

November 2014



URLA Newsletter

Upper Rideau Lake Association
Box 67, Westport, Ontario, K0G1X0

President's Message-Jayne MacDonald

Normally we try to live with and enjoy nature and the wildlife at the lake but this year proved difficult. During the long winter a handful of creatures took refuge in our pump house including raccoons, mice and garter snakes. Flying squirrels were hiding out in the bird house. In May we were glad to see the mink scavenging the dead fish along the shoreline until we realized they were stashing them under the floorboards of the pump house. June brought out the muskrats and July a lone beaver was trolling the shoreline and munching on a few dogwoods.

By August nature didn't seem pleasant at all. The lake was slowly turning green and the biggest menace of them all the cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) had taken over.

Some of the lake residents reported rashes and itchy skin and eyes when in contact with the water. The Ministry of the Environment was called and low concentrations of toxins were reported. The health unit issued warnings about the poor water quality that we passed on to anyone on our e-mail list and posted on our Facebook page.

The lake cleared but many people were left with questions and concerns. What happened? Was the Westport lagoon issue to blame? What can we do? Will this happen again next year?

Some of us had lived through this before about 25 years ago but now there is a heightened awareness of the dangerous toxins that these algal blooms contain. Boiling the water doesn't help and those who draw water from the lake were left with properties barely usable at all.

We're back to the basics. Again we need to keep vigilant with respect to the Westport lagoon situation, we need communication and education. We will fight for zero discharge into the lake. We need to ensure that our members around the lake are aware of what is going on and can both take precautions in unhealthy situations and make environmentally sound decisions. We need to promote best septic system practices and shoreline restoration and maintenance.

By late August this year the lake at least looked clearer. Some people were still wary but many returned to the water. In September otters were out playing and the loons were gathering. If only those squirrels and mice hadn't moved into the cottage!

Highlights- URLA AGM 2014

The Upper Rideau Lake Association's 25th Annual General Meeting held on July 12 at the North Crosby Hall was attended by 90 people.

We appreciated Jim Mahoney from the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change documenting the current situation at the Westport Wastewater Facility (Snowfluent) and accepting questions from our members.

Other speakers and attendees included Steve Clark (MPP-Leeds-Grenville), Township of Rideau Lakes Mayor Ron Holman, Emily Bacon from the Centre for Sustainable Watersheds, Jane Lyster from the Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and Don Rasmussen from the Rideau Lakes Environmental Foundation.

Members expressed their concerns about the discharges from the Westport lagoons. All are hopeful that a permanent solution (without further impact on Upper Rideau Lake) will be found.

What can you do to protect our lake?

- Plant and maintain a shoreline buffer zone
see enclosed plant order sheet
- Maintain your septic systems.
- Report suspicious algae blooms
- Help us fight for ZERO discharge into our lake.
- Reduce phosphate use.

We would like to congratulate the winners of our recent Municipal Election...

Rideau Lakes Township

Mayor- Ron Holman

Councilors North Crosby-
Ron Pollard and Bob
Lavoie

The Village of Westport

Mayor- Robin Jones

Councilors- Frank Huth,
Jackalyn Brady, Mark
Parliament and Gerald
Schwinghamer

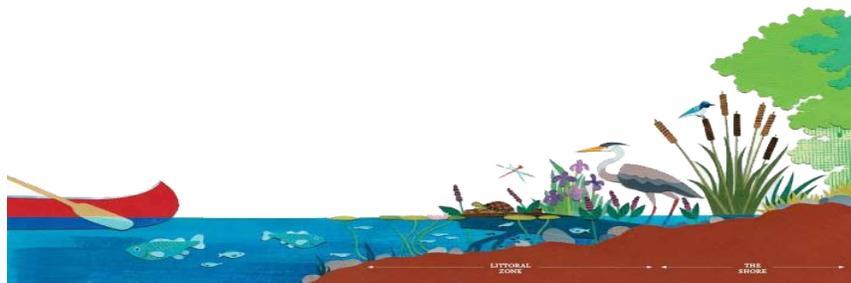
LOVE YOUR LAKE

Thank you to all of our volunteers who ferried the Love Your Lake students around our lake this summer. The in-field phase of the project was completed this July. Boat drivers included Tim Nash, Peter Newgard, Shelly Bacon, Peter Holmes, Jacob Thomas, Graham Beaton, Jack Vena, Ruth Ferguson and myself.

As outlined in our June newsletter, Love Your Lake is a shoreline assessment and stewardship program designed to identify shoreline restoration or improvement opportunities and suggest voluntary actions that each of us can take on our properties to contribute towards the health of the Upper Rideau Lake.

The shoreline information that the students collected this summer is currently being used to produce individual reports that will be available to all property owners in 2015. These reports, complete with a picture of your property, include summaries of the shoreline features observed that contribute towards a healthy lake as well as recommendations on how you can maintain or improve your shoreline.

With the spring newsletter you will receive a buck slip (coupon) with a unique code allowing you to access your personalized report on-line. Please watch for them in our next newsletter. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at colleen.holmes3117@gmail.com or at 613-737-3117.



Water Quality

We all know natural lake water is not sterile. There is always potential for the water we swim and recreate in to be contaminated for one reason or another. Normally any risk to our health is minimal. The bacterial content of the water could change daily. At times, like after a heavy rain, the level of bacteria in the lake can increase significantly. E. coli, a bacteria found in the gut of warm blooded animals including humans, is usually the indicator for this contamination.

The Foley Mountain beach, located in Little Bay, is the only public beach on the Upper Rideau Lake and it is tested weekly during the summer months. The results are then posted on the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit website. According to the health unit common sources of contamination of beach water include, bathers, birds, surface water runoff, animals, sewage spills, private sewage disposal systems and pleasure boats. The results for the last fifteen years indicate the beach is not in an area of the lake that is regularly susceptible to contamination.

The recreation water quality objective of 100 colony forming units (CFU/100ml) for E. coli was exceeded in two areas of the lake tested by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) on June 11th of this year. On June 11th during a substantial rainfall the Westport site near the lagoon discharge was extremely turbid and tested at a high level of E. coli, 5100 CFU/100mL. On the same day Kane's Bay and Little Bay were at 168 and 22 CFU/100mL respectively. Subsequent testing of the E. coli at the Westport site on July 25th resulted in 6 CFU/100mL. Of the 156 samples RVCA took between 2005 and 2013 none were above 116 CFU/ 100mL and the average was 8 CFU/100mL with only 2 samples above the standard.

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Water Quality- continued

Blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) are different. Naturally occurring, these algae can form large, unpleasant blooms when the conditions are favourable. Ministry of the Environment information sheets indicate that in Ontario phosphorus tends to be the nutrient that controls how much algae can grow. The blooms have potential to contain a variety of toxins which can be released into the water after the growth has diminished. This year much of our lake was affected by unsightly blooms ranging from scummy, pea green soup to turquoise paint-like films on the surface. When the Ministry tested the Upper Rideau Lake low concentrations of toxins were present. The health unit issued warnings about contact with the water, eating fish and pet safety. **We were reminded that boiling, chlorinating or UV treatment of water that contains blue-green algae will not purify it.**

<http://www.ontario.ca/environment-and-energy/blue-green-algae>



We continue to monitor the Westport situation

URLA wrote a letter of support for the village's two applications for funding from the federal and provincial infrastructure grant programs. Both applications involve the water and sewage system and have passed the first stage successfully.

Members of URLA attended a meeting in Brockville with Steve Clark (MPP) along with Big Rideau Lake Association and the Rideau Lakes Environmental Foundation. He shares our concerns about the lake.

At her request, we had a great two hour chat with newly elected Westport mayor Robin Jones soon after her victory. She allowed us to air the URLA's concerns and listened patiently as we did so. Of course she can't solve all our problems but hopefully with the lines of communication open we can work towards improving things for all of us.

Stay tuned!

Finding the Balance in Eastern Ontario's Lake Country

The **Upper Rideau Lake Association** is a member of the working group on a study titled, *People Aquatic Plants and Healthy Lakes: Finding the Balance in Eastern Ontario's Lake Country*. We attended a meeting in September and discussions included:

- research on sediment cores and macrophyte biomass
- a citizen watch website to report green algae blooms
- community events and workshops
- fundraising

Also included on the agenda was the issue of blue-green algae blooms and the establishment and implementation of best practises with respect to communicating with lake association members, the health unit and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change.

This year sediment core samples from Upper Rideau were collected and they are currently being processed at Carleton University. The students will analyze diatoms in the core which will give us an idea how much the phosphorus concentration in the lake has changed over the last ~200 years and the chlorophyll a which will give an indication of change in algal concentrations over the same time period.

Results will be available next year





Can you contribute to the battle against Blue-Green Algae?

Although last summer was not overly warm, our lake had more algae than usual. And in August, a number of incidents of Blue-Green algae were reported. This may have left you asking “What can I do to combat this happening more often”. We often feel helpless and think that there is little that we can do. We blame the algae blooms on causes out of our control. Experts would disagree.

Reducing the nutrients that leach into our lake minimizes the conditions that produce algae. We should all be planting a ***buffer zone of at least 10 metres of native plants*** along our shoreline. Not only would this reduce the number of nutrients leaching into the lake but it also protects against erosion. So if you want to improve the water quality of the Upper Rideau, take advantage of the plants that URLA is offering again in 2015.

Choose from the plants below that prefer either moist or dry conditions and you will be improving soil retention, preventing erosion and limiting nutrient leaching into the lake, all of which ultimately contribute to better water quality and higher property values.

Trees available this year include: Sugar Maple, White Cedar, Larch/Tamarack White Spruce, White Birch and Burr Oak. All trees are bare-root and small in size compared to those that you might purchase at a commercial nursery.

Shrubs include Buttonbush, Highbush Cranberry and Black Elderberry that like wet feet, Serviceberry and Gray Dogwood that prefer dry feet and Ninebark that can tolerate both wet and dry conditions.

Minimum orders **per variety** of both trees and shrubs are groups of 10 plants.

Orders must be placed by **Friday, December 12, 2014** by contacting Colleen Holmes via email at colleen.holmes3117@gmail.com or by telephone at 613-737-3117.

Plants must be picked up between **11 a.m. and noon** on **Saturday, May 2, 2015** at the North Crosby Municipal Yard on County Road 10.

(If this date is not possible for you please let me know when you place your order.)

Numbers are limited --- reserve your plants now!





Executive for 2014/15

President- Jayne MacDonald
-613-549-0732
Vice Pres. – Anne Carter
Past Pres. – Wendy Stewart
Treasurer – Murray Kane
Secretary – Jennifer Davis
Membership and Community Affairs- Anne Carter
Lakeshore- Colleen Holmes
Water Quality- J. MacDonald
Newsletter- Carol Thomas
Members at Large –
-Bob Branson
-Diana Kemp
Web Master- Huw Davis

E-MAIL:

jmacdonald43@cogeco.ca

Mail: P.O. Box 67,
Westport, Ontario,
K0G 1X0

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.urla.ca

We're also on [Facebook!](#)

URLA 2015 AGM
JULY 11, 2015
NORTH CROSBY C.C.
WESTPORT
875 CONCESSION RD 8

All Candidates Meeting

Kudos to the organizing committee of our first municipal all-candidates meeting for Township of Rideau Lakes Mayoral and Ward 4 candidates.

All the eligible candidates participated and answered both prearranged and written questions from the floor. The community hall in Newboro was full to overflowing for the Thanksgiving weekend event.

Joan Duncan, Wendy Stewart, George Ingram, Jayne MacDonald and John McDowell were a successful team and special thanks for a job well done!

A Big Thank You to ...

Our Corporate Sponsors-

The Cove, Cross Street and Co. Accountants, Internet Kingston and Westport Village Rentals- *We are forever grateful for your support.*

Our Many Volunteers!

Buoy Program- George Ingram, Don Rasmussen and Peter Newgard install and remove our marker buoys each spring and fall, helping us stay safe on the water. Thank you also to Elizabeth Newgard who also helped this year.

Lake Partner Program- Diane and Brian Wilkinson, Colleen Holmes and Jayne MacDonald collect water samples and measure water clarity

Rideau Lakes Environmental Foundation- Don Rasmussen and Anne Carter represent Upper Rideau Lake. RLEF helps fund many programs, we encourage your donations-*** please make sure to direct your tax deductible donations to Upper Rideau Lake *** see attached brochure.

Road Reps- Our many Road Reps who help circulate information. We still need reps for Sugarhouse Lane, Adrains Creek and Mulville Bay Lane.

A special thank you goes out to **Louise Kane** for once again organizing the BBQ that followed our AGM, to Fraser Nash who provided tech support for the AGM and helped BBQ and to **Cliff Udall** who volunteered his time to repaint the URLA sign located at the Narrows.

About Our Organization...

URLA is a volunteer, not-for-profit organization comprised of community members surrounding the Upper Rideau Lake. The Association surveys the lake for potential problems, monitors water quality, promotes shoreline maintenance and restoration and also gives a strong voice for its members to the regional bodies governing the lake.

Our membership year runs from July 1st to June 30th. Our membership fee is still \$30 per year.

It's not too late to send in your membership for 2014/15, the membership form is available on our website. Your updated contact information with membership renewal facilitates contact when the need arises.

**We encourage you to join our fight to protect OUR LAKE.
We want zero discharge into Upper Rideau Lake!!**

- Glen Murray -Minister of Environment and Climate Change- gmurray.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org
- Steve Clark -Leeds and Grenville MPP- info@steveclarkmpp.com
- Gord Brown -Leeds and Grenville MP- gord.brown.c1@parl.gc.ca
- Mayor Robin Jones -Mayor of Westport- rjones@villageofwestport.ca
- Mayor Ron Holman -Mayor of Rideau Lakes Township- mayor@twprideaulakes.on.ca