



Sparrow Lake Association (SLA) *Newsletter*
Serving Lakefront Property Owners and Cottagers
Lock # 42 Washago—Lock # 43 Swift Rapids
Editor: *Meredith Oberfrank*

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Note: Click on underlined text in this newsletter to access relevant websites/emails.

1. Greetings from the (Outgoing) President Bob Corbett

As we enter the fall season, our hopes are that your hectic summer pace is slowing down and that you can enjoy a more relaxed October. The seasonal weather and cooler water temps may allow you time to actually sit back, relax, and enjoy the fall colours. For those who are starting their annual cottage shutdown routine, and for others who are prepping for the winter, please consider what mother nature is capable of dishing out.

Last winter we had unprecedented **snow levels** and a harsh reminder of what **damage** can occur if precautions are not taken. Many Sparrow Lake and area residents had roof and structural collapses and damage caused by snow, heavy ice, fallen trees, and branches. Installing a few support posts in older cottages and outbuildings could save a lot of grief from crushed roofs caused by future storms. Take a look around your property for branches hanging over buildings, and consider cutting them back (also for fire-prevention purposes).

Each spring we receive notices about missing dock sections, lawn furniture, and small boats that have floated away during the high-water periods. We never know what the spring **water levels** will be, but pulling your items away from the water's edge and securing them properly could save you from unwelcome surprises next year. Some of you were inquiring about the lower water levels in August. Although the Trent-Severn Waterway (TSW) is a federal waterway, the upper and lower levels can vary—see [Water levels - Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site](#). Parks Canada noted that rainfall was down almost 75% this summer. The TSW's feeder lakes and rivers also suffered, and this resulted in many areas along the waterway being at their minimum height.

Weeds: last autumn, I made a comment (from my own observations) that there seemed to be fewer weeds than in the past several years. My words sparked feedback from several members who did not agree, and who stated that their weed issues were just awful again. The concentration of weed growth can certainly vary depending on local water depth, current strength, the amount of sunlight, and activity (boat traffic, etc.). The weed issue I noticed again this year was there appeared to be fewer amounts of large weed batches floating down the lake and channel. Hopefully it was due to people cutting their weeds properly and also removing them from the lake. We have been pushing this process for several years—maybe our persistence has finally paid off.

The **Muskoka Beach House** continues to attract many Sparrow Lake area residents for lunch and dinner. Their beautifully renovated [The Pines](#) restaurant (formerly known as Silver Pines), with its great menu and terrific staff, has been a treat for many of us to access by boat and dine at. The second phase of this project is still sitting idle. Gravenhurst Council passed the original proposal, but I understand there are still pending issues involving the very large waterfront pool and septic system. Although SLA challenged many aspects of this 80-cabin /glamping proposal, we hope the developer will eventually sort out the issues and move ahead with a revised plan that will not only benefit the owners, but will consider traffic flow, parking, existing area residents, boat/pedestrian movement around the Franklin Park area, and of course future preservation of our lake use and water quality.

This time last year, **Delmonte in the Pines Resort** opened its doors, closets, and cabinets to sell off all their furnishings before the sale closed. Many SLA members took advantage to get one last look around this beautiful property, purchase some items needed at their own cottages, and grab some keepsakes from years past. Between late 2024 and May 2025, the new owners were marketing the 60 luxury condo/townhomes that would replace the old lodge. We were surprised to hear the deal fell through, and now the original property is back on the market again. As we all know, waterfront property development is enviable; there will eventually be another developer with a dream to change this historical resort into a profitable project. We wish the Delmonte owners all the best for reselling their resort.

Our **SLA volunteers** continue to put in valuable time and effort to keep our members informed with items that affect us at the lake.

The recent fall FOCA meeting was well represented by the SLA Board. Meredith Oberfrank, Rebecca Lee, and John Cooper attended this virtual event. A report follows in this newsletter. Water-quality test sampling was completed and submitted to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks by Jane Bowman.

Another volunteer, Andrea King, assists with Facebook updates and information distribution. Hazard markers on the lake continue to be installed each spring, removed each fall, and maintained by volunteer Jeff Kent.

Jeff Lambing, our volunteer Director at Large from the Tory's Landing community, has once again submitted a helpful report for all of us.

And, of course, we are grateful for the contributions made by Judy Moore Vey, who handles all our membership, finances, and newsletter and e-blast distribution.

I would like to thank these SLA volunteers for their support and the time spent to get the many tasks completed that keep a successful cottage association functional. If you are interested in volunteering with us, please email presidentsparrowlakeassn@gmail.com.

As mentioned in our spring newsletter, I am stepping down from my role as President after serving on the SLA Board for 10 years.

I am very pleased and excited that Rebecca Lee, who has been our weed and invasive species

volunteer, has agreed to take over as (interim) President. Rebecca brings fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the Board. She has a PhD in Social Science and Ecological Agriculture, and a MSc in Rural Extension Studies.

Rebecca can be contacted at presidentsparrowlakeassn@gmail.com.

Although this note is repeated from our spring newsletter, I want to write it again: with a team like this SLA Board and its volunteers, my position as President was made very easy. I have been spending time on Sparrow Lake and McLean Bay for most of my life. I have made many lifelong friends and hope to continue to keep in touch with everyone. This will be my last report. It has been an honour to help this organization, and I wish the very best for the Association and to you—the members.

Wishing you all a healthy, safe winter, and all the best in the years to come.

Cheers,

Bob Corbett
(Outgoing) President

2. First Message from the Interim SLA President

Rebecca Lee

I am very pleased to have the confidence of the SLA Board to take on the presidency of SLA. As Bob mentioned in his report, I have taken it on—on an interim basis.

It's always fun to hear how cottagers introduce themselves; take myself as an example: "I'm Rebecca Lee, I'm from the fourth generation of my family coming to the lake, and the fifth one is growing up quickly....." My grandfather's uncle first started coming to Sparrow Lake early in the 20th century. Other cottagers are more recent to our shores, but no matter how long we have been coming up, we all feel the draw of the water and the plants and animals that live around it. We enjoy fishing on calm mornings, swimming on hot afternoons, maybe going for a hike while looking out for the species around us, and then relaxing by the lake on a warm summer evening or reading on a screened porch. And don't forget the endless BBQs! We also get concerned when we see it under attack, such as when invasive species start to take over, or ecosystems and human safety are at risk and may be at odds with economic development.

The strength of SLA lies in its members and the willingness of its volunteers to take action—by writing to governments with our concerns and collaborating with provincial organizations to gather useful data. Sharing relevant information and organizing social events to encourage meeting neighbours are important, too. We will always have a lot to do, and also a lot to celebrate.

Over the coming year, I hope to focus on spreading the word about [SLA](#) around the lake and expanding our membership so we can also spread the work and the fun. 2026 is the year of SLA's centennial, so we will also be looking for ideas on how to celebrate it!

I look forward to hearing from you: please do not hesitate to reach out to me at presidentsparrowlakeassn@gmail.com on how SLA can best support residents and the lake.

3. 100 Years Young!

Judy Moore-Vey

The [Sparrow Lake Association](#) was incorporated in 1926. Next year, in 2026, SLA will be 100 Years Young. There have been a couple of hiatus time periods where the SLA did not exist or function but, after a short break, it would get rejuvenated by a few active cottagers, and then it would be well on its way again.

We want to celebrate this amazing milestone for SLA. We haven't decided exactly how we will celebrate but we will let you know in our 2026 Spring Newsletter. If you have any ideas for festivities you would like to suggest, please get in touch.

4. Treasurer and Membership Update

Judy Moore-Vey

While SLA does not require a huge budget to keep basic activities running, we do have some expenses. We have our regular operating costs, such as the annual installation of hazard markers, Director's Insurance, and FOCA fees. In addition, we have funds set aside in case we are required to hire a consultant or external professional for any issue that may warrant expertise on or around Sparrow Lake. On the other hand, our income is earned mainly from membership fees! This brings me to my next point: the importance of having good representation of our cottagers.

This summer, beyond our membership renewals, we also gained several new members. Despite that, our current membership numbers are lower than usual. We would like to gain more members and have close to 100 active memberships: 100 for the 100th anniversary! We now have [online membership renewal capabilities](#), and that has made it much easier for people to renew/join. We encourage all active members to mention the Sparrow Lake Association to a neighbour, friend, or someone who has just purchased a cottage on the lake. Please motivate them to join SLA and help us grow our membership base.

Email reminders are sent annually if your membership has expired. If you do not receive an email, this means your membership is current. If anyone has any questions pertaining to membership, please contact me at treasurer@sparrowlakeassociation.com.

5. Should You Consider a Heat Pump for Your Seasonal Cottage? Jeff Lambing

As winter approaches, many cottage owners consider ways to keep their seasonal retreats warm and comfortable during the cooler months. One popular option that has gained traction in recent years is heat-pump technology. Heat pumps are a versatile and energy-efficient way to heat and cool your home, and they can be particularly effective for cottages that are only used seasonally.

One of the biggest advantages of heat pumps is their ability to both heat and cool your space. This makes them a cost-effective and convenient option for buildings that experience extremes in temperature throughout the year, as we do on Sparrow Lake. Heat pumps work by transferring heat from one area to another, rather than generating heat through combustion like

a traditional furnace. This means they are energy-efficient and can help save on heating and cooling costs in the long run.

Another advantage of heat pumps is their versatility. They can be used in a variety of settings, including cottages and commercial buildings. Heat pumps are relatively easy to install, making them a popular choice for homeowners looking to upgrade their heating and cooling systems.

One newer development in heat-pump technology is the window heat pump. These compact units are designed to be mounted directly on a window, providing a more discreet and space-saving option for cooling a small area. Window heat pumps are especially well-suited for cottages, as they can be easily installed and removed as needed.

While heat pumps have many advantages, they have some drawbacks to consider. One potential downside is their initial cost, as heat-pump systems can be more expensive to purchase and install than traditional heating and cooling systems. Additionally, heat pumps may not be as effective in extremely cold temperatures, so they may not be the best option for your cottage during a harsh winter. Your current space and baseboard heaters or woodstove may still be needed to provide your building(s) with supplemental heating.

Bob Corbett notes: "Heat pumps are very efficient in spring and fall for heat, and allow air conditioning for those hot July days. Mine has generated sufficient heat in early winter when temps are -15 °C [and there are also units now capable of working well in the -25 to -30°C range]. I have one unit set up with an app on my phone that allows me to turn on the heat before arriving at the cottage. Also, there are often provincial incentive programs for energy-saving rebates to help off-set the initial purchase."

Overall, heat-pump technology can be a great option for those looking to upgrade their heating and cooling systems. With their energy-efficient operation and versatile design, heat pumps can help keep your space comfortable year-round. And with the newer technology of window heat pumps, cottage owners have even more options for staying cool during the summer months. Consider talking to a heating and cooling professional to see if a heat-pump system is right for your cottage.

6. The Ontario Lake Partner Program/Water Testing

Jane Bowman

The Ontario Lake Partner Program (LPP) is a volunteer-based initiative for monitoring the water quality of inland lakes. It involves citizens in collecting water samples and measuring water clarity. Samples are analyzed for nutrients like total phosphorus, calcium, and chloride at a Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) lab, contributing to a long-term dataset of lake health available to the public and scientists. Volunteers use Secchi disks to measure water clarity, and they collect samples from May to October annually to help track changes in lake health due to factors such as development and climate change.

Visit the FOCA website: <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program/> or the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks website for more information.

Gregg Thurlbeck and I submitted a Sparrow Lake water sample in May. The results of this sample have not yet been posted on the provincial government website.

Secchi disks are provided by the LPP and are used to measure water transparency or turbidity in bodies of water. The disk is mounted on a pole or line and lowered slowly down in the water. The depth at which the disk is no longer visible is taken as a measure of the transparency of the

water. This measure is known as the **Secchi depth** and is related to water turbidity. In 2025, Secchi depths were recorded in northwest Deep Bay as follows: May: 4.7 m; July: 4.3 m; August: 5.5 m; September: 3.5 m; October: to come.

It has been a fun to be involved with understanding how to assess the health of our lake. We look forward to continuing the work in 2026.

7. Fall FOCA Report

Meredith Oberfrank

[FOCA](#) speaks on behalf of 50,000 Ontario waterfront families and 550+ lake and road associations. Their annual Fall Seminar, with an emphasis on “passing the torch” to younger generations, was held on September 20, 2025. Here are some highlights:

[Climate Legacy](#): a speaker from this group of retired people stated that we know what awaits future generations—more extreme weather events (more intense storms, flooding, and wildfires), warming lakes, invasive species and pests, and droughts and water level changes. What can we, as waterfront property owners, do about climate change? Three things: address the root causes of climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; adapt—manage the impacts of climate change; have a dual strategy to respond to climate change.

From this group’s research, they concluded that waterfront property owners and their children tend to protect what they love, and that trusted spokespeople are peers and family—not necessarily strangers or talking heads. This may seem obvious, but at times it is challenging for some of us (this writer included) to ask young lake neighbours or relatives to consider modifying activities or actions that are harmful to the environment. Climate Legacy encourages all of us to lead by example (reusing, recycling, not letting harmful chemicals enter the lake, naturalizing shorelines, etc.).

It is unlikely that younger individuals are reading this newsletter—it’s not short and snappy, as with social media posts. How do we **engage youth** in a lake association? A FOCA marketing intern encouraged us to “meet young people where they are”—on Instagram, TikTok, etc., and to engage them in helping out with social media content, short-term projects, or fun events (clean-ups, festivals, etc.). They could gain volunteer hours for high school or have something extra to add to a resumé. **If you know any young people who would like to help SLA, please let us know.**

Cottage Succession is always a popular topic with FOCA, and estate-planning lawyer Peter Lilloco was on hand to discuss five common mistakes and assumptions cottage owners make in succession planning—primarily with the Principal Residence Exemption and capital gains tax. Find out how to resolve these challenging legal issues by contacting Peter or attending one of his sessions: see [Cottage Succession Planning - FOCA answers Ontario cottage country questions](#) for more information.

Click [here](#) to sign up for FOCA’s monthly elerts. They are always informative with many relevant updates, and also provide information about member discounts for a variety of businesses. For those interested, FOCA has discount codes for the upcoming Cottage Life Show (Nov. 14–16).

8. SLA Email Addresses and Other Ways to Connect with Us

Rebecca Lee, Interim President: presidentsparrowlakeassn@gmail.com

Treasurer: treasurersparrowlakeassn@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.sparrowlakeassociation.com/>

Facebook: search “Sparrow Lake Association”

*On behalf of the SLA Board—
Rebecca Lee, Bob Corbett, Jeff Lambing, Judy Moore-Vey,
Meredith Oberfrank, John Cooper—
we wish you a great fall and winter, and all the best for 2026!*