

# Otter Lake News

Fall 2023

info@olra.ca

www.olra.ca

[OLRA Otter Lake](#) on fb



**2023 Photo Contest Overall Winning Photo by:**

**Jillian Hurley**

(see our website Galleries at [OLRA.ca](#) for many more great Photo Contest winners)

**Save These Dates:**

**OLRA Annual General Meeting (AGM)- May 26th, 2024**

Join your lake neighbours via Zoom from 9am-11:30 am for our AGM including guest speakers: Mayor Ann MacDiarmid, Councillors Ken Adams and Mario Buszynski, plus news and updates on OLRA's many initiatives. (Note: this date is a week after the May long weekend).

**2024 OLRA Family Ol' Fashioned BBQ and Corn Boil- Saturday, August 10th from Noon - 3 pm at the Foley Community Centre**

As per the 2023 survey feedback, OLRA is changing its social events in 2024 to provide a fun, family oriented outdoor BBQ event that everyone can participate in. Come play some games, meet your neighbours, have some fresh corn on the cob and a burger. Everyone welcome!

(more details to come...)

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## Electing Our Executive

We currently have a full compliment of 9 Board members but there are always people rotating on and off the Board and standing for re-election. So, if you are interested in joining us, please let a nominating committee member know or send an email to [info@olra.ca](mailto:info@olra.ca).

### Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 OLRA began its 62<sup>nd</sup> year!

That is a VERY impressive history of generations of caring Otter Lakers coming together to contribute to their lake community, protect our lakes, have fun, give us a collective voice at [Seguin Township](#) (Seguin) and other levels of government, as well as at the [Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations](#) (FOCA).

OLRA also engages with other organizations such as the [Georgian Bay Biosphere Mnidoo Gamii](#) (GBB - in which Otter Lake and Little Otter Lake lie), the Ontario Government through its [Lake Partner Program for water testing](#) (see pg 4), [Nature Metrics](#) North America,

## Current OLRA Board of Directors

<i>Chair/ President / Communications</i>	Kerry Mueller
<i>Vice President / MNR&amp;F</i>	Marty Chepesiuk
<i>Liason re: Lake Levels</i>	
<i>Secretary</i>	Nicole Mailloux
<i>Treasurer / Membership</i>	AJ Mueller
<i>Lake Steward</i>	Brian Hindley
<i>Director</i>	Gerry Doyle
<i>Director</i>	Rob Cribbie
<i>Director</i>	Brad Chittick
<i>Director</i>	David Amy

Guelph ON for the initiation of our eDNA sampling project in 2022/2023 (see pg. 4), [Safe Quiet Lakes](#) (SQL) and the [Muskoka Watershed Council](#).

As well, OLRA hosts fun social events and informs residents about how they can weigh in on key issues, sustainable lake living and things to do in and around our area.

Currently, the Board of Directors can consist of up to 9 Board members who each usually serve a 3 year term. Check out [Our Association](#) on [olra.ca](http://olra.ca) for our [Aims and Objectives](#) and the 10 benefits of supporting OLRA (pg. 11) as we strive to preserve and protect Otter Lake (including Little Otter Lake) and its biodiversity as the shared freshwater jewel it is today!

The Board typically meets 4-6 times a year: in February, on the day of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May, and a few times in the summer and in the fall.

New Board members are elected at the AGM. Nominations can be to the Nominating Committee (below) and at the AGM. You must be a current OLRA member to be a Board member and to vote at the AGM.

**OLRA's AGM is planned to be on Sunday May 26th, 2024 from 9-11:30 via Zoom.** (See the front cover).

Looking forward to seeing you then! 😊

### OLRA Nominating Committee

<b>Kerry Mueller</b>	<b>Brad Chittick</b>
519-463-5454	905-601-8236
<b>Marty Chepesiuk</b>	
416-219-7686	

## From The Chair / President

By: Kerry Mueller

Welcome to our 2023 Fall (verging on winter) newsletter. As I write this on Dec. 8th, it appears we may have a green Christmas and the lake may be open in the wide spots into January.

First off I'd like to give a big shout out to Jeff Smith and Jeremy Hill who sprang into action when a fire started on Black Bear Path on November 14th. You may remember that Jeremy took over the OLRA water pump a few years ago with the intention of keeping it in working order and available in the event of fire. Jeff remembered that and called Jeremy when this fire broke out. They took the pump over in one of Jeff's boats to try to slow it down until the Seguin Fire Department could arrive. Sadly, the cottage was past saving in a very short time, but with the use of the small water pump Jeff and Jeremy helped keep the fire from spreading to the neighbours' property until the fire department came.



It should be added that Jeremy had his wrist in a cast during all this!

It is very sad that a family's cottage was lost, however, the OLRA Board thanks Jeff and Jeremy for their quick action and efforts to help their lake neighbours!! Thanks also to the Seguin Fire Department for getting the fire under control and putting it out.

Image from Jeremy Hill

If you have a portable water pump, please consider letting your neighbours know where it is stored and how to use it. Quick actions can help reduce losses in such an emergency.

2023 has been another busy year for your OLRA Board and volunteers. At the AGM we voted to update our articles to be in line with the new [ONCA](#) legislation.

In May the Lake Stewardship water sampling and other initiatives began and continued all summer (see articles starting on pg.4).

The Boat Parade happened on July 1st in lovely weather (see pg 9) and the photo gallery [here](#).

In August the OLRA Annual BBQ was held in the Grand Tappattoo Resort's banquet room. Thanks go to the team at Tappattoo for hosting us again in their lovely facility!

The 2023 OLRA survey went out in August and gathered over 300 responses! Thank you to all who shared feedback and ideas. (See pg 9 and a summary

## From the Chair / President cont'd...

of the survey results on [olra.ca](http://olra.ca) [here](#).)

One theme in the comments was a wish for OLRA to hold a family oriented, outdoor BBQ with games for kids, to allow everyone of all ages on Otter Lake and Little Otter Lake to participate (see the front pg). So that is what we are shifting our social events towards for 2024.

The OLRA BBQ and Corn Boil will be held on Saturday August 10th from noon until 3pm at the Foley Community Centre, 60 Rankin Lake Rd, Foley, ON P2A 0B2. Please save that date!! If you would like to join your lake neighbours in organizing this event, just drop us a note at [info@olra.ca](mailto:info@olra.ca).

The Photo Contest rounded out the OLRA events with another great bunch of entries. Congrats to all the winners!



1st Place in the Adult—Scenery Category  
Photo by: Steve Craft

In other news, an information session will be held Dec. 12th on the new pool ([WPS Recreation & Cultural Centre](#)).

In February 2024 another [Otter Lake Cup Pond Tournament](#) is being planned at Tappattoo. You can sign up teams now. Should be fun!

The role that [Short Term Rentals \(STRs\) play in reducing housing for people to live in](#) has been in the news lately. According to a [Nov. 22nd 2023 Facebook post](#), during the summer of 2023, Oro-Medonte laid charges against two owners of STRs under their Zoning By-law 97-95, which has similarities to Seguin's. These will be cases to watch.

To relieve the housing crisis here, [Seguin has rezoned over 700 acres](#) for the construction of thousands of housing units just south of the Parry Sound Canadian Tire. [Cooperation from the Town of Parry Sound has been requested](#). This too is a big project to watch in 2024.

This newsletter is a team effort and all those who contribute are much appreciated!! Drop us a note to [info@olra.ca](mailto:info@olra.ca) with questions / comments / photos. You can reach me at [kerryemueller@gmail.com](mailto:kerryemueller@gmail.com) / 519-463-5454.

Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas to all!

## Lake Stewardship Report—Fall 2023

By: Brian Hindley and Nicole Mailloux

### Otter Lake eDNA Sampling Program—Year 2

Within the last decade, a technology called environmental DNA (eDNA), has been increasingly used as a means of assessing animal biodiversity in aquatic (marine and freshwater) environments, particularly in remote or inaccessible locations, where more traditional means of sampling organisms is impractical, uneconomic or lacking biological expertise. [Nature Metrics](#) is a leading biometrics company specializing in eDNA, metabar coding (DNA “fingerprinting”) that is working with the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) to develop a global database of species in support of the IUCN objective of [conservation of the Earth’s biodiversity](#).

The use of eDNA to identify organisms (invertebrates, fish, reptiles/amphibians, birds, mammals) present in water from traces of their DNA, is a rapidly emerging technology that has the potential to characterize biodiversity by analysing a water sample. It has the potential to augment more traditional/labour intensive means of sampling using nets and traps, and to identify many more species..

The OLRA membership supported a small eDNA project in 2022, which allowed us to collect 6 samples in August from predominantly wetland habitats in the lakes and inflowing tributaries. The results, which were highlighted in the [OLRA 2022 eDNA Biodiversity Project Review](#) on [olra.ca](#), showed that **these areas of the lake support a highly diverse assemblage of aquatic and terrestrial communities** and encouraged us to again request and obtain membership support to undertake sampling of 6 locations in 2023. Results are expected soon.

In 2023 samples were taken on Sept. 16th, a little later in the year. Two locations were resampled to see how results vary at different times of the year plus one additional wetland and a shallow, rocky shoreline.



The remaining 2 samples were collected by combining samples collected from a depth of between 11 – 20 m in the main part of Otter Lake and the Long Arm near the marina. This was accomplished using a Kemmerer bottle, (photo on the left) which was kindly donated to OLRA by Mr. Don Speller, owner of Tarandus Associates Ltd..

## OLRA Lake Stewardship Report cont’d

This Kemmerer sampler can collect a water sample at any depth (depending on the length of the tending line!!) and will be very useful to OLRA for our environmental monitoring programs.



Open Water Sampling Location - Photo submitted by Brian Hindley.

### Lake Partner Water Sampling

Water sampling in Otter and Little Otter Lake is part of a long term water quality monitoring program supported by the Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MOECP) called the [Lake Partner Program \(LPP\)](#). In Otter/Little Otter Lake this program has been running since 2002. Volunteers collect and submit water samples to the MOECP that are then analysed for [Total Phosphorus and Calcium](#). The long term data indicates that both lakes have low concentrations of total phosphorus typical of high quality or oligotrophic lakes and low calcium concentrations typical of Pre-Cambrian Shield Lakes. This long term program is very important as an indicator of general water quality in the lakes.

Results from the 2022 GBB table indicate that the lakes remain in good health and are maintaining their oligotrophic status (lakes with low levels of nutrients). Both lakes are showing a steady or slightly decreasing trend in total phosphorus concentrations which is good news.

A total of 6 monthly water samples were collected from May to October. Generally water temperatures and Secchi depths (a measure of water clarity) have been similar to past years, which is no surprise. Sample results for 2023 are not expected until spring 2024.

(See the chart of 2022 GBB results on the next page.)

## OLRA Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

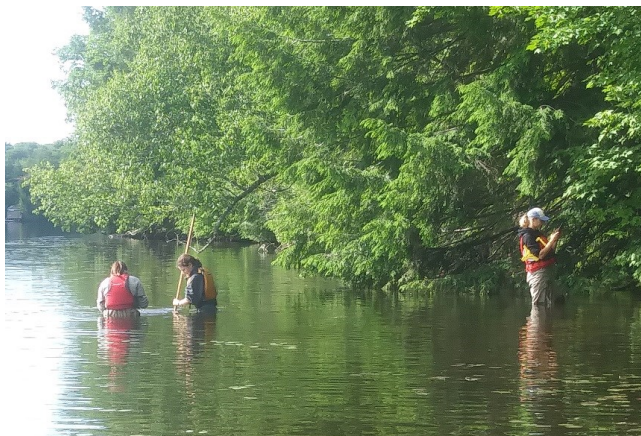
Otter Lake	
• Station: 4193	• Trophic status: oligotrophic
• Site ID: 3	• Average TP: n/a
• Description: N end, deep spot	• Trend: decreasing
• Data collector: LPP volunteer	• Average Secchi depth: 5.6 m
• Years sampled: 2002 – 2022	• Visible outliers: None

Little Otter Lake	
• Station: 4196	• Trophic status: oligotrophic
• Site ID: 1	• Average TP: n/a
• Description: Mid lake, deep spot	• Trend: decreasing
• Data collector: LPP volunteer	• Average Secchi depth: 3.3 m
• Years Sampled: 2004, 2006, 2017 – 2022	• Visible outliers: TP of 16.8 µg/L in Oct 2020

### Benthic Invertebrate Sampling

As part of an ongoing environmental quality monitoring program, [Georgian Bay Mnidoo Gamii Biosphere](#) (GBB) has been assessing the health of about 50 lakes within the biosphere by collecting benthic invertebrates from the shallow muddy sediments of these lakes, including Otter/Little Otter Lakes. Benthic invertebrates are small, soft bodied organisms, such as snails, clams, crayfish, scuds, mayflies and aquatic worms, that live in the lake bottom. In addition to providing food for fish, loons and other wildlife, these organisms collectively act as the “[canaries in the coal mine](#)” for lakes, providing insight into the health of lake habitats and water quality.

GBB has been monitoring these lakes for 5 years now and trends in the quality of the lakes are appearing. The GBB provides OLRA an annual [Aquatic Environment Report](#) for Otter Lake and Little Otter Lake. Benthos results are compared to other lakes in the Biosphere.



Benthos sampling, Otter Lake — By Brian Hindley

This year, GBB collected, sorted and identified benthic invertebrates from 3 locations, 2 in Otter Lake and one in Little Otter Lake on July 3-5 2023. Seguin pays for 2 of the 3 location. OLRA funds the 3rd sampling site.

Both Otter and Little Otter Lakes have yielded consistent results over the 5 years of sampling and indications are that both lakes are healthy, with good habitat quality and good water quality. The key measure of health from a benthic invertebrate perspective is %EOT, which is a measure of the abundance of sensitive invertebrate species collected. Our lakes have a healthy %EOT.

- Odonata  
(damselflies  
and dragonflies)



- Ephemeroptera  
(mayflies)



- Trichoptera  
(caddisflies).



## FOCA Fall Seminar – Understanding the Changing State of Our Lakes

By: Marty Chepesiuk

Terry Rees, who has been Executive Director of FOCA for the past 20 years, announced he will be stepping down from this position next year. He spoke of the many programs that FOCA sponsors, all available on the FOCA website at [www.foca.on.ca](http://www.foca.on.ca). Some examples are the [ISAMPLE](#) (eDNA) sampling program in which OLRA is participating, [invasive species monitoring](#), [forest fire safety](#), [cottage succession planning information](#) (for a fee), [boating](#) (where you can find out about possible new regulations mandating PFDs for boaters), [short term rental issues](#) and info on [private roads](#).

Ian Crawford, FOCA president, encouraged all members to sign up for important [FOCA news](#) (“elerts”). He noted FOCA lake associations contribute about half the funding for FOCA at a rate of \$125 per association and \$4 per member, but the fee may be increased at the AGM to be held in Thornhill March 2, 2024. Besides the above programs, benefits to member organizations include free phone legal advice and reduced insurance rates from [Cade Insurance](#).



1st Place in Adult—People Category  
Photo by: Susan MacLean

Al Douglas from the [Climate Risk Institute](#) presented the [Ontario Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment](#) report completed this year. It has established a risk baseline for the six different regions of Ontario, of which Otter Lake is located in the central region. All regions are expected to have many high risk events due to climate change by 2050. The report helps inform about adaptation to expected climate change risks.

[John Smol, a professor from Queens University](#), presented *Lake Changes with Potential Ecosystem Impacts “Below the Waterline”*.

Cont'd on page 17

## Seguin Township Fall 2023 Report

By: Mayor Ann MacDiarmid

As the first skim of ice forms along our shores, I hope that you are enjoying the changing of the Seguin seasons and the upcoming holiday season.

Your Council has been busy having adopted our new Strategic Plan for 2023 and beyond with the guiding foundations of LEAD, GROW AND COLLABORATE. While we have many operational issues to tackle in the next 3 years of our council term we are excited to be looking forward 20 plus years to help shape the community we call home.

2023 saw many important accomplishments: the rezoning of over 700 acres of land for attainable and rental housing has been completed; the long overdue Roads Needs Study and Waste Management Strategy have been adopted; the expansion of the airport runway and business park are complete and the West Parry Sound Recreation and Culture Centre (better known as “the pool”) has a confirmed location at 44 Joseph Street, right beside the new Parry Sound High School. Our bylaw department is now full time and are working through all of the bylaws to ensure that they meet the needs of the community and are enforceable.

As I write this, your Council is building the 2024 budget with unprecedented pressure on costs ranging from fuel to goods and services. Our goal is to keep tax increases at or below 4% versus 2023 and to ensure that we are building a capital reserve to ensure that we can maintain and improve our infrastructure over the long term. The final budget numbers should be available in late March when we receive confirmation of the various external levies.

I continue to encourage everyone to keep in touch with Seguin’s activities on [www.letsconnectseguin.ca](http://www.letsconnectseguin.ca). I hope to see many of you at the various holiday events coming up. They include:

- Breakfast with Santa in Foley on Sat. December 9<sup>th</sup>
- Seguin Turkey dinner for all at the Orrville Community Centre December 9<sup>th</sup> – free for all and delivery to shut ins – call to reserve at 705-732-4300
- Santa Skate at Humphrey Arena – December 10<sup>th</sup>
- Community Open House with Pool Architects at the Stockey Centre – December 12<sup>th</sup>
- Winter Sound Waves in support of the pool at the Stockey Centre – Sunday December 17<sup>th</sup> – tickets can be purchased on line through the Stockey Centre

As we move into snowy driving, I urge everyone to respect our plow drivers and their challenges. It is now illegal to pass plows on all Ontario highways. From your Council and Township staff to everyone – all of the best for a happy, healthy holiday season.

## **Ward 1 Councillor Report, Seguin Twp.**

**By: Councillor Ken Adams**

A year has gone by since I was elected Councillor of Ward 1 and I thank you all. The first year has been an incredible learning experience. I thoroughly enjoy working along side my fellow Councillors. It is very rewarding getting to know the Ratepayers of Ward 1 and assisting wherever I can.

I wish everyone a safe and Happy Holiday and the best in the year to come!

Ken Adams, Councillor Ward One  
adamsken038@gmail.com  
Cell 705 471 7549

## **Ward 2 Councillor Report, Seguin Twp.**

**By: Councillor Mario Buszynski**

A lot is happening as I write this report and a lot has happened since I last reported to you. The most significant is that an article in the Parry Sound North Star electronic news stated that the mayors of Seguin and Parry Sound had invited a number of other west Parry Sound area mayors to a meeting to discuss “*shared services and a more simple form of government.*”

At the next Council meeting I proposed resolution 2023 - [263](#) that Seguin was opposed to any sort of amalgamation. The motion was seconded by Ken Adams (Ward 1) and supported by Greg Getty (Ward 3) and Ted Collins (Ward 5). The Mayor and Gail Finsson (Ward 4) were opposed to the motion and Terry Fellner (Ward 6) abstained, so the motion passed.

Amalgamation could have caused our taxes to triple and we could have had less representation in a Council led by the Town of Parry Sound. I also moved a motion on shared services with Ken Adams seconding it. We have many shared services now such as a the [West Parry Sound Geography Network](#), the [Parry Sound Area Municipal Airport](#), Belvedere Heights (long term care), social services for the District of Parry Sound and the [West Parry Sound Recreation and Cultural Centre](#) /pool complex. We are not against shared services, but the motion ensures that any future shared services discussions will have full Council involvement.

Two big issues also occurred on Otter Lake. As a result of a complaint by an adjacent landowner, a by-law officer enforced the provisions of a Parks By-law on a contractor installing septic systems for water access cottagers using the Long Arm access point. The by-law has provisions regarding the length of time materials can be stored on Township land. I am working to have this provision taken out of the Parks By-law since a lake access point is not a park and making contractors servicing water access cottages feel welcome to use this access point is important.

The second issue involved public parking at the Otter

## **Ward 2 Councillor Report, Seguin Twp. Cont'd**

Lake Marina. Historically there has never been enough public parking available. Just before the Thanksgiving weekend, Seguin did some reconstruction of the parking area to make it consistent with the property boundary and took out at least 15 spaces. I am happy to report that these will be reinstated for the spring, summer and fall. The Township needs this area for snowploughing, however, the opposite side of the road (see the left side of the photo below) is available for winter parking.



Parking areas at Otter Lake Marina Dec. 2, 2023.  
Photo by Kerry Mueller

The infrastructure in Seguin is showing signs of age. A roads needs study and a waste management study were undertaken this year and Council is in the midst of discussing the results of these studies in order to set up priorities for repair and replacement. Your input is welcome.

Many of our by-laws are being revised. I try to inform people through the contact that I have with lake association Presidents, who pass on the information to their members. The same is true for the update to our Strategic Plan. I strongly advocate for public involvement by the Township through lake associations and I believe that this is starting to work. Anyone can go to the Seguin Township website to find out what is happening and you can sign up to receive notices relating to significant events.

Council is presently reviewing the 2024 draft Township Budget with the aim of bringing it in at a lower tax rate than the one for 2023. I hope that we will have good news on the budget soon.

I wish all of you and your families the best for the Christmas season and look forward to seeing many of you in the New Year.

Mario Buszynski  
416-254-6614 (cell)  
mario.buszynski@gmail.com

## When is a Flagpole Not a flagpole?

By: Billie Ann Robinson

Imagine a time with no cell phones, land lines that were wired to the wall and there were party lines, where you had the risk of having to wait to use your own phone or have someone listening in to your conversations.

My parents bought Rakres' in 1963 because my 70+ year old grandmother had been having challenges negotiating the rocks at the cabins. The cottage property had a road in, a sandy beach, a stream, a large friendly dock, running water *and* electricity, attributes the cabins' property lacked.

My parents decided that it was important for The Ladies, Gran and her friends, to have a telephone, the first one on Blue Lake Rd. on Otter Lake. It would be a party line, but they would be the only party and the Bell technicians happily installed it after explaining how revolutionary and bizarre it was to have a phone *at a cottage!* But the next request from my father was even weirder. He wanted an extension put in the boathouse. The Bell Boys shook their heads in disbelief, but not after Dad explained that he didn't want The Ladies, to have to run up to the cottage to answer the phone. In went the extension.

So what does this have to do with flagpoles? Quite a bit.

After the Bell Boys departed, Dad and I went into town to get a proper flag for the flagpole. Apparently, ratty ripped shorts did not meet the fashion standards of flagpoledom.

The next weekend Dad disappeared in the boat for several hours. Remember this was 1963; Goddard Crescent was not developed; Carter's Camp was going strong and there were few cottages anywhere. There were no green identification signs; Blue Lake Road was gravel. When he came back, he shared his adventure.

He had gone to every cottage within the lake, from the entrance to Little Otter to the Long Arm and had spoken to every family who was in residence, asking them to pass on his message.

He explained that there was a telephone in the boathouse and if the flag was on the flagpole it meant that the boathouse was open and in an emergency *anyone* was welcome to come and use the phone.

The only request he made is that *regardless of the hour*, the person was to come up to the cottage and tell the people there.

Over the next twenty years there were at least three occasions when people took advantage of the phone; all were true emergencies; in at least one case, it meant the difference between life and permanent disability. No one misused the privilege.

Last winter, during one of the storms, at age 65+, my beautiful flagpole died a heart-wrenching death, snapped in a bad windstorm.

## When is a Flagpole Not a Flagpole cont'd



Billie Anne Robinson's new flagpole By: Billie Anne

The new flagpole is fiberglass, courtesy of *Flags Unlimited*, with a 1 m cubed base (75 bags of 30 k cement, FYI) and a cost that rivals the construction of the CN Tower. Amortized over 65 years, it works out to pennies per day. Dad would be pleased.

## OLRA Membership Report

By: AJ Mueller

It is heartening to see OLRA's membership holding pretty steady during these times of high inflation and costs. I am happy to report that as at Dec 5th, 2023, OLRA's membership is within 2 households when compared to all of 2022.

	Dec. 4 2023	Dec. 31, 2022
Families	183	185
Additional Family Members	294	309
Totals	477	494

We would like to thank you, the many members who support OLRA and generously donate to the environment and reserve funds! You are OLRA's lifeblood!! Thank you also to the OLRA Board and other wonderful volunteers who make OLRA tick.

If you know of a new owner on the lake or someone who may like to support OLRA's many initiatives, please share this newsletter with them. A membership form is on pg.10. Member benefits are on pg 11 and on our website [here](#). Thanks for your support!!!



## 2023 OLRA Survey Summary

By: Gerry Doyle and Rob Cribbie

Thank you for participating in OLRA's summer survey of residents on Otter Lake. We were pleasantly overwhelmed to have received over 300 responses!

Respondents included a broad range of households, with many who are new to the lake and many who have been enjoying our community for 20 or more years. While over 70% of respondents were members of OLRA, 30% were non-OLRA members interested in participating and sharing their thoughts.

Water quality and preserving the wildlife of our environment were clearly the most important priorities of residents. For example, water quality testing/monitoring and the loon survey were the most important of the current initiatives endorsed by respondents.

There was importance placed on the Annual General Meeting, Photo Contes, Boat Parade and BBQ but less than environmental initiatives.

Respondents also expressed a desire to learn more about the lake environment through educational tours and events, including events centred around natural shorelines, native plant species, and invasive nursery plants.

Among potential new group activities, walking, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, nature hikes, bird watching, a golf event, and a skating/hockey event were very popular.

Aside from "putting the environment first", respondents also expressed a strong desire for education and adherence towards boating safety. The impact of unsafe boating practices and wake boats on shorelines and small crafts (canoes, SUP's, kayaks) was also highlighted by several respondents as being a concern.

The survey did include comments regarding the Otter Lake Marina and Tappatoo resort. Those results are being shared with their respective management teams. Overall responses were very positive on their services, and gracious in their suggestions on how to "keep up the good work". Clearly both businesses were viewed as making a positive contribution to residents.

Your OLRA Board is now reviewing your input and will be taking steps to reach out to respondents who wish to become members and who offered to volunteer their time and energy. OLRA is considering how your suggestions might be implemented so that we can play a role in enhancing your enjoyment of our community.

Your input and participation are welcomed as we strive to include your needs and wishes. Please feel free to reach out to us and help us serve you better.

A more detailed summary of the results can be found on the OLRA website [here](#).

## 2023 Boat Parade Recap

By: Rob Cribbie

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual OLRA Boat Parade was held on July 1, 2023. It was a beautiful day for the parade (unlike the 2022 parade where boats were dealing with gale force winds!).

The parade started at Otter Lake Marina, and ended in the bay near Beaver Hollow. There were 14 boats that took part in the parade, with a wide variety of decoration styles (see <https://olra.ca/galleries/> for pics).

Winners of the prizes for best decorated boats were:

*Most Patriotic:* David Deeks' Team

*Most Otter Lake Spirit:* Rob Van Geest's Team

*Most Creative (> 14')*: Barb Eddy's Team

*Most Creative (≤ 14')*: Islay Fairholm's Team

*Best Overall:* Alan Hanks' Team

Best Overall won the honor of hosting the Boat Parade trophy for a year and won a \$100 Otter Lake Marina Gift Certificate, while winners of the other categories won an Otter Lake Hoodie.

Thanks to Denise Exler and Janice for participating as judges, and Gerry Doyle and Terry for photographing the event/boats.

Special thanks to Deb and Jeff at the Otter Lake Marina for allowing OLRA to use some dock space for judging, and for donating two Otter Lake Hoodies for Boat Parade prizes.

Finally, thanks to everyone on the docks for your great spirit ... there were even bagpipes playing!!



The Hanks Team being awarded the prize for Best Overall by OLRA Board members (l) Rob Cribbie and (r) Brad Chittick

Please give any new neighbours on the lake a warm Otter Lake welcome, share this newsletter and encourage them to join our OLRA family too!



## Otter Lake Ratepayers' Association

website: [www.olra.ca](http://www.olra.ca)  
 email: [info@olra.ca](mailto:info@olra.ca)  
 facebook: [olra otter lake](https://www.facebook.com/olra.otter.lake)  
 twitter: [@OLRAOtterLake](https://twitter.com/OLRAOtterLake)

1 <sup>st</sup> Family Member			\$30
2 <sup>nd</sup> Family Member			\$5
3 <sup>rd</sup> Family Member			\$5
4 <sup>th</sup> Family Member			\$5
5 <sup>th</sup> Family Member			\$5
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*OLRA sends information, announcements and newsletters via e-mail to keep communication costs low. You may request an update to your e-mail address or delete it at any time by sending a note to [info@olra.ca](mailto:info@olra.ca)*

Consider Donating:	Reserve Fund
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**Please make your cheque payable to OLRA and mail it with this form to AJ Mueller, OLRA Treasurer, 1701-144 Park St, Waterloo ON, N2L 0B6 or send an e-transfer and a copy of completed form to: [treasurer@olra.ca](mailto:treasurer@olra.ca)**

*The Otter Lake Ratepayers' Association (OLRA) would like you to become a member too. Help us celebrate and protect awesome Otter Lake!*



**Here are 10 Benefits of Being an OLRA Member:**

- 1) Stay in the know with **OLRA's two newsletters** (spring and fall) plus other updates.
- 2) Help **protect our lake water quality through our Lake Stewardship initiatives: Benthos "bugs in the mud" monitoring, eDNA biodiversity sampling, invasive species monitoring, wave study and the Lake Partner Program.** Help ensure our lake ecology stays healthy and our property values are maintained.
- 3) **Support our Loon** surveys, news updates and reporting to Birds Canada.
- 4) Socialize with your neighbours at **OLRA's annual BBQ** typically held in August.
- 5) Participate, win prizes or just enjoy **OLRA's annual photo competition** (see past winners in the Galleries at [olra.ca](http://olra.ca)).
- 6) **Strengthen our collective voice at Seguin Council** and the province on matters affecting you, your property and the lake environment. Stay informed about Public Meetings.
- 7) Enjoy **member benefits** in the **Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association (FOCA)** as an OLRA member. You have access to all the research and programs that they offer including discounted insurance programs.
- 8) Stay informed of initiatives by the **Georgian Bay Biosphere**, a globally important ecological region, designated by UNESCO in 2004, in which Otter Lake is located.
- 9) Support and stay informed of initiatives by **Safe Quiet Lakes (SQL)** to promote safe boating on our lakes.
- 10) Vote, learn and socialize at **OLRA's Annual General Meeting** in May. Engage with your neighbours, discuss key topics plus hear updates from our Council members.

In short, you'll **feel good and do good by joining people who love Otter Lake** and are working to keep it the gem it is for decades to come!

We hope you will participate in the **OLRA AGM on the morning of May 26<sup>st</sup>, 2024.**

Learn about what's going in and around Otter Lake and new initiatives by your Board. Find out how you can get involved too.

**Hope to see you then. Thanks for your support of OLRA!!!**

The summary below was received from Steve Vandermeer, Aquatic Science Operations Specialist, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) who spent 5 days on Otter Lake himself during this fish survey.

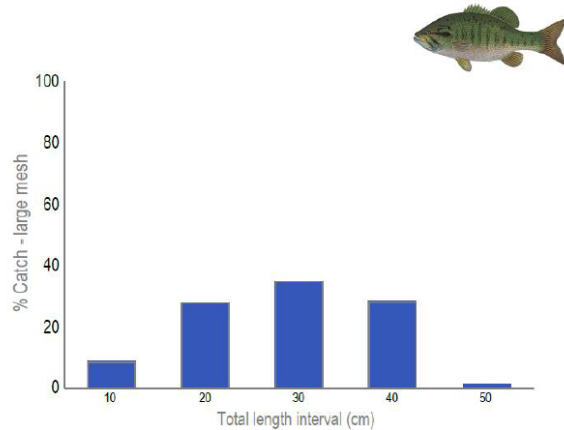
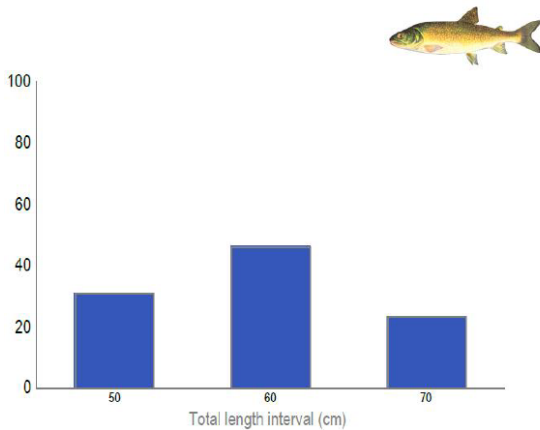
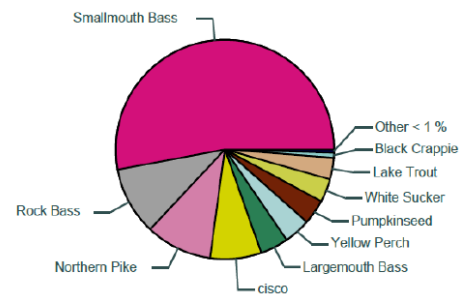
The MNR has not yet updated the *Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish* re contaminants in the fish of Otter Lake per this 2023 fish study but should soon. The 2021 guide can be found [here](#).

## 2023 Otter Lake Netting Summary

Fish populations were surveyed using trapnets and large mesh nets to provide information on fish species present and their characteristics such as growth, age and abundance. The trapnetting captured a total of 1035 fish of which 679 were tagged and 131 were recaptured. The large mesh netting captured 11 different species of fish of varying lengths, which are shown below. A length distribution for smallmouth bass and lake trout has been provided showing the % of catch vs. total length.

Fish species	Total catch %	Maximum length (cm)	Minimum length (cm)	Average length (cm)
Smallmouth Bass	53	51.5	13.8	33.5
Rock Bass	10	23.9	10.5	15.6
Northern Pike	10	99.7	46.2	71.4
cisco	8	31.3	17.6	23.4
Largemouth Bass	4	46.7	14.2	27.4
Yellow Perch	4	19.1	15.0	16.5
Pumpkinseed	4	21.4	10.3	15.9
White Sucker	3	60.3	24.8	46.6
Lake Trout	3	79.2	50.3	64.8
Black Crappie	< 1	20.9	11.6	16.9
Brown Bullhead	< 1	31.2	22.1	26.7

Proportion of fish caught in large mesh nets

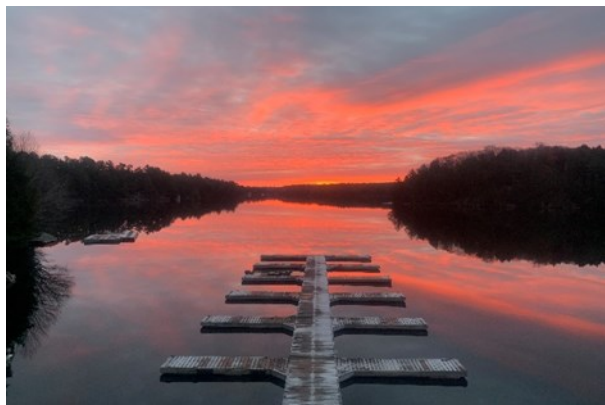


Levels of contaminants in fish (e.g., mercury, PCB's and other organic chemicals) will be reported in the "Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish" in the coming months. Species from Otter Lake that were sent to the MECP for analysis included Lake Trout, Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Northern Pike, Black Crappie and Pumpkinseed.

For more information visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/broad-scale-monitoring-program>

## Otter Lake Marina Update

By: Deb Smith



We are officially done for the season! Haul out is complete and all the boats/seadoos have been put away for the winter. As with the end of every season, we are thankful for our loyal customers, however we also look forward to some quiet time on the lake before the busy holiday season.

Although we are not officially in the winter season yet, it certainly has started to feel like it with some light snow and cooler temperatures. We recently saw a light crust of ice on the lake near the bridge to Little Otter however nothing substantial yet.

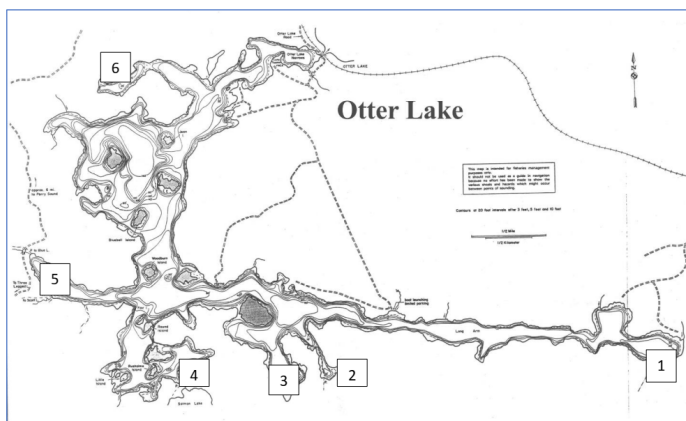
We hope to see some folks over the winter months once the lake freezes over. Last year it was the middle of January before we ventured out on the lake!

## Lake Stewardship Report cont'd from page 5

### Back Bay Dissolved Oxygen Profiles

Dissolved oxygen profiling has been carried out by OLRA annually or biannually since [OLRA's Lake Water Testing Project in 2017](#) to continue monitoring for the potential of algal blooms due to low dissolved oxygen. The map below shows the locations of the enclosed bays monitored.

Map - showing the six sample locations.



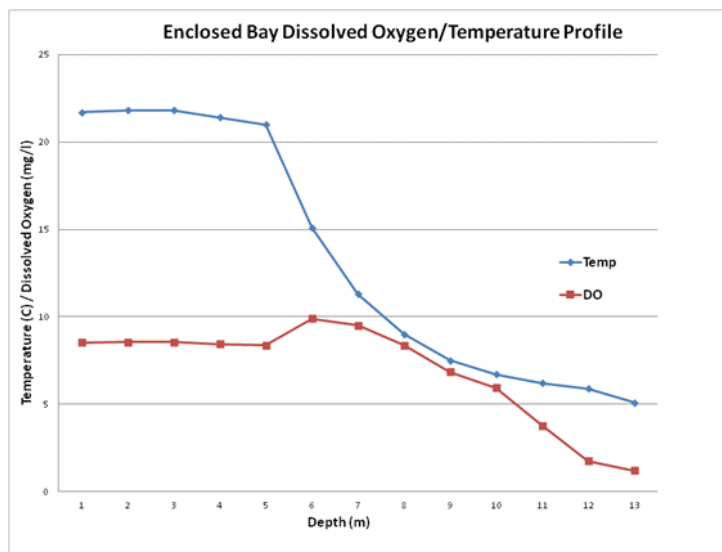
In addition, one location is monitored in Little Otter Lake.

## Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

Results in 2023, collected on Sept 3, 2023 showed that all bays had become stratified and all showed near zero dissolved oxygen concentrations near the bottom, except Little Otter Lake which showed little change in dissolved oxygen levels from top to bottom.

At all Otter Lake locations, the thermocline occurred between 5 – 6 m in depth. Generally results have remained similar to the original 2017 study. That study concluded that dissolved oxygen concentrations in these back bays did decline to near zero, however the phosphorus monitoring results suggested that the phosphorus concentrations in all but one back bay remained low, similar to lake-wide results, and therefore the risk of algal blooms was low.

However, when dissolved oxygen is low and other environmental conditions are suitable (such as warm water/air temperatures, still water) as can happen particularly in late summer, blue green algae and other varieties can become abundant and "algal blooms" may develop.



### Sunny Point Bay Graph

By: Brian Hindley

This is a typical late summer profile showing the relationship between temperature, dissolved oxygen and depth. There is a thermocline between 5-6 m depth defined by a rapid temperature drop and above this area dissolved oxygen concentrations are relatively constant at around 9 mg/l. Below this thermocline temperatures gradually drop with depth to around 5 C, while dissolved oxygen drops fairly precipitously reaching concentrations less than 1 mg/l at 12 m or about 1.5-2.0 from the bottom. These very low dissolved oxygen concentrations may cause fish to avoid these areas and also result in a release of phosphorus from the sediments which could lead to problematic algal blooms.

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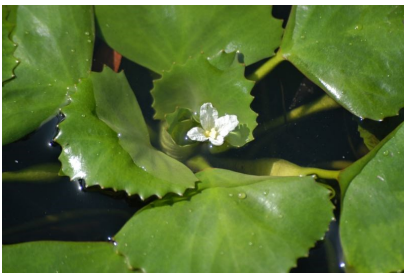
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## Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

### FOCA Invasive Species Sampling Program

This year, OLRA participated in ISAMPLE, the [Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations Invasive Species](#) sampling program. Most recently, this program has focused on invasive aquatic plants, most of which are introduced/spread by boat bilges, bait buckets, unclean hulls and then spread in our lakes. The more common species most people know include zebra mussels and plants such as phragmites. When these species get into waterbodies they are very aggressive colonizers and outcompete native species, upset food chains and degrade fish habitat.

FOCA has begun to use eDNA as a tool to look for these invasive species since eDNA samples can signal the presence of these species before they become established. As the eDNA testing for plants is expensive, FOCA chooses 2 species annually to test for. This year the 2 species were:



European Water Chestnut  
(*Trapa natans*)

and Water Soldier  
(*Stratiotes aloides*).



FOCA runs a sampling tutorial for all volunteers who participate on behalf of their lake association. Generally the recommended sampling location is a public boat launch.

We sampled at the boat launch at the Narrows in Otter Lake in early September and submitted samples through the Isample program to the MOECP which does the eDNA analyses. Results are expected in spring 2024.



Yellow Iris - an invasive plant found at Long Arm boat launch

While conducting our sampling, we observed some Yellow Iris at the Long Arm boat ramp, also an invasive species, which aggressively outcompetes our native [Purple Iris](#). Please don't spread the yellow invader!

## Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

### Effect of Boat Wakes on Lake Shorelines and Nearshore Areas

[Dr. Chris Houser, now Dean of Science at the University of Waterloo](#), started conducting boat wake research on Whitestone Lake in 2020. Using pressure sensors at specific locations in the lake from May to September 2020, he looked at wind caused waves and boat wakes. Dr. Houser found that recreational boat wakes accounted for > 60% of all wave energy during that time period.

In 2022, Dr. Houser expanded his research to look at how the relative importance of recreational boat wakes varies with lake configuration and shoreline type?

In 2023, OLRA approached Dr. Houser about conducting research on Otter Lake. In spring 2023, recording pressure sensors were placed in 10 locations around Otter Lake including open lake and enclosed bays. Data was collected until mid-September. Early findings show greater impact of waves on enclosed bays and narrow areas with 60-70% of wave energy caused by boats in the Muskoka Lakes according to Safe Quiet Lakes. We anticipate having the full results by spring 2024.

### Supreme Court of Canada to rule on 1850 Treaty Obligations By Marty Chepesiuk

[The Robinson Huron Treaty \(RHT\) of 1850](#) was negotiated between the British Crown and the Anishnaabeg (Ojibway/Chippewa) tribal chiefs whose people inhabited the areas around the Great Lakes at the time. This treaty allowed for settlement, lumber extraction, fishing, mining and other economic activities in return for granting the native people various designated reserves, hunting and fishing rights over the area as well as an annuity to be increased as the value of economic activity in the ceded area increased. However this amount was increased only once, in 1875, to \$4 per person annually, and has remained the same since. [A 2018 Ontario Supreme Court ruling found that the Crown failed to augment the annuity, leading to a proposed \\$10.5 billion settlement that was to be split between the federal and Ontario governments for the beneficiaries of the RHT.](#)

The Robison Superior Treaty (RST) covering the north shore of Lake Superior, is similar to the RHT, and here an award of up to \$126 billion has been proposed, though Ontario has argued that the cost of infrastructure investment in the area means that actually nothing is owed. There are approximately 35,000 people who would benefit from settlement of these treaties. In early November 2023 the Supreme Court of Canada was asked by Ontario to allow further negotiations over settlement amounts rather than allowing court awarded settlements, and whether a judge can determine any further amount awarded for damages. [This ruling is the most important reconciliation matter heard by the Supreme Court of Canada in years](#), and could be the largest treaty settlement in Canadian litigation history.

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## FOCA Fall Seminar – Understanding the Changing State of Our Lakes *cont'd from pg 6*

Professor Smol stated freshwater ecosystems are facing more stress than terrestrial or marine ones. Changes are gradual and “under the radar” but can be clearly seen over time. Threats include [climate change](#), contaminants like acid rain and road salt, plastic pollution, invasive species and algal and [cyanobacteria \(blue-green\) blooms](#). The latter are occurring with increasing frequency despite improvement in spring lake total phosphorus concentrations. It was thought that lower phosphate loading of lakes from improvement in septic systems and less agricultural runoff would prevent these toxic algal blooms, but climate change has reversed this progress. Lakes are losing ice cover and also getting warmer over longer summers accompanied by lower wind speeds which cause more lake stratification. Sudden massive rainfall events can cause pulses of nutrients entering lakes, which feed algal blooms and increase stress on sensitive species like Lake Trout. Aeration of deep water habitat could be done to help the Lake Trout but is expensive. He emphasized taking action on climate change. One can report suspected algal blooms at 800-268-6060.

Gavin Vance reported on the status of the [Lake Partner Program](#) (LPP) which is now 27 years old. This has been measuring the total phosphorus concentration and lake clarity of now 542 Ontario lakes, with calcium levels added in 2008 and chloride (indicative of road salt) since 2015. Shield lakes like Otter Lake are sampled once a year in May in the deepest part of the lake, with monthly water clarity determined by Secchi disk depth. Results can be found at [foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program](http://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program). Specific questions for him can be answered at [lakepartner@ontario.ca](mailto:lakepartner@ontario.ca)

Lujanne Hamdan spoke on Protecting the Great Lakes from [Grass Carp](#), the worst of 4 invasive Asian carp. They grow quickly, are prolific breeders and eat massive amounts of vegetation. Several have been detected in Ontario. An electric fence in a Chicago waterway is preventing more from arriving. They can be distinguished from common carp by lack of whiskers, eyes level with the mouth and a short dorsal fin.

Liana Hryniewicz spoke on the Top 5 Aquatic Invasive Plants. These can decrease property values, disrupt ecosystems and impair recreational activities. Invasive [Phragmites](#) is widespread and found along roadways as well as in Georgian Bay. Unlike native Phragmites, it grows in dense monocultures inhospitable to native species. [Eurasian Water Milfoil](#) came from aquariums and is widespread. Much less common are [European Water Chestnut](#) found mostly in Eastern Ontario, [Water Soldier](#) in the Trent waterway and [Starry Stonewort](#). All these plants can cause dense mats. To prevent contamination of a lake, boats and trailers should be carefully inspected after visiting affected areas before launching in another lake. Invasive species can be reported at [EDDMaps.org](http://EDDMaps.org)

[Kathy Jones](#) from [Birds Canada](#) spoke on [Loons and Your Lake](#). The Common Loon nests in most of Canada but is in a long term decline, in part due to low

## FOCA Fall Seminar – Understanding the Changing State of Our Lakes *cont'd*

reproductive rates and poor chick survival. If a chick can make it to six weeks of age it will generally survive the season, but a lot of mortality also occurs in their wintering grounds (the Gulf and Atlantic coasts). Climate change is mobilizing mercury that ends up in the fish Loons eat. [Lead sinkers in fishing gear can poison wildlife and are not allowed in Canada's National Parks](#). Runoff can lead to algae blooms that reduce water clarity and thus a Loon's fishing ability. Collisions with boats and swamping of nests from wakes take a toll.

To protect these birds she encouraged maintaining natural shorelines, thoughtful boating and fishing, reducing pesticides and fertilizers use and avoiding fireworks.



2nd Place Winner - Adult—Wildlife Category  
By: Kevin Mardy/Speers

A Q&A session followed, with Professor Smol replying to a question about lake water discoloration due to dissolved organic carbon, mostly “tannins”. These are produced in wetlands and from the decomposition of conifers. He noted that with the reduction in acid rain in the Sudbury district, lakes that were unnaturally clear are “re-browning” as their acidity levels drop; the reverse of how tea becomes clearer when lemon juice is added.

**39th Annual Seguin Sled Dog Mail Run  
is coming up on Feb. 24th, 2024**

For more info on this fun event and purchasing a “sledvelope” in 2024 check out [seguin.ca](http://seguin.ca)