



Climate Change is coming to Muskoka

In January of this year, the Muskoka Watershed Council (MWC) released a report on Climate Change and what effects it will have on Muskoka's environment.

MWC looked at mid-century data to determine the impacts of climate change on lakes & waterways, forests & rural land, our infrastructure and our lifestyles by 2050.

The MWC projected climate change is based on mean daily maximum temperatures and minimum daily temperatures.

- Currently July and August have the highest temperatures at 25 or 26 degrees. They anticipate that in 2050, temperatures will be in the 30 degree zone for the same timeframe.
- December, January and February now show below freezing temperatures. By 2050, only January will show below freezing temperatures – and just barely.
- Currently we have 3 to 4 days a summer where we have a heat-wave (over 30 degrees). Soon that will change to a month's worth of days where the temperatures are over 30 degrees.
- The future is expected to show more summer heat-waves and more freeze/thaw cycles in the winter.
- More precipitation is expected in every month - except July, August, September and October. These months will be drier due to higher temperatures. This will cause more moisture evaporation and the soil will have less water available for our streams and rivers that flow into our lakes.
- Annual precipitation is expected to increase by 10% over today's annual precipitation. There is a shift of precipitation towards the winter and spring; the summer and fall will be drier.

The report also focussed on forests and the impacts we will see on trees. MWC believes our current Muskoka trees' growth zones will be moving north. By mid-century the trees in Muskoka now will find they survive better north of Muskoka. Parry Sound will have more of the trees we have now. So forests will change.

- **White Spruce** will most likely leave Muskoka. It is most 'comfortable' in places like James Bay.

- **White Pine's** preferred habitat is in northern climates – so it's susceptible.
- And we should enjoy our maple syrup now – **Maple** trees will head north of North Bay.

What happens to these trees – they become stressed without enough water, they will have shorter lives, won't reproduce and the samplings will be weak.

Watch for more information on the report coming out. The full report can be found on MWC website at www.muskokawatershedcouncil.org

According to Dr. Peter Sale "Muskoka is a special place – and can remain so if we have the wisdom to plan ahead and act".

Photo by Andrew Hicks



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It's been a rough past few weeks in Muskoka with the flooding. As some of you know I live on Lake Muskoka now and work remotely or travel for business. The flooding has become so extreme, again this year, with so many passionate people very upset with this new trend, that many of us have spent most of the time in early April dealing with the flood personally, trying to save our docks, boathouses and belongings. We have again experienced severe impacts to not only waterfront property around Muskoka, but we now have another impact to the Environment, with material shoreline erosion and its potential impact on the water quality.

As a reaction to this flood emergency, I launched an MLA Water Level Task Force on April 11th. This was after a continued rapid rise in the lake water levels, after Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry did not lower lake levels as much as they have in previous years, including Spring 2015. On the big lakes, the water was left approximately 16" higher than last year during the February drawdown. These metrics are formally published on a real time basis by Environment Canada. For our members who use MLA email correspondence, you have received a "flood" of email notes from us communicating what has been happening, as the original flood watch was issued on March 30th and we tracked the water level rise. To compound the excess high water, the ice had not all melted and many shorelines were exposed to ice and high water levels, over most docks and strong winds for almost a full week, moving ice flows around with tremendous force damaging anything in its path including pushing boathouse walls down.

The MLA Water Level Task Force has been well received by our members, the press and most importantly the local politicians. The MLA requested, and were granted, immediate meetings with all four area Mayors in Gravenhurst, Bracebridge, Muskoka Lakes and Seguin. We have also already met with the District of Muskoka Chair, District Director of Environmental & Watershed Programs and the District Commissioner of Planning. Among other important influencers, including our meeting with our MPP, Norm Miller in Queen's Park.

The mandate for the task force is simple: The MLA will gather the facts leading to the recurring Spring floods in Muskoka and propose rational recommendations to the District of Muskoka, MNRF and other government regulating bodies to mitigate property damage caused by flooding. The MLA will take the lead in representing cottage/waterfront property owners in Muskoka in collaboratively working with the Provincial Government, the MNRF and the signatories to the Muskoka River Water



Management Plan (MRWMP) to formulate specific and balanced action plans to minimize future flooding events from occurring.

The MLA is assembling all the facts, preparing a briefing and has requested, at the time of writing this mid-April, a meeting with the Minister of the MNRF and his Chief of Staff. We are not alone in this matter and fight. A key contributor to the flooding is the MRWMP, which expired in March 2016. The MNRF has approved a 5 year extension to this plan, which is clearly no longer working. The plan must incorporate climate change considerations, like excessive spring rainfall events. The good news, which just happens to align with our focus, is that the Township of Muskoka Lakes Council and the District of Muskoka have passed a motion to request MNRF not honour this extension and re-write the plan now. We want to provide special thanks to the MLA Past Director Phil Harding, now Township of Muskoka Lakes District Councillor and Chair of the District Engineering and Public Works Committee for his support.

We also need your support on this material issue. We all dealt with this in 2013, again to a lesser extent in 2014 and here we are again in spring 2016. We have issued a Flood Damage survey to members and we need your information. For those who received damage from the flood and did not respond, please help

this cause by completing the short survey. You can find this here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MLAWaterLevels>

Michael Hart - President

MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS UPDATE:

WE NEED YOU!

THIS IS A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION. WE ARE DOING OUR UTMOST AS A TEAM TO TACKLE THIS HEAD ON.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? SPEAK TO YOUR COTTAGE NEIGHBOURS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO JOIN THE MLA NOW.

THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS AS THOUSAND'S OF VOICES CAN'T BE IGNORED.

HERE IS THE LINK TO OUR MEMBERSHIP SIGN UP:

<https://mla.on.ca/membership/MembershipPayment.aspx>



The Ties That Bind

Very soon the MLA will again be releasing its annual yearbook for members. A tradition almost since the formation of the MLA in 1894 it is eagerly anticipated by many members each spring as a precursor to the launch of summer fun in Muskoka.

For this year's book, we are delighted to welcome back John Challis as Editor. John was at the helm of the MLA yearbook for many years and graciously accepted our invitation to add one more edition of the MLA yearbook to his bookcase.

We hope you'll look forward to some of the generational stories he's sourced. Patrick Boyer has created a feature on two multigenerational local families which describes an early tourist industry built by people to cater to visitors just beginning to visit to a newly discovered vacation destination. Similarly,

Richard Tatley's feature on the history of steamships reinforces that the ships were both completely reliant on, and indispensable to, cottagers.

Over generations, the line between seasonal and local resident has become increasingly blurred. Today, many seasonal residents have opted to live permanently in Muskoka. Sandy Lockhart profiles three people who are in that blurred zone. Tamsen Tillson, Elizabeth Mason and Lawton Osler have like many waterfront residents, long standing ties to Muskoka.

There have been times when divisions open again. Sometimes pitting association members against year round friends and neighbours. Those wounds to eventually heal with things returning to normal again, but there is always the chance of it happening again.

This issue of the MLA Yearbook celebrates the generations that have loved and built Muskoka. It also serves to point out that today, the line sometimes drawn between seasonal and permanent residents is as grey as ever.



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Is a potential new member around the corner?

We hope you'll help us grow the MLA by passing the benefits of membership on to friends or neighbours who aren't yet a member, and asking them to join you in preserving and protecting Muskoka.

Growing our membership is in the best interest of all MLA members. A larger MLA gives us more resources, and more clout where it counts.

When welcoming the new cottage owners down the road, be sure to mention the MLA and all the benefits of MLA membership: access to our popular Advantage Card, the ShoreLines and NewsBites newsletters, and access to a summer's-worth of MLA events – and the pride of knowing you are doing your share to preserve Muskoka's unique environment for future generations.

We hope you encourage your fellow Muskokans to join the MLA.
Muskoka is worth protecting.

Seedling Day Reminder

The Muskoka Lakes Association's 2016 Seedling Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 21, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Port Carling Community Centre. Again this year, MLA staff will be on-site, distributing pre-ordered plant species. If you haven't ordered yet give us a call - we may still have a limited selection available. Native waterfront plants prevent shoreline erosion and improve water quality.

MUSKOKA LAKES ASSOCIATION

REGATTA

SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2016

mla.on.ca

DON'T GET STRANDED

Ensure that you and your boat are prepared for a day on the water

It's a beautiful day; the sun is shining and you've just launched your boat for the start of another season on the water. And the thoughts of that tough winter just past are quickly forgotten. Everyone's on board, excited about the day ahead, so off you go.

The day unfolds as you had hoped it would. Until a problem leaves your boat dead in the water.

It could be that you've run out of gas or you've had a mechanical breakdown of some kind. What to do? Likely what you did not do is check your boat thoroughly before heading out. And unfortunately, you are not alone.

www.smartboater.ca was created by the Canadian Safe Boating Council in partnership with the National Search and Rescue Secretariat to remind Canadians during Safe Boating Awareness Week, which runs from May 20st - 27th and throughout the entire boating season to review their safe boating check list before heading out onto the water.

Scott Miller, a Maritime Search and Rescue Coordinator with the Canadian Coast Guard says: "75 to 80% of calls for help to the Coast Guard are non-distress calls; the most common ones deal with boats that have broken down, run aground or have just run out of gas which is far and away the most common call to the Coast Guard, and these are all situations that are entirely preventable by the boat operator."

Mechanical failures can strike any boater, any time. That's just part of boating. And it's not necessarily an indication that the boater has simply failed to properly look after the boat. Stuff happens!

But many calls for help are predictable and preventable. Have a proper check list for your boat and follow it before you head out, each and every time. Make sure that your boat is mechanically sound and that you have enough gas for your intended voyage with some in reserve. And file a sail plan or itinerary to help Search and Rescue find you in the event of a real emergency. A few simple steps will save you the embarrassment of making an unnecessary call for help and diverting search and rescue resources from areas where they might be needed more.

Review your check list BEFORE your leave – Be Prepared! Whether you use a power boat, sail boat, personal watercraft, canoe, kayak or fishing boat, find more information on a variety of boating safety tips by visiting www.SmartBoater.ca.



5 KEY STEPS TO SAFER BOATING

Wear your lifejacket:
Legally you must carry one on board, appropriately sized for each passenger. But don't just carry it, WEAR IT.

Don't drink and boat:
Boating under the influence is not just illegal; it's irresponsible. Wait until you get back to the pier to have that beer.

Take a boating course:
The final date for the pleasure-craft operator card is Sept. 15, 2009. Get yours before the deadline.

Be Prepared:
Ensure your boat has all the required safety gear and sufficient fuel. Be sure the weather is suitable for your vessel's capabilities.

Beware of Cold Water Risks:
Cold water is a significant risk. Learn how to protect yourself. Check out the reverse side of this brochure.

The Canadian Safe Boating Council is in the business of promoting safe and responsible boating throughout Canada. In conjunction with our partners and members we actively promote key safety messages nationally as well as sponsoring an Annual Symposium and the Canadian Safe Boating Awards.

To learn more visit us at our web site:
www.csbc.ca


Canadian Safe Boating Council



Eastern Hemlock – Monarchs of Our Forests

British Columbia has its towering old growth Douglas-Fir – Ontario has its white pine. British Columbia has large old western hemlock – Ontario has its – well – eastern hemlock. Parry Sound/Muskoka is part of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest Region in Canada and is blessed to have a rich diversity of tree species. Eastern hemlock (*tsuga Canadensis*) is common throughout much of this region and plays a vital role in shaping the forest environments in which it grows. Few trees have such a profound effect upon the forest as does hemlock. It often grows incredibly dense, lives to an old age (one specimen over 550 years old in Pennsylvania) and its needles that drop causes the soil to be more acidic so along with the high degree of shade it provides, there is usually little other vegetation growth underneath creating a park-like setting.

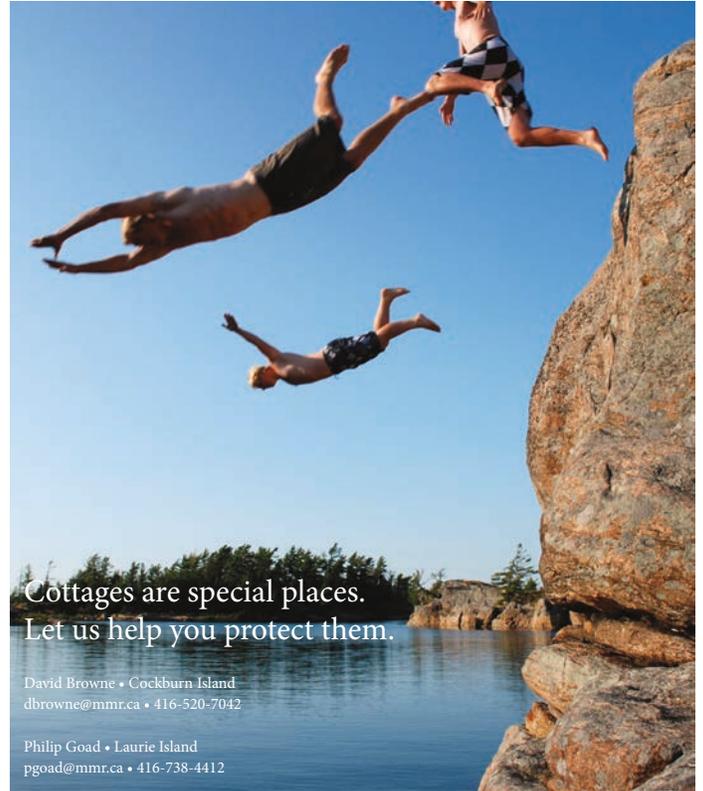
truly one of the most interesting trees that can be found in our local forests

To provide a brief description of eastern hemlock, it must be understood that it is a conifer as its seeds are borne in cones – small cones about 1.5-2.5 cm long which is a fraction of the size of pine cones- and like most conifers it retains most of its needles throughout the year. These needles are dark green and singly arranged and are only 1-2 cm long. Hemlock needles can be mistaken for balsam fir needles which are also flat – you can't roll either between your fingers – but hemlock needles are attached to twigs with a tiny stem. The soft, flat arrangement of needles on a heavily branched hemlock gives the tree a feathery appearance. When a hemlock matures, its bark becomes very rough, somewhat similar to a large white pine. However, if you break away a small piece of bark, there will be an unmistakable purple coloring on its underside.

Hemlock is very tolerant of shade meaning that it can germinate, survive and grow under the canopy of other trees and when more light is provided, the young tree can take advantage of the added space and light. Westwind Forest Stewardship manages hemlock under a partial cutting system that provides more light gradually to the younger trees – either through a system called shelterwood or selection implemented through tree marking. Removal of some of the larger trees ensures the renewal of the forest by providing release to younger trees and saplings. Forest managers normally rely on natural seed to renew the hemlock forest although planting is sometimes done to expand the occurrence of hemlock on our landscape. Fallen broadleaved leaves often smother small



A dense eastern hemlock stand with little sunlight reaching the forest floor so little understory vegetation exists. **Photo by Barry Davidson**



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hemlock seedlings so germinating plants sometimes survive best on an elevated platform such as a rotting log. When the log completely decays the hemlock tree will look like it's on stilts as the top part of its roots will be above ground.

The most well-understood association between eastern hemlock and wildlife is that with white-tailed deer in the winter. Hemlock creates a dense canopy that holds snow off the ground and reduces wind chill under stands of these densely crowned trees. Deer, which in this region migrate to deer yards in the winter, prefer these conditions for cover and ease of movement. Through the forest management plan for Crown land, Westwind must retain suitable levels of winter cover to help sustain deer populations. Ironically, deer will eat hemlock seedlings, especially in the winter when food is scarce, so they literally will eat themselves out of house and home. Cutting in and amongst the hemlock stands stimulates the growth of plants that deer use as food – which is often the lacking ingredient in deer yards.

Hemlock can be found in pure stands, mixed with white pine and very commonly be found as single trees, small clusters and large patches within tolerant hardwood stands including maple and yellow birch. Having hemlock trees within a hardwood forest creates a unique habitat feature, and one that a number of wildlife species exploit or require. For instance, the songbirds blackburnian warbler and the black-throated green warbler prefer to live mixtures of hemlock and hardwood.

Hemlock does not make great wood products for higher valued products such as furniture. It is often used in railway ties, dock pilings, in commercial buildings such as barns and in the manufacture of pallets

Continued on page 6



Eastern Hemlock – Monarchs of Our Forests *Continued from page 5*

and other lower end products. It is commonly known that once a nail is hammered into hemlock and the wood becomes fully dried, it is almost impossible to remove. Hemlock is susceptible to ring shake – which is the separation of the wood at the growth rings. We have all looked at a cross-section of a stump or log to count its rings to determine a tree's age – if gaps develop due to separation of the wood at the growth rings, this is ring shake that drastically reduces the utility of the hemlock wood. Historically, hemlock was prized for chemicals in its bark known as tannins which was used in curing leather.

Hemlock is often shallow-rooted making it susceptible to drought. However, the most common issue with hemlock is attack by the insect called the hemlock looper which is a smooth caterpillar that eats foliage. Approximately 15 years ago, many hemlock-covered islands on Georgian Bay were decimated by a significant outbreak of hemlock looper. Perhaps the biggest threat to our hemlock is an invasive insect – the hemlock woolly adelgid which arrived to North America from Japan in the 1950's. This tiny insect that covers itself with a white waxy substance has been found in the northeastern United States with tragic consequences for the survival of hemlock. Although it has yet to be an issue in Ontario, scientists and managers are keeping a close watch.

The eastern hemlock is truly one of the most interesting trees that can be found in our local forests and is representative of a large, long-lived monarch tree of our climax forests.

Barry Davidson is the Forest Manager for Westwind Forest Stewardship Inc., a not-for-profit community-based company responsible for forest management on Crown forests in the Muskoka-Almaguin-Parry Sound areas.

From The Forest - Barry Davidson R.P.F.



Eastern hemlock with its layered branches of thick foliage intercepts snow and reduces wind chill in deer wintering areas. Forest managers manage hemlock by partial cutting techniques that maintain sufficient cover for deer while providing release to younger hemlock. **Photo by Barry Davidson**



Don't forget your Advantage Card

By using your MLA Advantage Card or key fob, you will receive preferential pricing or special deals from more than 100 restaurants, retailers and service providers throughout Muskoka. A partial listing of offers is available on the MLA website and a full listing will be emailed to you in June.

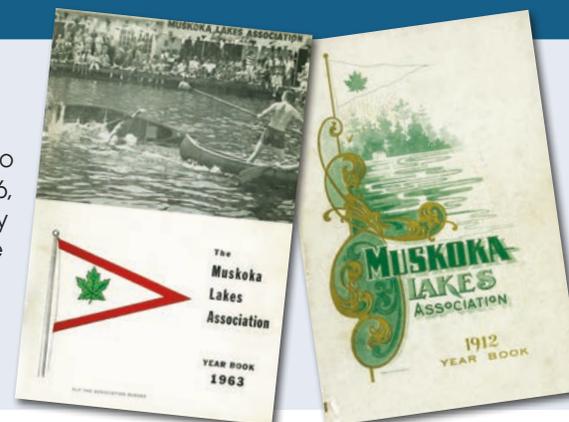
2016 Validation stickers will be included with your 2016 yearbook, or mailed to your permanent address if you are not eligible to receive or typically pick up your yearbook.

The MLA Advantage Card is about more than the benefits you receive as a member; it's part of our effort to encourage members to 'Stock up in Muskoka' supporting local business and strengthening the District economy.

What's in your Attic?

At the MLA we are constantly looking for additions to our collection of MLA memorabilia. Do you have any old yearbooks you'd like to clean out of your cottage? We are missing 1941, 1936, 1928, 1927, 1926, 1925, 1924, 1923, 1921, 1920, 1915, 1913 and any prior to 1912. Do you have any old trophies, medals, reward signs or burgees etc., that are simply collecting dust? We would be happy to take them off your hands.

Items can be dropped off at the MLA office at 65 Joseph Street in Port Carling (right beside the Home Hardware) or give us a call and we can arrange pick up!



MLA Water Quality 101

As an MLA member, you are likely aware of our Water Quality initiative, but, do you know what we do, how we do it, and why? The MLA has been actively monitoring the health of our Muskoka lakes since 1966. Back then we worked in tandem with the Ontario Water Resources Commission to test for coli form counts. The MLA program is different from other water programs in many ways. The MLA program not only looks at long term trends in the lakes, but they also look at the near shore, where we play and swim in the water.

What do those things mean? Well, to put it simply we monitor for items close to shore those things that can immediately affect you. We test for bacteria including eColi in those nearshore areas. High bacteria readings can cause a beach to close if those results reach 100 cfu/100ml. The MLA sets off a re-testing response for any reading over 50cfu/100ml. If results continue to be high, we begin to contact those involved or those who may be impacted.

The other factor we monitor is for phosphorus, but what does that mean? We all hear that phosphorus in the lakes is a bad thing. We know it can cause algae blooms, but what else? Phosphorus is a naturally occurring element that is always going to be found in the lakes. We as cottagers cannot effect the naturally occurring portion. What we can affect is the portion WE put into the lake. We put phosphorus in the lake via faulty septic systems, cleaning products, even rainwater pouring down hard surfaces directly into the lake. Those are the items we can correct and stop phosphorus from going into the lakes.

Phosphorus is looked at long-term, not short term. Scientists look at trends to see how the levels are changing over decades not weeks. Phosphorus levels are used as a land-use planning tool. That means that as the levels increase in the lakes restrictions are put in place to help those levels come down and to protect the lake.

All lakes in Muskoka have different thresholds of phosphorus because each and every lake in Muskoka is different. So you can't compare your lake to another one. The lake thresholds are determined from a lake model. This model is determined via testing to be the level of phosphorus that would have been in the lake had there not been any development or man-made influences. Once this level is determined, it is increased by 50% to allow for development. The result is the phosphorus threshold for your lake.

So what does all this mean? It means each and every cottager must do all that they can to keep the lakes healthy because you just never know what might happen in the future.

So what are you going to do?

4 SIMPLE TIPS FOR

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

If you take good care of your system, you will save yourself the time, money and worries involved in replacing a failed system. Here are a few tips.



1 SCRAPE YOUR DISHES

Scraping your dishes into the garbage will make sure solids don't go into your septic system



2 KEEP THE PLANTS AWAY

Don't plant trees or shrubs too close to the system or leaching bed



3 CLEAN IT OUT

Pump your tank out on a regular basis (3-5 years) and keep accurate records of septic system maintenance and service calls. Keep an 'as built' system diagram for reference and familiarize yourself with the location.

4 CONSERVE WATER

Reduce the amount of wastewater your system must treat. Replace old toilets with low-flush models



A POOR SYSTEM CAN DEGRADE WATER SUPPLIES AND REDUCE PROPERTY VALUES

www.oowa.org

Tips for protecting Muskoka's natural environment

There are positive steps you can take, right now, to protect and enhance your shoreline. Make a commitment to yourself, and your lake community to:

- Use phosphate-free soaps and detergents;
- Use environmentally friendly cleaning products;
- Leave the shoreline at the waterfront in a natural state;
- Leave property in its natural state; limit lawns and manicured gardens;
- Create rain gardens or catchment swales to catch run-off before it enters the lake;
- Reduce or remove paved areas on property;
- Service septic system regularly and replace when needed;
- Reduce boat wake, especially near shore; and
- Help to maintain the integrity of our water quality for the next generation.

We're looking for volunteers to fill our ranks!

We need people willing to roll their sleeves up who are passionate about Muskoka along with any of the following:

- **Social Media** - Are you social savvy? We're looking for people who love sharing online - following the rules of course!
- **Marketing** - We're looking for some marketing smarts to help get the message out about the great work the MLA does on behalf of waterfront property owners
- **Communications** - Do you have a knack and love for writing, editing or just with a great story to tell? We'd love to hear from you!
- **Volunteers for single day events** such as the boat show and regattas. Maybe you can only give one day a year to help out. No problem, we'd love you to join us for a day!
- **Municipal experience** (planning, financial, septic & water systems) - We're looking for anyone who has worked in a municipal office and knows about the red tape and process that needs to be followed.
- **Strategic Planning** - Can you help the MLA plan for the future? We've been around for almost 125 years and we need your help to plan for the next 125 years (probably not at once though!)



Inside the MLA

Over the next few issues of ShoreLines we'll be introducing you to each of the MLA's committees and what they do on behalf of our members. As we're days away from starting the 16th year of our current water quality program, we thought it best to start with it.

MLA Water Quality & Environment (WQE) Committee

2016 marks the 16th anniversary of the current Water Quality Initiative (WQI). However, the MLA has been monitoring the lakes and rivers of Muskoka since 1966 making this our 50th anniversary of tracking trends and gathering information about Muskoka's most precious resource, its water.

The WQI continues to demonstrate its importance to the MLA, partner associations, government, and many other interested parties. With over 100 volunteers that support the initiative the momentum of volunteerism continues to be a remarkable example of what can be achieved when passions for a common goal are aligned.

This committee is responsible for any kind of environmental issue which includes working with the MLA Political and Land Use Committee (PLUC) when the need arises. Quite often development issues are brought forward in areas where we monitor water quality and the data and information we've collected can be discussed as part of the development in question.

The WQE committee also works with local stakeholders to address water quality concerns and help them create remedial action plans for their area of Muskoka. While the MLA can provide the framework, including support, we've found that local involvement is key to the success of these programs.

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Traditionally, the WQE committee has discussed water quality issues, but is now moving to a more encompassing environmental role including plans and communications about invasive species. See the article in this issue about the Eastern Hemlock and the affect the Hemlock Looper has on it. The committee is currently looking for a new member who can take the lead in connecting with other groups in helping to get the word out about invasive species and what to look for and do when cottagers come across them. If you think you might be interested, please contact the MLA office. We'd love to have you join us.

I also wanted to take a moment to highlight and thank the Committee members for all their great work and efforts to keep the WQI current and relevant to the demands of our members and agile enough to keep up with the water quality challenges that periodically arise. The committee is made up a group of volunteers that come from varying backgrounds and expertise that provide the committee with a solid foundation for one of the best examples of a citizen science based program in Canada.

Committee Members: Chris Cragg, Louise Cragg, Michael Hart, Bob Ensor, Jan Getson, Andrew Watson, John Bowlby, Rob Clark, Barbara Triskan, Michael Cleverdon, Lawton Osler, Mike Finley, Al Moran, Eleanor Lewis, Paul Raymond, Deborah Martin-Downs.

Michael Bidwell, Chair
MLA Water Quality & Environment Committee



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