

The Leaflet

Lake Waseosa Ratepayers' Association Newsletter

Summer 2015



Summer Corn Roast: Saturday Sept 5th

12:00 – 4:00 pm, 1346 S. Waseosa Lake Road

This is undoubtedly one of the favourite lake social events of the year! It's a great way to spend a couple of hours with your family and neighbours. As usual, there will be steamed corn-on-the-cob (free), and a selection of grilled burgers and sausages, and drinks (nominal charge). We welcome donations to the dessert table! And we will have our traditional auction and raffle of small gifts – a great way to put to good use things that you would like to 're-gift'!

Water work: do I need a permit for that?

With thanks to Ariel Zwicker, MNRF for assistance

Most landowners are familiar with Town of Huntsville's requirements for their properties: the need for building permits, the need to maintain a 15m shoreline vegetative buffer over 75% of the waterfront, and so on. Many are less aware of the rules for in-water work (anything past the ordinary high-water mark), which are typically governed by Ontario's Public Lands Act (PLA).

The requirements for water work are important, because so much happens in the "ribbon of life" along the shore: this is where 90% of lake and river life is born, raised and fed; the interchange between land and water supports a complex web of life; diverse plant populations support high invertebrate and fish populations (which then support birds and mammals); and shorelines create travel corridors that allow habitat connectivity for wildlife species.

Of course when we live near the lake, it is natural that we may want to adjust something. The key section of the PLA that defines what we can(not) do is Regulation 239/13. A few practical implications of this are:

- Without a permit, we cannot dredge the shore lands for any purpose, nor fill them to construct an erosion control structure. We cannot remove aquatic vegetation from shore lands, mechanically or by hand. (There is a limited exemption for invasive aquatic species).
- No filling also means we cannot create a new sandy beach. If sand is deemed essential, one option is to create an upland beach, above the high-water mark, with a buffer to prevent run-off into the lake.
- Without a permit, we cannot remove rocks from the water. We can relocate them *within* the water, as long as they are redistributed randomly, without creating an erosion-control structure (e.g.: we cannot create a pile of rocks to "shore up" a shoreline.)
- Without a permit, we cannot construct a dock or boathouse with a supporting structure (e.g.: cribs or

pipes) that is more than 15 square metres. Moreover, any cribs must be at least 6 feet offshore, and spaced at least six feet apart. The ratio of cribs to decking must be less than 50%, no pressure-treated wood can be used, and all rocks must be clean and obtained from above the high-water mark.

For information on permits, exemptions and timing, visit: <http://www.ontario.ca/rural-and-north/crown-land-work-permits>

Eek! A snake!

We love to see the deer, foxes, rabbits, loons and the otters, but snakes often generate a negative and even fearful reaction ... and this was *before* the Harry Potter movies! This is unfortunate, because the snakes in our area are not harmful, and are often rather interesting. By far the most common snake you are likely to see around our lakes is the Eastern Garter Snake, which has long yellow stripes running along its body. They are active during the day in many habitats (including gardens), and are a meat-eating food generalist (amphibians and insects). Females can grow to a metre long, while males are usually smaller. A rarer offshoot is a 'Melanistic' garter snake, which has solid black pigment throughout, and is the opposite of albino.

The Northern Ribbon Snake looks similar to a Garter, but typically inhabits only wetland areas. It is slightly thinner, the stripes are higher up on its body, and there is a white crescent in front of the eye. This snake is not as cold tolerant, so it tends to occur further south in Muskoka, most of the time. Moreover, it has been defined as a Species-at-Risk, because so much of its wetland habitat in southern Ontario has been drained (all the more reason to keep our wetlands here!).

More common is the Northern Watersnake, which is often a blotchy brown-black with red "half-moons" on its belly. It can grow to 1.35m, and lives near shorelines, where it forages for fish and frogs. Since it is easiest to catch weak or diseased prey, these snakes also help keep our shorelines free of dead and dying creatures.

Other, somewhat rarer snakes we may encounter are the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake (threatened), and Brown- and Red-Bellied Snakes (mainly nocturnal)

There are NO venomous snakes in our region: the closest (and only) poisonous snake in Ontario is the Massasauga Rattler, which lives much closer to Georgian Bay, where the climate is warmer.

Water quality testing 2015: update

The quality of our water is critical to our ability – and future generations – to enjoy the lakes. The District of Muskoka tests water quality in Jessop and Waseosa (but not every year), but do not test Palette or Ripple. Some of us use the Lake Partners' Program (on Palette and Waseosa) to submit

water samples for testing, but these are limited tests, for surface water only.

This year the LWRA has hired the University of Waterloo to conduct multiple tests on nine separate sites, on each of two different days, across all four of our lakes. We will send full results to all paid-up members in August. However based on preliminary results from the first tests, we know we have seen high phosphorus readings in Palette and Waseosa.

Phosphorus above normal background levels is caused mainly by human activity; primarily from septic, fertilizer and other run-off into the lake. Aside from throwing the lake out of balance, it is also the main contributor to algae blooms.

What simple things can we do to keep our lakes in good shape? Here are a few reminders of what helps and hurts:

- DO prune trees near the shoreline, DON'T remove them
- DO keep *porous* materials and natural pathways and driveways to absorb run-off. DON'T expand solid (e.g.: paved) surfaces. If you need stairs or paving stones to head downhill toward the water, keep them as narrow as possible, and 'zig-zag' the path so that water does not rush straight down
- DO leave a wide vegetation buffer along most of your shoreline. There are many low-growing native shoreline plants that still leave a view from above. DON'T clear your shoreline! (Remember: Huntsville's by-laws require a 15m natural vegetation buffer over 75% of each shoreline).
- DO use natural materials and vegetation for better erosion control, DON'T "armour" your shoreline
- DO use floating docks or steel piles, to minimize the impact on fish habitat and the shoreline; DON'T install crib docks
- DO maintain your septic system properly; DON'T let bacteria and phosphorus seep into the lake!
- DO maintain a natural lawn, and if you cut it, leave the grass 3 inches high to prevent drying out. DON'T use fertilizers and pesticides: fertilizers fill the lake with phosphorus, and many pesticides are toxic for shoreline and lake life
- DO use biodegradable and natural cleaning products without phosphates; DON'T flush chemicals!
- DO use an efficient motor, and take extreme caution with

gasoline and oils – very small amounts can pollute a large body of water. Consider using biodegradable, ester-based synthetic oils. Save fuel by throttling down once your boat is on a plane, especially when not fully loaded or towing.

Boat licence training (PCOC) for kids

Dwayne Verhey will run two courses for our next generation of boaters, on Wed Aug 12 and Sun Aug 16. Classes start at 10 am at 21 Cottage Lane (off N Waseosa Lk Rd), and will take approximately four hours, depending on the students' needs.

The course will prepare the student to write and pass the Pleasure Craft Operator's Card exam, and is presented in an informal, low-pressure atmosphere. The PCOC card is good for life. Open to ages 8 and up. Students must bring ID. Limited to 8 per course. Cost is \$25 per person for LWRA families or \$40 per person for non-members. Alternatively, people can challenge the test alone for \$15 per LWRA family member or \$25 per non-member.

Pre-register by contacting Dwayne at 705-788-3693 or boatlicense@lwra.net.

The Little Lending Library

We have a new trial "take a book, leave a book" gathering place at the LWRA bulletin board near 628 N. Waseosa. This blue library was built by Roxy Talbot (thanks Roxy!), and is maintained on behalf of the Association by Marjorie Bower (thanks Marjorie!). Great for summer weekend reading!

Recycling: remember TWO streams!

Remember that Muskoka has TWO stream recycling: one for paper and cardboard, and one for containers (plastic, glass, metal etc.). These must be in SEPARATE blue bins or recycling bags, or they will be left behind!

Have you renewed your membership for 2015?

If you still have not done this, kindly complete the form below and send your cheque! We will also take membership renewals at the Corn Roast.

Lake Waseosa Ratepayers' Association Membership Information Update. Mail to: LWRA, c/o 1081 N. Waseosa Lake Rd., Huntsville, Ontario. P1H 2J4
Dues are \$40.00 for 2015.

Name: _____ Muskoka Telephone: _____

Muskoka Address _____

Off-Season Address (if applicable): _____

Off-Season Telephone: _____ E-mail Address: _____