



Summer 2010

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Don't miss this year's

CANADA DAY

Celebrations

Kilworthy Park

Thursday July 1st
starting at noon

Live entertainment
50/50 draw
Kids games
Lots of fun & food!

Sponsored by the Kilworthy
Historical Committee

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Looking ahead

Marten Burns, SLA President

Welcome back to all for the summer of 2010. With a low snowpack, an early Spring, and unseasonably warm weather, the lower water levels were of initial cause for concern. The rains have come, but many cottagers note that things “seemed different” at the lake these past few summers. I agree. Water quality has worsened due to eutrophication and warmer weather. The Sparrow Lake Association (SLA) membership demographic has changed dramatically, and many old family cottages have changed hands. The grand old lodges are gone. Big and small boats have larger wakes and, as a result, shoreline damage has increased. Trent Severn waterway markers and signage have disappeared, and zoning, environmental approval and planning issues have become more complex.

The SLA executive continues to work hard on these issues, but the association needs more members to get involved and take on leadership roles. We also need to hear from all of our current, and prospective, members about what issues are most important to you, as well as your cottage location on the waterway. Our association covers a large area, and our boundaries and issues span multiple jurisdictions and levels of government. We appreciate your continued membership and support. However, we also need to expand the SLA membership and create new committees to help share the workload. What type of association do we want to be? What should the SLA's key priorities and issues be? We look forward to hearing from, and speaking to, you over the summer. Get involved - I challenge each of you to sign up a new member(s). See you on the water, or at one of the SLA events. Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

Member Survey and Strategic Plan

For the Sparrow Lake Association (SLA) to remain an effective association, and to deal with the increasingly complex issues facing cottagers and our waterway, the SLA has initiated a survey to determine the issues and services that are the important to its members. The results of the survey will be shared with all members and discussed at the AGM. The goal is to prioritize our key objectives and develop a vision and strategic plan for the next few years.

While the survey is comprehensive, it can easily be completed online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SLAsurvey>. The survey process allows you to stop, if needed, and come back to complete later. We ask that each member, or one member from each family complete the full survey. Other family members can also complete the survey if they wish – we would especially like to hear from current or prospective members in the 16 to 25 age group. All information provided will remain confidential and only aggregate data will be shared with no identifiers. You always have the option to choose that any additional comments remain confidential, or that they are shared with the membership.

Please contact the SLA President if you have any concerns, or wish to provide certain information in confidence. The SLA needs your input and opinions.

Please complete the survey by July 30th. If you prefer, you can print a paper copy of the survey from the SLA website. Mail completed surveys to: **SLA Survey c/o 698 Roosevelt Ave., Ottawa, ON K2A 2A7**



“Our collective actions on our cottage properties and in the water, can have a direct impact on the nutrient status of the lake and thus on the growth levels of algae and aquatic vegetation.”



Environment: Algae in Southern Ontario Lakes

Hillary Knack,
Environment Issues

At the Sparrow Lake Association’s AGM last August, many people noted a higher abundance of algae in the lake than normal. Indeed it seems that algae and algal blooms have been present in abundance in many of southern Ontario’s lakes and rivers the past few seasons. Besides the unsightly aspect, the presence of algae causes concern due to possible correlations between the presence of algae and decreasing lake health. The relationship between algae and lake health is not straightforward however. Algae can both be present in lakes that are healthy, and can be indicative of lakes with problematic nutrient levels.

Freshwater Algae:

Freshwater algae are typically very small green-coloured aquatic plants. Algae can grow in many forms, including species that are microscopic and single-celled and others that grow as masses of cells or strands of cells. The former floats within the water column and at high concentrations can decrease water clarity and influence the colour of the water towards a greenish hue. The latter take forms that can appear as floating blobs or branching plants attached to hard surfaces on the lake bed. There are four basic divisions in the

algal world: green algae, blue-green algae, diatoms and pigmented flagellates (the latter two are not discussed here). Green algae can grow in many forms, including the large bright green blobs termed “elephant snot” that have been noted in Sparrow Lake, and are non-toxic. Blue-green algae also grow in many forms and are distinguishable by its blue-green hue. Unlike green algal species, blue-green algae can be toxic to the aquatic environment as well as to wildlife and humans if ingested in sufficient quantity.

Algae Growth in Ontario

Lakes: Algae, like other plants, require sunlight and nutrients to grow. The availability of these components will limit or promote growth. The depth to which algae and other aquatic plants grow is the depth that sunlight is able to penetrate. Correspondingly, the increase in aquatic plant growth that has been noted in southern Ontario is in part related to the increased depth that sunlight is able to penetrate due to the water clarity-promoting effect of zebra mussels. The intensity of sunlight (influencing water temperature) can also promote algal abundance; and climate change is making the annual level of sunshine less predictable.

Two of the primary nutrients that aquatic plants require for growth are nitrogen and phosphorus. In an aquatic environment these nutrients can be present naturally, especially as a lake “ages” and an increasing amount of plant and animal matter decomposes on the lake bed. However this process (termed eutrophication) can be exacerbated by human inputs of nutrients, for example, from leaking septic tanks and the infiltration of herbicides into the lake water.

Another factor that can affect the abundance of algae is competition from other aquatic plants for sunlight and nutrient resources. An interesting point is that often the available growth resources in a lake are used predominantly by either aquatic plants or algae, and the balance can be tipped. I have noted that the level of aquatic vegetation in Sparrow Lake has decreased in the last few seasons (uncertain whether naturally, or by physical or chemical removal), as the abundance of algae seems to have increased and I wonder if the balance has “tipped”.

(Continued on Page 3)

Environment: Algae in Southern Ontario Lakes cont'd

Algae can increase in abundance in an opportunistic manner; as nutrients become available the algal cells are able to take advantage of the supply and increase in numbers. As the supply diminishes they begin to recede. The first part of this past summer had a high level of precipitation which has the effect of washing nutrients from the adjacent upland into the lake. This type of nutrient burst can thus have the effect of promoting short-term algal growth.

Although this effect is likely a contributing factor to the increase of algae in Sparrow Lake this past year, as cottagers we must not become complacent.

Our collective actions on our cottage properties and in the water can have a direct impact on the nutrient status of the lake and thus on the growth levels of algae and aquatic vegetation.

The presence of green algae at reasonable concentrations is not a problem (in fact the beneficial aspects of algae include being an important component of the aquatic food chain and helping to maintain water oxygen levels), however we all want to discourage an overabundance of green algae growth as well as the presence of green-blue algae at any concentration.

The story of Three Mile Lake, the first of Muskoka's lakes to harbour a serious blue-green algae bloom is reason to be thoughtful of our actions at the cottage. Residents at this lake were no longer able to swim, fish or draw water for domestic use and needed to dramatically limit inputs of nutrients in order to help the restoration of lake health.

There are many ways that cottagers can help to limit the input of nutrients to the lake. The following are some suggestions:

- *Keep a buffer or native vegetation at the shoreline (on land and in water) in order to help filter nutrients from overland runoff;*
- *Reduce the amount of hard surfaces on the cottage property in order to promote infiltration of runoff instead of direct flow into the water. Incorporate natural-bottomed swales and depressions into the landscaping to allow for better infiltration;*
- *Avoid using herbicides or pesticides on the lawn or gardens.*
- *Use phosphate-free detergents and cleaners (be especially careful with dishwasher detergents as these are typically high in phosphates).*
- *Avoid using soap or shampoo in the lake;*
- *Have properly designed and maintained septic systems. Ensure they are pumped out at regular intervals (2-4 years is the recommended interval), inspected periodically, and avoid using bleaches and anti-bacterial soaps as these disrupt the function of the system; and*
- *Avoid application of copper sulphate or other types of algaecides in the water. These can have toxic effects on fish and other elements of the aquatic ecosystem.*

The abundance of algae is variable and is dependent on a number of changing environmental conditions; however cottagers can have an impact on the availability of nutrients and thus the abundance of algae. Incorporating the above suggestions can help to limit algal growth and help to maintain lake health.

Tracking the presence and type of algae and other aquatic plants over the years is another good way to be involved. With a microscope, there are resources available to help the identification of different types of algae however most are difficult to identify with the naked eye. If there are algae that are particularly concerning (especially ones with a distinct blue-green hue), cottagers can send samples to the Muskoka Watershed Council ((705) 645-7393 or <http://www.muskokawaterweb.ca/PDFs/AlgaeIDForm.pdf>).

For those interested in learning more about algae in cottage country, the following articles have more information:

<http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/programs/4661e.pdf>; and

<http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache:rBtzx7L5pukJ:www.muskokawaterweb.ca/PDFs/Algae%2520in%2520Muskoka.pdf+algae+muskoka&hl=en&gl=ca&sig=AFQjCNFOSXV0Dss-n2AEpvZG5viSHp5DBg>



Let's bring the 2010 Vancouver/Whistler Olympic enthusiasm to Sparrow Lake for this summer's 2010 Annual Regatta!!



SLA Survey Results will be released and a proposed Strategic Plan will be discussed. ALL members are encouraged to attend and participate.

Fishing Derby & Picnic – Saturday July 10th – Silver Pines

From July 3 to July 11, as part of National Fishing Week, anyone can try fishing in Ontario without a licence. Of course, regular Ontario Recreational Fishing Regulations and limits still apply.

To celebrate, the SLA will once again host a fishing derby and picnic, using the hospitality of the Silver Pines property as our base location. This is a fun event for both young, and young at heart. There are great prizes for all kids. Age categories will depend on the number/ages of participants, and there will be two grand prizes – one for the largest fish caught and one for the most fish caught.

Participants must supply their own equipment and observe all fishing/boating safety rules and regulations. Cost is \$4/kids under 12, and \$5/adult to help cover the cost of the BBQ. Register at the SLA tent at Silver Pines at 9:31 am. Fishing starts at 10:00 am and all participants must return to the tent by noon. Prizes and lunch will follow. Advance registration is needed so that enough food/prizes can be ordered.

Please RSVP your participation asap to:

president@sparrowlakeassociation.com or leave a message at (705) 687 4142

SLA Annual Regatta – Sunday August 1st – Bayview/Wildwood

Last year's regatta had record participation, good weather, and many new events. A list of all the winners and some photos are posted on the SLA website. The Cottage Cup was won by the Morrison family, and the Nesbitt family won the brand new Cottage Spirit Award. The new Pie Baking contest was an immediate success, with Maureen Clipsham awarded the inaugural First Place Rolling Pin. Get ready all you bakers for this summer!

We always appreciate the overwhelming support of Bayview Wildwood Resort, and the use of their beach and facilities. All of the regular events are back this summer, with some top secret new events, based on the 2010 Winter Olympics, being planned.

Wear your red and white and Canada gear, and get ready for another great day!

SLA AGM – Saturday August 7th - Bayview/Wildwood

Before this year's Annual General Meeting, we will need your input and ideas so please take the time to complete the SLA member survey by July 30th.

The location for our AGM this year will be Bayview Wildwood, with a start time of 10:00 am. Further details and meeting documents will be emailed (or mailed) to all prior to the meeting.

This is your opportunity to voice your concerns, and share ideas with other members. We need you to help us prioritize our key objectives and to develop a clear vision and strategic plan for the SLA over the next few years. There will be many issues to discuss, and we welcome your input, either in person at the meeting or beforehand.

The agenda will also include remarks from Bruce Stanton, Member of Parliament for Simcoe North.

The AGM is a great opportunity to see old friends and meet new neighbours from around the lake and river. Depending on the interest and weather, we may also have an informal BBQ after the meeting – details to follow.

Water Safety Issues – John Cooper, Water Safety

Do you have your Pleasure Craft Operator Card? If not, you are risking a \$250 fine without one. Our goal is to have all SLA members and your children certified with their “card”. Go to the SLA website and click on the link to take the course and test. **TIP:** *Make a photocopy of the card(s) and keep copies in each boat this summer.*

Water levels remain a continuing concern. While the “summer levels” are back after the recent rains, we still have to count on large amounts of rain throughout the summer to maintain these levels. This is particularly the case since levels were low in all of the watershed areas that feed the Severn River and Sparrow Lake. We continue to monitor and work with Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW) officials and MP Bruce Stanton on this issue

While low water levels in the Kawartha and Canal lakes area will keep larger boats from Lake Ontario and beyond from passing through the TSW, the depth from Washago is adequate, and we should expect to see the Lake Simcoe and Couchiching boaters making more runs to Georgian Bay this summer. For those members whose property is affected by excessive waves, please record and report any incidents and damage to both the lockmaster and the SLA. Proper identification of these boats and owners is necessary should there be a need to pursue criminal charges, or a civil action for damages. **TIP:** *The OPP and lockmaster numbers are on page 6 of this newsletter. Also, keep your municipal locator or “green number” by the phone to help identify your location.*

We have increased our outreach and communication with other lake associations and groups to share common concerns and best practices. The SLA participated in the Freshwater Summit 2010 – a forum to discuss issues concerning the protection, use and management of our freshwater. See: www.2010freshwatersummit.org

Wiancko House / Ontario Municipal Board Appeal

Many long time SLA members will remember the association’s intervention in the Wiancko House property (east side of Sparrow Lake) - an issue that dates back 35 years. During 1975-79, the SLA membership opposed the so-called “leisure village” development proposal for the property. This was eventually scaled back to propose a maximum of 25 single detached dwelling units, and a maximum of 35 accommodation units on the approximately 99-acre property. The property is still vacant and was recently sold. Certain zoning issues became apparent as a result of the Town of Gravenhurst’s new comprehensive zoning by-law, which was approved by Council on April 15th.

The SLA’s current concerns with the new by-law relate to the density of the residential and commercial development permitted for this property, as well as conformity with the Official Plan, which designates the land as rural and waterfront.

The SLA made representations to Gravenhurst Council on this issue in February, and we have now filed an appeal, along with the Wiancko Road Association, to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). We will keep members informed of all developments concerning this issue.

The Lantern Marina also filed a site-specific appeal regarding the new by-law related to their future ability to expand the trailer park on the Severn River.

Current water level information can be found at the Parks Canada web site: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/on/trentsevern/index.aspx>

The SLA has purchased a GPS unit and new markers to map and mark hazardous rocks & locations around Sparrow Lake. We will soon post these locations on a map on our website. Please help us ensure that these markers remain in place. Report any vandalism to the SLA.

The SLA continues to monitor zoning and by-law issues in both Simcoe and Muskoka, and intervenes when appropriate.

Visit the SLA website for more info on zoning issues and key contacts

Municipal elections are on October 25, 2010 – the SLA will provide you with an analysis of the key issues in September.

Sparrow Lake Association

Marten Burns,
President

Judy Moore,
Treasurer

Catharine Inniss,
Secretary

John Cooper,
Water Safety

Bob Colhoun,
Municipal Issues

Michael Ewing,
Regatta

Hillary Knack,
Environment

Steve Hopper, Past
President

Contact us:

info@sparrowlakeassociation.com

president@sparrowlakeassociation.com

SLA – Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association

Catharine Inniss and John Cooper attended the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association (FOCA) AGM in March. FOCA, with over 550 member associations, provides our liability insurance, and a portion of your SLA fees help to support FOCA's advocacy initiatives. Current key issues include: taxation reform, water quality and environmental issues. The SLA is part of the 75 cottage associations in the FOCA Muskoka Region area.

"Take the Plunge" is FOCA's new comprehensive manual for waterfront living –copies of this manual and further details will be available at the SLA AGM for review (see: <http://foca.on.ca/environment> to order your own copy). FOCA has new, Transport Canada approved, cost-effective buoys to use for our rock & obstacle marking program. The SLA has bought 8 buoys. FOCA continues to work with the Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation (WRAFT) to push for tax fairness for cottagers. (see: <http://foca.ca/property-tax> and www.wraft.com)

Church of the Good Samaritan – 100 years young

On a sunny July morning in 1910, the little Anglican Church in Port Stanton opened its doors for the first time. Built with the faith and dedication of Ellen Stanton and Charles and Jennie Musson, the Church of the Good Samaritan will have offered Sunday worship services during the summer weeks for 100 years come July 3rd.

This summer, there are plans for special anniversary services with guest ministers, vocalists and musicians beginning July 4th. On July 18th, a special Homecoming worship will be conducted by Right Reverend George Elliot, Bishop of York/Simcoe. The "Good Sam", as it has been affectionately called, invites everyone to help celebrate this special year.

Keep up to date at: www.sparrowlakeassociation.com

Bookmark the SLA website as one of your favourite sites! Our website already has some great info and links - we plan to expand and update the site, including a members-only section. Tell us what you want to see on our site!

The SLA needs more help with our communications and newsletter – if you are interested, and have writing, communications or web/social media experience, please contact the webmaster - Judy Moore Vey at: info@sparrowlakeassociation.com

Keep our waterways safe – report violations to the OPP at: 1-888-310-1122 (or 911)

Lock 42(Couchiching): 705-689-2182 Hamlet Swing Bridge: 705-689-6161 Swift Rapids (43): 705-756-8177

Write down all details of the incident (date/time/location/damages/boat identification & licence) and copy the info to president@sparrowlakeassociation.com. The SLA will use this info to enable us to track and report these incidents, advocate for solutions, and take any actions deemed appropriate.

Do we have your email address? - keep in touch with the SLA this summer!

In order to be more environmentally friendly, we are now going paperless whenever possible.

WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS to stay in touch. If you did not receive an electronic version of this newsletter, we do not have a current email address for you or your family. Please email your preferred email contact info to the SLA at: info@sparrowlakeassociation.com *

All future communications will be sent electronically, unless we don't have your e-mail address. The SLA also plans to send regular E-Updates over the summer, and whenever we need to share important and breaking news with members. These updates will soon be available in the members section of our website.

* In accordance with the SLA Privacy Policy, no personal info, including your email address, will be shared with any other 3rd party or member. Information collected by the SLA is solely used for the purposes of communicating with its members and for the provision of its programs.