

Meeting Notes
Community Meeting/Workshop
Otty Lake Management Planning
May 12, 2007
North Elmsley Hall, 121 Station Road, Port Elmsley

Background: Members of the Otty Lake community were invited to the meeting/workshop to help identify goals, objectives and action strategies that will assist the Otty Lake Association and government agencies and organizations in long-term planning to ensure that Otty Lake will be a healthy and beautiful lake for future generations to enjoy. Recommendations incorporating these goals, objectives and action strategies will be developed as part of the Otty Lake Management Plan.

Participation: The workshop was attended by 25 participants that included seasonal and permanent residents from the Otty Lake Community along with Sheanna Tinlin, Program Manager, Lake Management Planning Program.

Introduction: Karen Hunt (Chair, Otty Lake Management Planning Committee) welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking them for their participation in the Otty Lake Management Planning process and then overviewed the Otty Lake Management Planning since its inception in 2004.

Karen reported that the final version of the Report on the State of Otty Lake and its Watershed should be ready to go to the printer in the coming week. Copies of the Report will be available online at http://www.rideauvalley.on.ca/programs/LMP_Program/otty_lake.html or as CD or paper copies from David Reesor or Karen Hunt. Karen then described the current task in which meeting participants are asked to provide their feedback i.e. the development of goals, objectives and action strategies which will become the draft recommendations in the Otty Lake Management Plan.

Karen reported that the Lake Management Committee is aiming to have the draft recommendations ready to present to the community at the OLA's AGM on July 14, 2007. She stressed the importance of the Otty Lake Management Plan being a community – based undertaking.

Wally Robins was introduced as the facilitator for the workshop.

Wally explained that the **purpose of the May 12 workshop** was to provide an opportunity for the workshop participants to help establish key objectives and short and longer term strategies/recommendations which would assist the Otty Lake Community in caring for the long-term health of Otty Lake.

Wally overviewed the **layout for the workshop.**

Intro - 1- 1:30

Process Overview - 1:30- 1:40

Task One – Identifying Key Priorities - 1:45- 2:15

Task Two – Developing recommendations and action strategies - 2:20- 3:20

Task Three – Sharing ideas for Lake Management Planning
Committee - 3:25- 3:40

Wrap-Up - 3: 40 - 4:00

Task # 1 - Your Key Priorities

Participants were asked to review the 11 major themes/issues posted on flip charts around the room (themes are based on areas of concern identified by the Otty Lake community and the Otty Lake Community Partners in the first stage of the Otty Lake planning process). Participants were then asked to use coloured sticky dots to indicate their top 2 priority issues.

Results:

Issue # 1 Surface Water Quality - First Priority – 4 participants
Second Priority – 3 participants

Issue # 2 Aquatic Vegetation - First Priority – 3 participants
Second Priority – 0 participants

Issue # 3 Ground Water Quality and Quantity – First Priority – 0 participants
Second Priority – 1 participant

Issue # 4 Water Levels – First Priority - 0 participants
Second Priority – 0 participants

Issue # 5 Development Pressures and Land Use – First Priority – 6 participants
Second Priority – 8 participants

Issue # 6 Fish and Wildlife Health – First Priority – 1 participant
Second Priority – 2 participants

Issue # 7 Mining Rights and Claims - First Priority – 0 participants
Second Priority – 0 participants

Issue # 8 Shoreline Protection and Health – First Priority – 3 participants
Second Priority – 5 participants

Issue # 9 Impacts of Boating – First Priority – 4 participants
Second Priority - 0 participants

Issue # 10 Responsibilities of Landowners in Protecting Lake Health – First Priority – 5
Second Priority – 6 participants

Issue # 11 Partnerships in Lake Management – First Priority - 0 participants
Second priority – 0 participants

Task # 2

Participants were asked to go to the flip chart topic that they had identified as their personal first priority. After selecting a recorder for the group, participants reviewed the flip chart data from the Oct. 17/06 Community Partners meetings (data posted on the OLA website) and added their recommendations based on the following question.

Question:

What strategies/recommendations in the short term (immediate - 2 years) and longer range (2 years and beyond) should the Otty Lake COMMUNITY (including individual property owners) implement to address this issue?

A resource person was available for each break-out group to assist as needed. At the end of the time allocated for Task #2 notes were collected by the resource person.

TASK TWO RESPONSES

Issue # 1 - SURFACE WATER QUALITY

Preamble

1. It is difficult with current testing process to identify trouble areas on the lake
- also difficult to ascertain what causes deterioration
-north end water quality readings worse than south end
Many septic systems have been replaced by year-round residents

2. Test more often? Reduced # of testing sites 32 to 10 – just provides general information
Tay Valley septic Inspector uses information but it is of limited use. Difficult to establish causal with testing

3. Tay Valley –has program to inspect septic systems (inspects 100 systems per year) Encourage Drummond/North Elmsley to adopt inspection program

Compare lake to an island. Need to control all negative inputs to lake and watershed. Lake is unable to heal itself without help

N.B. All goals below are short-term to initiate but will be long-term in implementations

Good water quality should be regarded (by the OLA) as a matter of paramount importance as it has a large impact on residents' use and enjoyment of the lake (e.g. swimming, use of water for household use, excessive weed growth, appearance of lake)

- Could establish maintaining/improving "good water quality" as a program goal for lake residents.
- Could set specific water quality targets to be achieved in a specified period of time.
- Maintain an adequate ongoing monitoring program to measure the above.

Implement measures to maintain/improve water quality

- By education of lake residents to:
 - Communicate about voluntary septic system inspections
 - Encourage regular pump-out of septic tanks
 - Discourage use of fertilizers
 - Encourage the development of a "buffer strip".
 - Post additional (and larger) signs warning about invasive species. Evaluate the feasibility of providing facilities for washing boats.
- By government action:
 - Encourage Municipalities to introduce and augment septic re-inspection programs

Issue #2 – AQUATIC VEGETATION

1. Strike a balance ...

- OLA should work with MNR to get more information about the permit process to cut weeds i.e. clarify the process (short –term)
- currently takes so long to get a permit to cut weeds that some residents proceed without a permit
- have heard that you don't need a permit to cut 6m X 6m area of weeds – is this true?

2. Promote awareness

The two lake residents who took part in this discussion blamed 90 % of weed problem on septic systems

- felt OLA should ensure inspection of septic systems by the townships; it should be compulsory; should apply to everyone in the townships, not just lake residents,
- First priority should be cottage conversions (long-term)
(see below – addendum 1 and 2)

3. Identify and manage inputs ...

- gather research e.g. from B.C. and Minnesota) re aquatic vegetation
- set up committee of OLA re aquatic weeds to develop expertise and gather info/resources
- encourage people not to use compost or fertilizer near the lake i.e. in the buffer zone; (N.B. composting is no better than fertilizers)
- provide pamphlets to homeowners; (long-term)

[Addendum 1 –

In Haliburton, the municipality pumps septic tanks every three years – homeowners can do this on their own, or, if they don't, the municipality does it for you and puts it on your tax bill and adds on an administration fee]

Nutrient Footprint – should contain the following elements:

- # of people in the dwelling
- Fertilizers used
- # of days the dwelling is used per year
- Use of non-phosphate, phosphate soaps
- Trees cut down
- Is there a lawn? Is fertilizer used?
- # years since the septic tank was pumped
(long- term)

[Addendum 2-

– After inspection of septic tanks where systems fail, alternatives should be mandated e.g. 1. composting toilets 2. biofilters 3. filter beds

Engineered solutions are necessary for certain “difficult” lots
(long- term)]

3. For Education Purposes

- Document the aquatic vegetation problem – get strong evidence and data – before trying to educate the people

- Try to get evidence re how much of phosphorus is due to fertilizers flowing into the lake
(long-term)

Issue #3 – GROUNDWATER QUALITY

There was no discussion on this topic by workshop participants

Issue #4 – WATER LEVELS

There was no discussion on this topic by workshop participants

Issue #5 – DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

1. The Otty Lake Association should encourage owners to rehabilitate/modernize/improve properties approaching 50-60 years old. – upgrading is not necessarily a bad thing.
2. Opinion about proposal should be discussed with owner well before presentation is given to Municipal Council. Communicate Association willingness.
Result – OLA does not become one of the “enemy” through which the owner has to move to make any changes
3. Group endorsed all of the goals and objectives written on the flipchart sheets

Issue #6 FISH AND WILDLIFE HEALTH

No input provided by workshop participants

Issue #7 MINING RIGHTS AND CLAIMS

No input provided by workshop participants

Issue #8 – SHORELINE PROTECTION AND HEALTH

Short term:

* Create shoreline BMP workshops focused on smaller lake community audiences i.e road associations

* Referendum Approach:

- Identify top 3 priority issues:
- include all issues not just specific to shoreline issues
- ask how the public would deal with them
- complete by July
- give self addressed envelopes to encourage response

- give details and strategies identified at AGM,
- People be informed of outcomes by mail

- Take results to townships and lobby to have bylaws put in place

- Lobby for ongoing enforcement of bylaws

Long Term:

- * continue to Lobby for bylaws protecting shoreline
- * encourage neighbours and community to become more active in reporting unsanctioned shoreline development (set up a reporting system that allows for anonymity)

* use shock value in educating shoreline owners

Issue #9 – IMPACTS OF BOATING

1. Promote education effort with regards to protecting loon babies – including noting that canoeists and kayakers as well as motor boats can disrupt birds
 - Promote responsible distance separation by watercraft from nesting birds
 - Provide seasonal removable signage with regard to nesting birds.
 - Establish new loon platforms on Otty Lake as an Otty Lake Association project

2. Noise mitigation by time restraints – (Some group members are bothered by the noise of motors.)

Identify one day a week or a month when the tranquility of the lake would be enjoyed. Or if it is too difficult to do this weekly/monthly with many families different time schedules to come and enjoy the lake - Challenge the community to set aside one day a summer when no motor noises will be heard at Otty Lakeone day with tranquility.

3. Minimize harmful effects of watercraft –
 - Wake awareness
 - Post additional no wake signs.
 - Educate through the website and info package the impact of wave action on shorelines

 - Educate lake community about the impact of drinking and pontoon/party boats.

 - Encourage waterskiing, tubing, wakeboarding in the centre of the lake rather than along the shoreline.

 - Promote effective cleaning of boats being introduced to Otty Lake. Information needs to continue to be shared at launch sites as well as other means regarding the transferring of harmful agents to our lake. eg. the time needed for a boat to dry in the sun before being launched again.

 - Educate and promote moving to 4-stroke or new more efficient 2-stroke motor boat engines. e.g.. include some related information in the property owners package as it was felt that lessening impact for those who choose to motor boats is an encouraged responsibility.
 - also can promote saving money on lowered fuel consumption while caring for our lake.

4. Investigate recent increase in swimmer's skin infections or allergies (group was not sure how wide-spread this is but members of the group had some personal experience)
 - i.e. suggestion from a group member that perhaps this is caused by an excretion from the zebra mussels

Issue #10 – RESPONSIBILITY of LANDOWNERS in PROTECTING LAKE HEALTH

1. Lobby municipal governments to legislate –
 - a) pumping septic systems on a regular basis
 - b) regular inspection of septic systems

Encourage

- recruit neighbours to join OLA
- every one of us could talk to our individual neighbours
- work through road associations
- make landowners aware that it is in their best interest to protect their properties

Educate

- have a column in the Courier or EMC
- focused approach on information from annual meeting i.e. septic systems
- problem is how to get landowners to recognize that lawns are bad!
- positive peer pressure
- present lists of “safe” products in local papers and in OLA newsletters

Educate cont’d

- present lists of good plantings to use for regenerative designations and natural designations in OLA newsletters
- mail OLA newsletters to everyone on Otty Lake whether they are members or not – they need to be informed

Long-term – All landowners in the watershed need to be informed through newsletters

N.B. This group did not support the suggestion to “fundraise and develop a Landowners Stewardship Education Program” that was listed on the flipchart information from the Oct. 17/06 Community Partners Meeting. They felt that it was impractical and very long-term

A big influence is still in the road associations – this should really be a focus for informing and educating people in their small area

Issue # 11 PARTNERSHIPS IN LAKE MANAGEMENT

- No input from workshop participants

Task # 3

Occurred in plenary.

Participants were asked the following question:

What one recommendation/ piece of advice do you have for the Lake Management Planning Committee?

Task 3 responses were recorded on a flip chart as follows:

1. Keep up the good work
2. Be specific. Develop quantitative measurable goals.
3. Enforcement is important. Work with community partners
4. Encourage Tay Valley Township and the Township of Drummond/North Elmsley to work together to harmonize regulations in the two townships.
5. Use an array of communication vehicles
6. Capitalize on the current emphasis on the environment especially with an election at hand
7. Educate and lobby the people who have the authority to make and enforce the regulations
8. Work to improve the water quality of Otty Lake – use this as the banner under which other concerns are addressed.
9. Set measurable goals for improvement of water quality
10. Have every septic system within 500 feet of the lake re-inspected within five years
11. Have a competition to develop a slogan under which the lake community organizes to protect the long-term health of the lake – the slogan could be posted on cottage roads etc.

Wrap Up

David Reesor, President, Otty Lake Association, thanked Wally and the participants and emphasized the importance of the Community’s involvement in the Otty Lake Management Planning process.

David also thanked Sheanna Tinlin, the Lake Management Planning Program's Program Manager who has provided considerable support and guidance to the Otty Lake Management Committee.

David reminded participants that the Lake Management Committee was targeting to have the draft recommendations for the Otty Lake Management Plan ready to present to Otty Lake residents at the OLA AGM on July 14. Input from the community and the community partners will be important.