

BBLA Newsletter

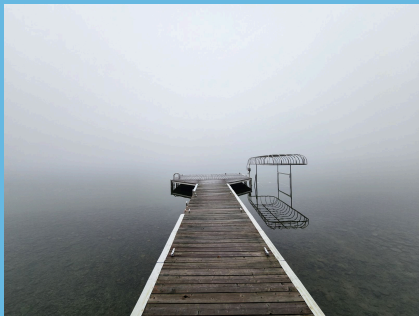
Spring/Summer 2026

Chairman's Letter



In This Newsletter:

- > Charimans Letter
- > Technology
- > AGM 2025/2026
- > Membership
- > Huron Shores Official Plan
- > Loon Survey
- > 4th Annual Goose and Gander Concert
- > Water Rangers
- > New Facebook Functionality
- > Membership Survey
- > INaturalist/BioBlitz
- > History Corner
- > Municipal Affairs
- > Lake Partner



I am so pleased to warmly welcome our members to another unforgettable summer on Big Basswood Lake, filled with the joy of reconnecting with family, friends, and neighbors. As our local members are fully aware, the Big Basswood Lake watershed area had an impressively snow-filled winter this year, and lake temperatures remained quite low until late June. Summer is now in full swing and there are several upcoming events for our community to enjoy.

The Big Basswood Lake Association's 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Friday, July 17 at 4:00 p.m. at the 12-Sided Barn, with a social hour to follow with appetizers and beverages. This is a board election year and we strongly encourage any members who are interested in supporting the association through volunteer board membership to email Bobby Swain at b_swain@outlook.com to submit their names for consideration. Board membership is open to all BBLA members with residences on Big Basswood Lake and requires participation by video conference in our spring and fall board meetings, as well as the AGM. It is a great way to support the lake community and help preserve our community's shared resource.

Your volunteer board has been hard at work over the winter. Key highlights of our activities include regular contact with Huron Shores municipal planners regarding this year's overhaul of the municipalities Official Plan (the primary land-use and local zoning framework). We have also supported our members' participation in the Water Rangers Program in collaboration with Huron Shores and the Nordic Institute. We look forward to welcoming the Nordic Institute at our AGM to hear a full briefing on the program. Our board members have also actively participated in Huron Shores municipal committees for both environmental affairs and economic development.

Other upcoming events include the (now annual—we hope) Both Sides Now Concert Featuring Goose and Gander on Wednesday, July 22 at 7:00 p.m. And, on Saturday, July 25 at 4:00 p.m. sharp, bag pipers will return to perform on Lolly Hunting's dock (participation by boat is strongly encouraged).

continued on page 2 ...

... continued from page 1

Chairman's Letter (cont'd)

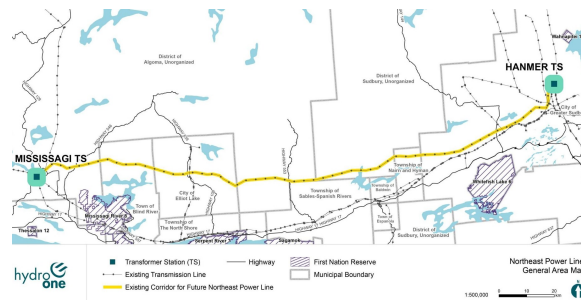
I want to acknowledge the recent efforts of BBLA member Jim Falconer is leading efforts to coordinate the upcoming August 11 “Bio-Blitz” to help protect and document our local ecosystem, in collaboration with the Central Algoma Land Trust. The Bio Blitz will offer Big Basswood Lake residents the exclusive opportunity to have a local naturalist travel directly to their shorelines by vessel to help identify and catalogue species. This is a community-driven, citizen science effort to record as many plant and wildlife species as possible within a specific location and time frame. Observations will help map local biodiversity and support the long-term conservation efforts of the Central Algoma Land Trust and the Big Basswood Lake Association. More information will be provided at the AGM.

Finally, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the May 30, 2026 passing of our beloved BBLA member and longtime community and business leader Bryan McDougall. Bryan was a life-long resident and friend of Big Basswood Lake. He grew up in Thessalon and spent most of his summers in or around the Basswood. He cared deeply about the lake and was a constant supporter of the lake association and its initiatives on behalf of the stewardship of our lake. I knew Bryan since I was a little boy and he would show up to my family’s cabin in his iconic jet boat—one of the coolest lake memories of my childhood. A friend to many, many on the lake, he will be missed by us all...

Matt Aho

Northeastern Power Line

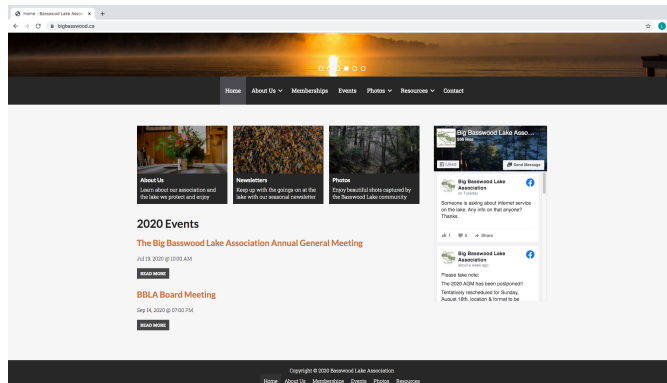
Of interest to Big Basswood Lake property owners might be the proposed construction in 2027 of a new power line from a transformer station on Hwy 129, North of Basswood Lake to a transformer station North of Sudbury



Please follow this link for more information on time lines including public consultations next summer:

[Hydro One Northeast Power Line Information](#)

Technology



Streamlining member sign-ups and renewals has been an ongoing priority for the board for the last several years. As discussed at our last Annual General Meeting (AGM), there are several limitations with our current website content management system that have complicated efforts to track memberships and renewals.

Over the winter, the BBLA board explored several options for a new website content management system but believes the monthly costs associated with these paid platforms is excessive. As an alternative, BBLA is planning to overhaul our systems for tracking memberships and renewals using QuickBooks online. QuickBooks will allow us to import the entire membership database and create a streamlined sign up and renewal process.

Under this new system, new members will be able to sign up online using our existing website. Existing members will receive automated renewal emails prior to the expiration of their memberships and will be able to pay seamlessly online using a credit card. All other renewal options, such as payment in cash or by cheque at the AGM will remain as is. The new system is under development and the board will share more details at the AGM.

We are also taking steps to boost engagement on social media. BBLA member Jim Falconer and board member Marilyn Kellum are collaborating to enhance our social media presence. We strongly encourage other members with social media experience to volunteer to assist us with these efforts! You can help by following BBLA on your own social media accounts and posting your own pictures of life on Big Basswood Lake.

Matt Aho

2025 Annual General Meeting

The 2025 AGM was held at the Sowerby Twelve Sided Barn. We convened the meeting at 4:00 pm on Thursday, July 7. Attendance at this event was much lower than in previous years, perhaps due to the Thursday afternoon time and earlier July 7 date. This change of date and venue was necessary because Melwel lodge was no longer available to the BBLA. Despite the lower attendance, many interesting and informative topics were covered resulting excellent discussions and feedback from the membership. We were pleased to have MPP Bill Rosenberg and Mayor Jane Armstrong in attendance.

Daniel Featherstone, the Lake Huron North Project Co-ordinator for the Algoma Phragmites Working Group was our guest speaker. Phragmites are an invasive perennial reed grass that if left uncontrolled will destroy wetlands. Mr. Featherstone explained the process by which these grasses spread, their effects on Wetlands and the efforts being made by Lake Huron North and its partners to eradicate Phragmites in Algoma.

Our second guest speaker was Jim Falconer, who provided an entertaining refresher course on i-Naturalist and encouraged all of us to avail ourselves of this valuable tool to identify and learn about the plant and animal species in the Basswood Lake watershed. As well, Christina Coutu provided an update on the Water Rangers Program.

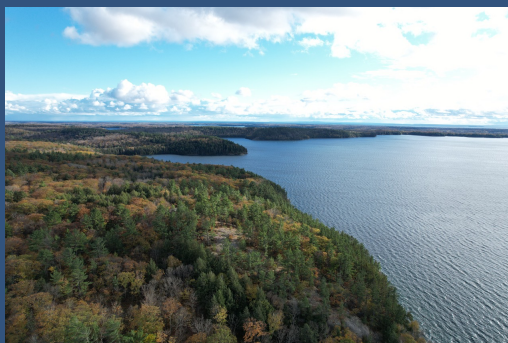
We again have an interesting and informative agenda for this year's AGM. We hope to see everyone at the Twelve Sided Barn on Friday, July 17, 2026 at 4:00 pm for the meeting and a social hour to follow.

Cynthia Woods

Big Basswood Lake Association 2026 Annual General Meeting

*Friday, July 17th, 2026
12 Sided Barn - Sowerby*

*Meeting 4PM - 5:30 PM
Followed by a Social Hour
Beverages and Snacks Supplied*



Membership

A Note to All Members:

BBLA membership has not fully rebounded from the COVID-pandemic dip. A strong membership base is essential for addressing the challenges that affect our lake and the quality of life we all enjoy. Your continued support truly makes a difference.

Annual membership in the Big Basswood Lake Association includes several meaningful benefits:

- Lake Stewardship Events — educational programming, historical presentations, and community activities.
- FOCA Membership — automatic enrollment in the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, including access to their publications on issues facing Ontario cottagers.
- Insurance Savings — preferred cottage insurance rates available through FOCA partnerships.

Membership remains \$25 per year. Nonvoting Associate Memberships are available to local businesses and to friends and family who visit the lake frequently.

Payment Options

- PAYPAL
- ETRANSFER (Canadian bank accounts): send to Treasurer Cynthia Wood at cince48@gmail.com
- CHEQUE: Big Basswood Lake Association, P.O. Box 337, Thessalon, ON P0R 1L0
- Sowerby Market (Saturdays until Labour Day): complete the information form, place it in the provided envelope, and deposit it in the red box. Please remember to take your receipt.

Matt Aho



Annual Bagpipe Concert

Huntings Dock

4:00 PM

Saturday, July 25th, 2026

Access by Boat Requested

New Official Plan/Aggregate Extraction Land Use Designation

Huron Shores is currently undertaking a revision of the municipal official plan and the corresponding comprehensive zoning by law.

A public consultation period on the draft language for the comprehensive zoning by law was in effect last summer, culminating in a request for written feedback no later than September 30, 2025. The lake association sent a reminder out to the membership in the week of September 22nd to remind them that the deadline was approaching.

Very late in September of 2025, the BBLA board was contacted by a concerned group of ratepayers in the Walker/Pine Ridge Road area about a potential new aggregate quarry that was being explored for that area. They had noted in their research that several areas in the municipal land use map near Big Basswood Lake had been identified for aggregate extraction and that we might want to investigate how the new official plan and zoning by laws would address this land use and if any related by law changes should be contemplated.

On further discussion, the board came to the conclusion that it was too late in the game to call this matter to the attention of our membership prior to the September 30th deadline. Instead, we decided as a board to write a letter to Huron Shores requesting additional time to explore the issue and to present it to membership, as necessary. This letter was received by Huron Shores and forwarded to the planner on the September 30th deadline. A copy of the letter was published in the fall newsletter for your reference.

We received a response to our letter from the municipal planner, Mr Peter Tonazzo in November/2025. In that response, he offered to do a presentation on the comprehensive zoning bylaw and some of the key points that were raised by our leadership. This presentation was held during a special public meeting of the Environmental Services Committee on January 23rd, 2026 in the Huron Shores council chambers. That meeting was recorded and available for replay from the Huron Shores Municipal website. We encourage our membership to view the recording as it includes a number of key issues that may be of interest to our members

We came away from that presentation satisfied that just because an area on the land use map is designated for aggregate extraction, that doesn't automatically free up developers to begin quarry development. There are a number of steps and approvals that must be gained before development rights can be granted. This includes robust public consultations.

continued ...

New Official Plan/Aggregate Extraction Land Use Designation

(continued)

Subsequent, to that presentation, one of our board members, Felix Rogers, held another round of discussions with Mr. Tonazzo. These were driven by his concerns that there were inconsistencies regarding mapping of aggregate extraction very close to his property on the East End of the lake. He met with Mr. Tonazzo on Feb 2nd and came away satisfied with the responses. Felix would be happy to discuss his experience with any member of the association. He can be reached at fjrogers15@gmail.com and cell 248 854 0748

The draft zoning bylaw was subsequently presented to council on Feb 10th and passed on Feb 11th

Larry Allcorn/Felix Rogers

Loon Survey

They're back!! Once again the ethereal sounds of loons can be heard drifting across Big Basswood Lake. We ask everyone to note their presence and observe any nesting spots and young ones later in the summer. Feel free to contact Gwyneth Wilcox at puddoxx@gmail.com with questions and observations.



Marilyn Kellum and
Gwyneth Wilcox

BOTH SIDES NOW 4

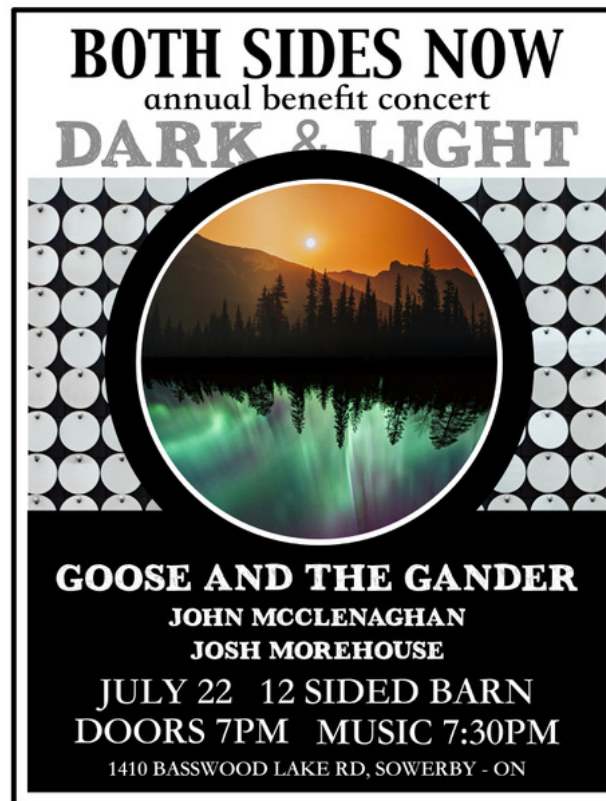
Goose and Gander Concert

Wednesday July 22nd

At the 12-Sided Barn in Sowerby

Come on out to the 4th Both Sides Now Benefit Concert at the 12-Sided Barn in Sowerby. Admission is a donation to the Northshore Health Network Auxiliary-Thessalon Site. Doors open at 7 PM, music begins at 7:30 PM.

The Goose and the Gander's music will feature songs of Light and Dark. Local musicians Josh Morehouse and John Mcclenaghan will also be performing. Should be an evening of good music.



Water Rangers

This article is reprinted from the Winter, 2026 Newsletter with Updates

As reported in previous newsletters, members of our lake community participated in the provincially sponsored Water Rangers Program in 2024. Specifically, testing was done in 2024 by Bobby Swain in the east basin and Paul and Tania Hazlett in the West Basin.

During the winter of 2025, Dr Ho-Tossane of the Nordik Institute contacted the Environmental Services Committee of Huron Shores about a project that she was initiating to collect do fresh water sampling along the North Shore. Here is a write up describing the program that was being initiated for 2025:

This initiative is part of a community-led effort operated by the NORDIK Institute. The goal is to empower local residents to collect consistent, meaningful data on the health of our local water bodies — including lakes, rivers, and creeks throughout Huron Shores and surrounding communities.

<https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/new-nordik-project-focuses-on-water-quality-in-the-north-9570165#:~:text=A%20new%20NORDIK%20Institute%20research,water%20quality%20across%20northern%20Ontario>.

The project builds on successful models used in other Northern communities and is designed to fill data gaps in areas where there is little to no regular environmental sampling. While this is not a regulatory or enforcement-driven program, it can help provide valuable baseline data that contributes to public awareness, long-term planning, and resource protection.

The project includes:

- Weekly water quality sampling (May–Sept) using test kits
- Parameters like pH, temperature, clarity, and conductivity
- Volunteer training and safety guidance
- A shared digital database to support transparency and learning
- A fall data workshop to review findings together as a community

At that time, Dr Ho-Tossane requested that the ESC find volunteers in various water bodies within Huron Shores to collect samples and submit them to the program. Since the program was being run using the Water Rangers protocols, the BBLA volunteered to incorporate their program with Dr Ho-Tossane program.

For 2025, three locations on Big Basswood Lake were then identified for sampling:

Continued testing by the Hazletts in the west end
Testing by Christine Coutu and Jason Naccorato in Philips Bay
Testing by Peter Falk near Harris Creek in the East End

Throughout last summer, site testing was performed at each of these three locations using the prescribed protocols.

Larry Allcorn

Water Rangers (Cont'd)

Coincidentally, last summer saw the formation of a large, lake wide algae bloom on Bright Lake. No specific cause for this has yet been identified although a lot of effort has been put into understanding what causes these algae blooms and if one or more of these causal factors were in play in the watershed last year.

Going forward, the following is the game plan for 2026.

- Continue to test at the same 3 sites on Basswood in 2026
- Add an additional 3 sites for testing on Bright Lake – One on the South Shore, One on the North Shore and one at the East End of the Lake
- Larry Allcorn is working directly with Dr. Ho-Tassane and her team to review the types and locations of testing that is being done to see if additional protocols/sites are required.

In addition, we discovered that the program is constrained by the backpack test kits that are allocated to the program. Because there are fewer kits than there are sites, the kits must be stored at the Huron Shores Municipal Office and the volunteers have to retrieve them to their dockside before they can take a sample. As a consequence, the BBLA board has approved the donation of another test kit to the Huron Shores community to at least partially alleviate the need for travel back and forth.

Basswood Ice Dates - 2026

Ice In - January 1, 2026

Ice Out - April 27th, 2026

Membership Survey

Help Shape the Future of BBLA

The Big Basswood Lake Association Board is committed to representing the interests and priorities of our members, and we need your input. To help us better understand who our members are, what you value most about Big Basswood Lake, and where you believe the Association should focus its efforts, we are conducting a membership survey. Your feedback will provide valuable insight as the Board plans future initiatives, allocates resources, and works to enhance the lake experience for everyone.

We encourage all members to take a few minutes to complete the survey using the link provided below. Whether your interests center on water quality, environmental stewardship, boating and recreation, community engagement, or other important topics, your perspective matters. The more members who participate, the better equipped the Board will be to serve our community and ensure that BBLA's priorities reflect the needs and interests of its membership.

Thank you for helping shape the future of the Big Basswood Lake Association.

Survey link:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/hRYKQGp3pY>

George Craigie

New Facebook Functionality

"Connect with Neighbours: Introducing the New "Big Basswood Lake Association Community" Facebook Group!

Many of our members already follow our official BBLA Facebook Page for major updates, but we are excited to expand our online neighborhood! We are officially launching a brand-new, private discussion group connected to our page, called the **"Big Basswood Lake Association Community"**.

While our existing page is a one-way notice board for official association announcements, this new **Group** is designed as a private, interactive space for those who love Big Basswood Lake. It is the perfect spot for lakefront residents, seasonal cottagers, family members, and local neighbors to swap local updates, municipal notices, environmental observations, recommend local trades and engage cottage-life fun.

Keep an eye out in the coming weeks! Because this is a private but visible group, you will be able to search for it directly on Facebook. However, to make things as simple as possible, we will also be emailing out a direct invitation link as soon as it officially opens"

Jim Falconer

iNaturalist



iNaturalist BioBlitz Event

Help protect and document our local ecosystem! Join BBLA and the [Central Algoma Land Trust](#) (CALT) on August 11th for a lake-wide iNaturalist Bioblitz. We are offering residents the exclusive opportunity to have a local naturalist travel directly to your shoreline by vessel to help identify and catalogue species.

What is a Bioblitz?

A Bioblitz is a community-driven, citizen science effort to record as many plant and wildlife species as possible within a specific location and time frame. Our observations help map local biodiversity and support the long-term conservation efforts of the Central Algoma Land Trust and the Big Basswood Lake Association.

The Vessel Initiative

To make participating easy and accessible, we've partnered with CALT to offer a unique "House Call" service. On the day of the event, a dedicated CALT naturalist will motor to your cottage dock by boat! They will walk your property with you, pointing out hidden biodiversity, and assisting you in cataloguing plants, birds, amphibians, and insects using your phone or camera.

How to Participate

Getting started is simple and open to everyone, regardless of your biology background:

1. **Mark Your Calendar:** Set aside time on August 11th to explore your property. (Rain date August 12th)
2. **Download the iNaturalist App:** [Create an account](#) on the iNaturalist platform.
3. **Join the "Big Basswood Lake Watershed" Project:** This will allow us to track and report back on the results.
4. **Snap & Share:** Take photos of plants, insects, birds, mammals, and other wildlife around your cottage and upload them to iNaturalist.

Book a Dockside Visit

Space for the vessel-assisted naturalist visits is limited and will be booked on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like a naturalist to stop by your property by boat, please reach out to Jim Falconer at bbla.fb.admin@gmail.com to reserve your spot!

Additional information will be made available during the BBLA General Meeting on July 17th, 2026.

Many thanks to Carter Dorscht and the staff of the Central Algoma Land Trust for offering so many opportunities for education, research, and public enjoyment. Congratulations on your 25th anniversary!

Please take the time to visit the [Central Algoma Land Trust](#) website to learn about their recent expansion and consider donating to their worthwhile cause.

Jim Falconer/Marilyn Kellum

History Corner

Thanks to Bobby Swain of Basswood Outfitters for this contribution to the history corner. We recommened that you check out the many interesting blogs that Bobby has created on the Basswood Outfitters web page

<https://www.basswoodlake.ca/>

Introduction: (Bobby Swain, Basswood Lake Outfitters)

Following is a link to a series of articles from Forest and Stream magazine (1893) which detail a foray made the prior year by a group of American sportsmen from several mid-western states, to what was then the very remote location of Big Basswood Lake east of Thessalon.

The area around Big Basswood Lake had been surveyed and registered as Day Township in 1879, and the lots were put up for sale by the Ontario Government in 1880. Much of the land in the southern part of the Township proved to be productive farmland and was purchased as such by many early settlers whose names would be familiar to many in the area to this day.

A portion of the Township which was not suitable for farm settlement was the strip crossing between the two largest lakes in the jurisdiction. This narrow strip of land between what are now known as Big Basswood and Bright Lakes, was shown in 1882 maps as the proposed routing of the CPR Soo branch of the railway (before the final decision was made to run the mainline north of Lake Superior from Sudbury Junction). The property along what became Harris Creek between the two lakes, was quickly identified as ideal for industrial applications such as grain milling and sawmilling due to the water power supplied by the steep creek.

The area just east of the Creek was identified by J.B. Dobie as an ideal location for a townsite to be developed along the railway which would prosper from both the nearby industry and tourism along the lake shore. Mr. Dobie, then and for many years, the owner and operator of a general store in Thessalon, purchased the property in 1880 under the speculation of the railway location. A townsite was surveyed in 1882 and named Portage City. The first drawing card of any townsite in those days was the establishment and construction of a church building. Therefore, the first lot to be granted and developed in Portage City was the McArthur Presbyterian Church, which is mentioned in one of the articles noted above and linked below. Remnants of the Church graveyard still exist near the shores of Big Basswood Lake on Portage Street, nearly 140 years later.

Mr. Dobie sold the central Big Basswood lakefront property to an Englishman, George Dyer, for the purpose of Mr. Dyer establishing a fishing camp for international visitors to the new townsite - which as you will read he readily undertook this task. Unfortunately, Mr. Dyer passed away in 1894, a year after these articles were published and Mr. Dobie subsequently purchased the property back from Mr. Dyer's estate in 1895. Mr. Dobie went on in the next couple of years to build onto Mr. Dyer's lodge and establish what he named Komta Cottage. Komta remains to this day nestled up in the forest on the bank of Dobie Bay on Big Basswood Lake near the Harris Creek dam.

History Corner (cont'd)

For perspective on the era that this trip was taken and the associated article published, 1892 was the year that the incandescent light bulb was invented, Grover Cleveland was elected the 24th President of the United States, and John Thompson was elected as the 4th Prime Minister of Canada – and as you will read, it was the first official year of tourist accommodation on Big Basswood Lake.

Below is the link to the 1893 Forest and Stream magazine articles about the "Kingfishers" trip to Basswood Lake in 1892. For easier reading these articles have been transcribed and will soon be compiled into a story to be published on the Basswood Lake Outfitters website (basswoodlake.ca). The transcribed story will add perspective notes and plenty of additional information relating to Mr. Dyer and the Kingfishers' 1892 trip to Big Basswood Lake - keep in touch for updates.

[v.40 \(1893\) - Forest and stream - Biodiversity Heritage Library](#)

Page 429 - Part 1

Page 452 - Part 2

Page 474 - Part 3

Page 492 - Part 4

Using the "single page view" is easier to read and the page numbers noted are the actual page numbers seen on the magazine page headings.

Municipal Affairs

As mentioned several times in previous newsletters, the BBLA continues to foster a close working relationship with the municipality.

Specifically, 2 members of our board serve in volunteer positions on council committees:

Larry Allcorn serves as a committee member to the Environmental Services Committee (ESC),

Christina Coutu as a committee member for the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC).

If you have any questions regarding the municipality, please contact us for follow up.

It's also worth noting that the next municipal election is coming up on Monday, October 26. Candidate enrollment is open now should you be interested in running.

Christina Coutu

Lake Partners

In addition to participating in the Water Rangers program, we continue to submit monthly test results to the Ontario Lake Partners program. You'll recall that we have been participating in the Lake Partners program for many years, predating our involvement with the Water Rangers program documented earlier in this newsletter. Please reference the 2024 fall/winter newsletter for a detailed review/analysis of historical trends on Big Basswood lake. We feel that continued involvement with the Lake Partner program is important as there is a lot of history that has been collected. In addition, the samples collected under this program are laboratory tested and tends to show more robust results.

Last year, Bobby Swain did the sampling for lake partners. Although the lab results for this year's samples are not yet available (lab turnaround has been much slower in the last couple of years, he does report that water quality measurements using the secchi disk remain consistent year over year.

This year, Bob Kellum will be taking over the testing duties. If you are interested in participating, please be in touch with one of the board members.

Larry Allcorn

DIRECTORS OF BBLA

Matt Aho, Chairman, 917-849-9229

Cynthia Wood, Treasurer, 705-946-0623

Marilyn Kellum, Secretary and Lake Stewardship, 734-717-1290

Christina Coutu, 705-254-9799

John Glaser, 970-227-1471

Felix Rogers, 248-854-0748

George Craigie, 514-941-3500

Larry Allcorn, 416-407-2158

