

# LOOKING AFTER THE HEALTH OF NORWAY LAKE

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A PRESENTATION TO THE FOCA LAKE STEWARDS' SEMINAR, "WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING LAKE-LY", APRIL 26, 2003



FELLOW COTTAGERS,

I WANT TO EXPRESS OUR APPRECIATION TO FOCA FOR AWARDING OUR ASSOCIATION THE JERRY STRICKLAND AWARD THIS YEAR, AND FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A PRESENTATION AT THIS LAKE STEWARDS' SEMINAR.

## INTRODUCTION

MY FAMILY HAS BEEN COTTAGING ON NORWAY LAKE SINCE 1959; IN FACT, MY WIFE DIANE AND I HAD OUR FIRST DATE AT THE LAKE AND EVEN SPENT OUR HONEYMOON THERE. MY FATHER AND MYSELF ARE PAST PRESIDENTS OF OUR ASSOCIATION AND DIANE IS THE CURRENT PRESIDENT.

THE LAKE IS SPRING FED, IT IS ABOUT 4 K LONG AND 1K WIDE, AND THE TOTAL SURFACE AREA IS 271 HECTARES WITH A SHORELINE OF 12.9 K. HALLIDAY CREEK DRAINS THE LAKE INTO THE MADAWASKA RIVER, AND CHANGES THE WATER OVER IN ABOUT 5 YEARS. NORWAY LAKE HAS BEEN CLASSIFIED BY THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO OXYGEN DEPLETION, SUGGESTING AN IDEAL COTTAGE RATIO OF 1 PER 5.4 ACRES OF LAKE SURFACE. HOWEVER, EARLY DEVELOPMENT HAS LED TO 1

COTTAGE PER 4.6 ACRES. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT MUNICIPAL ZONING WILL NOT ALLOW ANY NEW DEVELOPMENT. OUR LAKE IS BASICALLY PRIVATE AND DOES NOT SUPPORT ANY INDUSTRY OR MINING OR EVEN A VILLAGE ALONG THE SHORE.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF NORWAY LAKE ASSOCIATION

NORWAY LAKE ASSOCIATION WAS FOUNDED IN AUGUST 1973. ONE OF THE CATALYSTS THAT LED TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ASSOCIATION WAS THE SUBMISSION OF A ZONING REQUEST TO ALLOW A SUBDIVISION OF 100 TRAILER LOTS ON THE SOUTH SHORE OF THE LAKE. THE 'NIMBY' SYNDROME (NOT IN MY BACK YARD) ASIDE, EVEN IN 1973 OUR LAKE WAS OVERDEVELOPED. LARGELY DUE TO ASSOCIATION INPUT, THE REZONING WAS NOT ALLOWED.

OTHER CONCERNS THAT YEAR INCLUDED CARELESS BOATERS, A LANDFILL SITE ON NORWAY LAKE RD, AND ROAD MAINTENANCE. ALL OF THESE ITEMS CONTINUE TO APPEAR AS CONCERNS RIGHT TO THE PRESENT DAY, INCLUDING TRAILERS MAGICALLY APPEARING ON THE SOUTH SIDE SITE. CONSTANT VIGILANCE BY THE ASSOCIATION ADDRESSES THESE ISSUES AS THEY ARISE.

## SOME MEMBERS TO MENTION

IT'S NOT ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO MENTION INDIVIDUAL NAMES BECAUSE I CERTAINLY CANNOT EVEN ATTEMPT TO NAME EVERYONE WHO HAS CONTRIBUTED THEIR TIME AND EFFORT OVER THE YEARS. MANY, MANY

COTTAGERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE ASSOCIATION'S SUCCESS STORIES. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GROUP EFFORT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE A FEW I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION.

OUR FOUNDING PRESIDENT, BEV HARRISON, SERVED IN THAT CAPACITY FOR FIFTEEN YEARS. HE STILL COTTAGES ON OUR LAKE.

ANOTHER FOUNDING MEMBER, RUTH BERRY, IS OUR TREASURER. WE HAVE 135 COTTAGES ON THE LAKE, AND RUTH VISITS EACH ONE BY BOAT, CAR OR BICYCLE EVERY YEAR. RUTH IS THE MAIN REASON WE HAVE 115 PAID MEMBERSHIPS EACH YEAR. IN 1973 OUR DUES WERE \$2, IN 1984 THEY WERE \$3, AND IN 2001 THEY WERE \$5. EACH YEAR OVER THE LAST FIVE WE HAVE HAD A BUDGET SURPLUS OF ABOUT \$800.

RUTH'S HUSBAND, BOB BERRY, PH.D., IS A DIRECTOR OF THE ASSOCIATION AND OUR RESIDENT SCIENTIST AND CHAMPION FISHER ON NORWAY LAKE. A LANDFILL SITE ON NORWAY LAKE RD. HAS BEEN A CONSTANT CONCERN SINCE 1973, WHEN WE ASKED FOR SOIL COVER AND TESTING FOR LEACHATE. BOB'S CREDENTIALS HAVE ADDED CREDENCE TO OUR REQUESTS FOR TEST WELLS AROUND THE DUMP, AND FOR BEAR CONTROL. ALSO, BOB PERSONALLY TRAMPED THROUGH THE BUSH TRACING A CREEK THAT FLOWS FROM THE DUMP TO OUR LAKE, SOMETHING THAT THE MINISTRY DENIED UNTIL BOB PROVED IT. HIS RESEARCH AND THE EXECUTIVE LETTERS TO MOE AND THE TOWNSHIP HAVE BEEN ONE REASON THAT THE TOWNSHIP'S REQUEST TO ENLARGE THE LANDFILL HAS BEEN DENIED, AND LAST YEAR THE DUMP WAS CLOSED. HOWEVER, BOB'S AND THE EXECUTIVE'S JOB IS NOT OVER, AS THE SITE WILL NEED TO BE MONITORED FOR YEARS TO COME AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO ASK FOR NEW WELLS TO TEST FOR LEACH ATE.

ANN PHILIPS, OUR PAST PRESIDENT, HAS BEEN BUSY FOR THE LAST 5 YEARS WORKING TO BRING ALTERNATE VOTING TO THE TOWNSHIP. SHE HAS PRESENTED THE COTTAGERS' VIEWPOINT AT COUNTLESS COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL MEETINGS. FROM A COUNCIL THAT REFUSED TO EVEN DISCUSS IT 5 YEARS AGO TO THE INTRODUCTION OF MAIL-IN VOTING IN THE NEXT MUNICIPAL ELECTION, ANN AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER LAKES IN THE COUNTY HAVE GIVEN COTTAGERS THE MEANS TO VOTE.

OUR ASSOCIATION DOES NOT HAVE ONE INDIVIDUAL APPOINTED AS A LAKE STEWARD. ALL MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE FEEL THAT THEY ARE FULFILLING THAT POSITION, AS DO MOST OF THE COTTAGE OWNERS.

WHY HAS OUR ASSOCIATION THRIVED? IT IS THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN WILLING TO VOLUNTEER THEIR SERVICES AND STAND FOR ELECTION YEAR AFTER YEAR.

### **MONITORING ACTIVITIES**

IN 1978, WHEN WE STARTED TESTING FOR WATER CLARITY WITH THE SECCHI DISC, OUR SECCHI DISC DEPTH WAS 16 FT. THE SECCHI DISC DEPTH HAS REMAINED CONSTANT OVER THE YEARS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 2000, WHEN THE SECCHI DEPTH DECREASED TO ONLY 14 FT. THIS MAY HAVE INDICATED PROBLEMS WITH ALGAE, BUT THAT YEAR WAS NOTED FOR EXCESS POLLEN THAT SEEMED TO COVER THE LAKE.

A MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES FISHERIES SURVEY WAS REQUESTED AND DONE IN 1978. THIS SHOWED A HEALTHY POPULATION OF BASS, PICKEREL AND PIKE. HOWEVER, WE WERE WARNED THAT THE PICKEREL FISHERY COULD DECLINE BECAUSE OF LOW OXYGEN CONTENT IN THE LAKE. A SURVEY IN 1985 FOUND A HEALTHY PICKEREL POPULATION, WITH NETTINGS REPRESENTING A PARTICULARLY GOOD HARVEST FROM A LAKE OF OUR SIZE. ALTHOUGH THERE HASN'T BEEN A RECENT SURVEY BY THE MINISTRY, A COTTAGE SURVEY IN 1994 SUGGESTED THAT THE PICKEREL POPULATION WAS STILL HEALTHY. AN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE HAS MAPPED AND MONITORED ALL KNOWN PICKEREL BEDS ON THE LAKE AND WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN KEEPING THEM OPEN AND UNDISTURBED.

IN 1999, WE BEGAN TESTING FOR ZEBRA MUSSELS AND SPINY WATER FLEA, AS WELL AS EDUCATING FELLOW COTTAGERS ABOUT INVASIVE SPECIES. THERE IS NO LEGAL PUBLIC ACCESS TO OUR LAKE BUT WE PURCHASED SIGNS FROM FOCA REGARDING ZEBRA MUSSELS, AND POSTED THESE ON PRIVATE RAMPS, AS WELL AS IN AREAS THAT CAN BE ACCESSED FROM A RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY. MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE TALKED TO LOCAL MOTELS AND TOURIST OPERATORS ABOUT THE HAZARDS OF BRINGING CONTAMINATED BOATS ONTO NORWAY LAKE. BECAUSE OF THESE MEASURES AND A LOT OF LUCK, AS OF LAST SUMMER WE ARE STILL MUSSEL AND FLEA FREE.

## **OTHER ASSOCIATION PROJECTS**

BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE 911 SYSTEM, THE ASSOCIATION NUMBERED ALL COTTAGES ON THE LAKE AND PROVIDED A MAP TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT IN CALABOGIE TO ENSURE A FASTER RESPONSE TIME IN CASE OF FIRE.

'NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH' HAS BEEN IN PLACE SINCE ITS INCEPTION. WITH THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF SOME OF OUR PERMANENT RESIDENTS AND THEIR FOUR-WHEELERS AND SNOWMOBILES, BREAK-INS AND VANDALISM HAVE DECLINED. ALL COTTAGERS HAVE BEEN REMINDED THAT THEY NEED TO PARTICIPATE. THE O.P.P. HAVE BEEN GUEST SPEAKERS AT OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AND SUPPORT THE PROGRAM.

ON THE MUNICIPAL PORTION OF OUR ROADS WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY LOBBIED FOR AND BEEN GIVEN A REDUCTION IN THE SPEED LIMIT FROM 80K TO 60K. WE HAVE ASKED FOR AND BEEN GIVEN SIGNS, INDICATING DEAD END RD, NO EXIT, AND YIELDS.

NORWAY LAKE IS DRAINED BY HALLIDAY CREEK, AND OVER THE YEARS BEAVER DAMS HAVE RAISED THE LEVEL OF THE LAKE. THIS IS A BENEFIT TO COTTAGERS IN SHALLOW AREAS BUT A PROBLEM FOR ORIGINAL COTTAGES THAT WERE BUILT WHEN LAKE LEVELS WERE LOWER. IT WAS THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE MIGHT TAKE IT UPON THEMSELVES TO BLOW UP THE BEAVER DAMS -- AN ILLEGAL ACT, AND ONE THAT COULD LOWER THE LAKE LEVEL BY A FOOT OVERNIGHT. AFTER YEARS OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT WATER LEVELS BEING EITHER TOO HIGH OR TOO LOW, IN 1996 THE EXECUTIVE PREPARED A QUESTIONNAIRE AND DISTRIBUTED IT TO ALL COTTAGERS. THE QUESTIONNAIRE WAS 76% IN FAVOUR OF HIGHER LEVELS. THE NEXT GENERAL MEETING GAVE THE EXECUTIVE A CHANCE TO PRESENT THESE VIEWS. ALSO, A SPEAKER FROM THE MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES REINFORCED THE IDEA THAT NATURE SHOULD BE LEFT TO TAKE ITS COURSE. THE DAM HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED SINCE AND NATURE ALONE LOOKS AFTER LAKE LEVELS. IN FACT, OUR RECENT LONG HOT SUMMERS HAVE KEPT WATER LEVELS LOW.

IN 1996, THE ASSOCIATION FUNDED BULLETIN BOARDS FOR NORWAY LAKE ROAD, AND VOLUNTEERS BUILT THEM. THEY HAVE BEEN USED FOR POSTING ASSOCIATION BUSINESS AND NOTICES. THE PUBLIC CAN PLACE NOTICES THAT HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE.

IN 1989, THE ASSOCIATION ORDERED HATS AND T-SHIRTS WITH OUR NORWAY LAKE LOGO. PROFITS FROM THE SALE OF THESE ITEMS HAVE BEEN USED TO FUND AN ANNUAL PICNIC AND OUR JULY FLOTILLA. THE BALL CAPS REMAIN A POPULAR SELLER WITH NORWAY LAKERS AS WELL AS A GREAT GIFT FOR GUEST SPEAKERS. IN 1996, OUR BESTSELLING YEAR, WE PRODUCED A PROFIT OF \$1340.

ONE OF OUR NEWEST CONCERNS IS THE K AND P TRAIL AT THE WESTERN END OF OUR LAKE. THE K AND P RAILROAD CEASED OPERATING IN 1963 AND THE TRACKS WERE TORN UP IN 1974. AT THAT TIME THE ROADBED WAS USED AS A COTTAGE ACCESS ROAD BY SOME LAKE COTTAGERS AND LOCALS WERE ABLE TO ACCESS THE LAKE FOR FISHING. THE LAND HAS BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE K AND P TRAIL ASSOCIATION, WHICH HAS BEEN DEVELOPING A LONG RANGE PLAN. AT PRESENT THEY WISH TO RESTRICT THE TRAIL TO SNOWMOBILES IN WINTER, AND BAN ALL VEHICLE TRAFFIC IN SUMMERS. OUR ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES AND CONCERNED COTTAGERS HAVE BEEN MONITORING THE SITUATION AND ATTENDING MEETINGS. LOCAL RESIDENTS WANT TO MAINTAIN THEIR ACCESS TO THE LAKE AND HAVE ASKED FOR CONTINUED VEHICLE ACCESS. THIS UNAUTHORIZED ACCESS TO OUR LAKE HAS BEEN SPOILED BY A MINORITY WHO LIGHT FIRES, DRINK, BREAK BEER BOTTLES, AND CREATE A GENERAL NUISANCE. IT IS A DELICATE SITUATION, AND ONE THAT THE PRESENT ASSOCIATION MUST INVOLVE ITSELF IN OVER THE COMING YEAR.

WHY DOES NORWAY LAKE STAY HEALTHY? WE HAVE A HARD WORKING ASSOCIATION WHOSE COTTAGERS CARE ABOUT MANY ISSUES -- AND, AS WITH MANY THINGS IN LIFE, WE HAVE HAD A GENEROUS HELPING OF LUCK.

GARRY ANDERSON,