

BBLA Newsletter

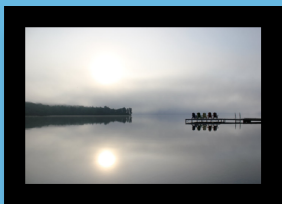
Fall 2021

Chairman's Letter



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Welcome to the Big Basswood Lake Association's Fall 2021 newsletter.

We sincerely hope that all of our members and their families are safe and well.

Although we started the summer of 2021 still subject to public health restrictions due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, the great news is that the border did reopen to Americans travelling into Canada on August 8th. By mid August, the lake was full of our property owners from both sides of the border and life was returning to a semblance of normalcy. Welcome back to all of our American friends!

However, in spite of the restrictions of the pandemic emergency, the board has continued to work extremely hard on your behalf.

We held our spring board meeting on June 21st, conducted virtually again via Zoom. Our fall board meeting was held in person on September 13th for the first time in 2 years.

The good news was that our strategy of delaying the AGM until August in the hope that we would be able to hold an in person meeting worked! On Sunday, August 15th we were able to hold our AGM outdoors on the lawn at Melwel Lodge overlooking our beautiful lake.

The board was very pleased at the turnout, with over 50 very active participants. Everybody seemed to be very interested in getting caught up on the activity around the lake and lots of lively discussion ensued. This newsletter contains an update on most of those topics.

At the AGM we accepted the resignation of Leigh Olmstead after several years on the board. We thank Leigh for her contributions and look forward to her continued participation in the lake association.

I am very pleased to announce, however, that we did receive 4 volunteers for new members to join our board. Please join me in welcoming the following new board members ...

- Matt Aho
- Bobby Swain
- Dave Baskcomb
- George Craigie

I think this shows just how much interest there is in our lake and the work of the lake association. You will see from this newsletter how many files the board continues to work actively on. We welcome your feedback and participation on any of these topics as we move forward.

Membership

Membership Matters More Than Ever

We are very thankful that, in 2021, we saw the return of many neighbours and friends who were unable to enjoy time at Basswood in 2020 due to Covid-related restrictions. The summer seemed to fly by and we're now enjoying a beautiful, colourful and somewhat cooler autumn.

As the seasons change, the lake association board looks ahead to 2022, and the goals we need to achieve in fulfilling our commitment of informing and educating members. As many of you know, there are always topics of interest and changes in government programs that can affect cottage owners, and we endeavour to keep you updated as news becomes available.

We strive to increase our number of members each year, so that we can reach a wider audience. To that end, we appreciate your help in talking to your neighbours about the benefits of membership.

We're also always looking for ways to make enrolment and renewals easier. We'll be investigating an auto-renewal option for existing members, with an opt-in feature once the technology is available.

Please consider renewing your membership early in 2022 to avoid missing out on the following advantages:

Attendance at events focused on lake stewardship, area history and ongoing education.

Participation at the annual general meeting

Savings on your cottage insurance through FOCA - the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association

Membership dues are still only \$25 per year for property owners, which includes voting rights at the AGM. Associate memberships (non-voting) are available for the same low fee, for those who may not own property but visit regularly and want to be kept informed, or those who own businesses and would like their company's contact information posted on our website: www.bigbasswood.ca

Payment options are as follows:

PayPal - you'll find a link on the website, on the membership page

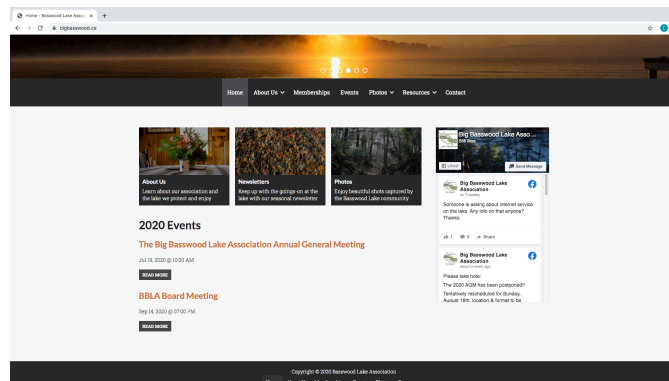
Cheque, which can be mailed to Big Basswood Lake Association, P.O. Box 377, Thessalon, Ontario P0R 1L0

E-transfer from a Canadian bank account, which can be sent to our treasurer, Cynthia Wood, at cince48@gmail.com

Cash or cheque at the AGM, or at the Round Barn Farmers' Market on Saturdays in July and August

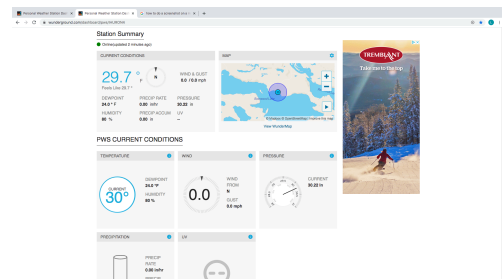
- submitted by Joanne Falk

Revised Web Site



Another summer gone and another opportunity to enjoy the benefits of our beautiful lake with the colors of the fall season. We are certainly looking forward to the year ahead with some more of our US friends joining us next spring.

Please take the opportunity to visit our newly improved website with its easy access to things like great photos of nature and sunsets, previous news items and newsletters, history, upcoming dates for meetings and socials, and a link to real time weather on the North Shore of the lake thanks to one of our members. Lastly is the link to our very important Lake Association annual fees which you can pay conveniently on our site using Pay Pal. Thank you in advance for your support of the BBLA as we continue to serve you in keeping our lake the beautiful pristine gem that it is today. Your membership contribution is greatly appreciated by your Board as we continue our work on your behalf.



Mark These Dates for 2022

Spring Board Meeting	June 20, 2022
Annual General Meeting	July 17, 2022 (to be confirmed)
Sweet Sowerby Social	TBD
Fall Board Meeting	September 12, 2022

A New Canada Water Agency

In 2019 the Federal Government announced the initiation of a process to create a "Canada Water Agency" intended to provide a formal management structure of coordinated oversight on freshwater issues across the country. The government's 2021 budget proposed to provide \$17.4 million to establish the Agency - expected to be started up in 2022.

Currently, freshwater management in Canada is a responsibility shared between federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous governments. This new Agency will be expected to coordinate the efforts of all levels of government to eliminate gaps in management and avoid duplication. These efforts would include responsibility for managing the authorizing of water use and distribution, inland fisheries and habitat, drinking water quality and wastewater systems.

In Huron Shores we have noted that with the overlap of jurisdiction, no government entity is taking ownership of the management of water quality - for instance in Big Basswood Lake. The Ministry of the Environment, Huron Shores and North Shore Health all have related jurisdiction but continue to point to each other for ultimate responsibility depending on the issue.

When the Canada Water Agency is created, it is the hope of many that this will not be an Ottawa based Agency but rather a decentralized office in an area where water resources are in abundance and related science, monitoring and research is easily applied.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie has recognized the resources available at and near the municipality will make it a very good candidate to host the Agency office. As such, the city has appointed a taskforce to pursue this opportunity and has solicited support for the initiative. Earlier this year Mayor Christian Provenzano and Councilor Corey Ward met with MP Terry Sheehan and MP Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to discuss the SSM proposal. The Mayor and council continue to campaign with the Federal government at this time.

Having the Canada Water Agency office located close to Big Basswood Lake will enhance our lake association's opportunities to interact with the Agency to help drive proactive change in how resources are managed in our lake. Considering this, the Chairman of the Big Basswood Lake Association, Larry Allcorn, has forwarded a letter on behalf of the BBLA membership, supporting the SSM taskforce goals and requesting information on how we may provide further support.

We note that the City of Regina is also undertaking the same initiative and with the critical state of Agricultural water resources relating to climate change and drought, they also are well placed to host the Agency. The SSM taskforce has a significant challenge ahead to land this opportunity.

We are hopeful that SSM group will be successful in their mandate and that the new Federal Agency will help to consolidate freshwater management strategies to ensure that our Big Basswood Lake continues to be one of the clearest and healthy water bodies in the country into the future. The BBLA Board will continue to monitor this file and provide support to SSM, and we will update the membership as we receive further information.



Chairman's Letter (continued)

And finally, please pay careful attention to Joanne Falk's article on membership. We normally sign up the bulk of our members at the start of the AGM and last year that wasn't possible because the meeting was held virtually. Consequently, our numbers were down for 2020. We started to recover back to previous levels in 2021 but still have a ways to go. After reviewing the newsletter, I hope you will agree that the BBLA is doing worthwhile work in promoting your interests and the stewardship of our beautiful lake. Please take a few minutes to use one of methods that we have set up to pay your \$25 membership for this year if you have not done so yet. And mention to your friends and neighbors that it is not too late for them to join for 2021.

Have a great winter and we look forward to seeing everyone again in the spring of 2022..

Stay safe Larry Allcorn

Chairman - Big Basswood Lake Association

Lake Partner Program

Back Up and Running!

Water samples to measure phosphorus and calcium and the monthly Secchi disk readings have been submitted to the Lake Partner Program (LPP) after last year's hiatus. This long-term, volunteer based program has been collecting data on Ontario's inland lakes for approximately 40 years. Big Basswood began to submit data in 1999.

This year Bobby Swain and Laura Foley took charge of the data collection. The results will be posted by the LPP in early 2022. Check out the following link for information about how and when this data is collected: <https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/The-LPP-Data-Life-Cycle.pdf>

Below are the Secchi readings for 2021 — this form had been submitted to the LPP.

Vol ID 1759

LAKE PARTNER SECCHI DATA
Note: pencil works best on this waterproof paper

BASSWOOD LAKE
East basin, deep spot

STN 246 Lake Max Depth (m) 73
Site ID 1 Site Depth (m) 73

Watch the Secchi disk in the water. Is the colour:
Green or Yellow ☒ OR Brown or Orange ☐

Date (dd-mmm)	Time (24 hr)	Secchi Depth (m)	Secchi Disk Hits Bottom? (✓)	Comments (examples: water temperature °C, pollen, weather conditions)
30-May	12:00pm	11.0	No	pollen, calm, 20°C
24-June	11:30pm	11.0	No	19°C, calm
07-Aug	12:30pm	11.5	No	9°C, 20°C humid
05-Sep	10:00am	12.0	No	18°C, clear
10-Oct	11:15am	11.5	No	19°C, calm

Keep this sheet to record Secchi depths from May through October. Please mail this sheet to Dorset in November using the provided postage paid envelope.
Email: lakepartner@ontario.ca

2021 Ice Dates

Ice on: January 23, 2021

Ice off: April 9, 2021

For more information and data check out:

<https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program-sampling-assistance/>

Explore Local Map

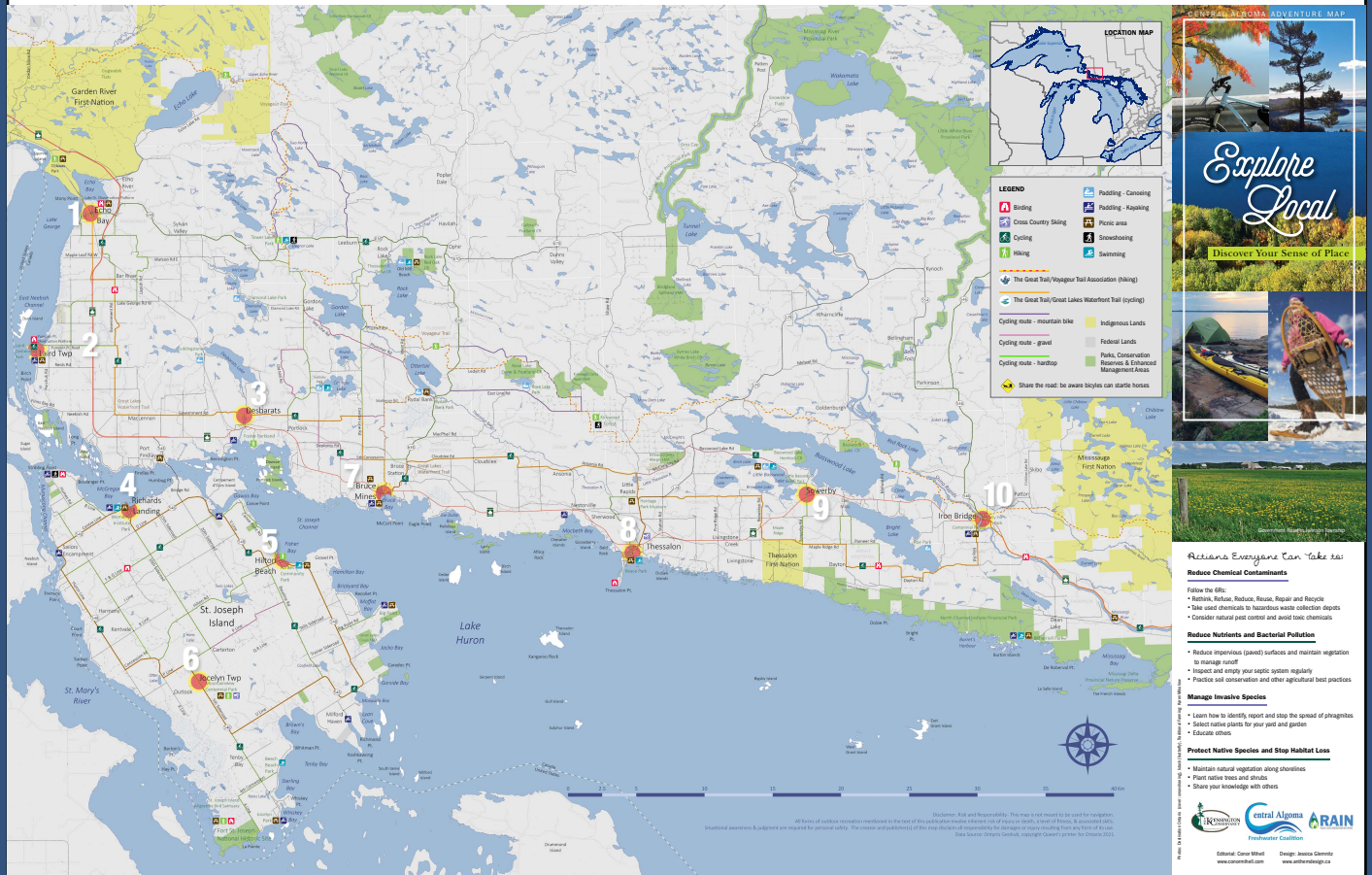
Discover Your Sense of Place

The Central Algoma Freshwater Coalition has published an excellent map which outlines 10 "Points of Departure" for exploring Central Algoma by Cycling, Hiking, Snowshoeing, Birding or Paddling.

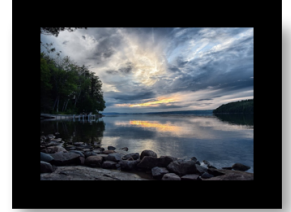
Hard copies of these maps will be distributed from the lake association's table at the Saturday morning Sowerby market or can be obtained by contacting the CAFC directly at:

www.centralalgomafreshwatercoalition.ca

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Mike Hunting Lake Stewardship Award



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We are pleased to announce the launch of the Mike Hunting Lake Stewardship Award Program.

The intent of the program is to honour those who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and/or contributions to the stewardship of Big Basswood Lake and the surrounding area. The award is named in memory of our friend and past president of the Big Basswood Lake Association, Mike Hunting.

Entrants are encouraged to be creative and innovative; however, projects do not need to be started from scratch. Individual or collaborative initiatives already underway will also be eligible.

Projects may include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Citizen Science, which may be defined as the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care
- Preservation of water quality/pristine condition of Big Basswood waters
- Preservation/improvement of natural shoreline/surrounding areas
- Contribution to the elimination or mitigation of risk from invasive species
- Any other unique/outstanding contribution toward the preservation of our pristine lake

Project ideas, including a summary of the intended goals and planned process, should be submitted to the board by June 1, 2022. If you are interested in participating, or know an individual or group who might have an idea for a new initiative, or already have one underway, please contact Joanne Falk by email at joanne.falk@gmail.com

Proposals will be reviewed at the June 2022 board meeting, and directors will endeavor to answer questions and identify funding opportunities where appropriate, through Trillium grants, our association, etc.

Final reports, or interim updates for ongoing projects, should be submitted to the board by Aug 31, 2022. Projects will be reviewed in September, 2022 and the first recipient of the award will be announced at the 2023 AGM.

Eligibility is not limited to members of the lake association; rather, we welcome submissions from all area residents.

Projects will be evaluated using criteria that include the following:

- Overall impact, i.e. demonstrating a positive impact on environmental sustainability and or social responsibility
- Creativity / innovation, or the 'wow' factor
- Applicability / reach - providing potential for others to adopt the idea, in order to have a broader impact
- Ease of implementation
- Collaboration

Thank you for your interest and support in continuing to ensure the long-term health of our pristine lake and surrounding area

2021 Loon Survey

Citizen Scientists at Basswood Lake

Loons on Basswood Lake and Volunteer Loon Watchers

Loon sightings for the summer of 2020 and 2021 were “hit and miss” as many of the participants were not able to get to their cottages due to the pandemic. An official Canadian Lakes Loon Survey was not submitted to Bird Studies Canada this year. However, In the three previous years before 2020, volunteers from all areas of the lakes contributed data to the surveys designed and recorded at Bird Studies Canada. They reported loons sighted from May through August. This represented categories such as:



1. Number of days surveyed in May – for example
2. Maximum number of adult loons
3. Maximum number of mated pairs
4. Maximum number of young
5. Maximum number of Large Young in August
6. Number of nests observed and number of eggs present

Here is a link to the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey:

[Canadian Lakes Loon Survey | Birds Canada | Oiseaux Canada](#)

There is lots of information on recording data information. And lots of tips and information on observing and getting to know loon behavior.

In the meantime, we have reached out to the Kensington Conservancy, located in Desbarats, to co-ordinate opportunities to be involved in citizen science. Please see Marilyn Kellums update on this initiative elsewhere in the newsletter.

For more information contact Leigh Olmstead (Photo Credit Jill Glaser)

Big Basswood Water Levels

As previously reported we received a copy of the dam operating plan from the MNRF for Basswood Lake. This plan outlines the targeted operating levels for the lake that the MNRF normally works toward and how those levels were determined.

It outlines the following key considerations for determining the best target levels for the lake:

- A stabilized lake level for Lake Trout fall spawning in October/ November
- Adequate water being supplied to Bright Lake from the end of April to the first week of June to support Walleye spring time spawning
- Water levels stabilized for the summer by early June to support shore infrastructure for the seasonal and full time residents of Basswood Lake

There is ongoing discussion with MNRF about whether this plan is optimized for our watershed and how proactively it is being adhered to. We will continue these discussions over the winter with MNRF management.

Water flows through the Harris Creek Dam have kept at a relatively consistent rate this year due to agreeable weather, careful attention by local property owners and relatively timely response by the MNRF technicians (with one exception mid summer). As a result, we did not see any major dips in water levels as we have seen in prior years.



The MNRF has been more responsive to our communication out of the Sault Ste Marie office. They tell us that a dam replacement is still being planned although time frames are still unknown. The engineering study planned for this summer did not happen and has now been rescheduled for 2022. We are assured by the MNRF that any planned changes/replacements will be subject to public consultation before the plan is finalized.

If you have questions on lake levels and the operating plans, please contact me and we will get the response from the MNRF. We encourage lake residents to contact the lake association first if they have questions – we may already know the answer or can get it quickly from the MNRF.

Thessalon First Nations Boundary Land Claim

In the spring newsletter, and at this year's AGM, we informed the membership that the negotiation around the Thessalon First Nations boundary claim had been paused and that the matter had returned to the courts.

You will recall that boundary claim centers around the interpretation of the boundary of the TFN reserve lands as defined in the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850. Specifically, the issue has to do with the definition of the actual boundaries due to confusion in the units of measure. The First Nation understood leagues as the boundary unit of measure while the treaty used miles – a factor of 3 difference.

In a recent discussion with Jane Thomas, the chief negotiator for Ontario, she informs us that the issue that is being reviewed in the courts is that the First Nations is seeking a "Declaration of Aboriginal Title" from the courts to provide some clarity in further negotiations. Whether or not this will be ultimately ruled on is unknown at this time.

The Canadian Encyclopedia defines aboriginal title as:

"Aboriginal title is an inherent right, recognized in common law, that originates in Indigenous peoples' occupation, use and control of ancestral lands prior to colonization. Aboriginal title is not a right granted by the government; rather, it is a property right that the Crown first recognized in the Royal Proclamation of 1763. It has been subsequently recognized and defined by several Supreme Court of Canada decisions."

We will provide further updates as more information becomes available from Jane. If you have questions for her, she can be reached at:

jane.e.thomas@ontario.ca

Big Basswood is iNaturalizing

This summer's AGM demonstrated a strong interest in being able to observe and compare notes about what is happening on and around the lake. Because of this interest, a few of us met with Carter Dorscht, Executive Director of The Kensington Conservancy and citizen science advocate, to explore how we could do this. As a result of this meeting the BBLA has partnered with The Kensington Conservancy, a local land trust, to track flora and fauna within the Big Basswood Lake Watershed area using iNaturalist. This will create a baseline inventory of what species are present within the watershed and can help guide future conservation initiatives.

To participate, sign up for an iNaturalist account by downloading the app on your mobile device or visit the desktop website. Then go outside, take photos of any plant, insect, mushroom, or animal that you see and upload it. iNaturalist has great recognition software to even suggest identifications if you aren't sure what you are photographing!



The boundaries of the Big Basswood Lake Watershed showing the iNaturalist observations that have already been submitted to the project.

iNaturalist observations can be submitted from wherever you are, so even if you are not currently within the watershed, you can start iNaturalizing! The project and the observations collected within it can be viewed at inaturalist.ca/projects/big-basswood-lake-watershed. If you have any issues getting started or would like more information, you can contact The Kensington Conservancy at info@kensingtonconservancy.org or 705-782-2200. Also, the BBLA would be interested in your feedback on this initiative.

We at BBLA would like to thank Carter and The Kensington Conservancy for sharing their expertise. Nature connects us all.

Sandbar

In recent years, one of the issues that has arisen on Big Basswood Lake is in relation to what is commonly referred to as “the Sandbar”.

Just about every day in the summer has seen a gathering of boats and people at the Sandbar, particularly on weekends. At times, the crowds have gotten quite large and this activity is not confined to the sandbar - we have had reports of gatherings in other areas of the lake.

A sampling of the issues that have arisen are:

1. Garbage in the water (fruit cores, beer cans, papers and diapers being recent examples)
2. Trespassing on private property adjacent to the Sandbar (this includes people going ashore to defecate)
3. Excessive noise from music and people yelling/partying
4. Careless and dangerous operation of PWCs in and around other watercraft and swimmers
5. Domestic disturbances accompanied by profane language
6. People bathing and shampooing in the water

The above is in no way meant to indict all of the folks who gather at the Sandbar, however these are real occurrences that have been witnessed by cottagers in and around the area.

We all know that none of us “own the water”. However, along with our ability to freely travel on and around Big Basswood Lake, comes the responsibility to ensure that all of us are being respectful of our neighbours, fellow cottagers and the lake itself. We should all make an effort to ensure that we are not imposing ourselves on others, interfering with the ability of cottagers to enjoy their own property and being respectful of others right to privacy. Let common sense guide us with an awareness at all times of what would be considered to be reasonable behaviour.

On a final note, boaters need to be aware that Hydro One has a high voltage, underwater cable that transects the Sandbar to supply power to cottages in the area. A number of years ago, this cable was severed by a boat traversing the area. Cottagers in the area were left without power for several days.

Hydro One’s advice and guidance on this issue is:

“Submarine cables are submersed high voltage underwater electrical cables used to bring power to your shoreline located across a body of water. These cables often run in and out of the water up onto the shoreline feeding into green pad-mounted equipment. This equipment's main function is to step down the voltage to bring service to your cottage or residence.

Each year Hydro One responds to significant outages that are a result of contact damage to [submarine cables](#). Severing or making contact with any of Hydro One’s submarine cables may not only cause a power outage to you and your neighbours, but it may also result in costly repairs or injuries. Left undisturbed, these cables are safe in the water; however, damage to the cable could have very serious consequences.”

Hydro One Rate Changes

As early as January 1, 2022, Hydro One is going to eliminate the seasonal rate class and move seasonal customers to one of three other rate classes - urban density, medium density or low density.

This change was initiated due to the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) deciding that the rate being charged to seasonal customers did not fairly reflect the cost of serving them. Hydro One claims they were opposed to this, however the OEB rejected their submissions and is moving ahead with the new plan.

With the new rate structure, Hydro One claims that a little more than half of customers will see an increase in their bills and the remainder will see a decrease. Whether you will see an increase or decrease will depend on which of the three new rate classes you are assigned to. The determining factors will be "how many customers are located in a particular area and how many customers share each kilometer of power line used to deliver the power to them." Hydro One estimates that the typical seasonal resident will see their bills increase by 54%, on average \$650 per year.

Without knowing for sure, it would be a pretty safe bet that the majority of us on Big Basswood Lake will be assigned to the low density rate and will therefore see an increase in our power bills.

Hydro One proposed to the OEB that they be allowed to implement a rate increase mitigation plan that would allow phased-in increases for those customers seeing a jump in their bills of more than 10%. I have been unable to find any information that indicates whether or not the OEB accepted this proposal from Hydro One.

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association (FOCA) has been actively lobbying the OEB on behalf of its 500 member associations. They are publishing regular updates on their website at www.foca.on.ca. The BBLA will continue to monitor but we also suggest that our membership checks back to the FOCA website for updates.



A reminder to all of our members that a membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association includes a membership in the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association.

The association is currently some 500+ members strong representing over 50,000 waterfront land owners in the province. They provide us with a number of valuable services:

1. Ongoing participation in their lake partner program. We submit our lake test results for clarity and phosphorous levels to the lake partner data base every year. This continues to show Basswood as one of the clearest lakes in Ontario
2. FOCA holds a spring and a fall meeting every year, both of which usually feature valuable information. The spring meeting was held virtually on March 6th and was attended by Larry Allcorn on behalf of the Big Basswood Lake Association, Note that any of our members are free to attend these events.
3. The fall meeting will be held, again virtually, on Nov 6th. Larry is once again registered to attend but all members are welcome. Please see reprint of the agenda below
4. Also, the FOCA web site contains a large amount of valuable information on lake stewardship and the ongoing initiatives that FOCA is working on. Please visit the website at <http://www.foca.on.ca/> for more information
5. A valuable lobbying resource that can speak effectively on behalf of the 500 member associations. FOCA is currently very involved with the negotiation on Ontario Hydro rate changes. Please see the important information in Dave Baskcomb's article on the status of this negotiation
6. FOCA also offers ongoing discounts on a number of products and services. These are also listed in the website above.

2021 Fall Seminar:

"The Changing Face of Cottage Country"

Saturday, November 6th, 2021 from 9:00am-11:30am

by Zoom webinar [Click to register here!](#)

<p>9:00am Welcome & Zoom Overview by Ian Crawford, FOCA Board President.</p> <p>9:10am FOCA Updates on Programs, Services & Hot Topics by Terry Rees, FOCA Executive Director, including a Lake Partner Program update by Liz Favot, FOCA Assistant Lake Stewardship Coordinator.</p> <p>9:35am So you want to run for Municipal Council? What rural residents should be considering before the 2022 municipal elections. by Danyle Moffatt, FOCA Board Treasurer and Seguin Township Councillor.</p> <p>9:45am FEATURE SPEAKER: Dr. Norman Yan - Imagining a Good Future for our Lakes Despite Climate Change.</p>	<p>10:25am Boating Safety & Etiquette led by Michelle Lewin, FOCA Communications & Development Coordinator, including the Be #WakeAware campaign introduced by our campaign partners from Safe Quiet Lakes and the Muskoka Lakes Association.</p> <p>10:40am Rural Roads – Ask us anything! an open discussion of member roads' questions, with our partners from the Ontario Good Roads Association – submit your road questions to FOCA before the event, or add them to the "Chat" during the session.</p> <p>11:10am FOCA member Q&A an open session for Member Questions led by FOCA staff – submit your questions to FOCA before the event, or add them to "Chat" during the session.</p> <p>11:30am wrap-up</p>
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History Corner

As we mentioned in the Chairman's letter, the Big Basswood Lake Association is extremely fortunate to have 4 new board members who have volunteered to serve on our board.

One of these board members, Bobby Swain, is very interested in local history and has spent a lot of time transcribing stories about that history. Reprinted below is an example of one of his stories. If you are interested in more information about local history, we encourage a visit to his website:

www.basswoodlake.ca

Following is a reprint of one of these stories for your interest:

“A WINTER AT BIG BASSWOOD LAKE – 1907/1908”

This article was transcribed from a 1909 magazine article submitted by Mr. J.W Holland, who was then charged with proprietorship of the Canadian Camp Club clubhouse located on the north east shore of Basswood Lake just west of what is now Melwel Road.

From reading the article it is clear that Mr. Holland was a big promoter, back in the day, of the offerings in this local area to both homesteader and tourist alike. Mr. Holland had a good grasp of the English language and was able to turn some nice phrasing while proclaiming the virtues of this beautiful area. We hope you enjoy reading this journal of life on the Lake 113 years ago! (taken from Basswood Lake Outfitters Blog July 2020)

“A Winter in Northern Ontario”

BY J. W. HOLLAND

Transcribed from the February 1909 Edition of “Rod and Gun and Motor Sports in Canada” – italics notes by Basswood Lake Outfitters

The winter of 1907-08 was spent by me on Lake Waquekobing (*Big Basswood Lake*), at the club house of the Canadian Camp Club of which I had charge.

Readers of "Rod and Gun" who live in lower latitudes than this may be interested in winter conditions here. Not that our latitude is so very high ; we are about in line with the middle of France and some three degrees farther south than Vancouver. We have, however, no warm ocean currents to temper the boreal breezes that come from the icebound Arctic seas. Our elevation, too, of over a thousand feet above sea level has its influence in lowering the general temperature.

Yet we are not without advantages, especially as compared with the Northwest. We have the shelter of the vast forests, and plenty of the best fuel always on hand, a dry, clear, bracing atmosphere, which makes it easier to resist the cold, and good winter roads without snowdrifts.

History Corner (cont'd)

"A Winter in Northern Ontario" (cont'd)

Before describing the winter, however let me speak of the locality which is one that should interest all lovers of nature and sport. The club house is situated on the north shore of Lake Waukegobing, locally known as Big Basswood Lake, a beautiful body of clear sparkling water, stretching east and west about nine miles and two and a half miles across at its widest part. It reaches entirely across the township of Day in the district of Algoma and penetrates into the townships of Gladstone at the east and Kirkwood at the west it presents every variety of shore line from bold rocky bluffs to gentle slopes, mostly covered with dense woods, but here and there opening into cultivated farms.

It contains several beautiful bays with stretches of sandy beach, and at one part, where a small stream enters, is covered with lily pads. It is fed chiefly by underground springs and at one point is of unknown depth. About three miles from its eastern end it debouches into a stream of considerable volume which falls over eighty feet in less than a quarter of a mile and then enters another lake about five miles in length which rejoices in the high sounding Indian name of Pakawagamengau.

But alas! for the romance of poor Lo, to his more prosaic and labor saving white brother, its name is "Mud" (*for many years known as Mud Lake now Bright Lake*). Another stream from the eastern end of Mud Lake carries its waters to the great Mississauga River flowing into Lake Huron.

Besides these two principal lakes there are half a dozen others near and easily accessible, ranging in size from a mile and a half in length to a little gem with a surface of some one hundred and fifty acres, set on the top of a commanding eminence in the midst of the surrounding forest. In all these lakes the gamey black bass abounds and in the larger ones are lake trout, whitefish and pickerel.

This series of delightful lakes, with so many attractive features for tourist and sportsmen, are distant less than five miles from the north shore of Lake Huron, fifty miles east of the Soo, and less than ten miles from the thriving town of Thessalon, where hundreds of thousands of dollars were expended the previous summer in new buildings and enterprises, including a smelter for the reduction of copper ore, a new sawmill, the largest on the lake shore, a forty thousand dollar hotel, several stores and numerous residences.

The lakes are not the only attraction. The mighty Mississauga River flows within three quarters of a mile of the club house and the exploitation of the canoe trip down two hundred miles of this river from the main line of the Canadian Pacific to this point was the genesis of the Canadian Camp Club.

The scenery along this river excites the unbounded admiration of all who view it. There are huge bluffs from the summits of which wide views of the surrounding country may be had, deep forested valleys, where deer and moose abound, grand waterfalls, rocky canyons, through which the river forges with amazing energy, rushing rapids and long stretches of deep, wide, smooth-flowing water, along which the canoe glides like a phantom. Numerous American visitors can testify that there is no exaggeration in the brief description of the advantages of this region for a summer outing.

Now as to winter conditions. For the past three summers I have been a frequent visitor to this vicinity and becoming enamoured with its beauties have purchased a tract of land on the Mississauga on which there is a good six-roomed house built of square pine logs well put together.

It was my intention to spend a portion of this winter on that place, when the departure of Mr. Hope induced me to accept the care of the club house instead (*you will note from an earlier Basswood Lake Outfitters Blog that J.B. Dobie noted on recollection of a visit to the Clubhouse in the early 1900's, that he believed that Mr. Hope was then the proprietor*). Having heard stories of the thermometer dropping to twenty and even forty degrees below zero, it was with some trepidation that I looked forward to my winter's experiences, as I am not by any means a lover of cold weather, and have no arctic exploration ambitions.

I was indeed agreeably disappointed. It was only after the first week of February was past that the snow began to accumulate to any considerable depth. Up to almost the end of January there was not more than six inches of snow on the ground and later snowfalls only increased it to about a foot in depth, just enough to enable the lumbermen to haul their logs conveniently to the waterways.

History Corner (cont'd)

Access to the club house by land is had only by a trail through the woods, leading over a high hill from the government road along the river some three quarters of a mile away. On the road and river bank was situated the lumber camp of Mr. Jas. Rosenberg (*everyone in this part of Algoma, either local or summer cottager, will recognize this surname from the lumber and builder supply business located at Sowerby for many many past decades*), who had the contract for cutting the pine on four hundred acres in rear of the clubhouse.

Some idea of the density of the forest may be formed by the fact that on this tract some fifteen thousand sawlogs have been cut and the cutting is not yet completed. And the pine is only one of a number of species of trees growing here, so that when all the pine is cut, there still remains a thick forest growth of hemlock, maple, red and white birch, cedar, spruce, balsam and others. I passed over this trail to the lumber camp almost every day for it was there I received my mail and heard from the outside world.

I also took more extended walks up and down the road and through the woods and hardly ever wore even heavy winter clothing. For instance, twice in January I visited my own place walking mostly through the woods, a distance of almost four miles, and on each occasion my entire outfit consisted of a medium weight suit of fleece underwear, a grey flannel shirt, not heavy, a suit of tweed that I wore the previous summer, a soft felt hat, a pair of woolen socks over one of cotton, ordinary leather walking boots and a pair of woolen mitts. I wore no muffler and no ear covers, and found myself at the end of the journey in a rather uncomfortable state of perspiration.

Perhaps the one feature of the winter that impressed me most was the large amount of sunshine. Fully five days of each week were clear all day with bright blue skies and the sun shining brilliantly, sometimes with a genial warmth that would do justice to an October day. Then the sunsets over Lake Waquakobing, how shall I describe them? Sometimes the sun goes down in a golden blaze with not a speck of cloud to modify the gold. Again when a layer of clouds hovers on the western horizon we have a coloring so gorgeous as to defy description.

A peculiarly brilliant effect is produced when the sun sets clear, by the lingering lights on the distant hill tops and trees. It is as if a magic city had sprung into existence, with pavilions and towers and huge buildings brilliantly lighted throughout by electricity, something like the illuminations at the world's fairs, on a larger scale. We hear of Italian skies and Italian sunsets. Here we have them in zero weather and they are quite as entrancing to the lover of nature, even though he may not sit out on the lawn to enjoy them. Coming over the trail towards sunset the dark trunks of the trees outlined in a blaze of color, sometimes golden, sometimes roseate and sometimes many-hued, form an impressionist picture that would delight the soul of an artist.

Up to February we had but three or four short spells of very cold weather, on the night of the eighth of January, the thermometer touched fifteen below, and Lake Waquakobing, which had contemptuously shaken off one or two thin films of ice and piled them against the shores like heaps of broken glass, was caught napping and firmly bound under an inch of ice, which came near the melting point a few days later.

On the fifteenth and sixteenth we had a similar snap, which moderated again towards the evening of the second day. Two or three days before the close of the month it was again very frosty. On each of these occasions the air was still, the sun shining brightly and as the weather moderated slight falls of snow followed. I wrote this on the evening of the seventh of February, after experiencing the heaviest snow storm of the season which began on the morning of the fifth and lasted throughout the following night, with high wind, during which nearly a foot of snow fell. I see by the New York papers that a similar storm swept the Eastern States on the twenty-fourth of January, when ten inches of snow fell in New York city, demoralizing traffic, partly suspending business, causing the death of half a dozen people and costing the city two hundred thousand dollars for removal of the snow.

One advantage of living "far from the madding crowd" is that we have no disastrous results to record from our storm. In the shelter of the forest the lumbermen worked all day, *and like Robbie Burns wrote of Tam O'Shanter sitting next to a blazing fireplace "Outside, the storm might roar and rustle, Tam did not mind the storm a whistle."*

On February the seventh the sun shone as brightly as ever, with dazzling effect upon the pure white snow, and at night the early moon shed a soft effulgence over the scene, while the temperature was only sufficiently low to prevent the snow from clinging to the feet as one walked through it. The ice on the lake was strong enough for teams to drive across, and being well covered with snow made excellent sleighing over a perfectly level surface, and shortened many a farmer's road to town, besides saving considerable hill climbing. On the whole I believe that for those who enjoy clear cold weather the winter conditions on Lake Waquakobing are almost ideal, and are not at all to be dreaded as many people imagine.

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