

The Leaflet

Lake Waseosa Ratepayers' Association Newsletter

Winter 2016



A Message from the President

Brian Gray

Change can be bittersweet and upsetting, but also healthy and even inspiring: but perhaps the main thing is that it is *inevitable*. One area of change that affects us all is revision to the Town (and later, District) Official Plans. There are many views on how Huntsville should be developed or preserved, and these are all being voiced right now at Town Hall. The developers' lobby is particularly well-represented, and while we absolutely need developers, their interests may not always align perfectly with residents'. We will work to keep LWRA members informed, but also urge you to express your views when necessary via Town Hall functions. Please stay tuned to our website and email updates!

The LWRA Executive will also be changing over the next few months, and this can be very healthy too. Please consider putting your name forward, either to volunteer for the social events, or to serve a year or two on the Board!

Finally, it had to happen. After two years of very cold and snowy winters to complain about, we had one of the warmest Decembers on record, with freeze-up not happening until the 31st on some of our lakes. Sure enough, even before year-end, the cries could be heard: we can't cross-country ski! We can't ice-skate! We can't even snowshoe!! What a difference a year – and a bit of change – can make.

District to add Palette, Ripple water testing following LWRA initiative, after U of W results

Last year, the LWRA paid to have the University of Waterloo test the lake water quality on our four lakes (this, of course, was done in part with the assistance of your membership fees). You will recall that results on Jessop and Ripple were within expectations, but that Waseosa, and especially Palette, had high phosphorus readings. We discussed these results with the District of Muskoka. Currently only Waseosa (bi-annually) and Jessop (tri-annually) are tested. The District has now agreed to add Palette and Ripple to their testing schedule, with the first tests in 2016.

Red foxes – our thriving predators

Across North America, our population of predators has declined for decades. Big canines (wolves) have shrunk in territory, and cross-bred with smaller coyote species. Big cats have declined as well: cougars are extinct in eastern Canada and have a reduced territory out west, while the secretive Canada Lynx has also retreated as humans advance. Yet one carnivorous predator that continues to hunt in the LWRA area is the red fox, *Vulpes vulpes*. This hardy carnivore is present throughout northern North America and Eurasia, and is even considered an invasive species where it has been introduced in some southern regions. However it is believed to have arrived in LWRA territory shortly after the last ice age (and possibly earlier), so we can legitimately consider it to be native.

Like many local species it breeds once per year, in the spring. Four to six kits are common, and the family group may stay together for much of the first year, although the individuals are typically solitary thereafter. Red foxes den and sleep extensively in the winter, but they do not hibernate. In fact, we see them regularly through the cold periods, and winter rabbit kills are often evidence of their activity. In addition to mice, voles, groundhogs, ermines and various invertebrates, the foxes also consume plant matter, including berries and tubers. As many locals know, they also keep a close eye on the calendar, and come out of the woods on Thursdays, for garbage day. A fox is typically bigger and stronger than a house cat, and is likely to be the winner if they come into contact (we had a report of such a conflict from a member this fall).

So the next time you come across a Red Fox – often trotting along our roads in early morning or at night – maybe salute our local carnivore that continues to succeed in the age of humanity.

Lake Plan Update

Huntsville's Official Plan incorporates several Lake Plans, which provide additional guidance on planning and development along their shores. The LWRA has had a draft

Lake Waseosa Ratepayers' Association Membership Information Update.

Dues are \$40.00 for 2016. Pay with e-transfer to secretary@LWRA.net, or mail to: LWRA, c/o 1081 North Waseosa Lake Road., Huntsville, Ontario. P1H 2J4

Name: _____ Muskoka Telephone: _____

Muskoka Address: _____

Off-Season Address (if applicable): _____

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

lake plan since 2006 (updated 2011), however for various reasons this was never discussed with or approved by Council. At last year's AGM, Brian Gray reviewed two options for the Plan with attendees, who approved the proposal. In addition to providing substantial background to our lakes, the Plan provides additional policy on severances and shoreline setbacks. The Plan has been discussed with the Town's Planning Department, and has now been formally submitted to the Town. Given the timeline for Huntsville's Official Plan (see below), we do not expect feedback until well into 2016. The Lake Plan can be found on the website at LWRA.net

Update: Huntsville's Official Plan

Many important decisions about how our region is maintained and developed are guided by the Official Plans (OPs) of the Town of Huntsville and the District of Muskoka. The Town is currently reviewing its OP in a process that will run through 2016. Input received from the public to date has had a reasonably strong environmental / small-town / quality-of-life tone, as well as economic progress. The current LWRA President, B. Gray, sits on an OP "Working Group" that supports the process, and tries to present views that balance our environment and lake character with development. The working group is also well-stocked with developers and planners, who are pushing for reduced regulation, more multi-storey developments in rural areas on septic (without the cost of water or sewage connections). Your input is important to the political decision-makers, and we will continue to advise you on our website of upcoming public meetings.

Town, MNRF clamp down on shoreline destruction

Our northern Muskoka habitat is unique, and we must take care that it is not overrun with (occasionally well-meaning) attempts to suburbanize it. For this reason, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) regulates many aspects of the waterfront, and the Town's by-laws regulate the shorelines. As we have highlighted before, one of the most relevant by-laws provides that shorelines must remain naturally vegetated for the first 15m, for at least 75% of the shoreline.

Two local cases highlight these issues. On the west side of Waseosa, the MNRF responded when a cottager began dumping sand to create an artificial beach – this was settled with a fine. On the east side of the lake, where a family clear-cut and terraced almost the entire width of their property, the Town's Planning Department has stepped in to insist on a revegetation plan at the family's expense. We all have an

interest (both property values as well as aesthetics) in preserving our local environment ... and it's the law!

Town Hall – variances

In recent months, the LWRA expressed no objection to a re-drawing of property lines on a series of Ripple properties. This adjustment created an additional lot with frontage on N. Waseosa Lake Road (allowing a further dwelling), but did not increase the number of waterfront lots. The LWRA also negotiated a compromise with residents seeking to rebuild on the west side of Waseosa. With an unusually-shaped lot, the owners wished to breach the 30m lakefront set-back, with part of their dwelling. We agreed with them to support the proposal, in exchange for other conditions to protect the lake – in this case, an expanded 20m naturalized zone along the entire waterfront (except for paths to the shore), and agreement not to build boatports or boat houses. The owners had no interest in boat houses or mowing near the shore, so in this case we achieved a win-win. The Town accepted our recommendation, and the agreement is to be stipulated in the property's site plan.

The LWRA Board needs new directors!

We believe the LWRA adds value to its members, but it needs volunteer Directors and Executive to function. Several current members are long-serving, and would welcome replacements. This year the need is also greater, as Brian Gray (Director, President) and Andrea Gray (non-director, Secretary) will move out of the LWRA area, and therefore step down. Please consider the modest time commitment to put your name forward for 1 or 2 years. Directors are elected at our AGM in July.

Those cute little LWRA signs?

Yes, they are available to members. The cost is a one-time fee of \$15, to pay for the sign itself. This is separate from your annual LWRA membership (which is used for events, water testing, Town Hall costs, etc.) Then, each year that you remain a member, you receive a small sticker (free) to put on your sign – kind of like a license plate sticker. If you would like a sign, please contact Bill Somers directly at 705-788-2015.

Your Executive are:

Brian Gray , President	705-788-2984
Ambrose Adam , Director	705-788-3669
Paul Keighley , Director	705-789-4907
Susan Han , Director	705-788-9853 or (416) 485-4703
Sandra Heinz , Director	705-789-6604
Katarina Simons , Director	416-606-6054

Bill Somers , Treasurer	705-788-2015
Andrea Gray , Secretary	705-788-2984

Our e-mail address is: secretary@lwra.net

If you have not received e-mail notices lately, please email secretary@LWRA.net.

Snail-mail: LWRA c/o 1081 North Waseosa Lake Road
Huntsville, Ontario. P1H 2J4