the lake like European Frog-bit and Eurasian Water-Milfoil. Here is a map that was created in 2016 by Rideau Valley Conservation Authority that shows the presence of 3 invasive aquatic species at that time. They did not look for others.



If you want help identifying the aquatic plants at your waterfront you can call the **Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711**. For example, in the fall of 2025 they helped me identify the Eurasian Water-Milfoil growing off the end of my dock on O6.

The guidelines for removing invasive aquatic plants are similar to native aquatic plant removal. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/remove-invasive-aquatic-plants>

## 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](mailto: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

## Save These Dates!

July 11 <sup>th</sup>	Lake Litter Roundup
July 25 <sup>th</sup>	OLLA Annual General Meeting

## Otter Lake History #4

*Submitted by Elizabeth Doering*

### Defectors, Traitors and Scalwags

In a previous article, we learned that Igor Gouzenko, the Soviet cipher clerk who defected in 1945, stayed for a short time at Otter Lake before his identity became public triggering a major international security scandal and a prelude to the Cold War.

Few people know that more than a century earlier, the widow and children of America's most famous traitor, General Benedict Arnold, who is remembered for his defection to the British during the Revolutionary War, were granted land mostly in what would become South Elmsley as a reward. In 1803, Widow Margaret "Peggy" Shippen Arnold, and her six children received a whopping 8,800 acres in South Elmsley, making them the largest land owners in our area. Their grant included land around Otter Creek and the current Lombard Glen Golf Course. Similarly, the tracts immediately around Otter Lake were first owned on paper by Loyalist families long before the Lake was settled by the soldiers and farmers who actually cleared and lived on it. If you stood on the shore of Otter Lake in the early 1800s you would not see any settlement, but just a surveyed landscape divided into concessions and lots, many of these owned by absentee families like the Arnolds. A few attempted to sell their allotments to "land jobbers" as these families had no intention on settling in the area. Others would privately sell to adjoining property owners, or, like the Arnolds, keep some of the land as part of their estate. That is why the land around our Lake remained undeveloped wilderness much longer than many other areas in Eastern Ontario. It was years later that early settlers with the intent of laying down roots came to the north and the west of Otter Lake. This included colourful characters like Francis Lombard and John Oliver- the subjects of our next dispatch.

Note: If you have Otter Lake stories to share, please send them to [ronald.doering@gmail.com](mailto:ronald.doering@gmail.com)



*Peggy Shippen Arnold*

### Otter Lake Litter Round Up

*Submitted by Betty Large*

Please join OLLA on the lake Saturday July 11<sup>th</sup> as we clean up debris along the shore of Otter Lake. People can get out on the water on their own time on or before July 11<sup>th</sup> to participate. If anyone finds large items in the lake that you need help with, please message Betty at [lakeplan@otterlake.org](mailto:lakeplan@otterlake.org) by 1 pm on Saturday. Organic matter (i.e. trees, aquatic plants) is not considered litter. Send us photos of your round up collection and get your name entered to win one of our Otter Lake Ball Caps. Collect your prize at the AGM, July 25<sup>th</sup>. See you out there!

### Bass Spawning Sanctuary Project Update

*Submitted by Jeff Neal*

As you may recall, in 2024, OLLA became involved with a group of scientists whose goal is to improve conditions for Bass spawning in Otter Lake (as well as other lakes). In 2025 a group of Brave snorkelers took to the lake to locate and mark Bass nests following which they took samples from the fish to establish their health and maturity.

2026 will see the group return for additional sampling and testing to improve the baseline data for the study. Discussions with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (OFAH) are currently underway seeking support for the expansion and continuation of the project.

What it means to the residents of Otter Lake – Areas of the shoreline will be designated as Bass Spawning Sanctuaries. They will be identified with signs indicating that no fishing should take place in these areas during the Bass spawning season. The reason we say “No Fishing” rather than “No Fishing for Bass” is that we have many reports of anglers saying they are fishing for other different species of fish and not Bass. These designated areas can be monitored by residents and details of transgressors can be provided to officials with supporting documentation and photos. OLLA will continue to provide modest financial support and volunteer assistance to the project during 2026.

## Help Wanted

OLLA's current secretary is stepping down from the Board of Directors at the end of her term, July 25, 2026. By law, we must have a Secretary on the Board in order to continue functioning.

We are reaching out to our Membership asking that someone step forward and assume this legally critical role. The job involves taking minutes at all Board Meetings, which occur approximately 8 times a year, and at the Annual General Meeting which occurs in late July every year. The Secretary's presence at the AGM is mandatory but the Secretary can attend the Board Meetings via ZOOM or Teams. The Secretary is also responsible for the general organization of the AGM with help from the other Board Members. As with all OLLA positions, this is volunteer work. No compensation is provided except for out of pocket expenses.

For further information please contact [info@otterlake.org](mailto:info@otterlake.org)

## Reminder - OLLA PHOTO CONTEST

*Submitted by Betty Large*

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.

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.

## A Message from FOCA (Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations)

We're glad you're part of Ontario's cottage community! It brings great joy, and also comes with responsibility. 🌿

From keeping wake impacts low, to maintaining natural shorelines, to respecting fire bans, every action counts when protecting our shared environment.

👉 Get your free copy of FOCA's "Top Tips for Living in Cottage Country" and learn how to be a great waterfront neighbour at <https://foca.on.ca/welcome> (then share the news with a friend!)



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## Did you know?

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 <https://foca.on.ca/member-services/benefits/>

**F O C A**  
Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations