

Huntsville Lake of Bays Lakes Council Newsletter Spring 2012

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- > Oxbow Lake Cottagers Association
- > Peninsula Lake Association
- > Springsyde Cottagers Association
- > Toad, Camp & Blue Lake Association
- > Walker and Pells Lake Area Association



Executive Update

The Lakes Council would like to draw the attention to the efforts that have been made since the last strategic development meetings and our effort to develop a stronger business plan and vision. Huntsville and Lake of Bays Lake Council continues with its critical work in support of both the regional needs and the waterways of our community. We are proud of our strong advocacy for a balanced approach to environmental changes through insightful articles in our newsletters, fostering of educational events and guest speakers at our meetings.

The Lakes Council has historically playing an important role in ensuring the updating and enforcing of Lake Plans in Huntsville and Lake of Bays. Its historic work through delegates has resulted in a strong voice in evolution of the “Unity Plan” which will improve how the development of region affects our lakes and rivers and to enshrine it in our Official Plan so that it has the teeth of enforcement. There is nothing more important to our local economy than the protection and enhancement of our lakes

Since the opening of new research faculty at Forbes Hill Summit Centre for the Environment, the events manager, Robin Brushey has been working in tandem with the Lakes Council in fostering research and find answers to problems created with out changing demographics and time. That research may well result in discoveries of commercial value. The job creation that could result from such work could make Huntsville the center of such industries. Currently, it is generally felt by the executive that while the main focus of the Lakes Council has historically been on Lake Planning, recent changes the Northern Muskoka Lakes Region through the evolution of the Town of Huntsville “Unity Plan” and the Research faculty at the Forbes Hill Centre have necessitated a new focus in our strategic vision. Since we are living in a time of extremely fast-paced change, it is useful to have a concerted cooperation towards a common goal to remind us of the value of tradition, custom and heritage. We would like to drawn your attention to the efforts that have been made with renewal of the HLoBLC newsletter which we hope will provide a “single voice” for the region.

Organization are living entities and we are better served by working together towards a better future. We are grateful for the inclusion of our business sponsors and many friends and look forward to continued relationships.

Huntsville Lake of Bays Lakes Council Directors and Member Associations 2012

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Member Associations

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 Fairy Lake Association

Oxbow Lake Cottagers Association
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 Hidden Valley Property Owners Association
 Lake of Bays Association
 Lake Vernon Cottagers Association
 Mary Lake Association
 Otter Lake Association
 Springsyde Cottagers Association





Students Learning about Muskoka Ecosystems at Waterloo Summit Centre

Students are learning about ecosystem assessment skills and practice in a University of Waterloo field course.

Twenty-four keen students came up from the city to experience Muskoka and to study on May 13th. This field course is a term-long blended course with four of the 12 weeks spent at the Waterloo Summit Centre for the Environment in Huntsville, ON. It is a great opportunity for students to study in an environment that is very different from that of the Waterloo campus, as they participate in this Department of Environment and Resource Studies' course.

Today's environmental practitioner requires a comprehensive skill set of advanced environmental assessment techniques and this course will offer students just that. They will be trained by in field professionals in respective fields of forestry, aquatic biology, water quality, vegetation and landscape ecology to become independent environmental technicians.

Staying on site at the Centre, the student will be learning both inside the Waterloo Summit Centre in the classroom and working in the new ecology wet lab, as well as outside in the field. Students will participate in field trips, and conduct numerous field and lab analyses. Don't be surprised to see them in their hip waders collecting water samples on the edge of Cann Lake or examining the forested area around Lion's Lookout.

The primary vehicles for learning while at the Centre will be acquiring and improving field identification skills of organisms and formal use of ecosystem assessment. As part of this course, students are accredited with the provincially-recognized Certificate of Ecological Land Classification.

Towards the end of their stay at the Centre, students will be joined by numerous professional in the environmental field to undertake the Ontario Benthic Biomonitoring Networking (OBBN) Training Course. The OBBN course is another provincially-recognized certification. The plan is for this melding of students and professional development to become an ongoing offering at the Waterloo Summit Centre for the Environment.

The field course also includes an invitation for the community to come learn too. The course instructor, Colin Yates, is calling on all interested community members to join the students at a number of course lectures that he is opening to the public. There is no cost to attend, Yates just hopes people will come out to listen, learn and ask questions.

These public lectures include:

□ *Sustainable Trail Building and Eco-Tourism*, by Hap Wilson, Eskakwa Eco-Adventures Company Inc. on Friday, June 1, 2012 - 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm

□ *Treating Wastewater with Constructed Wetlands: From the Arctic to Muskoka* by Colin Yates, University of Waterloo on Tuesday, June 5, 2012 – 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Additional event details are available at www.uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-summit-centre/events. RSVPs are requested to Robin Brushey, Event Manager at 705-571-0259 or rbrushey@uwaterloo.ca, so she has an idea of how many are attending.

Since its opening, the Waterloo Summit Centre for the Environment, the University of Waterloo's environmental research centre, has been host to several small conferences, training sessions, and educational seminars, as well as credit courses and research projects through the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Environment. This Ecosystems Assessment course will be followed later this summer by another Environment and Resource Studies course, Conservation and Restoration Practice. To learn more about the activities at the Waterloo Summit Centre for the Environment visit www.uwaterloo.ca/waterloo-summit-centre.

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For more information, please contact:

Robin Brushey, Events Manager at the Waterloo Summit Centre for the Environment, University of Waterloo, at 705-571-0259 or rbrushey@uwaterloo.ca

Colin Yates, University of Waterloo, at 519-888-4567 ext. 38387 or cyates@uwaterloo.ca

**Lake of Bays Update
Shane Baker-District Councilor –Lake of Bays**



<u>Township</u>	<u>District</u>
Office 705-635-2272	705-645-2231
877-566-0005	800-461-4210 (within 705)
Fax 705-635-2132	705-645-5319
Web www.lakeofbays.on.ca	www.muskoka.on.ca

It would appear the Federal and Provincial governments are beginning to address their indebtedness and this may lead to a reduction in funding to the lower tier governments. The District of Muskoka continues to try and manage a debt ranging between 90 and 100 million dollars, while Lake of Bays is essentially debt free. Our Township budget was passed much earlier than usual, and it would appear we have overcome the deficits of 2009-2010.

Important Dates

***Muskoka Summit on the Environment:** Studying Biodiversity Loss, June 6-7, 2012.

Township News

The Township budget was passed much earlier than normal this year, with an increase of 7%, which represents \$262,335 in spending. Of this increase in spending, \$20,000.00 was directed to reserves. This equals an increase of \$6.74 per \$100,000 of assessment. Visit the Township website for details.

The budget includes capital spending on the following road projects in Franklin & Sinclair:

- Point Ideal Rd. (2.8km) slurry seal, \$43,000.
- Ten Mile Bay Rd. (1.2km) high-float, \$25,000.
- Put in Bay Rd. (2.3km) gravel replacement, \$48,000.
- Billie Bear Rd. (2.7km) slurry seal, \$43,000.
- Tally-Ho Winter Park Rd. (1.7km) slurry seal, \$27,000.
- Hillside Crescent (1.1km) stabilize and high-float, \$80,000.

Fire Dept:

The Fire Service Review is now complete, and it included over 69 recommendations. At time of writing the contents of the report still have not been made public. The recommendations we are following will be outlined in the next newsletter.

Lake of Bays has also recruited eight new volunteer firefighters who are currently in training. Further recruitment will be required at three of our four fire halls to meet our recommended compliment.

Heritage Committee:

On February 24th, Mayor Young and Councilor Tapley travelled to Queen’s Park to receive a Heritage award from the Lieutenant Governor. This was one of only three awards received province-wide. Congratulations to Nancy and the committee she has chaired for eight years!

Algonquin Grace Hospice:

Several members of the Lake of Bays council attended the opening of the new Huntsville Hospice on January 4th. What was especially interesting to learn is that many of the volunteers are from Lake of Bays. Furthermore, three of our residents made donations large enough to earn naming rights for specific rooms. They include Alberta Beaman, Brian & Karen Markham and Larry & Mary Greenwood.

Building Department:

During the budget deliberations it was interesting to learn that permit revenue within Lake of Bays for 2011 was about equivalent



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Baysville Salt Dome: \$ 700,000.

Muskoka Road #9 (various projects): \$1,800,000.

Airport Advisory

This newly struck committee is comprised of representatives from the public as well as one member from each town or township in Muskoka. A first initiative of this committee has been the recommendation of an \$80,000 operational review. Much energy in the past year has been directed towards airport expansion options to accommodate an expanding airplane painting business at the airport. After hours of laborious work, a phased expansion on the east side of the airport was approved, at a cost of 1.2 million for the first phase. More recently, the company in question has sent a letter confirming they will be expanding elsewhere; this will save us development costs in the short term, but it is always disappointing to lose the prospect of new business/job opportunities.

Muskoka Watershed Council

The Muskoka Watershed Council has elected a new chairperson in Pat Arney. She should be an excellent leader. Many thanks to previous chairperson, Rob Milligan, a seasonal resident in Lake of Bays. The websites for the Water Web, Watershed Council (MWC) and Heritage Foundation have all been improved, and I encourage you to visit each to see what conservation information is available at your finger tips! The MWC and partners at the MOE and MNR were also successful in their bid for a \$600,000 Canadian Water Network grant (\$200,000 per year for 3 years). Research will study the issue of declining minerals such as calcium and the resulting effect on microorganisms in our ecosystem.

Development Charges

Years ago, consultants were hired to review development charges in Muskoka. The report recommended that the District double development charges (DC) ASAP. After several years debate, council began to initiate a four year phase-in to increase DC. After one year of the phase-in, the majority of council voted to stop further increases. Therefore, the taxpayers of Muskoka will continue to subsidize all new development into the foreseeable future.

Service Review Committee (SRC)

All committees meet on a three week schedule at District. Within these meetings in 2012 each committee reviews a portion of the functions within their departments to look for efficiency or redundancy. The SRC meets monthly to review what has been covered and how to improve the process. There is also a Citizen's Review Committee operating in parallel. Lake of Bays is represented on the citizen's committee by Bill Rogers and Mary Ann Carson. It appears unlikely the review will have much effect on the 2012 budget, but hopefully when the process is complete new ideas will be adopted in 2013.

Saving paper & money

The District of Muskoka and Township of Lake of Bays, both took the initiative early in 2011 to equip councilors with lap-top computers. The initiative has led to less use of paper, toner, copiers, couriers and staff time. I'm still trying to get the numbers on actual savings, but I believe the District is saving about 250,000 sheets of paper per year by not printing Council and Committee agendas. I hope to have more accurate figures later in the year.

Small Hydro and Sustainability

Many of you have been asking what is happening with the idea of a Township-operated hydro project in Baysville. Currently this site is not even available for applications, so in the meantime I am looking for less expensive and less obtrusive technologies for this site. I still believe in the benefits of such a project to our sustainability as a Township. While wind-power seems unlikely to find much support in the Township, solar projects are also worth considering when they are not visible from shorelines. On May 2nd, I met with Water Power Group representatives at the Baysville Dam and later at their small hydro presentation in Bracebridge. While it is early to predict any future association, they do seem to operate from an inclusive model that would allow for community and municipal investment. I am also interested in learning more about bio gas energy, and generating electricity from wood chips. Let me know

I am also interested in learning more about bio gas energy, and generating electricity from wood chips. Let me know if any of these topics are of interest to you. The current weather we are experiencing simply underscores the need for a new outlook to the future.

I hope you enjoy this update. Your questions and comments are always welcome.

Respectfully,
District Councilor Shane Baker,
Sbaker@lakeofbays.on.ca



75 West Rd.
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Water Management in the Muskoka River System: Muskoka River Water Management Plan

The Muskoka River watershed originates on the western slopes of Algonquin Park, descending 300 meters in elevation over a distance of 210 kilometers before flowing into Georgian Bay via the Musquash/Gibson and Moon rivers. The watershed is 510 square kilometers (approximately the size of Prince Edward Island) and includes more than 2,000 lakes of various sizes with a total surface area of approximately 78,000 hectares.

The watershed receives more than 1,000 millimeters of annual precipitation which is one of the wettest locations in Ontario. Annual precipitation includes more than 300 centimeters of snowfall representing 20% to 25% of the annual precipitation amount. The watershed is one of the wettest locations in Ontario including total amount of snowfall.

The lakes, rivers and wetlands within the Muskoka River watershed support a diversity of natural ecosystems, tourism and recreation activities, and businesses including hydroelectric generation.

The Muskoka River is comprised of three subwatersheds: the North and South branches, and the Lower Muskoka subwatershed. There are a total of 41 water control structures located throughout the river including 11 waterpower facilities and 30 dams. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) owns and operates 29 of these dams.

In 2002, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) produced the *Water Management Planning Guidelines for Waterpower* to provide a formal planning framework for the operation of waterpower facilities and dams for river systems within the province of Ontario. A water management plan is intended to provide for the management of water levels and flows on a “watershed” basis to equitably address environmental, social and economic interests within the lakes and river reaches.

The *Muskoka River Water Management Plan* (MRWMP) came into affect in June, 2006. This plan provides for the management of water levels and flows as they are affected or controlled by the operation of each water control structure. Currently there are four waterpower companies and the MNR Parry Sound District signatory to the MRWMP.

The MRWMP report can be viewed in its entirety on the Muskoka WaterWeb at: www.muskokawaterweb.ca/water-101/water-quantity/mrwmp.

The MRWMP includes the lake Operation Plan for each water control structure, enforceable provisions for the management of flows and levels, compliance monitoring to ensure that waterpower facilities are meeting requirements, and effectiveness monitoring to determine whether the ongoing implementation of the plan results in attaining the ecological, social and eco-

economic objectives.

A number of objectives were identified during the planning and consultation phase of the MRWMP which includes the following:
Social and Economic Objectives

- maintain public safety during high flow periods or flood events
- avoid adverse impacts to built infrastructure and shorelines
- maintain or enhance recreational capacity of lakes
- enhance base flow conditions in river reaches especially during periods of drought
- maintain or increase hydropower potential
- remain within current operational and flow passage capabilities of water control structures
- remain within the established normal operating zones for developed lakes



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Ecological Objectives

- higher and/or longer duration spring peak levels for fish and wildlife reproduction and habitat
- gradual water level reduction on lakes throughout the summer period;
- improved base flow conditions in river reaches downstream of water control structures
- provide for moderate seasonal and inter-annual variability in levels and flows;
- consideration of more natural flow regimes
- less differential between fall and winter drawdown levels to prevent or reduce lake trout egg mortality and promote successful lake trout reproduction

Water levels, flows and the overall “health” of the Muskoka River and watershed are monitored on an ongoing basis by a number of government agencies, organizations and groups. Environment Canada in partnership with the MNR maintains automatic (electronic) gauges throughout the river system. Daily water levels are recorded by these gauges for most of the regulated lakes and daily flows are recorded for the north and south branches and lower subwatershed (Musquash River and Moon River). Lake levels are manually recorded at least once per week in the absence of an automatic gauge.

On a daily basis, MNR Parry Sound District water control technicians collect, compile and analyse level and flow data along with other environmental information such as rainfall and snowpack conditions (water content). The data and information is used to determine which MNR dams need to be operated to meet flow and level objectives. Water levels and flows are altered by either placing or removing a certain number of control stop logs to best meet seasonal objectives of the MRWMP and water level regime identified in the Operating Plan for each lake.

Ongoing documentation of water levels and flows provides the opportunity to monitor conditions over time. Changing weather patterns or climate can alter the hydrology of a watershed over a relatively short timeframe or extended period of time. For example, climate change may create greater fluctuations in flows and levels and possibly increase the frequency and severity of flood and drought events.

The MRWMP and other similar plans provide for an “adaptive management” approach to water management planning. As new information and science becomes available, the MRWMP can be amended as required to prescribe new or altered level and flow requirements and objectives.

For further information on the Muskoka River Water Management Plan, please contact Steve Taylor, Water Resources Coordinator, MNR Parry Sound District at steve.taylor@ontario.ca or 705-646-5509.

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Unity Plan: Huntsville's Guide to a Sustainable Future
by Rebecca Francis, Sustainability Coordinator, Town of Huntsville



In 2010, the Town of Huntsville approved a sustainability plan, a.k.a. the Unity Plan: Huntsville's Guide to a Sustainable Future.

What is a sustainability plan?

"Huntsville's Unity Plan is a long-range plan for the community that identifies strategies and actions on how to reach the Town's goals and vision for sustainability. The Unity Plan provides direction on how the Town can develop in a way that does not jeopardize future generations' ability to work and live in Huntsville"

What is the vision for Huntsville's Unity Plan?

Huntsville is a vibrant, welcoming and healthy place in which to live and play as we foster innovation, celebrate arts, culture, heritage, and recreation, develop a strong and resilient economy and follow an ethic of social caring and environmental stewardship.

How is Huntsville's Unity Plan implemented?

Because the Unity Plan is a community-oriented plan (not just a Town policy document) residents of Huntsville are involved in the grass-roots implementation. It works like this:

- There are 6 implementation teams, called working groups, whose membership consists largely of Huntsville residents, a councillor, and staff representation
- The chair of each working group sits on a standing committee of Council, called the Unity Plan Implementation Committee (UPIC) which is chaired by Deputy Mayor, Scott Aitchison and vice-chaired by Councillor Fran Coleman
- Working groups operate in 2 ways towards the implementation of the actions set out in the Unity Plan:
 1. Implement projects of their own
 2. Make recommendations to Council, via UPIC, for projects staff and the Town can implement

Why is sustainability important for Huntsville?

Sustainability...

- is healthy
- opens the discussion for climate change adaptation
- is a way for Huntsville to be a model community
- can save money
- creates a unified vision for the future
- provides the Town with opportunity to show leadership in the District
- builds on existing programs, plans and policies and identifies areas for further action
- includes the ideas, dreams, hopes of Huntsville residents
- includes community members in implementing change
- provides a framework for municipal decision making
- provides a tool to monitor and track progress and success
- is about a new way of thinking...not an end destination!

What are some of the successes of the Unity Plan?

- Section on Sustainability in every staff report going to Committees and Council
- Corporate greenhouse gas emissions inventory starting June 2012
- Carbon calculator on the Town website: check it out!
- Survey to assess the need of a men's shelter in Huntsville
- The Green Team: youth and families learn about their carbon footprint through games, crafts, and activities
- Default to double-sided printing on staff computers
- Move towards paper-less at Committee and Council meetings
- Staff sustainability education and initiatives- setting an example for Huntsville!
- Investigation of potential for solar panels on Town buildings
- Proposal for Active Transportation Strategy
- Large natural areas policy research
- Much more!

Is there a staff sustainability team?

Sustainability is the responsibility of all Town of Huntsville staff- and residents! Sustainability is being incorporated into the job descriptions of all positions and staff are encouraged to think about more sustainable ways to do their jobs.

There is a Sustainability Coordinator, who provides support to the working groups, UPIC, and leads staff and many Town sustainability initiatives. The Sustainability Coordinator intern position is partially funded by FedNor's Northern Ontario Development Program

A recent motion to Council from UPIC recommended that the Sustainability Coordinator establish a Sustainability Committee consisting of representatives from all Town of Huntsville departments to assist with the vision, design, and promotion of future staff sustainability initiatives.

How can I learn more or become involved?

Visit www.huntsville.ca/en/living/Sustainability.asp or contact Rebecca Francis, Sustainability Coordinator: Rebecca.Francis@huntsville.ca or 705-789-1751 ext. 2366



Debi Davis *cfre*
Executive Director
705.789.2311 ext. 2492
debi.davis@mahc.ca

www.hdmhfoundation.ca
4-100 Frank Miller Drive Huntsville ON P1H 1H7

The advertisement is enclosed in a black border. At the top left is the Habitat for Humanity Muskoka logo, featuring a stylized house icon with three human figures inside. To its right is the 'ReStore' logo in a large, bold, blue font. Below these logos, the text 'Renovating? Remodeling? Recycling?' is written in a green, sans-serif font. Underneath that, a green horizontal bar contains the text 'SHOP * DONATE * BUILD * VOLUNTEER' in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the bar, the text 'Donate to the ReStore' is written in a large, bold, blue font. This is followed by the address '1964 Muskoka Beach Road, Bracebridge' and '3 Crescent Road, Huntsville' in a smaller, green font. Below the address is the phone number '705-646-0106' in a bold, black font. At the bottom of the advertisement, a dark blue horizontal bar contains the text 'Building Homes Building Hope' and the website 'www.habitatmuskoka.com' in white, sans-serif font.

Are Muskoka's Lakes and Rivers a Fluoride Dumping Ground?

By: Robert C. Henry

It has now been discovered that the District of Muskoka is fluoridating more than just its drinking water.

Ruth Bednar, a registered Orthomolecular Health Practitioner recently sent an e-mail letter to all District councillors. She notes that Muskoka has, up until very recently, never tested the amount of fluorides entering Muskoka's lakes and rivers in the wastewater discharge at sewage treatment plants.

Bednar and her husband Rick Bednar requested testing of water discharged from sewage treatment plants for fluoride concentration before its release into Muskoka's lakes and rivers. The district's Director of Water and Sewer, Herman Clemens, arranged for this testing at the Gravenhurst and Huntsville sewage treatment plants.

The Bednars quoted Clemens as saying "there is fluoride in our wastewater, much to my surprise, at 0.4 to 0.5 ppm (or 0.4 – 0.5 mg/L.) I would have thought it would have been much more diluted than that. That's the nature of fluoride. It doesn't degrade. Fluoride is not like chlorine that will degrade to practically nothing."

According to Bednar, Clemens also said this is an "eye opener for us (District staff). Fluoride is obviously not diluted that much."

In a follow-up interview Clemens stated that every year the District of Muskoka pumps approximately 10,000 litres of hydrofluorosilicic acid into Muskoka's drinking water. The fluorides in this compound do not break down and the recent tests appear to indicate a significant portion of it eventually makes its way into Muskoka's lakes and rivers.

He said that the figures quoted by Bednar are correct and that the same equipment normally used to test fluoridated drinking water was utilized, for the first time, to test discharge water at District sewage treatment plants.

The readings taken from the Huntsville and Gravenhurst sewage treatment plants would be skewed if the base level of fluoride in the Muskoka lakes was high. Clemens said that's not the case as only trace amounts of fluorides have been detected in water that enters Muskoka's water treatment plants.

Bednar went on to state that the Canadian Water Quality Guidelines for the Protection of Aquatic Life set by Environment Canada is limited to no more than 0.12 ppm (0.12 mg/L) fluorides – a maximum concentration recommended for the protection of all stages of freshwater life against the adverse affects of total inorganic fluorides.

She states that what is being dumped into the Muskoka Lakes is a serious hazard for aquatic organisms; in violation of the Fisheries Act and that these violations are a threat to sustainable development.

Bednar warned District councillors by stating that not only does inorganic fluoride (from hydrofluorosilicic acid), especially since what we are dumping into our waterways is at levels over and above the recommended guidelines set by Environment Canada.

In a March 31, 2011 report to District Council, Tony White



**Muskoka
Computes**

Bill Annand
108 Main Street E. Huntsville ON
705-788-7644
bill_annand@muskokacomputes.com

the District’s Commissioner of Engineering and Public Works stated that the fluoride “target range in Muskoka’s water treatment plants is 0.6 to 0.7 mg/L. The maximum acceptable is 1.4 mg/L.”

There is an endless amount of information available on the internet and elsewhere related to fluoridation in drinking water and how it can have negative health implications for humans. The opposite position is also extensively argued. The same holds true for the environmental consequences of discharging fluorides into lakes and streams.

Dr. William Hirzy, 2000 Senior Vice-President of the National Treasury Employees Union Chapter 280, representing professional employees at U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters has been quoted as saying: “If this stuff (fluoride) gets out into the air, it’s a pollutant; if it gets into the river, it’s a pollutant; if it gets into the lake, it’s a pollutant; but if it goes straight into your drinking water system, it’s not a pollutant. That’s amazing!”

Perhaps the most baffling aspect of this entire local debate is the absolute confidence with which the majority of District councillors have decided that fluoridated drinking water has many benefits and only a negligible down side.

Bednar has struggled to get District council’s attention. On May 18, 2011 a request went to the District’s Engineering and Public Works Committee to allow her and her husband Richard Bednar to make presentations with respect to fluoridation of municipal drinking water.

Without even a discussion or a stated reason the committee voted against letting the Bednars speak. Shortly thereafter, on June 6, 2011, Ruth Bednar was given permission to address District council. Why things changed so quickly is, well, not exactly transparent.

Nevertheless, Ruth Bednar did address council on the sixth of June. She countered arguments previously put forward by Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. She also presented an opposite opinion that came from an equally or more qualified medical professional, Dr. Hardy Limeback – a leading authority on the subject of fluoridation.

When Bednar concluded her address she was asked by Councillor Scott Young why she hadn’t made her presentation to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. She explained that Dr. Garner wouldn’t answer her phone calls.

More recently, perhaps in response to Councillor Fran Coleman’s call for a debate, Bednar tried to arrange an open discussion between Dr. Limeback and Dr. Garner. Again, she shared her e-mail with district councillors.

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FOCA Property Tax Update

In February 2012, FOCA Executive Director Terry Rees, and Tax Committee member Alan Morson, met with Mark Lindquist, MPAC Government and Business Relations Manager. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify and establish key points about waterfront property taxation under the new Current Value Assessment effective January 1, 2012.

Here are a few items discussed at this meeting:

Sales in the time period January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2011 will be used to establish comparisons for a given property. Already established is the policy of ramping up value increases over a 4 year period to lessen the impact of rapidly increasing property values however any decreases are to be effective immediately. There is the possibility of some waterfront communities experiencing a decline in the assessed value during the period.

Acceptable deviation for recreational property continues to be 25%. This compares to 10% for urban properties. Essentially this means that with the high degree of variation and lack of suitable comparisons in waterfront communities, MPAC accepts a higher degree of error for recreational properties compared to urban properties where the number of sales and greater uniformity produce a more accurate assessment.

“ABOUT MY PROPERTY” (AMP – visit http://www.mpac.ca/pages_english/products_services/aboutmyproperty.asp) is an internet access feature which will assist a property owner to determine assessments for comparable properties and answer some questions about how the assessment was generated. A new user ID and password will be included on the new assessment notice.

“NEIGHBOURHOOD” base values will vary greatly.

For clarity on deciphering assessment values, it is important to know what your “neighbourhood” includes. For waterfront communities, MPAC usually restricts a “neighbourhood” to other waterfront properties in a localized area of a lake. Therefore the number of sales used for the comparison may be small over the 4 year period and variation in quality and features may be high. The rise and fall of nearby but inland properties, may not have much influence over waterfront values

high. The rise and fall of nearby but inland properties, may not have much influence over waterfront values and vice versa.

There will be the same “time adjustment” factors applied to all properties. This means that a comparison property sale in your “neighbourhood” in 2008 will have a time factor applied to render a 2012 value. Although the pattern of change for high - versus lower-value properties may have differed during the 4 year period, the same factors will be used.

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Assessment notices are to be mailed between September 5 and November 2, 2012. Note that these new assessments will be used to determine municipal taxes in 2013. The assessed value established in 2008 is used for the 2012 tax year.

The Request for Review (RfR) deadline for 2013 is April 1, 2013. Therefore once the new assessments are received in November 2012, the deadline to challenge the value is April 1, 2013 for the 2013 tax year.

FOCA brought forward concerns about waterfront taxation to MPAC, again.

The taxation system was designed and first utilized in an urban setting and has a number of weaknesses when applied to a rural, waterfront setting. It tends not to recognize that many FOCA members do not enjoy the usual level of municipal benefits such as road maintenance, emergency services, education, waste removal etc. It is a FOCA concern that in many communities there has been a significant shift towards the waterfront community as the primary revenue source for taxation.

What do you think about aggregate extraction in Muskoka? Muskoka Watershed Council

The Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) first produced a position paper on Aggregate Resources in 2005, just prior to the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) coming into effect in Muskoka on January 1, 2007. MWC has released a draft update to the 2005 paper and would like to know what guidelines *you* think should be in place in order to ensure environmentally sound aggregate extraction.

There is pressure on the watersheds of Muskoka for new and expanded aggregate and dimensional stone operations. While continued prosperity is dependent, in part, on a long-term supply of aggregates at a reasonable cost, it is also heavily dependent on a vibrant, healthy natural environment to support native natural systems, provide a wide range of goods and services, and to ensure Muskoka remains a recreational and tourist destination.

A healthy aggregates extraction industry need not be mutually exclusive to a healthy natural environment. By looking at Muskoka strategically and identifying both the commercially viable aggregate resources and the natural values necessary to maintain current lifestyles and environmental health, a collaborative development approach can be achieved. As outlined in the revised MWC position on aggregate extraction, MWC would like to see:

1. A comprehensive strategy for aggregate extraction that includes both consolidated and unconsolidated material be developed.
 2. Municipalities require sound planning policies and a detailed database that identifies existing pits and untapped resources.
 3. Dimensional stone should not receive the same level of priority under the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) as aggregate required for road and building construction and other infrastructure needs.
 4. Municipalities, community groups and local aggregate producers work together to develop socially and environmentally responsible standards for aggregate extraction.
 5. The Province amend the Aggregate Resources Act (ARA) to require that cumulative environmental effect of multiple operations be analyzed and addressed. The Act does a reasonable job of assessing local environmental impacts but does not address the cumulative environmental impacts of multiple operations.
 6. Areas of no extraction and areas of limited extraction be identified. It is recommended that net replacement ratios, where operations are proposed in areas of limited extraction, be implemented.
- All programs, including resource analysis, permitting and enforcement are properly funded.

Have Your Say on Biodiversity Loss Muskoka Heritage Foundation

One of the most important factors influencing watershed health is biodiversity and so the 2012 Muskoka Summit on the Environment, scheduled for June 6-7, will focus on biodiversity loss. This is a Summit for the public to learn about biodiversity loss and have their say. For more information visit the website at muskokasummit.org.

The primary product of the summit will be a communiqué that can be used by the public at local, regional, provincial, or national levels to encourage action to be taken on stopping biodiversity loss.

In order to gather information for the communiqué, we want to know what you think:

If you had 10 minutes with an important politician, what would be the single most important ACTION you would ask that person to carry forward regarding biodiversity loss?

Biodiversity refers to the variety of life on Earth. It encompasses all living things and their relationships to each other, and unites species, ecosystems, and ecological functions. Biodiversity is about being connected – all species, including humans, depend on each other to survive.

Humans depend, directly and indirectly, on biodiversity for many things, such as clean air and water, food and fibre, climate moderation and a healthy economy. Without rich and complex biodiversity, these ecosystem services would be extremely expensive or impossible to replace.

There are multiple threats to biodiversity, globally and locally. The threats include population growth, climate change, unsustainable use of the Earth's resources (including water and air), invasive species, and pollution. Together, these fragment or destroy ecosystems, endanger species and cause ecosystem services to deteriorate.

We need to start valuing and paying for the services that nature provides to society. What gets measured often gets managed. We need to manage risk to ecosystem services now, or pay later for ecosystem services lost. We need an economy in sync with ecological limits, which means market signals and economic incentives that direct us towards ecological sustainability. Just as governments and households strive for balanced budgets, so must we strive to live sustainably within nature's finite capacity.

Biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services are rapidly occurring at both global and local scales as a direct result of damaging unsustainable human activities. Yet, despite the biodiversity crisis, biodiversity is seldom given any obvious economic value.

While some Canadians are concerned about biodiversity loss and profess to feel sad about it, the full magnitude of the problem, and the need for urgent action is not widely recognized.

So have your say and answer the question: *If you had 10 minutes with an important politician, what would be the single most important ACTION you would ask that person to carry forward regarding biodiversity loss?* You can send us your feedback at jbrowse@muskokaheritage.org.

Fire Warning: be Safe at the Cottage FOCA

We hope that 2012 will not be another record year for fire, but let's all get ready, just in case.

Last year, 1,330 forest fires were recorded in Ontario, affecting more than 630,000 hectares – the most area burned in the past 50 years! With an early dry Spring this year, we all need to take steps to help reduce fire risks, inside and out.

Whether you cottage or camp this summer, your actions can have serious implications for all woodland property in rural Ontario. Lightning causes about 50% of wildfires across Ontario; however, 90% of all wildfires that start within 3 km of our communities are attributed to human activity.

Remember: if your campfire escapes, you could be held responsible for the costs of suppressing your fire. Wildfires can move at amazing speeds under moderate winds. A typical grass fire can travel up to 2 km per hour. Fire can spread through the crowns of trees at up to 15 kilometres per hour. In most circumstances, fire agencies cannot arrive in time to stop these sorts of fires from causing damage to property in rural areas.

The best defence against wildfire is to take action on your cottage property long before a fire starts. Properly preparing your home does not guarantee that you will be free from any fire damage, but it does reduce the risks. Some preventative measures cost very little and reduce fire dangers considerably; others require planning and long-term commitment to change. Every home should have shovels, rakes, axes, garden hoses, sprinklers and roof ladders to assist in suppressing wildfires.

Follow the tips below and protect against fire, inside and out. You have the power to make a difference, and protect your family.

Indoor Fire Safety Tips:

Ontario's smoke alarm laws DO apply to cottages; that means working alarms are required on every storey and outside all sleeping areas.

Never use a fuel-burning appliance in the cottage without having a carbon monoxide alarm (this includes gas, propane or wood heating systems and appliances). Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer, because you can't see, smell or taste it.

Test all alarms and replace batteries regularly. Remember: batteries exposed to colder temperatures lose power faster, and should be replaced each season.

Alarms don't last forever! Sensors weaken and can become obstructed over time, even if the test button still sounds. Replace smoke alarms every 10 years, and CO alarms every 5-7 years.

Find out more about having "Peace of Mind for your Piece of Heaven" by visiting: www.safeathome.ca/pieceofheaven.

Boating Fire Safety Tips:

○ Follow local safety regulations and make sure any watercraft is outfitted with safety gear and a fire extinguisher.

○ In case of fire, abandon the boat and swim to safety, using appropriate emergency and signaling techniques to call for help.

Remember, carbon monoxide can collect within, alongside or behind a boat in minutes in a variety of ways. Never enter an enclosed area under a swim platform where exhaust is vented, not even for a second. It only takes one or two breaths of the air in this area for it to be fatal.

While you are on the water, watch out for water bombers! Stay well out of the way if you encounter a fire crew scooping up lake water to drop on a fire.

Outdoor Fire Safety Tips:

A little advance planning can provide valuable extra time before fire reaches you, giving fire crews more opportunity to respond and gain the edge in fire-fighting.

- Don't stack wood along exterior walls. Store combustible materials like fuel and wood piles at least 10 metres away from the cottage.
- Keep your roof and rain gutters free of debris and overhanging vegetation that could spread fire.
- Use an approved spark arrestor on your chimney or stove pipe.
- Take steps to protect your property from the risk of wildfire. Pay attention to creating a safety zone immediately surrounding the cottage by removing dead trees and thinning vegetation. Consider chipping, composting or taking your brush to a disposal site instead of burning. Metal burn barrels in good condition are suitable for burning brush outside of a municipality.

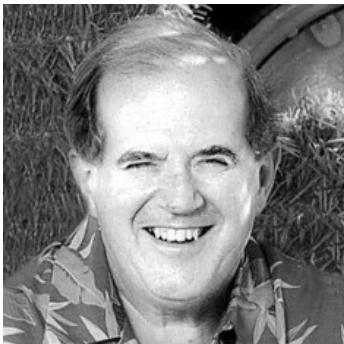
Campfire Safety Tips:

- Pay attention to local fire restrictions and fire bans, and don't build fires on windy evenings.
 - build your fire on non-combustible material such as rock or soil, at least 1 metre from flammable material like brush or overhanging branches
 - Keep your fire controlled and have water handy to douse the flames if needed
- All done? Put out your fire using lots of water, stir the embers and follow up with more water to ensure your fire is out completely

For more tips on being FireSmart, visit: www.foca.on.ca/firesmart

Enter to Win in the Safe at the Cottage Contest

Take pictures "before and after" your fire safety projects this summer, and you could win as part of the **Safe at the Cot-**



A Tribute to Dan Kerr

Dan Kerr was a long time board member of the Mary Lake Association. He served as a director, secretary and treasurer. Dan also served as a director on the Huntsville Lake of Bays Lakes Council as part of his service to the MLA.

Dan was also a husband, father and grandfather. He served the city of Kitchener as an engineer faithfully for many 30 years. Dan was well known at work for his Hawaiian shirts. On the day of his funeral the flag at Kitchener city hall flew at half-mast in a rare show of respect. The staff also held a Hawaiian shirt day in Dan's honour.

Dan loved living in Muskoka and made this his second home. Dan and his wife JoAnn volunteered at Muskoka Bible Centre. He could be found every Sunday after chapel in the dining room carving roast beef for the many guests. JoAnn manages the bookstore and Dan spent many hours helping out. He was a man of steadfast faith.

Dan Kerr passed away of a heart attack on December 31, 2011 while vacationing in Florida. Dan will be missed by all.

Editor & Layout: Ted Mercer
Associate Editor : John Kenny

Contributors:

Muskoka Watershed Council
Muskoka Heritage Foundation
Robin Brushey– U of W
Rebecca Francis-Town of Huntsville
Shane Baker– District of Muskoka
Steve Taylor
Robert Henry
FOCA

*Look for our next Edition this
December 2012*

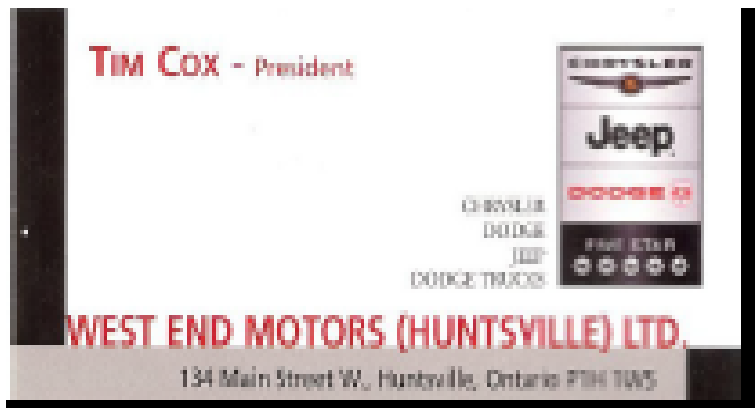
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Bonnie Passmore ABR, SRES
RE/MAX North Country Realty Inc.
75 West Rd
Huntsville, ON P1H1T4
Office: (705) 788-1444 ex. 255
Cell: (705)787-5404
bonnie@wesellmuskoka.com
Your Waterfront Specialist



Circulation of Newsletter

We would like to encourage all of our Lake Association executives, business sponsors and friends to circulate our newsletter to their respective membership and contacts. This action would greatly to assist our Council with its mandate as a “single voice” for the region.. Individuals , business sponsors or organizations parties may request a regular newsletter through our mailing address at contact@hloblc.org
Thank you for your assistance with this endeavour.