

## **RIDEAU LAKES LAKE ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE (RLLAC)**

**Wednesday, June 18, 2025**

The Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee (RLLAC) Meeting was held Wednesday, June 18th at 2:00 p.m. at the Morton Hall.

Roll call was taken and the following members were in attendance: Chair Mayor Hoogenboom, Councillor, Sue Dunfield. Township staff Tom Fehr, Manager of Development Services, and Amy Schur, Development Services Analyst were also in attendance.

Committee members from the following Lake Associations were also in attendance: Hansen Downer, Big Rideau Lake Association; Tom Belton, Chaffey's and Area Lakes Association; Buddy Penniston, Opinicon East Cottagers' Association; Rhonda Birenbaum, Opinicon Property Owners' Association; Jeff Neal, Otter Lake Landowners Association; Ken Watson, Sand Lake Estates, Steve Lauridsen, Troy Lake Ratepayers Association, John McDowell, Upper Rideau Lakes Association and Margie Manthey, Wolfe Lake Association.

Members absent with prior notice included: Councillor Jeff Banks & Clark Johnston, Bass Lake Association.

Members absent included: Councillor Carr

Also in attendance: Holly Evans from Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority.

### **EMERGENCY ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Chair Hoogenboom asked if there were any emergency additions or amendments to the agenda and none were heard.

Mr. Watson asked about the agenda, members would like to see more details going forward so they can prepare some notes and/or questions related to certain topics. Mr. Watson asked to have updates on Bill C23 and Bass Spawning added to the agenda.

### **RECOMMENDATION #10-2025**

Moved By: Jeff Neal

Seconded By: Ken Watson

To pass a Recommendation that;

This Committee adopt the Agenda, **as amended**.

Adding:

7.1: Holly Evans from Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority re: Conservation Authority Act Changes and New Regulation Policies.

7.2 Bill C23 from Ken Watson

7.3 Bass Spawning Sanctuaries from Hansen Downer

Carried:

### **DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST & GENERAL NATURE THEREOF**

Chair Hoogenboom asked if anyone had a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, regarding any items noted on the Agenda and none were heard.

### **ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee Meeting held March 18, 2025 were provided to the Committee.

### **RECOMMENDATION #11-2025**

Moved By: Margie Manthey

Seconded By: John McDowell

To pass a Recommendation that;

This Committee approve the minutes of the Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee meeting held March 18, 2025 **as submitted**.

Carried:

### **GUEST SPEAKER SUGGESTIONS FOR August 6<sup>th</sup>**

Chair Hoogenboom asked the Committee for guest speaker suggestions for the August 6<sup>th</sup> meeting and future.

- Queens Bio Station – what research they are performing, expansion, attending open house July 23rd. Perhaps holding an RLLAC meeting at their facility. Ms. Birenbaum going to send Amy contact information. It was noted that this year there is an online sign-up for the open house due to construction at the Station.
- Tourism in General, Anne Wier – impact of tourism on lakes and fishing in Rideau Lakes. The County has informational packages for tourist.
- Enforcement from MNR and OPP on the waterways, including enforcement of Bass Sanctuaries.
- Presentation from MP or MPP on the Causeway and Bill 5
- Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunting (OFAH)
- Report from Rideau Canal (3 RLLAC members are on the Rideau Canal board)
- Tyler from Chaffey's Locks, fishing show goes all over Ontario – what he is seeing around the Province
- FOCA & Watersheds Canada – Ms. Manthey is going to send Amy contact information for Melissa Dakers.
- Private road issues with winter road maintenance
- Presentation from Deputy Fire Chief on wildfire prevention

- Area cleanup for heavily grown roadways – Amy will email members contact information for Dan Chant, Roads Manager as well as the private road standards document.

## **RECOMMENDATION #12-2025**

Moved By: Tom Belton

Seconded By: Rhonda Birenbaum

To pass a Recommendation that;

The Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee acknowledges the suggested guest speakers for the August 6<sup>th</sup> meeting and beyond.

- Queen's BioStation
- UCLG – Tourism
- MNR & OPP Enforcement on waterways
- OFAH Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters
- Rideau Canal
- FOCA Federation of Cottagers Association
- Watersheds Canada
- Deputy Fire Chief – wildfire prevention

Carried:

## **GENERAL UPDATES**

Tom Fehr, Manager of Development Services provided the Committee updates regarding:

### **Fishing Tournaments**

Letter to fishing tournament organizers from Council & Lake Associations, was sent to Parks Canada. Resolution at Council May 5, 2025. Has been sent to Parks Canada.

Mr. Downer noted that Parks Canada have changed their fishing tournament regulations.

### **2024 Septic Inspection Program**

Report from Mississippi Mills, 393 inspections, most noted 45% regular maintenance, 7% need replacements.

2025 Program includes finishing Big Rideau & Lower Rideau, Troy Lake Islands and Mudd Lake Islands.

Questions were asked regarding the process of notifying the property owners when inspections are taking place, compliance percentage and follow up & enforcement.

### **Site Plan Control Follow Up Program**

In 2025 the Township is reviewing 2021 Site Plan applications.

### Bill 5 – Protecting Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025

The intent of Bill 5 enables large scale mining operations in the Province, Economic Zone no environmental review is required, Species at Risk Act has been repealed, definitions are being changed in new regulations.

### Bill 17 – Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025

Mostly affecting urban lands, large cities, changes made to development charges, changes to the Planning Act regarding complete application requirements - if a study is not in the Official Plan as being potentially required the Municipality cannot request it, Rideau Lakes has an extensive list of items that can be requested as part of a complete planning application.

Mr. Belton asked about the phrase “Treating planning applications on an individual basis”, instead of following the Zoning By-Law and Official Plan policies for all applications. Concerned that some residents are getting applications approved whereas some are not.

Mr. Fehr noted all planning applications are reviewed on their own merits and are reviewed against applicable policies including the Official Plan and Zoning By-law

Councillor Dunfield mentioned that it was noted on the news that Mississippi Mills have tripled their development charges.

### Conservation Authorities Act and Conservation-Supportive Legislation Changes

Holly Evans from Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority gave an update (her notes attached below).

Since 2020, Ontario's *Conservation Authorities Act* (CA Act) has undergone significant legislative changes aimed at redefining the roles and responsibilities of conservation authorities (CAs), many concerning land development and permitting processes. Here's a summary of the key amendments:

1. Bill 229 – Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (December 2020)
  - This legislation introduced several changes to the CA Act.
  - Ministerial Override: The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) gained the authority to override CA decisions on permit applications.
  - Permit Conditions: CAs were restricted from considering factors like pollution and land conservation when issuing permits; instead, the focus shifted to mitigating natural hazards such as flooding and erosion.
  - Board Composition: Changes were made to the composition of CA boards to enhance municipal oversight (i.e. at least 70% are members of municipal council).
2. Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act (November 2022)

This act introduced further amendments:

  - Conservation Authorities Act was amended to prohibit Conservation Authorities from reviewing and commenting on matters relating to natural heritage, water

quality, and other environmental matters. CA's scope of review was narrowed to natural hazards

- Wetland Evaluation Changes: The process for evaluating and designating provincially significant wetlands was modified, allowing qualified evaluators to submit reports directly to municipalities without MNRF oversight. No longer able to include inter connected wetlands as provincially significant wetland complexes.

### 3. Phase 1 and Phase 2 Regulations (2021–2022)

To implement the CA Act amendments there were requirements to complete additional governance documents (<https://cataraquiconservation.ca/pages/full-authority-board-governance>).

- Phase 1 (October 2021):
  - Mandatory Programs and Services: Outlined core programs CAs must deliver via Category definitions (see definitions below). Final related strategies were published in 2024 (Watershed Based Resource Management Strategy and Conservation Area Strategy)

## 3 Definitions

**"Category 1 - Mandatory"** means the listed programs and services in the Conservation Authorities Act eligible to be funded through municipal levy to achieve the regulatory requirement.

**"Category 2 – Municipal"** refers to programs and services provided through agreement on behalf of a participating municipality by the Conservation Authority.

**"Category 3 – Other Locally Supported Programs and Services"** means programs and services that the Conservation Authority members find important to deliver to meet the overall direction of the Conservation Authorities Act and require a cost-apportioning agreement should municipal funding be required to support delivery.

- Transition Plans: Required CAs to develop plans for transitioning to the new regulatory framework.
- Rules of Conduct: Established guidelines for behavior in conservation areas.
- Phase 2 (April 2022):
  - Budget and Apportionment: Introduced regulations for municipal levies and budget processes.
  - Fee Structures: Defined classes of programs and services for which CAs can charge fees.

### 4. Ontario Regulation 41/24 – Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits (April 2024)

Effective April 1, 2024, this regulation consolidated and replaced previous CA-specific regulations:

- Permit Conditions: CAs are now limited to considering and attaching conditions related to natural hazards and public safety.
  - The area of regulation adjacent to wetlands is now 30 meters for all wetlands rather than including 120 meters for Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs).
  - Appeals Process: Applicants can request a review of CA decisions by the MNRF. If the MNRF chooses not to review, applicants can appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal.
  - Annual Reporting: CAs are required to publish annual reports detailing permit statistics and compliance with the regulation.
  - Some new exemptions to CA regulation introduced including buildings and detached decks less than 15 sq. m.
  - As of June 9, 2025, Cataraqui Conservation's updated O.Reg 41/24 Implementation Policies are being used.
  - There are also updated floodplain elevations for Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.
5. Bill 5, Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act, 2025 (introduced April 17, 2025; Royal assent June 5, 2025)
1. CA were already excluded from considering natural heritage concerns regarding development applications so many changes do not have direct impact on CAs.
  2. Major concerns with Special Economic Zones – which could allow projects in hazardous areas or sensitive drinking water areas without proper assessment and approvals. The bill would enable cabinet to designate any location in Ontario as a special economic zone, and then to exempt any company or project in the zone from having to comply with whichever provincial laws, provincial regulations or municipal bylaws the government chooses.
  3. Reduces habitat protection; Eliminates species of conservation program; changes the permitting process (no need to satisfy some conditions before issuing permits, no more stop work orders), centralizes control over environmental enforcement (provincial officers can issue contravention orders, Minister can issue mitigation orders)
6. Bill 17, Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, June 5, 2025
1. Allows as-of-right minor variances for certain developments but does not apply to waterbodies and hazardous lands.
  2. Sets limitations on what studies municipalities can ask for and compels staff to accept certain studies as complete if authored by specific professionals. May

have some implications for studies/assessments that CAs may request (e.g. stormwater management report).

Ms. Evans also noted that they have been successful in getting funding to develop a Invasive Phragmites App to identify patches and get them reported before they spread. Not for the RVCA jurisdiction just CRCA.

### **RECOMMENDATION #13-2025**

Moved By: John McDowell

Seconded By: Margie Manthey

To pass a Recommendation that;

The Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee acknowledges the presentation by Holly Evans from Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority re: Conservation Authority Act Changes and New Regulation Policies for information purposes.

Carried:

### **RECOMMENDATION #14-2025**

Moved By: Hansen Downer

Seconded By: Sue Dunfield

To pass a Recommendation that;

The Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee acknowledges the general updates from Tom Fehr, Manager of Development Services for information purposes.

Carried:

### **Bill C23**

Mr. Watson – gave an update regarding Bill C23 related to Parks Canada Historical Places of Canada Act. Bill was stalled on the objection of the wording of Wardens enforcement.

If changes are needed have to go to Department of Transportation, transfer the responsibilities from Department of Transportation to Parks Canada to write their own regulations.

When the bill is re-introduced in parliament, most likely in the Fall, Mr. Watson will bring it back to RLLAC to seek support from the Committee/Council.

### **Bass Spawning Sanctuary**

Mr. Downer gave update (his notes attached below)

- Historic snorkeling surveys (1990-2017) of bass reproduction and recruitment indicated over those 37 years (mostly since 2000) that in Opinicon Lake:

- o The numbers of adult bass have decreased by at least 25-30%
  - o Reproductive success (RS) has decreased by about 50%
  - o Recruitment (REC, production of 1yr old bass) has decreased by as much as 70%
  - o Angling nesting bass has increased at least 5-fold
- During the COVID pandemic (2020 & 2021), there was almost no fishing during the spawning period, and as a result, RS and REC was by far the highest recorded since we started in 1990.
- The OMNR granted us permission to test the innovative strategy of using Bass Spawning Sanctuaries (BaSSs), i.e., areas of the lake where ALL fishing was prohibited until the bass season opened, to reduce the recruitment overfishing...in two Lakes, Opinicon and Charleston.
- Snorkel surveys during 2022 and 2023 collected pre-sanctuary baseline data for RS and REC for inside and outside BaSS areas in Charleston and Opinicon
- Two BaSSs were established in Opinicon and two BaSSs in Charleston in 2024.
- Snorkel Surveys in 2024 demonstrated that:
  - o Compliance with the BaSS regulation was excellent in both lakes
  - o Angling nesting bass inside the BaSSs was less than 10% of that in the non BaSSs
  - o RS inside the BaSSs increased almost 10X after the BaSSs were implemented
  - o REC for the 2024 year class will be determined during July/Aug surveys
  - o The opening day (July 6) for BaSS areas protected all spawning bass in both lakes
  - o All spawning bass in Opinicon and most in Charleston had finished parental care by the standard FMZ18 opening day (June 15).
- Ongoing snorkel surveys in 2025 again show:
  - o Excellent compliance with the BaSS regulation in both lakes
  - o Angling nesting bass inside the BaSSs was less than 10% of that in the non BaSSs
  - o Greatly increased levels of RS inside the BaSSs of both lakes compared to the outside...but bass are still on nests in Charleston.
  - o REC for the 2025 year class will be determined in 2026
  - o The opening day (July 5) for BaSS areas will have protected all spawning bass in Opinicon, but likely only most of the bass in Charleston.
  - o Most spawning bass in Opinicon will have finished parental care by the standard FMZ18 opening day (June 21), but NONE of them in Charleston.
- Comparison of current Opinicon and Charleston bass populations with those back in the early 1990s reveal the following changes:
  - o The number of spawning bass has decreased
  - o The size structure of the population has decreased
  - o The age-at-maturation of male bass has decreased
  - o The aggression and parental care effort of male bass has decreased.



[We are selecting for smaller and less aggressive (and harder to angle) bass

- Spawning sanctuaries are closed until July 5
  - o Dave & team will be patrolling the sanctuaries on both Charleston and Opinicon vigorously all day on Saturday and Sunday as well as when they visit for snorkeling on Friday and Monday.
  - o Working to have MNR COs on the lake one of those two days

Next Steps:

- Formed the Coalition for Innovative Fisheries Conservation (CIFIC):

Added the following 15 Lakes/Lake Groups:

Big Rideau, Lower Rideau, Upper Rideau, Newboro, Scott Island Group (Benson, Loon, Indian, Clear, Mosquito), Sand, Whitefish, Dog/Cranberry, Bass, Troy, Little Silver, Wolfe, Devil, Otter, Otty

- Formed Lake Groups in each and have visited all of the 15 new lakes to:
  - o Assess/Plan potential BaSS sites
  - o Collect baseline data:
    - scales for age/growth and age-at-maturation
    - aggression data using standardized angling
- Worked with Watersheds Canada to establish a process for funding the project
- “Educating” both the OMNR and the OFAH re the benefits of the BaSS strategy.
  - o Met twice with the director of fisheries policy for MNR
  - o Meeting in early July to present findings from Opinicon & Charleston 2024
  - o Have shared student PhD studies
  - o PhD student has done presentations in Kawarthas to increase inputs to MNR
  - o Meeting with OFAH to follow July MNR meeting
- Will develop a formal proposal to establish a research project account within Carleton University and submit to NSERC.

Lake Trout (and Bass) Telemetry (part of the CIFIC for Opinicon, Charleston and Big Rideau Lakes):

- Big Rideau Lake:
  - o Will deploy 24-28 VR2W acoustic receivers in an array in July  
[Receivers are in hand in Ottawa]
  - o Will capture (via angling) and implant transmitters into 30 lake trout sometime after the array is deployed  
[Awaiting delivery of transmitters...supply chain delays]
  - o Will capture (via angling) and implant transmitters into 30-60 bass Inside and outside BaSSs in 2026 after the BaSSs have been established.
- Charleston Lake

- o 60 LMB/SMB were tagged last year during spawning and there movements are being assessed. Great data.
- o Will capture (via angling) and implant transmitters into 30 lake trout sometime during the summer/fall 2025  
[Awaiting delivery of transmitters...supply chain delays]
- Opinicon Lake
  - o 60 LMB/SMB were tagged last year during spawning and there movements are being assessed. Great data.
  - o Opinicon does not have lake trout

### **BUSINESS ARISING**

Chair Hoogenboom noted a potential blue-green algae on Lower Beverley Lake

Ms. Manthey noted that there has been an increase in fishing studies and science to prove the increase in loon mortality.

Mr. Penniston asked about Skycroft, Mr. Fehr noted that the OLT hearing was in January and there has been no decision yet.

Mr. Watson mentioned that there is free lockage from June 20 to Sept 2 on the Rideau Canal.

### **MEETING DATES**

Chair Hoogenboom mentioned that the next meeting is August 6, 2025 at 10a.m. at the Portland Hall.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairperson declares the Rideau Lakes Lake Association Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:32p.m. until the next Regular Meeting.

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Arie Hoogenboom  
Chair

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Tom Fehr  
Secretary