



## WHITE LAKE PRESERVATION PROJECT

### **Newsletter, January, 2015**

#### **Founding and Organization of the White Lake Preservation Project**

The WLPP started in 2014 with a small group of concerned individuals from the Wabalac Road area on the north shore of the White Lake. Longtime residents and cottagers became concerned with the perceived deterioration of White Lake over time and wanted to do something about assuring its long term health. We initially approached the White Lake Property Owners Association which has done much good work over the years monitoring lake chemistry and, for example, managing the marker buoy program across most of the lake. However, WLPOA has a limited mandate representing only the Lanark Highlands part of the Lake, and was reluctant to take on issues that impact the whole lake, which lies in 4 townships and two counties. We therefore felt the need to start a new organization. WLPOA remains supportive of our goals and will participate on our steering committee.

#### **Website**

One of our initial activities was to set up a website for the White Lake Preservation Project ( [www.WLPP.ca](http://www.WLPP.ca) ). The purpose of the website is to serve as a central repository of all information currently available on White Lake including information on chemical data, lake history, fisheries assessments, state of the lake reports, etc. The website is also meant to serve as a forum for current issues affecting the lake including planned developments, current chemical data collection, investigative research projects, documentation of flora and fauna as well as interpretation of data.

The website is a work in progress and is continuing to evolve. In the near future, we are planning to improve the site by doing the following:

1. Post all the reports and data that we can find, historical and current, which deal with White Lake. It has taken some effort to find certain reports, even some as current as 2008, and we want to make sure that these documents are not lost and remain easily accessible to anyone.
2. Interpretation of old and new data will be adding dimension to the results we have and will help in planning future work. In addition to our own expertise, we are seeking additional comments and analysis from experts.

3. We are considering adding a section to the website which would use photographs to document the physical appearance and condition of White Lake over time. Currently we have photographs of the algal blooms we documented in 2013 and 2014.

### **White Lake Property Owner's Survey**

A very important early initiative was to assemble a list of the names and mailing addresses of all the property owners surrounding White Lake. This laborious task yielded some 300 addresses to which was sent a letter of introduction and a lake survey form, along with a self addressed return envelope. The Lake survey was developed by the Provincial Love Your Lake ( [www.LoveYourLake.ca](http://www.LoveYourLake.ca) ) Program and is designed to reveal the level of interest users of White Lake have in the health of the lake and also to show areas of concern. There were nearly 100 respondents to the survey and the detailed results and analysis can be read on the website at [www.WLPP.ca](http://www.WLPP.ca). What is clear from the survey is that the WLPP has a very strong mandate and that there is broad support for studying the capacity of the lake and developing a lake plan. Many were concerned that the quality of the lake water in White Lake was deteriorating and at risk.

As a result of the survey, we now have a total of 45 property owners from all parts of the lake who have indicated that they would be able to assist with our efforts to monitor the lake, raise awareness of issues with their neighbors and/or help with stewardship programs etc. Another 27 respondents want to be kept informed by e-mail but are unable to help at this time. With the help of self-identified volunteers we are planning to create a more formal organization. The Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations (FOCA) has an entire section of their website devoted to this question, which we will use to advantage.

### **Proposed Meeting of Volunteer Network: Saturday March 28, 2015**

We are planning our first meeting to bring as many of us together and to start the process of establishing the WLPP Volunteer Network. We are proposing Saturday March 28, 2015 starting from 10:00 AM to noon. We are considering holding the meeting at the Arnprior Airport since this site is fairly central to Ottawa, Arnprior, Almonte and White Lake Village. ***We would greatly appreciate knowing in advance, via e-mail, at [wlppmail@gmail.com](mailto:wlppmail@gmail.com)*** whether you will be available to attend this meeting.

The objective of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for volunteers to meet one another and also to set up a Steering Committee including offices such as: Chairman, Secretary, Membership Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, WLPOA representative, persons to monitor Township Council Agendas for items of importance to the Lake. We welcome your suggestions as well as nominations for these positions.

Once we have received input from you, we will be contacting you with further information on the time and location as well as the agenda for the meeting.

**WLPP Presentation to the Township of Mississippi Mills January 27, 2015: Status of Proposed Trailer Park at Hayes Bay**

During the past year, WLPP has made presentations to three of the four Township Councils introducing them to the WLPP and its aims and objectives. We have been well received at these meetings and we are encouraged that in the future we will see more coordination among the townships regarding issues and proposed developments that affect White Lake.

WLPP has been placed on the agenda for the Tuesday, January 27, 2015 Township of Mississippi Mills council meeting. As we have done with the other 3 townships, we will be making a presentation of our concerns regarding the health of White Lake and what role we think the townships should and could play in safeguarding it. This will of necessity involve raising the subject of the proposed new trailer park at Hayes Bay. This proposal involves the installation of 200 trailer sites on a small parcel of land located adjacent to a sensitive environmental area. We have been informed that no final decision has been made by the township on the approval of this project.

Our first contact with the Township of Mississippi Mills concerning the park indicated that no one had ever raised concerns with them regarding the health of White Lake. It appeared to us at that time that, in the absence of expressed concerns, the township might be heading in the direction of approving the application.

Because of budget cuts, townships can no longer rely solely on provincial government departments such as the MNR and the DOE to assist in decisions on environmentally sensitive issues. Not being within a Conservation Area, White Lake also does not benefit from this kind of oversight and protection. It appears that the only option that the township has is to hire a private contractor to review the application. The application, as it stands, does not include any kind of assessment on the capacity of White Lake to absorb the very large increase in population and the accompanying issues such as water usage, boat traffic etc.

The WLPP has hired a professional planner to look into existing legal protections enshrined in current legislation which could be used to protect the lake. We have just received a comprehensive report from the planner, which has been forwarded to Mississippi Mills and which outlines issues the township would be expected to consider under the Provincial and Township Official Plans and also under the Township Zoning Bylaws. The contents of the planner's report are encouraging, and we hope that it leads to a more comprehensive environmental review of the proposal.

**It is very important for property owners on the lake to attend the January 27 meeting.** The Mississippi Mills Township Offices are located at 33131 Old Perth Road, Almonte, ON. Although this council meeting is not a public meeting specifically

on the subject of the trailer park, a good turnout of concerned individuals from White Lake would send a message to the Township Councilors and Mayor that there are many people concerned with the health of the lake. They will also know that their decision making process is under scrutiny and could be challenged. We ask that you pass this message on to your cottage neighbours and encourage attendance.

### **Lake Core Samples**

The WLPP has obtained the participation of Prof. Jesse Vermaire from Carleton University to complete a sediment core study of the lake. Prof. Vermaire visited the lake in August of 2014, and with the assistance of the WLPP obtained a sediment core sample for the study of diatoms. The core sample was sectioned into about twenty sub-samples. These sub-samples were processed in Prof. Vermaire's laboratory at Carleton University in order to isolate the diatoms and slides have now been prepared for microscopic study.

Diatoms are the silica-based skeletal remains of phyto and zooplankton. These microscopic plants and animals are commonly found in all bodies of water and can be used as an indication of any changes which have taken place in the body of water over time. The species present and their relative numbers are sensitive to climactic changes as well as the impact of humans on the body of water. The sediment core will be able to track changes occurring in White Lake during the past approximately 150 years. A graduate student at Carleton University will be studying the prepared slides and a report will be available some time in the spring of 2015.

WLPP has purchased a microscope with an attached digital camera which will be used to photograph and record samples from White Lake, including algal blooms. This will help us keep a record of algae and other biota on the Lake. We will be asking volunteers from around the lake to collect water samples for microscopic examination.

### **Trillium Grant**

This past fall, the WLPP applied for a Trillium Grant under the auspices Watersheds Canada (formerly Centre for Sustainable Watersheds). The grant proposal was aimed at completing a detailed watershed study of lake chemistry including inputs from different sources. Part of the grant included comprehensive lake-wide measurements of chemical factors including phosphorous concentrations, temperature and dissolved oxygen measurements over the course of two years. A 'state of the lake' report was to be published as a result of this study as well as the formulation of a longer term lake plan for White Lake. Unfortunately we were not successful this time, apparently because there were an unusually large number of applications in this round. We were also asking for a fairly large sum of money, which may also have contributed to the negative decision. A new Trillium Grant competition will occur this coming July and we plan to resubmit a modified application.

## **Phosphorus Content of White Lake Water Samples**

The samples taken on the Lake in 2014 under the Lake Partner Program have now been analyzed. For the first time, samples were taken at the same location on a month to month basis in order to observe any changes in P concentrations during the summer months. From the samples collected by WLPP it is clear that phosphorus concentration levels increase in the Lake as the summer progresses, and drop off again as fall approaches. These results as well as a more detailed interpretation will be posted on the WLPP website.

The P results obtained in 2014 are very interesting, but need to be repeated for several years in order to establish any trend in P concentrations over time. Accordingly, we will be approaching Lake Partner Program again to allow us to take further samples during the next 2 years to establish the trend, if any. Of concern to us, is the cause and severity of the toxic blue algae blooms we have documented in White Lake in early fall of 2013 and 2014.

In summary, much has been done during the first year of the White Lake Preservation Project. However, for the WLPP to reach its goals the support and contributions of volunteers is absolutely essential. We are looking forward to working with all of you in the future to ensure that White Lake is and remains, to quote Henry David Thoreau: '...the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature'.

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