

September 2005 Peninsula Lake - Lake Plan Update

This report is to update the status of those projects specified in the Lake Plan that have been initiated. Many more could be started if new members would be willing to lead them.

The projects are listed with the numbering used in the Lake Plan.

Update Official Plans

The Township of Lake of Bays has approved and adopted into the Official Plan those policies of the Peninsula Lake Plan that are to guide development and redevelopment on the lake. The reference to the Peninsula Lake Plan in the Official Plan will also ensure that the character of the Lake that its residents want protected is officially documented.

The Town of Huntsville has just issued a draft Official Plan. The Association has commented on the policies of the draft and urged a prompt inclusion of our Lake Plan in a manner similar to that followed by the Lake of Bays Township.

Site Plan Control

The Association has worked with the planners of Lake of Bays and Huntsville to implement Site Plan Control Agreements on two redevelopments that were critical to the protection of our lake, in North Portage and Morgan's Bay.

Communication Plan

Pen Notes continues to be our main way of informing the membership on activities and concerns around our lake. A website has been under development for a long time. It is finally implemented and our directors and members are learning how best to use it for two ways communication and education on issues.

We have found that workshops and specific activities (both social and stewardship) have been enjoyed as a means of updating specific sectors of our membership on the status of our knowledge of the lake and the impact that we have on the lake. However, many of the members that we would like to reach with these activities do not participate in them. An excellent suggestion of developing a network of street captains to maintain contact with their neighbours is still hindered by lack of enough volunteers.

Stewardship Awards

A committee has set criteria for awards, published them in Pen Notes and asked for nominations. Three have been awarded to recognize good stewards in the preservation of our natural heritage, the protection of the lake from damaging development, and the careful management of redevelopment impacts. Much remains to be done to increase the number of nominations and expand them to contractors and real estate agents. To this purpose the awards have been presented at our AGMs and published in articles on local papers.

Shoreline Re-vegetation

We have distributed and planted 600 seedlings a year on the shores of our lake. Young members of our families have been encourage to participate in this activity and soon we will be able to judge and reward those that have been most successful in nurturing the growing trees.

Stream Inventory

We have held a workshop on this specific topic, led by a researcher who had studied the health of some of our streams . As a follow-up to the workshop we have carried out a benthic monitoring event on the McCredie Creek that flows from the massive development at Woodland Heights. Repeated annual events will enable us to judge the impact of deveolopment on the wetland head of this stream.

Loon Inventory

For a few years we have recorded sightings of loons on our lake. We were quite happy to see that the loon population seems to be self-sustaining, with an adequate number of young chicks reported.

Boating Awareness

Members have been encouraged to participate in safe boating training by holding one session on our lake. Awareness of the environmental impact of motor boats has been promoted by a motor free day advertised on Pen Notes and at AGM's every summer. An annual regatta for canoes, row boats and sail boats is a strong tradition on our lake and it has been enhanced with a long canoe race that includes a portage.

Monitoring

The traditional assessment of water quality by turbidity and nutrient monitoring has been expanded to bacterial level monitoring for several years, and to benthic monitoring in the last two years. We now have enough data to assess the effectiveness of this monitoring and target the monitoring to more specific evaluation techniques sometime this Fall. We have shared this data collected with the District of Muskoka and the provincial ministries (MNR & MOE), so that we should be able to compare the trends in our lake with that of similar lakes. This effort will need much more volunteering than currently available.

Invasive Species

Articles on Pen Notes and a presentation at a workshop have been used to increase our members' awareness of the risks of invasion by both water and land non-native species. Precautions to be used to manage the risk have been identified through the distribution of literature at our meetings, workshops and newsletters.

Lake Watch

An active committee has developed signage at entry points into the lake and contacts with the agencies responsible for enforcement of safety, environmental and land use regulations. They have also responded to complaints and observations by members concerned but unsure on how to respond to abuses seen.

19. Site Specific Stewardship

The site that has absorbed most resources (volunteer time and money) has been the proposed quarry overlooking Hill's Bay. Because of the importance of stopping this development for the quality of life on the lake, the other potential projects like the Canal and the Hidden Valley Creek restoration have been neglected. A successful conclusion of the no-quarry activities should re-energize these other site specific stewardship programs. The no-quarry battle has brought together our lake community to an incredible extent: overflowing passionate meetings, volumes of letters, special funds raised amounting to more than ten times our annual budget. We have high expectation that all this effort will eliminate the threat of similarly located quarry once and for all times.

20. Working with Partners

We have educated our elected municipal leaders and their planning staff through boat tours of the lake, invitations to our meetings and presentations to committees. The reputation we have gained has been helpful in several cases requiring planning or enforcement decisions. We have also shared the results of our reviews of official plans and bylaws with other Lake Associations and supported them in

activities where our experience could be of help (lake plan implementation, specific development comments, educational events).