

## **Otty Lake Property Owners' Survey, Fall 2013**

In Fall 2013, the Otty Lake Association (OLA) distributed opinion surveys to the local community about the *Otty Lake Management Plan – Five Year Review*.

Approximately 500 surveys were distributed, and 206 were returned by December 29, 2013, a satisfying response rate of 41 percent.

This summary presents an overview of the results of that survey. Below are samples of respondents' specific concerns and suggested actions and a table with numeric results. All comments received through survey responses have been posted on the OLA website at [www.ottylakeassociation.ca](http://www.ottylakeassociation.ca) under 'OL Mgmt Plan.'

Otty Lake residents identified water quality, aquatic vegetation and algae, and fish and wildlife habitat as their three top-priority issues. However, it is clear that they understand there are strong correlations among issues. A great many also recognized that all members of the community have a responsibility in making Otty a healthy lake.

Survey results will be incorporated into the *Five Year Review* which will be ready for discussion and approval by the membership at the AGM on July 12, 2014.

The OLA will use the survey as important input to identify and prioritize initiatives to help look after Otty Lake.

The OLA extends sincere thanks to all members of the community who took the time to provide input and looks forward to the community's support as it carries out its initiatives.

### **Samples of Specific Concerns and/or Suggested Actions**

#### 1. Aquatic Vegetation and Algae

- RVCA/MOE must identify the algae/weeds, then determine the concentrations of PO<sub>4</sub> etc. which limits their growth. Use the appropriate calculations to determine the feasibility of human intervention. In other words, will reducing the phosphate consumption make any difference? "Workshops" without scientific basis are useless.
- Investigate the possibility of mass vegetation cutting (renting equipment for many to use).
- Too many weeds and algae coming up. Please inform us what specifically we can do to remove *existing* weeds – not just for future prevention.
- Identifying cottagers using grass fertilizers – warnings and fines
- Keep encouraging good shoreline practice and be specific about what has phosphorus in it.

## 2. Boating

- Post 'no wake' signs and develop signage to prevent misuse of islands as camping/partying spots.
- Boaters still travel too fast and too close to shorelines. Reminder to members.
- Support and initiate more activities such as Paddle Power.

## 3. Climate Change

- Climate change is important, but not for us to deal with, as it is being dealt with by other organizations.
- Climate change is already impacting on all other issues. One action: discourage the old practice of burning accumulated brush on the lake ice in the winter. Burning brush on your property impacts: climate change – adds CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere; water quality - ash contains many nutrients especially phosphorus; aquatic vegetation; fish and wildlife habitat.

## 4. Development Pressure

- Enforce zoning laws for *everyone*.
- When my grandfather built his cottage in 1940 there were 50 cottages on the lake. Thirty years ago I had heard that there was to be no more development on the lake. When is enough, enough? Stop the over-development.
- There should be more information on variances applied for on the lake reported via Capt'n Otty's Log. Also info on OMB (Ontario Municipal Board).

## 5. Fish and Wildlife Habitat

- Addressing water quality, shoreline protection, and fish and wildlife habitat as all priority ONE items will encompass all the others. We must narrow our focus to become effective.
- Applaud OLA's 2013/14 project "Fish Habitat Enhancement" and its extension to habitat enhancement for all critters.
- Ensure development on the lake does not destroy fish or wildlife habitat –especially wetlands.

## 6. Groundwater

- Septic system re-inspection is an important program and needs to be continued.
- A shift in waste disposal over the very long term would be beneficial in view of the increasing number of permanent residences. The Townships should be asked to put priority on Type 5 Waste Disposal (Holding Tanks) so that nutrients are taken away from the lake rather than joining the groundwater as in Type 4 Waste Disposal (Septic/Weeping Tile Beds).

## 7. Partnerships

- The association has been doing a great job of partnering with other associations, committees, organizations etc. and recognizing the benefits of these liaisons, so it is important that they continue.

## 8. Responsibility of Landowners

- Applaud and encourage continuation of *all* of OLA's communication programs such as website, newsletter, workshops, distributed literature (including Handbook), annual calendars etc. etc. It will be an ongoing challenge to convince humanity that we no longer need to "subdue the wilderness". Rather, we should relax, sit back and enjoy what still remains of the natural world. That's what cottage life is supposed to be!
- Action: education; peer group pressure; consistency of municipal application of by-laws/regulations, as well as conservation authorities, MOE, Public Health and others. Bumping up septic inspections and implementing penalties for non-conformance could lead to landowner improvements.

## 9. Shoreline Protection

- Continue to provide shoreline plants and advice on which plants to use. This is educational and greatly encourages the landowners to be proactive in shoreline protection.
- Instruct boat operators to be aware of their wakes! Many are oblivious of the huge waves they produce. They simply never look back!

## 10. Water Levels

- I feel we need to allow *natural water level fluctuations* to occur. Do not re-build beaver dams ourselves. If beavers return, so be it. This is natural process.
- Last two years water level has varied quite a lot – we should be attempting to stabilize the levels.

## 11. Water Quality

- Require eco-flo type [septic] system when replaced.
- Double the budget for water quality sampling and research.
- Increased monitoring of spillage into the lake particularly agricultural, insecticides and septic.
- Stop clearing to shoreline. Stop people "citifying" property. Stop use of fertilizers.
- How about a working display at the AGM on how phosphorus can help algae bloom?
- Sources of pollution should be identified and addressed. Sources and individual cottage owners should be notified and told how to improve helpfully.
- Discourage stores in Perth from selling soaps (and other products with phosphates) at all.
- Many waterfront cottage owners still maintain beautiful lush green lawns down to the water's edge. I believe a delegation should approach each of these owners to ensure that they understand that their green lawns (and in some cases, their asphalt driveways) imperil the health of our lake.