

Lake Wah-Wash-Kesh

CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION



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Coming Events

- Annual General Meeting: Saturday August 1st, Bennett's Boathouse, 10:00AM
- Weiner Roast: Saturday, July 18th, STRAUB'S BEACH, 4:00PM
- Corn Roast: Saturday, August 15th, STRAUB'S BEACH, 2-4:00PM

Membership dues -Duncan Robertson and Lynn Abbott-Lennox

A reminder that if you haven't sent in your 1998 dues, then please do so as soon as possible. The mail-back strategy that we initiated in the fall (envelopes addressed to the treasurer and separate yellow membership sheets) was very successful. As usual, memberships will be available at the Annual General Meeting. Naturally, we would prefer that all memberships were mailed in prior to the AGM (makes everyone's life a lot easier), but we will accommodate those of you who forget. Identification stickers will be issued at the door to all members; only members are invited to speak and to vote. Find your 1998 membership decal enclosed if you have paid your membership by the time of this mailing (extras will be available at the AGM).

Stories of the flood of 1998.

We have already heard some amazing stories about the high water situation this spring. Could you share your for publication in the fall newsletter?

Mountain Biking Opportunities (an appendix) -Wayne Lennox

In the fall newsletter, I provided details of how to access a couple of biking trails. I neglected to point out that access to the snowmobile trails can be gained in another way. Throw your bike in the boat and head over to Holtz' Bay; take the portage trail to Maple Lake. It is about 150 metres to the main snowmobile route. Looking for a riding companion; I am a relatively decent rider whose is usually available throughout the summer (cottage number 389-1445).

Land-Use Committee - Wayne Lennox

On Friday, April 17th we learned--rather by chance, as we so often do that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs would be transferring responsibility for subdivision approvals to the Parry Sound Planning Board (currently, they consider applications for severance only). In discussions with them, we learned that they would be considering an interim by-law to cover the unorganized townships that would establish frontage and area (60 metres and .4 hectares--essentially the same standards established at the Longhorn OMB hearing) as the only development criteria for subdivision proposals. In our planner's opinion, this would seriously undermine the progress we have made, at considerable expense towards appropriate development on the lake. There are other regulations that must be included. For example, in the three subdivision proposals in which we have been involved, one of the criteria stated that the building site must be 4.5 meters above the summer lake level. In the past, cottages have been built far below this level; this spring, the consequences have been awful for many of our members. It is a situation that a proper planning by-law could prevent, but that the one considered fails to address by its limited scope. Good planning regulations must be in place to protect not only the lake and all lake residents, but also the individual cottage owner hen himself. We also learned that the Board would be considering this by-law on Monday, April 27th. It was, we felt, necessary to make an appearance at this hearing on behalf of the Association. Mr. Wynia and I traveled to Parry Sound, and he presented our case for additional restrictions at the meeting. Though the Board amended the frontage and area standards (70 metres and .5 hectares, a substantial gain to say the least), they would not include our conditions. They reason that in the absence of an Official Plan for the area, they have limited powers of enforcement. Though we disagreed with their rationale, we can sympathize with them. It was unfair for the Ministry to pass on the responsibility for plans of subdivision in the unorganized townships to the Board without the funds necessary to establish the appropriate framework for considering these plans. The process is, however, not finished. There will be a public meeting at which time the by-law will be aired for comment. We will be there to make our case, and we will be petitioning the Minister to provide the necessary funds to establish an Official Plan (we will also be requesting that we be allowed to participate in its design). We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Gary King, a member of the Board and a new Association member, and to thank Association member Mr. Bill Auld who is also on the Board for their support during the meeting (Bill publicly acknowledged and credited the Association for its determination to bring order to the development process on Lake WahWashKesh).

Political Action -Dalton Ferris and Don Easterbrook

At the AGM in 1997, we were given the responsibility of staying abreast of developments pertaining to Township restructuring, tax issues, etc. This report is the result of innumerable phone calls, attendance at meetings, discussions with various ministries and politicians

As you are aware, the "winds of change" are blowing through all areas and aspects of Ontario. Budgets are being balanced, services are being modified reduced and/or being changed to user pay models. We in Mckenzie will be affected even though we are unorganized.

a) *Amalgamation* - Organized and unorganized townships in Ontario are being consolidated. The government wants fewer municipalities. A few hundred have voluntarily consolidated already. Last fall, Hagerman Township Council asked the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to appoint a commissioner to explore alternate forms of amalgamation and service delivery in our area. This request I believe covered 7 townships of which McKenzie is one. This request is currently before the Minister but won't be acted on until the Croft-Chapman-Magnetawan amalgamation is completed on July 1, 1998. This request for a commissioner was discussed at a public meeting on Nov. 27th in Ahmic Harbour. Don attended this meeting and we had subsequent discussions with Tom Sutcliffe, Reeve of Hagerman. He is pushing for the appointment of a commissioner, and both Don and I feel that we should support this request. Being connected to Hagerman and other local organized townships makes sense from many perspectives--given that we cannot stay the way we are; it would seem to be cost effective. We would expect that we would want input once hearings start, assuming a commissioner is appointed.

b) *Assessment/Taxes* - We all have received our assessments and they are 2 to 2.2 times the 1984 assessments. These supposedly bring us up to 1996 property rates. As you are aware, we have been paying education tax, and a modest tax for land and roads. During late 1997, the provincial government took over responsibility for the education financing and planning. As an offset, municipalities became responsible for the cost of a host of other services. Consequently, many ministries are busy determining how they will deliver these other services to northern areas and similarly, how the service will be paid for by the residents. From what I can learn, taxes may be similar in 1998 to what they were in 1997, but we will be charged for some portion of all services available in our area, it is safe to assume taxes could rise significantly, although no ministry will give any indication of what to expect.

c) *Area and District Services* - The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines is responsible for putting in place legislation (Bill 174) that will enable various area and district service boards to be setup. This will cover both organized and unorganized townships of Northern Ontario. This piece of legislation may be included in the next session of the Legislature. This will cover roads, policing, housing, social services, as well as numerous other services. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Community and Social Services is setting up 10 districts in Northern Ontario to deliver and receive compensation for various social services. We expect there will be a Parry Sound District Board. These boards are to be in place during 1998 and will cover welfare, children's issues, social housing. etc. Apparently, this Ministry can proceed ahead of the legislation being implemented by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. We would expect that volunteers from unorganized areas would be involved with these boards plus people appointed from organized townships.

d) *General* - I understand that we will become part of the information and input process that occurs to affect this new service and

tax system. Jochim Muetze of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines is responsible for shaping the Parry Sound and Sudbury District Service Boards. Exactly how, and how much we will be charged for the current and new services will become clearer in early 1999.

I hope that this is helpful to members, and want to thank Don for help this past year. Looking forward to the summer ahead

Lands for Life Round Table

If you have not heard of this process, then perhaps you should take the time to do so. The Government of Ontario has appointed a number of these so-called round tables to consider the fate of all public lands in Ontario. Lake WahwashKesh is included in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region, and certainly figures prominently in a number of planning scenarios for our area. Because of the time frame, the Executive could only prepare a rather general response for the round table (we determined that a more detailed response would have required input from the general membership), but some of you may want to address the roundtable with your own point of view. They are currently preparing their recommendations, but apparently there will still be opportunities for input. In our opinion, the scope of the possible changes should have dictated a more considered pace than the one the government imposed. Such is not the case, so we must make the best of it.

Elections

Our constitution requires that Executive members are elected for a two-year term. To prevent the confusion that a complete change in the composition of the executive following an election would bring, a specific number of positions is available each year. This year there are four (Andy Vurma, Gary Kindree, and Mike Busenhart each have one more year to serve). While we must accept nominations at the AGM, we would certainly welcome written nominations before then. This year, we will prepare a ballot to prevent the problem we encountered last August.

Crainadog Cruise

The Cramadog Snowmobile Club (many of our members also belong to this local organization) will be holding a Cruise on June 13th. Tickets are \$50.00 per person and include bus transportation (from Peter Keck's home), boat cruise and fish dinner. Peter says that sales will be brisk, so if you want a ticket, get one soon. Phone Ed Bennett, (705) 746- 7977, or Dave Boyter (905) 522-

0946.

Fire Pump

Peter Keck, a member of the local volunteer firefighting group, has informed us that they have a portable pump and 1000' of hose for use in the event of a fire (could be especially useful for water access properties). He is looking for anyone who might be willing to donate his/her time and boat to transport the pump if an emergency arises (perhaps it would be reasonable to assume that we would need several volunteers; Ed Bennett has already agreed to be one). The portable pump will be situated at Peter's, not the best site for us but it is central to the area (yes, the pump would first have to be towed to the landing by a member of the volunteer brigade!). They are also looking for anyone interested in becoming a volunteer; they could really use the help (any time commitment would be great, according to Peter). If you are interested, or can offer your services, call Peter at (705) 389-2974, or Chris Armstrong at (705) 389-3721.

Dock Committee

The Docks are in, but we do not have an agreement with the Province yet. Their proposed contract requires us to do all of the work and money, but we do not have any control over the docks. If you have any questions, call Paul Thomson or Ross Willett.

Dam Committee

A) UWO STUDENTS FINALIZE DESIGNS

The two student teams from the University of Western Ontario's Civil Engineering Department have completed their work to design a replacement for the WahWashkesh dam. One group recommended that the existing dam be repaired, while the other group recommended that a new dam be built just downstream from the existing one. In both cases, all materials would be brought to the dam by barge, and the construction would take place on site. Their cost estimates ranged from \$60,000 (rebuild) to \$85,000 (new). Our feeling is that these estimates are probably low and that a new concrete dam would likely cost at least \$100,000.

B) MEETING WITH MINISTER REQUESTED

The staff at the MNR has said that they have been instructed to reduce the number of dams that they manage through a

prioritization process which is currently underway. They indicated that their review of the Parry Sound area dams shows them that our dam is not "core business" to the MNR, and consequently, they do not intend to spend any money on our dam! We got the impression that they would be very happy if we took it over ourselves. We certainly do not agree with this assessment by the MNR staff. We feel so strongly about it, that we have sent a letter to Hon. John Snobelen, Minister of Natural Resources asking for a face to face meeting to explain our position and ask for his personal support to rebuild our dam.

C) WHAT IF THE DAM FAILED?

Over the last few months, our committee has been phoning you to find out your reaction to the impact of a complete dam failure which we estimate could permanently lower the summer level by 5 feet. Should this happen, access through the Indian Narrows would be difficult, if not impossible, effectively isolating the Big Lake from the Top Lake. Similarly, access in the Top Lake beyond Deadman's Island would be difficult as both sets of narrows at each end of Deadman's Island would be reduced to a set of rapids. We wanted your reaction to such an eventuality, and you told us! A large majority of members were extremely concerned and felt there would be a direct negative impact on their cottage shoreline. Most estimate that their property values would drop and some felt that this might be as much as 50%! We also wanted to know your preferences for a minimum summer water level. The vast majority suggested a minimum water level 6" to 1' higher than the 1997 low water level. We did call everyone that we had a number for. However, if we missed you, we would still like you input.

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