



WHITE LAKE PRESERVATION PROJECT

White Lake Preservation Project Newsletter *April 2017*

1. State of the Lake Report

The State of the Lake Report (SOL) is a summary of the most current and relevant environmental information on White Lake and its watershed. It can be found on the WLPP website www.wlpp.ca in draft form. Comments on the SOL are still being accepted.

Initially the workplan for the State of the Lake Report called for meetings with the 4 Municipalities on the Lake to present the draft SOL and to discuss its findings. The final SOL was to be published in June. This was to be followed by the municipal meeting(s) to discuss a harmonized approach to protecting the Lake and finally publication of a Lake Plan. It has been an ongoing challenge to get official representation from all of the Municipalities at an initial meeting to discuss the draft SOL. At this time there is no date proposed for the meeting as none of our spring dates worked out for all of the municipalities. We are now going to target later in the year.

In the meantime there are items in the SOL which require further study and peer review. The major ones include the capacity of the lake for further development, the phosphorous levels, the algal blooms and now the zebra mussel invasion of the lake and what impact that will have on the future chemistry of the Lake and algal blooms.

A consequence of having zebra mussels is clearer water, more sun penetration, and greater aquatic vegetation growth, which is already being observed. The phosphorous levels in the water column have decreased but in effect the phosphorous has not left the lake. It is now in different compartments, and more of it will end up in the sediments. The outcome of all this is not yet known, although could be problematic going by the experience on other bodies of water.

For a more complete discussion of these topics refer to the Water Quality Monitoring Report on the www.wlpp.ca website.

2. Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) Hearing re White Lake Trailer Park

Just to review, the White Lake Trailer Park is situated on Hayes Bay. The original park had 33 small trailers, apparently a few serviced by groundwater. Sewage disposal services involved holding tanks in some trailers while others utilized outhouses. The new proposal is for somewhere between 100 and 200 new large park-model trailers serviced with running water and a central sewage treatment system. These trailers could serve as 3-season homes for people especially for those who go south in winter. The site would include parking/storage areas, reception buildings, boat docking structures, recreational areas, a swimming pool, a beach etc

The WLPP made representation to the Town of Mississippi Mills asking the Town to consider, in their decision regarding the trailer park, the sensitivity of the lake and to observe the Mississippi Mills by-laws regarding distance of structures from the water i.e. 30 m and number of units, i.e. 100 especially in view of the much more intensive use planned for the site.

On June 28, 2016, the Town of Mississippi Mills passed a by-law specific to this site reducing the setback from the water for the trailers from 30 m to 15 m and neither specified the number of trailers to be allowed at the 15 m mark nor the total number of trailers for the whole park. It appears that some 30 to 40 trailers are planned for the water's edge and although we have been told that there will be no more than 100 trailers, this is not in the site specific by-law. As a result of this decision, a request has been made for an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) Hearing. Until the Hearing takes place there should be no further changes to the site. At this point there is to be a 2nd pre-hearing consultation on May 2, which should establish the issues, expert witnesses, dates and duration of the Hearing.

This decision on the part of the Town was a great disappointment for WLPP. Many of our members and other interested parties had participated in a meeting to inform the Town of their concerns. The reason we have been so involved with this decision is that this development could set the precedent for future development on a Lake that is already vulnerable. It also seems to run counter to the many principles expressed in the Sustainable Communities Official Plan of Lanark County and to the Official Plan of Mississippi Mills regarding the preservation of the environment for future generations.

3. Lanark County Sustainable Communities Official Plan (SCOP) Amendment No 5

Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs) are defined by the government of Ontario as “lands and waters with features that are important for natural heritage protection, appreciation, scientific study or education.”

Quoting from the Lanark County SCOP “Significant ANSIs are those sites that have been identified by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) as being representative of the most significant and best examples of natural heritage and of geological features found in Ontario. They are divided into 3 categories: Life Science ANSIs; Earth Science ANSIs; Candidate ANSIs.

The way that ANSIs are currently protected in the Lanark County SCOP is as follows: “Development may be permitted in significant areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs) or on adjacent lands within 120 metres, only if it has been demonstrated through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or on the ecological functions for which the area is identified.”

The proposed Amendment No 5 would re-designate the Candidate ANSIs mostly to “Rural” thus eliminating the protection afforded by the ANSI designation.

In a letter to Lanark County the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust indicated the following: “Such action would put at risk ecologically significant lands and is contrary to the importance that the County attaches to the natural environment in its current official plan. The proposal is inappropriate as an example for natural heritage protection for lower tier municipalities.”

The letter goes on to say: “We understand that two provincially significant candidate ANSIs, A-15 Appleton Wetland and A-5 White Lake, would be affected. In the case of White Lake this would mean the further isolation of Conservation Reserve lands that are already fragmented.”

The meaning of these changes is that there will be no need in the future for any assurances regarding the safety of these lands from development either within the ANSI or adjacent.

WLPP is finding that those we thought we could rely on to protect these important sites are no longer doing so. An example is that MNR no longer takes responsibility for wetlands and shorelines but has downloaded that responsibility to Conservation Authorities. As White Lake is not within a Conservation Authority that means that the only protection for wetlands is in the hands of the 2 counties and 4 municipalities. This proposed action by Lanark County chips away at the feeble remaining protections.

We are currently trying to determine from MNR if they are still actively working on ANSIs as they have in recent years given up responsibility over many other subject areas. If you are at all concerned about the future of the Lake you may wish to make your concerns known. You can contact Lanark County at plan@lanarkcounty.ca or by mail: Lanark County, 99 Christie lake Road, Perth ON K7C 3C6.

4. WLPP Structure and Organization

The WLPP is not incorporated and has no legal standing. Currently we have a volunteer board, a list of members and another list of individuals who want to be kept informed of news worthy items on the Lake. We have never asked for a membership fee, although when people have asked about donating, they are referred to Watersheds Canada where donations can be made which will be directed to White Lake activities. Watersheds Canada can provide a tax receipt for any donations.

At some time in the not too distant future we would like to take the steps to make this a more formal organization, to collect funds and to have elections for a board. We do not feel ready for that step as we need a stronger representation from the lake community. To achieve that we will be spending this coming lake season working to inform the community of our activities and to try to get more involvement. The bigger our organization the stronger our voice with local and provincial governments.

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