

Otty Lake Property Owners' Survey, October 2007

Thank you to all members of the Otty Lake community who took the time to respond to the survey and provide your input to the Otty Lake Management Planning process. We distributed 535 surveys. At this time, 234 property owners have responded. This is an excellent 44% response rate.

From the survey responses we know that the Otty Lake community believes that Water Quality is the number one priority. Aquatic Vegetation is number two and Development Pressures are number three. We will focus first on these priority areas. The input from the community on the specific action strategies that were addressed in the survey will be important as we complete the **Otty Lake Management Plan** and begin the work of implementation.

Please note:

Not all the respondents answered all the questions in each section so the total number of responses varies from question to question.

A large number of comments were received as part of the survey responses. We have included samples of this input (both positive and negative) at the end of the section to which the comment seemed most to relate.

Issue 1 - Water Quality

The objectives are to monitor water quality to identify sources of impairment and to reduce or eliminate these sources.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. maintain partnerships with local and provincial organizations (MOE, MNR, RVCA etc) in water quality programs.	150	66	6	1
2. continue water quality monitoring program to identify sources of water quality impairment.	197	29	0	1
3. inform Otty Lake community of results of water quality sampling	164	51	9	1
4. promote awareness of threats to water quality	171	48	6	1

Sample Survey Comments – Surface Water Quality

“Water quality is the key to all management activities on Otty Lake.”

“The lake water quality is far from what it was 70 years ago. We don’t need all that algae and all that slime clinging to the rocks!”

“I believe that there already exists some good legislation to prevent water contamination. What we need is for municipalities to better police the areas for violations!”

“We can build tremendous community consensus around water quality. Many people, who disagree on other things, can come together on the value of maintaining and improving the quality of Otty Lake’s water.”

“I feel that the quality of the water is of extremely high importance. I would hate to see further deterioration.”

“The OLA should not take on more than it can handle. It should stick to primary lake issues (for example, water quality) and leave secondary, though important, issues to others. “

Issue 2 - Aquatic Vegetation

The objectives are to monitor aquatic vegetation, identify and manage causes of excessive weed growth and provide lake friendly alternatives to manage weed growth.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. develop volunteer-based monitoring program	87	109	21	5
2. work with national and local organizations to research contributing factors to excessive weed growth	154	64	9	
3. work with Otty Lake shoreline owners for targeted aquatic vegetation removal	136	57	22	6

Sample Survey Comments – Aquatic Vegetation

“The weeds and algae are killing the lake; priority #1.”

“Why is it that Otty has zebra mussels, algae slime, and weed growth far exceeding most similar lakes in this area?”

“The aquatic vegetation largely prevents us from enjoying the lake for swimming and canoeing. We are year-round residents, live on a private road and pay very high property taxes. Some of this revenue should be contributed by the municipality of Drummond/North Elmsley to help clean up our lake.”

“We recommend an aggressive campaign to limit use of fertilizers on lawns”

“Weeds may be good for fish but have curtailed swimming. Weeds are depreciating the value of our properties. Vegetation removal must be made possible without so much government regulation.”

“The seemingly rampant growth of algae and weeds has drastically reduced property values for some cottages where prevailing winds and enclosed bays foster maximum invasion. A plan for removal *in these areas* would be a welcomed priority.”

Issue 3 - Groundwater

The objective is to prevent groundwater contamination.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. encourage groundwater studies in the watershed	107	90	22	4
2. work with the municipalities and the Health Unit to ensure there is an inventory and database of all (new and old) wells and septic systems in the watershed	136	65	16	6
3. ensure that groundwater is protected from the impacts of mining activity through legislation	151	50	17	9

Sample Survey Comments - Groundwater Quality and Quantity

“Since the lake is an ecosystem, everything is connected. If water quality and groundwater are in good shape, most likely all else will be too. “

Issue 4 - Water levels

The objectives are to promote the understanding of naturally fluctuating water levels and to ensure an adequate flow into and out of Otty Lake

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. determine the natural fluctuations in water level over time	72	117	32	3
2. encourage property owners to make development choices respecting natural water level fluctuations	96	89	33	8
3. establish reporting protocol to respond to property owner concerns	53	104	53	7
4. investigate reported problems (e.g: beaver activity in Jebbs Creek)	88	88	38	8
5. monitor impediments to water flow	91	99	29	5

Sample Survey Comments – Water levels

“Understanding the water balance for the lake and the movement from the southwest to the northeast are important”

“Water level = Flow = Water Quality = Aquatic Life & overall health of lake”

Issue 5 - Development pressure

The objectives are to ensure that township Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws have development and redevelopment policies that protect the long term health of Otty Lake, to establish and manage the ecological carrying capacity of Otty Lake, to maintain and improve septic systems and to ensure a transparent planning and development process on Otty Lake.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. encourage local municipal governments to work towards consistent sustainable lake- wide development and redevelopment standards and policies	135	64	10	11
2. encourage local municipal governments to integrate recommendations of the Otty Lake Management Plan into their planning processes and documents strengthening Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to limit impact on shorelines	132	64	11	12
3. ensure that all relevant Conservation Authority regulations are applied to any shoreline development on Otty Lake	153	44	10	18
4. work with RCVA and municipalities to develop and apply a model or alternative method of determining the development and recreation capacity of Otty Lake	77	106	20	17
5. encourage municipalities to develop and implement a septic re-inspection program for properties on and in proximity to Otty Lake	150	50	19	7
6. encourage/lobby local municipalities to develop septic pumping guidelines and incentives for pump-outs (ie: pre-paid septic pump-outs included in tax bill)	80	84	24	39
7. encourage/lobby local municipalities and other agencies to provide information about incentives for replacement of marginal/defective septic systems	106	80	23	13
8. ensure that the approval process for redevelopment applications are open and understood by property owners	117	82	15	8
9. encourage the municipalities to develop a collaborative approach for development discussions	86	91	27	13
10. request that the OLA continue to be informed of all severance and variance applications by the municipalities	125	64	19	15

Sample Survey Comments – Development Pressures

“Very important to have all septic systems checked. If not up to standard, shut off water. Period.”

“Experience tells us that good official plans and zoning by-laws mean nothing, if townships will not enforce them. Therefore, efforts need to be made to convince governments to implement.”

“Small, targeted steps are better than utopian “central planning” fantasies. Better to champion, say, 80% septic compliance and inspection within 12 months and 100% inspection and compliance within 60 months, than more general and less easily attainable goals.”

“Current by-laws need to be enforced; otherwise, all our efforts will be thwarted. Illegal building needs to be detected, reported, altered or demolished.”

“Anti-development is selfish. More government/governance is bad.”

“The horse is out of the barn,’ and anything we do now will be of little effect. Climate change is a much bigger and more important environmental issue.”

“Otty Lake Association should keep their noses out! Otty Lake Association should stick to water quality/levels issues only! You don’t own my property.”

“Limit development of subdivisions – no more on the lake! Stop dividing up the properties.”

“Otty Lake is nearing the breaking point in terms of development. It is very possible that Otty will decline rapidly within the next three to five years if landowners do not alter their current behaviours.”

“I am concerned that the townships and municipalities are granting “minor variances,” i.e., 50-foot variances. These are not minor. In most communities a one-foot variance is major.”

Issue 6 - Fish and Wildlife Habitat

The objective is to protect, maintain and enhance indigenous fish and wildlife diversity and their habitat in the Otty Lake watershed.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. ensure sustainable populations of all fish species are maintained	117	84	20	3
2. work with appropriate agencies to create a specific, comprehensive Otty Lake Fisheries Report	65	109	44	5
3. conduct wildlife census/survey	44	115	63	5
4. promote/implement programs to preserve or enhance fish and wildlife habitat	112	91	17	5

Sample Survey Comments – Fish and Wildlife Habitat

“Fish and wildlife habitat should *not* be focused on fishing. It should be about *conservation*.”

“Limit one bass per day. No live bait.”

Issue 7 - Mining

The objective is to protect privately owned Surface Rights Only lands from mining claims, exploration and extraction.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. partner with advocacy groups and the townships to improve protection for privately owned “Surface Rights Only” lands	154	49	17	9
2. lobby provincial government parties to revise the Clean Water Act to protect rural surface and groundwater sources	159	46	14	6
3. investigate the establishment of a task force to exclude certain lands from mining activity	136	59	17	11

Sample Survey Comments – Mining

“Lobby the provincial government to change the mining act so surface and mining rights are one unit. Mining must meet environmental assessment”

Issue 8 - Shoreline Protection and Health

The objectives are to promote re-naturalization of all altered shorelines, recognize and reward good shoreline stewardship and ensure “the ribbon of life” is protected by municipal planning policies.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. Communicate results of M.A.P.L.E. (Mutual Association for the Protection of Lake Environments) shoreline survey to property owner	84	98	35	8
2. create recognition awards for good shoreline stewardship	33	95	69	28
3. ensure that municipal Official Plans and Zoning By-Laws identify all wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat deemed to be locally important and establish policies for its protection	100	92	17	12
4. encourage municipalities to develop, implement and enforce Site Plan policies or development conditions, by-laws and guidelines to protect/rehabilitate a shoreline buffer strip for all development/ redevelopment applications	114	69	16	17
5. encourage the development of monitoring/ re inspection programs to ensure site control or development conditions are met	97	83	22	17

Sample Survey Comments – Shoreline Protection and Health

“Is it not reasonable that shoreline property owners be able to make ‘suitable’ alterations to enable protection of shoreline, use of boat, view of lake, enjoyable swimming, etc?”

“Over the next few years we plan to re-vegetate our shoreline”

“Rather than create recognition awards, publish names and addresses of those who are responsible for shoreline deterioration.”

Issue 9 - Boating

The objectives are to ensure the Otty Lake community is aware of the impacts of specific boating behaviours and to protect the lake from the introduction of additional invasive species.

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. encourage boaters to minimize their impact on the lake	117	81	18	10
2. encourage the use of non-motorized watercraft or upgrading to new low emission engine technology	95	74	33	26
3. survey Otty Lake property owners to determine boating trends	21	92	82	26
4. lobby for more OPP patrols to enforce existing legislation	43	66	68	45
5. develop/post signage re: speed and wake control	56	76	65	27
6. provide information about the introduction of invasive species	121	86	20	2
7. maintain an invasive species monitoring program	108	86	22	7

Sample Survey Comments – Impacts of Boating

“I find the traffic on the lake unbelievably low. I really don’t see a problem there that needs to be solved - maybe just a periodic reminder in the newsletter that wakes near shore cause erosion. Talking with many of the old timers, the lake seems in better shape now than 40 years ago.”

“Add a project to ensure safer navigation of the lake by marking the shoals and maintaining the markers.”

“Lobby for more OPP patrols... Who comes up with these suggestions?”

"Let's have good manners on the lake and good boating practices"

Issues 10 & 11- Responsibility of Landowners in Protecting Lake Health and Partnerships in Lake Management Planning

The objectives are to educate the Otty Lake community about the issues affecting the lake and their role as good stewards of the lake and watershed and engage the lake community in protecting Otty Lake while establishing and expanding upon effective community partnerships in lake management

Priority	High	Medium	Low	I do not support
Recommendations				
1. develop education programs and information on good stewardship practices for topics of concern identified by the lake community	96	98	27	2
2. increase the number of Otty Lake watershed property owners that are involved in the Otty Lake Association, OLA committees and specific initiatives	47	116	53	7
3. encourage reporting of observed violations of environmental laws and regulations	91	76	35	20
4. increase public awareness of the Lake Management Plan and engage all parties in its implementation	95	97	27	2
5. maintain and expand partnerships with government organizations and other agencies in protecting the health of Otty Lake	108	81	29	2
6. facilitate open discussion and consultation between property owners and government and other environmental organizations	81	98	36	5

Sample Survey comments - Responsibility of Landowners in Protecting Lake Health and Partnerships in Lake Management Planning

“I believe most residents know what they should be doing, but won’t, for purely selfish reasons. How is OLA going to deal with improper septic systems, clearing of all shoreline buffer vegetation, use of fertilizers and other chemicals, destruction of in-water habitat, and residents with three or four motorized watercraft?”

“I am very interested in the lake and watershed issues and will try to live up to any suggestions made.”

“Please work on voluntary compliance. We do not need inspectors and snitchers to improve the lake.”

“I think public education is paramount to achieving your goals. Policies and enforcement are necessary components, I believe.”

“Keep communication with local municipalities open, and educate, educate, educate shoreline owners.”

“The single most important role of the Otty Lake Association is to lobby very aggressively the municipalities, community partners and provincial government to protect Otty and get the message to landowners that Otty is close to a major decline.”

“I believe the OLA has *no* business in what a property owner does with their property, as long as the owner abides with the township/county regulations.”

“I don’t want OLA to turn into a citizen vigilante nosy bunch of busybodies. We have enough of them already.”

“The word “encourage” is used 13 times. I think a stronger verb would be more appropriate. More action, fewer studies.”

“Recommend you frequently remind residents that the municipality is responsible for and has the authority for the bylaws and plans to ensure that the lake environment is sustainable for future use. The OLA is an advocacy organization with resources that can greatly assist the municipality in this work.”

“If you have 11 priorities, then you have no priorities. Focus on three or maybe four issues. Fix them. Then consider tackling the rest.”

“I strongly support the Otty Lake Management Plan. The OLA needs to follow *professional* advice from science-based agencies such as the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Centre for Sustainable Watersheds in Portland. Without the science, we don’t know what is degrading our lake’s water quality. Without the science, municipalities have no authority to tighten regulations on wells and septic systems.”

Conclusion

The following 11 issues have been addressed in the Draft Recommendations for the Otty Lake Management Plan. Please indicate which THREE issues you feel that the Otty Lake Association, working with the Otty Lake community, should FIRST address in caring for the health of Otty Lake. Please number 1, 2, 3.

Note: Some responses in this section were marked by x rather than numbering 1,2 or 3. This information has been included on the right hand side of the chart.

Issue	1 st priority	2 nd priority	3 rd priority	Xs	Total Responses from 234 Surveys distributed
Water Quality	92	38	14	49	193
Aquatic Vegetation	19	33	22	27	101
Dev. Pressures	21	16	18	19	74
Responsibility of Landowners	8	16	29	17	70
Shoreline Pro	3	14	18	14	49
Mining	10	17	11	11	49
Fish & Wildlife Habitat	7	7	20	11	45
Groundwater	10	15	9	10	44
Water Levels	3	7	3	8	21
Boating	0	3	2	7	12
Partnerships	0	2	5	3	10