



WHITE LAKE PRESERVATION PROJECT

White Lake Preservation Project

General Meeting Report

March 28th 2015 10:00 to 12:00

Arnprior Airport

Welcome

Janet Taylor welcomed approx 50 people in attendance, summarized the morning's program and introduced all of the speakers. Janet Taylor thanked Susan Gottlieb for her significant contribution to the WLPP, primarily in the form of financial support, to enable advancement of the project to date.

In attendance were: Seasonal and full-time residents and property owners; Business Owners; Councillors from 2 of the 4 Townships on White Lake; Representatives of the White Lake Property Owners Association



WLPP Achievements to Date and Plans for 2015/16



Conrad Gregoire, PhD, provided an informative overview of the historical data and reports collected and posted on the Website. Based on the analysis of prior studies, as well as more recent efforts to collect robust scientific data on key indicators pertaining to water quality and environmental stewardship, it appears that there is reason to mobilize and become more active in preventative activities to ensure responsible and sustainable enjoyment of White Lake. White

Lake is a sensitive, controlled, shallow lake with low annual flush volume and vast shoreline. There is additional complexity resulting from the fact that the lake involves four townships and two counties. For detailed information on the rich data collated on numerous indicators and particular challenges faced, folks are encouraged to visit the Project website at WLPP.ca. In particular, Conrad encouraged folks to review the 1998 and 2007 reports on the state of water quality in White Lake. An ambitious sampling plan for the Lake is planned for 2015 and can be viewed on the Website.

Questions following the presentation included:

1) *Did the recent WLPP sampling (2014) include sampling for E. coli?*

A: WLPP sampling program currently does not include E. coli. For 2015 WLPP sampling will include phosphorous, secchi depth, chlorophyll a; temperature; pH; oxygen.

The White Lake Property Owners' Association (WLPOA) does sample for E. coli; nitrate; phosphorus; volatile organic compounds, and petroleum hydrocarbons. Analysis of samples is expensive and the WLPOA currently allocates approx. \$500/y for water testing.

2) *What are the trends based on the water testing to date?*

A: water testing has mostly occurred in the south western half of White Lake (Sunset, Pickerel and 3 Mile Bays) and may differ in other parts of the lake. Past testing has been limited to one sample per year per site and mostly done in the spring. WLPP now has one year of monthly sampling for 6 months from one site and will be sampling monthly in 5 sites over the whole lake in 2015. Available data seem to indicate lower phosphorous levels in the lake during spring which tend to rise and exceed acceptable levels in late summer/early fall. This initial trend may suggest a link to human activity and the resulting impact on the lake. The new sampling protocol for 2015 will further study this phenomenon and over several years establish any apparent trends.

3) *How significant is the impact of development on the lake?*

A: It appears from the phosphorus sampling and the quality of the water (proliferation of aquatic plants, and algae blooms), that the Lake may be at or beyond capacity to tolerate further development. For this reason the WLPP is pursuing the possibility with the Townships of having a Lake Capacity study completed. This would provide a scientific assessment of the capacity of the lake to tolerate more development. WLPP is also seeking to better understand the legislation that is in place to safeguard the Lake and to raise awareness of it amongst the Townships. Given that the lake is subject to four townships and two counties, one of the main goals will be to support a harmonized approach to development, one that respects the lake as a commons. WLPP has already made presentations to all four townships and will do so again, since the election resulted in an almost complete turnover on council members. Heather Lang, Councillor for McNab Braeside, was present and re-enforced the need to engage councils.

WLPP Governance

Beate Schiffer-Graham provided a brief overview of the need to establish WLPP as a not-for-profit corporation. Given the maturity of the Project, it is timely to incorporate. This organizational structure will provide for credibility with funders; articulation of objectives and accountability to members. The proposed next steps would be to incorporate, have the current core group as a self-appointed board of WLPP, target an Annual General Meeting in 2016 to seek elected Board Members, Directors and Officers and finalize by-laws.

WLPOA advised WLPP to research insurance coverage for a not-for-profit organization. WLPOA currently pays approx. \$1500 annually on insurance A: WLPP is grateful for any advice and insight into these types of issues.

Lake Plans

Barbara King of Watersheds Canada provided an overview of 'Lake Plans'. She emphasized that many lakes in eastern Ontario have or are initiating 'Lake Plans'. These plans provide for scientific data to be brought to bear on the agreed to goals and aspirations of lake communities. Based on Watersheds Canada's experience, it is important to be inclusive and to provide opportunities for divergent interests to be discussed. In addition to Lake Plans and Capacity Assessments, Barbara provided examples of other programs that Watershed Canada supports, including "The Natural Edge", a program designed to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining and restoring natural shorelines. Based on her experience, WLPP will be able to benefit from much of the work done to date in other communities.



A general discussion followed and centred on a number of issues including:

- Ability of White Lake to sustain further development (e.g. proposed trailer park)
- Awareness that a possible outcome of a capacity assessment may be that the Lake is not beyond its capacity.
- Size and number of motor boats on White Lake
- Water levels and the competing interests on the Lake i.e. fish spawning sites, impact on frogs, turtles etc vs levels considered acceptable for boating etc.

Coordinators



Doug Smith invited those in attendance to volunteer and to sign up as members and/or as coordinators for WLPP. Maps have been developed with the help of GIS to assign volunteers to various areas of the lake. The coordinators are intended to have personal contact with people from their areas. They will be the conduit for communication between the WLPP Board and the members. WLPP is looking for about 15 coordinators. In addition to volunteering as a coordinator, Doug

encouraged those in attendance to sign up as a member and perhaps volunteer for one of the other committees (e.g. Fishery; Algonquin Land Claim; Governance; Newsletter).

A number of observation/suggestions were made including:

- A future meeting should be in the summer time, when more cottagers are aware and able to join
- WLPP may wish to consult managers of the Madawaska Watershed to share costs; information; inputs
- WLPP is encouraged to be prudent in its use of terminology. A culture of fear and alarm may result in loss of property values. WLPP was encouraged to frame issues as challenges and to acknowledge that White Lake is not different from other lakes requiring a good stewardship program
- WLPP should consider septic tank inspections as a low cost, simple but effective action to advocate
- WLPP should focus on educating folks on human activity that contributes to the formation of algae
- WLPP needs to address the size of motorboats and the speed allowed on the lake
- WLPP should provide coordinators with common, standardized information to use when contacting their area members to ensure consistent messaging
- WLPP should make fisheries the focus. Regulation and enforcement specifically to ice fishing should be a priority, including garbage removal from lake following the ice fishing season. A focus on fisheries could benefit from building on existing studies. In this context, WLPOA volunteered that study results from 2014 will be available in June/July 2015
- Policing and other issues may need to be addressed by WLPP in the longer term as well.

A number of those in attendance indicated their willingness to get actively involved by volunteering to support the WLPP efforts. These individuals will be contacted by WLPP in the spring (May/June 2015). Area Coordinators will be listed on the WLPP website.

Coffee, cookings and a delicious lunch
Was arranged by Joan Gregoire (left)

