

GRWA ShoreLines

The Gananoque River Waterways Association

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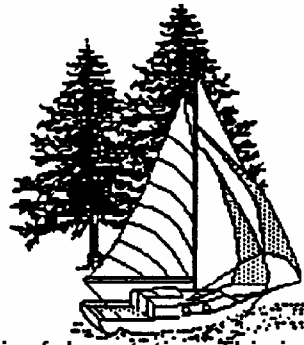
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Mary O'Connor Kaiser 1942 – 2005

We lament the sudden death of Mary,
resident of Lost Bay,
longtime member of GRWA
and its President these last two years;
mother, sister, aunt and grandmother;
environmentalist and philosopher.



She always signed her emails with a meaningful quotation. This is one of hers that particularly speaks of Mary O'Connor Kaiser.

Our life is an echo of our spirit today,
Of our essence as it is,
Caught between our yesterday and our tomorrow.
It is the resounding reality of who we are,
As a result of where we have been,
And where we will be,
For eternity

Mattie Stepanek, 2000.
For eternity

We share the sadness of her family. We heed her echo and her spirit.

At the Annual General Meeting, July 2, 2005

To Elizabeth Shaw: Honorary Life Member of GRWA

The Gananoque River Waterways Association celebrated its 40th birthday in 2003 and it was at this special celebration just 2 years ago that I first met Elizabeth Shaw. Her presence and talk left a lasting impression as I immediately recognized her passion for the Waterway and most important her continuing work to keep it sustainable, sustainable in all ways – environmentally, economically and socially. Her message was crystal clear: the community that uses and loves the Waterway has a duty to protect it for now and forever.

Ironically, as Elizabeth told us, the first concern that brought the residents together 40 years ago was that of water levels. I say ironically because here we are 40 years later with the same problem, high water levels in April of this year but now this summer a drought warning from CRCA. She spoke of the River's long history as a transportation route for the First Nations, its early ups and downs as the forests were cleared resulting in higher spring runoffs, the building of the Rideau Canal and the ensuing dams which tried to tame the water levels and finally today the cumulative impact of "over-crowding of shorelines by buildings, and elimination of shoreline and shallow water [natural] vegetation such as cattails which strain out a lot of pollutants." Elizabeth is one who very early recognized the value of the shorelines, the "ribbon of life" of all waterways.

Although Elizabeth is not always present at the meetings of the Association these days, her love of the River and her success in ensuring that its environmental, social and economic strengths are maintained for all the generations to come, inspires you and me. It lives in her own sons: Art who is the local historian of the area and Chuck who operates Shawmere as a magnet for fisherman and families who have enjoyed the waterway for two generations. It is a legacy that we all applaud Elizabeth for giving to us and it is a challenge to all of us to carry on.

Today we are here to present to Elizabeth Shaw a token of our thanks and the first honorary life membership in the Gananoque River Waterways Association.

My favourite place was the top of a shoreline rock at Shawmere. On the lakeside it dropped sheer into the water. Children called it "The Mountain" and played Indians there. There to me it was a place of peace, a "holy mountain", where I could hide for a few minutes stolen from my overly-busy day. Elizabeth Shaw, 2005

From Our Turtle Lady, Katherine Beehler

Michael O'Connor introduced Katherine Beehler, "our Turtle Lady", a Masters student in Geography-Environmental Resource Management at the University of Waterloo, who is doing research on the Northern Map Turtle, a species at risk in our area. Thanks to a chance meeting of Mike and Katherine, she decided to work in the GRWA area, with Mike acting as guide. Katherine studies riparian areas as this key habitat for turtles has not been well researched. She said reptiles and amphibians have many species at risk and need to be studied to help understand and preserve their habitats. Any given turtle will use different habitats for the different activities of basking, breeding, feeding, etc.

Their life span is about 20 years. A mature female is 18-28 cm. with a wider head whereas the adult male, 9-15cm, is much smaller. Their diet is snails, clams, molluscs, crawfish, aqua vegetation & some fish. Nesting in Canada is usually only once, in May-July, with 9-17 eggs laid. The number of hatchings in Aug.-Sept. is greatly reduced because of the predators: raccoon, possum, skunk, coyote. Water pollution can also reduce the numbers. [Since zebra mussels take over the rock substrate crowding out some molluscs, this reduction in food availability may have some affect on the turtle population. Changing the natural habitat to a lawn is also a key destructive factor.] Katherine traps the turtles noting its location, weight and sex and marks them with a number. If you see a numbered turtle, please note place, date, conditions and what it was doing. Send the information to: kmbeehle@fes.uwaterloo.ca

Katherine has also seen stink pot turtles in Lost Bay, snapping turtles on roads, cliffs, shorelines, and painted turtles on roads.

BIOBLITZ YIELDS RECORD NUMBERS

This year's Great Canadian BioBlitz of the Kingston Field Naturalists yielded a record number of species on the **Lost Bay Nature Reserve**, a 46 hectare property which combines a provincially significant wetland and forests with plants from both limestone and granite based soils.

A bioblitz is an intensive search for the maximum number of different species over a 24 hour period, involving as many biology experts as possible, assisted by the general public. Despite less than ideal weather conditions on June 17th and 18th, 465 different species were identified, beating the previous record of 400. A record of 68 human participants, coming from as far away as Dorval and Guelph, was also set. A special thanks to four GRWA members: **Emily Conger** and **Cam Smith** for organizing the Reserve and driving the shuttle service; **Lora Lee** and **John Buchta** for the use of their property.

Among the 71 different birds were: Least Flycatcher, Magnolia Warbler, Eastern Wood-pewee, Virginia Rail, Red Shouldered Hawk and Ovenbird. With an expert on damsel flies and dragon flies present, 19 different species were identified. There were also specialists on flies, horsetails and ferns, grasses and sedges, and moths and butterflies. Many of these experts taught the volunteers how to identify different species or set up traps to enable species to be studied. For a complete list of species identified, contact the Kingston Field Naturalists at 549-8023 or go to their website at www.kingstonfieldnaturalists.org

Anne Robertson, the chief organizer, says that what makes so many species possible is the variety of habitats. Maintaining a variety of habitats is something that landowners can do to foster a more species on their own land. As she says, "every species is important. We need to value the common as much as the rare, because the greater the variety, the better." This **biodiversity** can be enhanced or destroyed "through human activity".

The BioBlitz underscores the need to **maintain and enhance habitats** so that future generations can also have the thrill of finding a rich variety of life even on a small property. Landowners along **shorelines have a very special responsibility** to maintain natural vegetation and avoid damage to the two delicate ecosystems at the water's edge.

Our own Land Trust – The Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust

When the Lost Bay Nature Reserve (see BioBlitz in the next column) was rescued from development by a group of local, concerned citizens in 2000, there was no land trust in the GRWA area and so the easement on the property is held by the Nature Conservancy of Canada necessitating many trips to Toronto. Today any property owner who wishes to preserve the natural and/or historical characteristics of a property but retain the use of it with lower taxes, need go no further than 'just down the road' to connect with the newly-named Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust (TIWLT) which now covers most of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. Its 12 years of experience are invaluable and at your service to preserve habitats for you and the future.

Business is already brisk. The TIWLT was able to purchase 150 acres of raw land adjacent to Charleston Lake Provincial Park (CLPP) which in turn will be donated to the Park. This outright purchase was made possible with the help of several partners including the Friends of CLPP and the government. Outright purchase of a property is not the usual route but in this case it was necessary to put the land in the public domain as part of the Park for all of us to enjoy.

A new website is under development. In the meantime for more information about an easement on your land or about membership with the TIWLT, connect with Dave Warner, 613-923-2054 or dwarner@cybertap.com Thanks to **Alistair Burnett** for his work here.



For Cross-Country Skiing
Friends of Charleston Lake Provincial Park maintain 6 km of groomed trails accessible from the visitor's centre. This is a day's winter pleasure for only \$2 per person with the proceeds going to the **Friends of CLPP**. As the Park is "closed" no Park fees are collected.

Preliminary Test results from Red Horse Lake, 2005

With thanks to Dana Cruikshank, Surface Water Scientist, Ontario Ministry of the Environment

The following draft update information has been provided by the Ministry of Environment based on the survey data collected during 2005 and is currently being provided to the GRWA as part of an information request by the GRWA. The Ministry would like to point out that this data is very recent has not yet been verified by staff and therefore errors may occur. The final version of the data will be available in 2006 as part of a report on the 2005 water quality study conducted on lake trout lakes in Frontenac, Leeds & Grenville, Lennox & Addington and Lanark Counties.

The Ministry conducted three sampling sessions in May, July and September of 2005. Water chemistry samples and dissolved oxygen profiles were taken from the West, East and Long Reach Basins of Red Horse Lake as well as Singleton Lake.

The 2005 data indicates an improvement in the mean dissolved oxygen concentration (MDO) in Red Horse Lake in 2005 from the previous data from 2001. The West basin had a MDO of 4.95 mg/L vs 3.79 in 2001 and the east basin had an MDO of 5.17 mg/L vs 3.46 in 2001. It should be noted that these dissolved oxygen improvements are still well below the 7.0 mg/L criteria for dissolved oxygen that MNR has determined is required to protect lake trout populations and therefore Red Horse Lake will remain designated as a highly sensitive lake for lake trout habitat.

Phosphorus concentrations did not change much from the last few years and remain at a concentration where algal blooms are likely.

Secchi depths (measure of water clarity) showed a slight improvement over 2001 except for July where both basins have low water clarity and lots of algae blooms. May was also low for the west basin.

One of the goals this year was to determine the influence of Singleton Lake on water quality in Red Horse Lake. The data indicates that for phosphorus Singleton except for the fall sampling period has similar concentrations of total phosphorus as Red Horse Lake.

Phosphorus concentrations tend to be a little higher in Long Reach. The fall concentration in Singleton Lake is extremely high and is likely a sampling or lab contamination error.

STILL NO ZEBRA MUSSELS ON FODEY & KILLENBECK LAKES

Both these lakes were retested in August 2005 with a clean bill for zebra mussels and spiny water flea. Please spread the word to ensure they remain that way. GRWA will erect permanent signs to request that boats be cleaned.

Thanks go to Jim Johnson who did the testing on both Singleton and Red Horse Lakes. As in 2004, zebra mussels are present but still no spiny water flea. We will be testing the whole system from Lyndhurst to Gananoque Lake in 2006, again with the support of the Invading Species Program and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters.



MNR to Charge Rent for Boathouses Containing Living Space

Starting in 2006, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources will charge rent for boathouses with second stories that are not strictly for boat storage. This rent will be 6% of market value based on a "per square foot" value of the site as determined by both an accredited appraisal and a land survey. For more information contact Martin Blake, Area Supervisor Kemptville, 1-613-258-8385

Gananoque Lake reports:

Fluctuating water levels have been extremely frustrating: too low in the early spring for the pike in the marsh; too high for docks after abnormal rains; drought in the summer and finally back up to near normal now. The operation of the dams by Fortis for power generation is suspect.

Fortis (and unusual weather patterns) must come to some agreement to ensure the aquatic wildlife is protected.

Your membership expires...

The date your membership expires is on your envelope. If there is a membership form in the envelope, it is time to send in your dues. Please do so in order to continue to receive ShoreLines and to support your waterway to keep what it is that you love about it. If you are "new 05" you have received 2 complimentary issues of this newsletter to introduce you to the GRWA. Because the costs of stamps and printing have increased, to receive ShoreLines it is necessary to be a paid member. **Keep in touch; work together.**

What has GRWA done for you in 2005?

- 1) worked with the Township on the draft Official Plan especially dealing with lot sizes, floating dwellings and Red Horse Lake. The Plan was adopted by the Township in April – pick up a copy at the Lyndhurst office or www.townshipleeds.on.ca "Municipal Information", "Official Notices". It is still at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for final approval.
- 2) initiated meetings with the two Beverly Lake Associations, Leeds Stewardship Council, CRCA and other agencies to explore the possibility of doing a complete watershed study/plan from Morton Dam to Marble Rock Dam. As soon as the agencies have completed the Charleston Lake study by year's end, we will be able to tap into their expertise.
- 3) worked on a committee with the Beverlys, the Biosphere Network and the Town of Gananoque to refurbish the portages as set out in the CRCA paddling route from Morton to Gananoque. CRCA has approved this in principle. Ongoing.
- 4) organized a meeting of Red Horse Lake residents, members and non-members, with representatives of the Ministries of Environment and Natural Resources and CRCA. Stringent measures are needed to sustain the Lake especially with septic tanks, both old and new.
- 5) revised the Constitution at the AGM so that GRWA can move ahead with incorporation. It is with a lawyer.
- 6) connected with Red Horse Lake residents and the Ministry of Environment to initiate the moving of some cattle away from the shore. The owner of the land has agreed to put up a fence to protect the shore.
- 7) researched the issue of speeding boats near shore and how to educate the operators on the importance of "no wake" to preserve the essential shorelines. Hopefully by next summer, in partnership with St. Lawrence Islands National Park six "turtle" signs will be erected at the ends of the narrow sections of the Waterways and pamphlets will be given to boaters.

Property Assessments and MPAC and WRAFT

With thanks to David B. Bull, Executive Director, Thousand Islands Area Residents' Association and GRWA Board Member Margaret Armstrong

The following is a summary of the meeting of 37 people with the WRAFT (Waterfront Ratepayers After Fair Taxation) Executive Director Bob Topp at the Charleston Lake Association Office on October, 2005. WRAFT is a coalition of 175+ Ontario waterfront property associations with its objective to halt the unfair shift of the tax burden onto waterfront owners and to lobby the provincial government for a more equitable property tax system.

Meeting Summary

Bob began by talking about how WRAFT, despite its best efforts, has so far been unable to convince officials at Queen's Park, including the Finance Minister, to postpone mailing of 2005 assessment notices for the 2006 taxation year. Until a more equitable distribution of taxation is implemented, Bob predicted a crisis on the horizon, for both waterfront property owners and the government.

As assessment notices are being received, many are reporting dramatic increases, as much as 100% and more. In virtually all cases, **property taxes often increase significantly** as a consequence. In normal circumstances, the mil rate set by township/municipal governments should go down to reflect higher assessment base. However, the additional revenue generated from high value property assessment is just too appealing. [This is exactly the case in the Township of the Leeds and Thousand Islands where elected officials openly protest that the increase in taxation is a direct result of the increased assessment.]

Many argued that they receive and/or use few if any municipal services. Bob agreed and said that many use their waterfront property for only a few weeks a year. The shift of the tax burden is also moving steadily towards seniors who may be on fixed incomes and at risk of being unable to pay the resulting increases in property taxes.

Responding to a question, Bob noted that waterfront property owners are paying much more than their share. From a tax perspective, property taxes are **the only tax in existence where one pays an increasing tax on an unrealized gain**. In all other cases, when one realizes financial gain, tax is paid at the time. Many waterfront property owners do not view their holdings as an investment and do not necessarily have plans to realize financial gain from it. In fact, in terms of the current provincial government, which promised no tax increases prior to the last election, the current system is a tax increase.

WRAFT's research into other jurisdictions shows that **it is possible to implement effective mitigating measures**. For example, in Nova Scotia, there is a capping at the rate of inflation plus a small percentage (2%). This benefits the current waterfront property owner and when the property changes hands, the full current assessment rate applies to the new owner. Such mitigating measures do not diminish the overall tax collected by the municipality, rather help to spread the tax burden more equitably throughout a given township - often to those who actually receive and benefit the most from municipal services.

There was much discussion about the **role of MPAC**. Bob talked about a recent meeting WRAFT had with the Chair and President of MPAC, who, while well aware of WRAFT's concerns, say they are bound to fulfilling instructions from the provincial government. They did agree to pass WRAFT's concerns along to their customer, the Ontario Finance Ministry.

Bob said that the opportunity to highlight the many anomalies in MPAC's assessment formulas and methodology, many of which are secret, will begin to present themselves as the 2005 assessments roll out. It will be necessary to make property tax reform an election issue, particularly in time for the next provincial election in 2007, should WRAFT fail to succeed before then. It was noted that in the last few years, MPAC has dismissed most of their on the ground assessors, consolidated most of their regional office activity to Toronto and is working with a 30 year old computing system.

Non-waterfront property owner groups are also expressing similar concerns about a shift in the tax burden to high value areas. WRAFT is working hard to develop appropriate alliances with other groups also lobbying for property tax reform. For example, the towns of Niagara on the Lake and Blue Mountain (Collingwood region) are each lobbying the government for a more equitable property tax system because, they argue, their municipalities are unfairly subsidizing the greater region in which they are located.

Bob noted that according to MPAC, there are 250,000 waterfront properties in Ontario. WRAFT represents 30,000 waterfront property owners though its 175 member associations. This, Bob believes, translates into more than 100,000 voters, and growing. Bob encouraged those in attendance to **write their elected officials**. So far, WRAFT is aware of 500 letters of protest to elected officials. It's obviously not enough. They have hired an effective lobbyist

Bob concluded by encouraging everyone to **visit WRAFT's website**, www.wraft.com or call 1-416-929-9885. Also be sure to let the Ontario government know that changes are needed by **giving voice to your concerns** to:

Premier Dalton McGuinty 416-325-1941 Fax : 416-325-7578 dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

Rm 281 Main Legislative Building, Toronto ON M7A 1A4

Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) Bob Runciman, 1-800-267-4408

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