



## Sparrow Lake Association (SLA) *News and Views*

Serving Lakefront Property Owners and Cottagers

Lock # 42 Washago—Lock # 43 Swift Rapids

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### CONTENT

1. Greetings from the President .....Bob Corbett
2. A Report from Your Permanent Resident Board Member.....John Cooper
3. Membership: What's In It for Me? .....Jill King
4. Environmental Issues and Lake Water Quality.....Jill King & Wendy Miller
5. A New Location and New Events for the SLA Regatta.....Jane Bowman
6. Local Entertainment: Gravenhurst Opera House.....
7. Historic Boat Rides—HMS Segwun and Wenonah II.....
8. Ecottage Films—Check out the Website.....
9. Important Dates for 2015.....

**Note:** Click on underlined text in this newsletter to access relevant websites.



Photo courtesy of Barb Barrowman

Welcome back to another cottage season! And congratulations ... we made it through one of the coldest winters in years.

This year's message is written a few weeks later than in past years. The water levels have gone through the regular spring routine, rising to near-flooding conditions in mid-April. They have now dropped to almost mid-summer levels. I hope the spring flooding in the past few years in many cottage regions has not resulted in too much water being drained in the fall. Although this past winter was very cold, snow levels were much lower than in previous years, and the spring run-off has not refilled all the feeder lakes to their regular levels. The lower water levels will make it easier for you to get your docks and water lines installed, especially when it is below the leaks of the old hip waders that you refuse to throw out.

Your SLA Board monitors local activities that involve water quality, municipal affairs, the Trent Severn Waterways, the Ontario Power Generation, water safety, and OPP involvement. As mentioned in every newsletter, a portion of your membership fee is paid to FOCA (the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association). Since FOCA represents all cottage associations in Ontario, they have the backing of hundreds of associations like us. Strength in numbers allows FOCA to push for results in all levels of government. I urge you to check out the [FOCA website](#) and see all the available information on many subjects related to cottaging in this area.

An exciting news announcement: After decades of holding our annual SLA Regatta at Bayview-Wildwood Resort, we have moved the Regatta across the bay to Sparrow Lake Camp. The number of Regatta participants has grown recently, and so has the number of guests using the facilities at Bayview-Wildwood. Sundays have long been a changeover day at the Resort, but Resort guests often now stay the extra day on the August long weekend (which is when the Regatta is held). There is not enough waterfront space for everyone. We understand Bayview-Wildwood's concerns and respect their request to either move the Regatta date or move the location. We continue to support Bayview-Wildwood Resort and urge you all to do the same.

After several years of organizing the Regatta, Mike Ewing has stepped down. Our new Regatta Chair is Jane Bowman. With a new location and new organizer I hope we can get as many members as possible involved in this event. Please see Jane's report in this newsletter.

In past years the SLA has also organized a Fish Derby and Picnic. It was a great way to get kids out to experience fishing, and then to wrap up the morning with a barbeque. Last year's event had to be cancelled due to the low number of participants. Unfortunately, this left Silver Pines Resort with extra food, drinks, and ice cream that had been purchased. There had been mention of trying to rekindle this event, perhaps even hosting it at a SLA member's cottage. If you are interested in helping or organizing this event, please contact us.

I also encourage you to view the Sparrow Lake Association website on a regular basis. It's a great tool for checking dates, activities, and information about your cottage association. I also ask that all our members promote the benefits of being a member to your cottage neighbours. Not only is the \$30/year or \$75 for 3 years a reasonable price to pay for family admission to the Regatta, membership fees are also used to cover the costs of testing and monitoring water quality, staying connected to FOCA, and covering prizes and awards for the Regatta.

I hope you all have a great 2015 cottage season, and I look forward to seeing you throughout the summer!

Cheers, Bob

Here are some observations from your permanent resident board member.

Every member is entitled to access the [FOCA website](#). I attended their annual general meeting on behalf of the SLA. FOCA researches subjects of interest to seasonal residents. Rather than adding duplicate articles in this newsletter on water quality, taxation, significant OPP costs, succession issues, etc., we suggest that you visit the FOCA website whenever you are curious about cottage issues. FOCA has also recently set up an [invasive species monitoring program](#).

[Safe Quiet Lakes](#) is an organization founded in 2011. It is supported by the Muskoka Lakes Association and it focuses in on “lake-use etiquette.” The organization advocates for safe, quiet, respectful use of our waters. With their guidelines, boaters including those with 50-plus-foot cruisers, one-person kayaks, and paddleboards can all enjoy their time on and in the water. If you have children, grandchildren, or friends who would benefit from brushing up on their water awareness and boating skills, you might suggest that they visit this website!

We are well aware that our biggest threat to enjoyable use of our lake and the river is the increasingly nutrient-rich contamination of our water. This contamination encourages the rapidly growth of blue-green algae and Eurasian Water Milfoil. We are seeing evidence that this scourge is decreasing our property values, as it is so easy for prospective purchasers to simply look in to the water at most properties and observe either one or both of these invasive species.

We stated in previous newsletters that the main cause of this enrichment is the increasing urban runoff from the Oak Ridges Moraine that drains into Cooks Bay and Lake Simcoe, through the Trent-Severn River and Sparrow Lake, and eventually into southeastern Georgian Bay. The potassium and phosphorus fertilization of the Holland Marsh also results in the runoff of nutrient-enriched water that follows the same path as the urban runoff.

The federal government recognizes this challenging dilemma. As noted in past newsletters, a \$29 million budget is available from the government to organizations embarking on programs to study and recommend possible ways to reduce this huge and growing challenge to the enjoyment of our waters and the resulting decrease in waterfront property values. Many projects are underway that have been granted funding from this \$29 million. If you are interested in looking at these projects, they can be found by searching the following words on the internet: “Lake Simcoe southeastern Georgian Bay Community Stewardship program.” Another way to access this information is by emailing [LSGBCSP@ontario.ca](mailto:LSGBCSP@ontario.ca).

Two highlights of this program: there are subsidies of up to \$6000 to improve errant or failing septic systems. This does not cover new or expanded systems required by a building permit. There is also funding of up to \$15 000 for rebuilding shorelines—as long as the construction is environmentally friendly.

For those paying taxes to Severn Township, the declared tax increase for 2015 is 1.8%. For those members who pay taxes to the Town of Gravenhurst, the declared increase is 5.3%. This will increase further when the district and school board increases are added, but this information is not available at this time. As you can understand, considerable displeasure has been expressed by Gravenhurst taxpayers and the local press!

Electricity is going to increase across Ontario by 4.5%, so this increase will apply to seasonal residents as it will for your principal residence.

Sincerely, John

Below are some of the many things the SLA does for its members. Please pass these notes on to your cottage neighbours and friends, and encourage them to join us!

- Voices can be heard—of all Sparrow Lake property owners
- Timely discussions—for all SLA members
- Visibility at local municipal council meetings—to represent our property rights
- Membership in FOCA (the voice of 50 000 cottagers) as the Sparrow Lake Association
- Sustainability—cottage stewards bringing our precious lakewater into the future
- Environmental protection—promoting ecological lakefront development; monitoring water quality
- Lake development—monitoring zoning bylaw issues in Severn & Muskoka Townships
- An active website—keeping cottagers informed of current events and activities all year
- Membership—easy online registration or use a printable form to mail to SLA
- E-blasts—updates on upcoming events; reminder notices
- SLA newsletter online—including current events, key issues, and SLA initiatives
- Social media communications (e.g., Facebook)
- Networking opportunities—socialize with other members and keep informed
- Summertime events—family and friends annual picnic; fishing derby, regatta, etc.
- Fundraising—annual golf tournament to raise donations to a local organization
- Annual general meeting in August—all members can attend to discuss issues
- Education workshops (e.g., boating safety, estate planning, environmental concerns)
- Waterfront safety—liaison with O.P.P.; promoting safety issues and safe boating
- Prevention and protection—placing markers on rocks; identifying hazards

If your membership expired in 2012, 2013 or 2014, you will have received an email advising you of your expiry date. We encourage you to please renew your Sparrow Lake Association Membership early in the season. If your email address has changed in the last year or so, or you haven't heard from us, please complete the form.

1-Year Membership: \$30 / 3-Year Membership: \$75

There are two ways to renew:

**1)** Print the Membership Application found on the website (under the Join tab) and mail the form with a cheque payable to Sparrow Lake Association. Please be sure to complete all the information on the membership form! Mail your membership application to: Sparrow Lake Association Treasurer—Judy Moore Vey 118 O'Connor Crescent Richmond Hill, ON L4C 7R7

**2)** Send an email transfer from your bank to [treasurer@sparrowlakeassociation.com](mailto:treasurer@sparrowlakeassociation.com). Follow your bank's standard e-transfer procedures. Please complete the Membership form and scan and email it to the above email address so that we can update your information on file.

#### 4. Environmental Issues and Lake Water Quality

Jill King & Wendy Miller

This summer, the SLA “Water Gals” (Wendy and Jill) will boat to the six designated areas around the lake to take water samples that test for bacterial count and e-coli. All the areas tested in 2014 were negative. Every five years additional tests for specific chemicals are performed, so this year we will report additional information. All results will be posted (as was done in 2014) on the [SLA website environmental page](#).

Your SLA Water Gals work with the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) Lake Partner program. Each spring and fall, this government program mails our testing kits. We then send our water test samples to the MOE government laboratory. The MOE Lake Partner program monitors all Ontario lakes for phosphorus increase. Last year’s MOE report showed an overall increase across our lakes. For more information, please read about [FOCA’s efforts in controlling water quality issues](#), and offer them your support where possible.

#### 5. A New Location and New Events for the SLA Regatta

Jane Bowman

Despite years with steady or occasional downpours, the Regatta has always had a great turnout. The Regatta is a wonderful way for all to participate in friendly competition such as rowing, paddling, running, and swimming events. There are other fun activities for all ages.



All Regatta photos courtesy of Jane Bowman



This year we are excited to announce our new location for the 2015 Regatta: **Sparrow Lake Camp!** This will provide an opportunity to introduce new events and activities to enjoy with friends, family, and fellow cottagers.

**When?** Sunday August 2, 2015. Registration starts at 9 a.m.; events start at 9:30 a.m. sharp.

**Where?** Sparrow Lake Camp—Address: [1437 United Church Camp Lane](#) (off Torpitt Road)

- Limited parking for boats, but plenty of car parking
- there is a main hall for registration and for other activities such as the silent auction, etc. (Prize donations would be gratefully appreciated.)



## What?

- New events will include
  - basketball, volleyball, tug-of-war, and “minute to win it” challenges
  - Carpentry and pie baking
  - Lucky raffles and crafts
  - Potato sack races
- Old favorites—casting, inner tube, swim races, and the mini-marathon will make a comeback on a new landscape.
  - The camp has graciously offered participants the use of their canoes and kayaks (life jackets are mandatory)
  - Many races are done as intergenerational teams.
- BBQ fare and drinks will be available

It's wonderful to see combinations of different family members teaming up to earn points for prestigious awards such as the Cottage Cup and the Spirit Award.

After the morning swimming and water events come the boat races and landlubber events.

The Regatta would not be possible without the generous hospitality of the Sparrow Lake Camp. We would also like to thank Bayview-Wildwood Resort for hosting our event for the balance of the last twenty years. Thanks also go out to our many volunteers and sponsors.

Come out to the **SLA Regatta on Sunday August 2, 2015** to participate in this fun-packed annual summer family event. Watch for an e-blast confirming the events!



For more information, contact [Jane Bowman](#), or check for updates on the SLA website.

## 6. Local Entertainment—Gravenhurst Opera House

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Among the many options for entertainment in the area, the Gravenhurst Opera House has a [great lineup once again this spring and summer](#). See Shirley Valentine (currently playing), a comedy by Oscar Wilde, film nights, movie nights, and more. Check out their schedule and buy tickets soon!

## 7. Historic Boat Rides—RMS Segwun and Wenonah II

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Happy Spring from the *RMS Segwun & Wenonah II!*

See the double-sided flyer on the Links tab of the website that outlines exciting plans with the Muskoka Steamships this year, including the grand opening of KIDZONE at Muskoka Boat & Heritage Centre and family cruises aboard Wenonah II.

## 8. Ecottage Films—Check out the Website

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Stunning footage of Ontario lakes' shorelines are now available to view (for free) at [www.ecottagefilms.com](http://www.ecottagefilms.com).

## 9. Dates to Remember for 2015

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Photo courtesy of Meredith Oberfrank

- Sunday, August 2: SLA Regatta (see Jane Bowman's article for further details)
- Saturday, August 8, 9:30 a.m.: Annual General Meeting at Bayview-Wildwood Resort

**Have a fantastic and safe summer!**