

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2021

LAKE STEWARD'S REPORT

Introduction

The topic covered by this report include:

- Lake levels and water flow
- Water quality
- Invasive species
- Boating activity
- Lake Stewardship Plan update

The report is intended only as a summary, and additional information is included on our website or by contacting the Lake Steward directly.

Lake Levels and Water Flow

Summer 2020 saw an unprecedented rain event, which washed away the beaver dam (and many areas of road). Spring 2021 has been unusually dry. We have all been warned that global warming is likely to lead to more extreme weather events, and we should all be considering how to build resilience into our own properties and to the infrastructure around the lake.

The beaver baffler system has been much discussed over the years. To summarize, the Association has installed a baffler system in the dam at the outlet to Little Silver and aims to use this and, if necessary, dam skimming to prevent flooding of low-lying properties around the lake and to maintain continuous flow throughout the year.

As we can't predict precipitation (and nor it seems can the forecasters) this is a balancing act, with monitoring of the water level and maintenance of the pipes and cages when required to achieve our two objectives. The level of beaver activity also affects how often maintenance is needed. The maintenance work is undertaken by a team of volunteers, and more are always welcome – please let the Lake Steward or any Board member know if you are interested in helping. The Board is considering further modifications to the baffler system this summer, to extend some of the pipes further away from the dam in order to reduce beaver interference with the cages. We will use the bulletins and website to update you all on this.

Water Quality

RVCA tests the water in both lakes regularly, with the help of volunteers (especially during this pandemic year). Their website includes maps and reports that summarize findings.

Individual readings fluctuate considerably due to water levels and run-off. The long-term trend for our lakes has been one of slight improvement in quality. However, overall the condition of both lakes is only "fair", which is at the low end of the quality scale for other lakes in the Tay watershed. Our water is generally safe for swimming and drinking, though those using lake water should also take samples regularly to verify this. Some of the contaminants do contribute to weed growth, which is also aggravated by warm temperatures and lower water levels.

Our mandatory septic tank inspection program is one tool for maintaining water quality. It is also important for residents to limit inputs of chemicals such as phosphates as much as possible, by selection of cleaning products and by limiting use of fertilizers on gardens and lawns.

Concern over water quality is also why the Association takes an active role in Tay Valley Township discussions on development throughout our watershed, and on Township and county initiatives related to roadside spraying.

Regarding lake plants (weeds), residents should understand that we do not own the lake bottom, and provincial permits are required to disturb this. The installation of mechanical systems to remove plants is not legal without approvals. Preferably, if any plant control is undertaken it should use hand pulling, which can be quite quick and effective. In no event should plants be disturbed until after fish spawning season, and this also applies to any other in-water work.

Invasive Species

Our lakes are amongst the few in the region that are not infested by zebra mussels. Keeping them safe from these and other invasive species requires good boat hygiene at the launch or for launching at any other site, and other measures such as control of fish bait. Boats and fishermen are not the only sources of invasion, and other plant and animal species can be spread by air and other means. The last two years of gypsy moth infestation have been dramatic illustrations of the levels of devastation that invasive species can bring, though in most cases the effects show up more gradually and insidiously.

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations (FOCA), of which we are a member, is also undertaking data collection and monitoring for the spread of certain invasive species, and we are enrolled in the program. FOCA identifies species that are of concern, and provides useful material on recognition and control on their website. LSRLPOA includes links and summaries in our bulletins and websites, and our members attend their webinars. These are also generally open to the public at large (with limits on overall attendance), and if individual members are interested in receiving notifications please let the Lake Steward or your Area Representative know.

Boating Activity

There is a 10 km/hr speed limit throughout the South Arm of Little Silver Lake. More generally, a 10 km/hr speed limit applies within 30 m of the shoreline on our lakes and other Canadian waterways. These specific and general restrictions are written into the Canada Shipping Act and its Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations¹ and are enforced in Ontario by the OPP Marine Unit. This unit can also be called in to check on other forms of dangerous boating, such as endangering swimmers or other smaller personal watercraft.

In general, we hope and trust that our residents and visitors will always employ respect and consideration for operating all their watercraft, including giving others a clear berth and avoiding damaging levels of wake wash. Boat wakes are also dangerous to waterfowl shoreline nests, and can contribute to erosion.

¹ <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/sor-2008-120/page-10.html#h-743391>; LSL is covered in Schedule 6, Part 2

Lake Stewardship Plan Update

We published our Plan in 2018, and in 2019 it became part of TVT's overall planning framework. It can be downloaded from our website. The Plan was and is intended to be a living document, with monitoring of ongoing issues, removal of any that are resolved, and addition of any new topics that are of concern to our members. It guides the work of the Board, and provides the Association with standing with government organizations.

All of the items outlined in this report represent ongoing issues, and in many cases we are making progress against the actions identified in the Plan. For example, our involvement in many data collection programs has increased, and the Association is more closely connected with TVT processes than in the past. In some areas, the challenges have increased, examples being the pressures from invasive species and from problems such as Lyme disease.

Please read (or re-read) our Plan. If you would like to assist in any of the action areas identified in it, please let any Board member know. If you feel that any items should be added or given more or different emphasis, let us know that too.

Closing Note

The pandemic is likely to have long-term effects on how many of us relate to our cottages and our lakes, and increase the intensity of their use. Please respect the lakes and their natural flora and fauna, and recognize their vulnerability to our actions. While my Board position is Lake Steward, I encourage you all to think of yourselves as stewards of the lakes and the lands around them.