

KLRA - AGM  
Lake Plan Implementation Committee Update  
Update by George Lindsay - July 1, 2007

Here we are, back talking with you about the Lake Plan - again. It seems like only yesterday that we began this journey. The lake plan idea was introduced, by Chris Markey, KLRA President, at the AGM in 2000 and a feasibility study was initiated by the members. I guess we should have thought of it as a marathon, because it certainly hasn't been a sprint.

This afternoon, I want to take 10 minutes to go over 3 items: Background and what has been done; what is the current status and what we are doing today; and, what are we thinking about as next steps.

### **Background and accomplishments**

The membership of both KLRA and HRLR provided a mandate to build a new Lake plan to guide development and re-development on Kahshe and Bass lakes, and be incorporated into the Town of Gravenhurst's Official Plan.

One of the first activities was to solicit donations, in anticipation of utilizing professional lake planners to assist in developing our plan. The fact that just over \$36,000 was raised demonstrates the value many of the lake residents saw in producing a plan.

Over the next couple of years, working with Rick Hunter, a Consultant from Planscape, a small committee: Eleanor MacLean as chair was our determined leader; Clare Henderson as secretary & chief organizer; Gwen Hems; Alex Milburn; Charley Tonna and me, solicited input through surveys, workshops and presentations to the Annual General Meetings and eventually, ok, it only took 3 years, finalized a document that was approved by the membership. Rob & Allyn Abbott joined the committee over 2 years ago when Charley Tonna resigned.

The focus of the plan is to manage development and re-development on the lake. Based on lake resident input, development and re-development needs to be consistent with the character of Kahshe & Bass lakes and ensure environmental sustainability for future generations. Examples that were included were for set backs, shoreline buffer zones, height limits, size limits and boat house controls. One of the important principles from the input of the lake residents was to try to maintain as natural a view from the lake as possible. A second was to ensure development that did not impair the lake water quality.

When our plan was completed and approved by the membership, in 2003, we submitted it to the Town of Gravenhurst for inclusion in their Official Plan. Since the Town was overdue to refresh / revise their Official Plan, we agreed to incorporate our Lake Plan in the next revision of the Town of Gravenhurst Official Plan. Unfortunately that resulted in a delay, since the Town did not initiate their process until the fall of 2005. The good news, however, was that the Town struck a Public Advisory Council, which had lake resident participants, and they also engaged a consultant, who understood lake related issues very well.

The Kahshe Lake Plan Implementation Committee and your Board were very active in the Town's Official Plan development process. While we were not on the Advisory Committee, we received regular updates and provided feedback, advice and support

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throughout the exercise. There were also two Public Information Sessions, which we attended and provided feedback. On behalf of all of the lakes of Gravenhurst, we made a presentation to Council. The Draft Official Plan was accepted by Council in October 2006 and while it is not perfect, everyone agrees that it is very good and reflects the broad input that was solicited.

Following acceptance by Council, the draft was submitted to the District of Muskoka, for review and comments. While there had been input from the District, they are required to provide formal feedback, after the plan has been accepted by the Town. This process is expected to complete in July. Any changes would be submitted to Town Council and then to the District for approval and following a 20 day appeal period, it can be adopted by the Town. Hopefully the end of the process is near, at least by early fall, assuming no appeals.

The process of modifying the By-Laws to reflect the new Official Plan will begin following its adoption. The unfortunate reality is that it will take 3 – 5 years to complete. Hopefully within 2 years, the major By-Laws will be updated. Of course, until the new By-Laws are in place, the old rules apply, which you can appreciate is a little frustrating, since we have had our Lake Plan in place since 2003.

As I said at the start, we should have thought of this exercise as a marathon, when we started in 2000.

### **Minor Variances**

As many of you know, there is a minor variance process, through a Town of Gravenhurst Committee of Adjustment. This process is used to accommodate proposed development that doesn't conform to Town By-Laws. As part of the Town's notification process, the association is asked to comment when there is a Minor Variance request on Kahshe or Bass Lake. After the membership approved the Kahshe & Bass Lake Plan, it has been used as the basis for our response. Upon notification, the Lake Plan Implementation Committee circulates the request. One of the members, often contacts the Town Planning Department to solicit their professional opinion of the request. A response is formulated by one of the members and circulated for modification and approval. The final submission is made by the President to the Town Planners and Committee of Adjustment. In the last year I think we have reviewed over 20 requests.

If anyone is planning a project that will require a Minor Variance request, the Board would be pleased to discuss the project and the relevant sections of the Lake Plan, prior to it being submitted to the Committee of Adjustment. Please contact Clint Rohr, our new President if you would like to have a discussion.

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### **Other Accomplishments**

While the focus of the committee has been on development, approval and inclusion of a Lake Plan into the Town's Official Plan, there have been other significant accomplishments, which I want to briefly highlight.

1. The Lake Plan Implementation Committee initiated the Kahshe and Bass Lakes "Good Neighbours" Resource Book. It was published in 2002 and contains helpful tips and hints, including when a building permit is required, Fires in Open Air Guidelines and important emergency telephone numbers. A new version (our second) is available soon (today).
2. Based on membership feedback two additional subcommittees were established, one to represent the interests of Water Access cottagers – by the way, this committee provided critical input that was incorporated into the Lake Plan; the 2<sup>nd</sup> was the Rock Marker Committee. While all of the Kahshe Lake rocks are not marked – that would create a sea of markers - Clint Rohr and his team have done an outstanding job of economically identifying rocks in the key channels.
3. Clare Henderson, as part of the committee, initiated the History Project, which resulted in "Healing Waters, Volume 1", and now "Healing Waters Volume II". Over 600 copies of Volume I have been sold, and it continues to be available for sale. Its stories provide a wonderful glimpse of Kahshe Lake, over the years and it is an important legacy of the committee.
4. The Committee nominated one of our members, Allyn Abbott, to the Board of the Muskoka Heritage Trust. This organization works with land owners, using a variety of tools, including Land Trusts, to protect lands from future development. Allyn is the contact point for anyone on Kahshe or Bass Lakes, who want to investigate these options.
5. We have publicized and supported the annual Muskoka Heritage Trust native tree and shrub sale. It is an excellent, inexpensive way to naturalize your property.
6. Last year, the committee bought shrubs and wildflowers to naturalize the small section of land just south of the new dam on South Kahshe Lake Road. It will take some time to mature, but will be an example of what each of us can do – transforming a patch of grass into natural Muskoka. I went around last weekend and while there is still a lot of growing to do, there are now wild flowers blooming and most of the shrubs have survived and are growing. We will likely have to replace a few of the small trees, but all in all, a great success. Rob Abbott took some pictures which will be posted on the web site, but if you are in the area, take a look at it.

By the way, of the \$36,000 raised, we have about \$11,000 remaining. We have used some of the money to finance production of Healing Waters Volume II, but expect that it will be self funding, through sales. We did the same thing with Volume I, which turned a profit, based on over 600 copies sold.

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## **The Future**

So, what is next for the Lake Plan Implementation Committee? First, we need to keep our focus on having the Town pass the enabling By-Laws incorporating our Kahshe Lake Plan. Second, we are considering extending our Lake Plan work, through development of a Recreational Carrying Capacity Model for our lakes.

The Recreational Carrying Capacity concept was introduced as part of the Official Plan update. The basic concept is that development or re-development on lakes should be able to be limited based on the impact of recreational use. Recreational use is boating, wake boarding, water skiing, canoeing, sailing, paddle boating, swimming etc. If we can amass statistics about the quantity and use of boats we may have another measure of how much development is 'too much', while still being able to maintain safety, good water quality and reasonable enjoyment by residents.

As background, today the model to determine if more development or re-development is allowed is based on the lake's phosphorous level. The logic is that septic systems were the cause of most of the phosphorous in a lake and by limiting septic systems, you would limit phosphorous input. That is why the 300 foot frontage was introduced several years ago. Planning experts are now concerned that new phosphorous binding septic systems can eliminate any phosphorous from the septic system entering the lake and at some point, will result in challenges to the existing By-Laws to allow more intense development, since they can demonstrate that they will not put more phosphorous into the lake. In other words, Recreational Carry Capacity is a tool the planners will need to help manage development.

This is probably a good place to insert another small commercial for maintaining a 30 meter natural buffer from the shoreline – to act as a filter. "The Healthy Shore List says to keep the 30 meters from the water natural and also leave fallen trees and branches in the shallows to nourish critters and provide cover for fish. Also, it suggests elimination of lawn fertilizer, which adds phosphorous into the lake.

While there have been extensive studies done in several locations in the United States, we have not been able to find any similar work in Canada.

You may have noticed an article in the June 21 edition of The Muskoka Sun by Brett Thompson regarding phosphorous in lakes and what the Muskoka Lake Association is doing about it. Towards the end of the article it says that the MLA "will be surveying boat traffic on the bays next month, as erosion and sediment play a part in nutrient loading" Our committee is proposing to investigate how we can advance the science through a Kahshe Lake study. We have solicited the support of Jim Dyment, a consultant with Meridian Planning Consultants, who is working with us, at no charge, to develop an 'observers data sheet', which will be the starting point for collecting data about boat usage on the lake. It is an exciting piece of work. We don't know yet exactly what we will do, how we will do it, or what the results will be, however, that will become clearer over the next few months and I hope that the Committee will have exciting news to report in the next newsletter.

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OK, I think that is it for a Lake Plan update. The committee and I would be pleased to take feedback and answer questions. Of course comments are always welcomed on our website [www.kahshelake.ca](http://www.kahshelake.ca)

Thank you