

Otter Lake News

Spring 2024

info@olra.ca

www.olra.ca

[OLRA Otter Lake](#) on fb



2023 Photo Contest 2nd Place Winner for Adult Scenery

Photo by: Hilda Rady-Pentek

(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- Sat. August 10th, Noon - 3 pm at the Foley Community Centre (rain or shine)

As per the 2023 survey feedback, OLRA is planning a fun, family oriented, outdoor BBQ event that everyone can participate in. Activities for all ages! Meet your lake neighbours and enjoy fresh corn on the cob and a burger/hotdog. Everyone welcome! More details on pages, 7-9

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Electing Our Executive

Our Board positions are for 3 year terms. At this Annual General Meeting (AGM) on May 26th there are four positions coming open with one Board member standing for re-election. If you are interested in joining us, please let a nominating committee member know or email info@olra.ca We'd love to get to know you and what you'd like to contribute to OLRA and Otter Lake.

OLRA Nominating Committee

Kerry Mueller Brad Chittick Martin Chepesiuk
519-463-5454 905-601-8236 416-219-7686



Current OLRA Board of Directors

<i>Chair/ President / Communications</i>	Kerry Mueller
<i>Vice President / MNR&F</i>	Marty Chepesiuk
<i>Liaison 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

On Sept. 1, 2023 OLRA began its 62nd 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, Guelph ON for our eDNA sampling project in 2022/2023 (see pg. 14), [Safe Quiet Lakes](#) (SQL) and the [Muskoka Watershed Council](#).

As well, OLRA hosts fun 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.

Our Board of Directors consists of up to 9 Board members each typically serving a 3 year term. Check out [Our Association](#) on olra.ca for our [Aims and Objectives](#) and the 10 benefits of supporting OLRA (pg.13) as we strive to preserve and protect Otter Lake (which includes Little Otter Lake) and its biodiversity as the shared freshwater jewel it is today. Our fresh water is the envy of the world!

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 made to the Nominating Committee and at the AGM. You must be a current OLRA member to be a Board member and to vote at the AGM.

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

From The Chair / President

By: Kerry Mueller

Welcome to our 2024 Spring Newsletter which is chocked full of news and events! As I write this on April 4th the lake is free of ice with the last bits having disappeared yesterday. 2024 was the winter that really wasn't. Ice cover was only 75 days long on Otter Lake. Over the previous 15 years, the average ice cover on Otter Lake was 102 days so 2024 saw a 26% drop. [Few snowmobilers could enjoy the ice or the trails. Rinks were made](#) but didn't last. The Otter Lake Cup Pond Hockey Tournament was cancelled. [MNRF reported hungry bears waking up early looking for bird feeders and anything else to eat!](#) Quite the "winter"!



3rd Place—Adult Wildlife by Susan MacLean

However, for those who enjoy wearing shoes year round, driving on clear roads and boating early, this winter had its upsides. All this change does give one pause to think about [how climate change is affecting lakes, how to slow global warming and to plan for it.](#)

In 2024, the OLRA Board and BBQ committee members have been busy making exciting plans! Mark your calendars for the [OLRA family BBQ outdoors at the Foley Community Centre on August 10th from noon - 3 pm.](#) There will be games and activities for all ages to enjoy. Also, donations of gently used toys and games are welcome as prizes. We'll be accepting donations of non-perishables for the food bank too.

Admission is free! **Please purchase your BBQ meal tickets early** to help us plan food quantities and to save \$2/meal (see pages 7-9 for the menu, pricing options and more!) email treasurer@olra.ca. for tickets.

Thank you to the volunteers who have been busy planning this event and to those who have put their hands up to flip burgers, run games etc. on the day. If you'd like to volunteer, please let us know ... the more the merrier!!!

From the Chair / President cont'd...

We look forward to seeing Otter and Little Otter Lakers of all ages for a fun BBQ afternoon!! Bring your guests too!!

The OLRA photo contest will be run this year by a new volunteer, Julie Hoffman. Julie is taking it over from Catherine Rakosy who ran it wonderfully well for the past 2 years. Many thanks go to both these ladies for their time and support!!! The photo contest is a hugely popular event in which we [share our favourite photos of life at our awesome lake!](#) (see page 19 on how to enter yours.)

As boating season gears up for motorized and people powered craft alike, please use [safe boating practices](#) that make our lakes enjoyable for all. For instance, Safe Quiet Lakes (SQL) [reported that 90% of respondents to its survey are concerned or very concerned about the impact of wakes.](#) Oversized boat wakes have caused safety concerns, property damage and erosion on Otter Lake too. Hence, in 2023 a wave study was conducted on Otter Lake (see page 15) and we await the final results. In the meantime, Transport Canada (TC) has been listening too and made a change in Dec. 2023 to its regulations allowing the restriction of [wake surfing](#) separate from other boating sports. As per SQL's spring 2024 Newsletter, municipalities can now apply to TC for a Vessel Operation Restriction Regulation (VORR) that relates specifically to wake surfing. This change is new. OLRA will be watching to see how it is applied and enforced. In the meantime, please be kind to your neighbours, other boaters, wildlife and our fragile lake by keeping wakes low. Thanks!

Have you or a family member ever hesitated to go to a hospital Emergency Department (ED) because you had no idea how long you'd wait to be seen? With the help of a generous donor, the [West Parry Sound Health Centre](#) has just released a wait time tracker to help people check the wait times on-line. The ED wait time tracker is located on the lefthand menu of the WPSHC's home page or can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

As Monday's solar eclipse draws near, it reminds me of a wonderful evening that we spent on our deck with our kids and their friends mesmerized by the night sky over the lake. We are very fortunate to have relatively dark skies allowing us to marvel at our solar system twinkling above. For those, like myself, who don't know many of the constellations, there are several apps to help. Check out Sky Guide, Night Sky, Skyview or Stellarium Mobile to name a few. Happy star gazing!

Many thanks go to all who have contributed articles, photos, ads, ideas and proofreading to this spring newsletter! Our newsletters are always a team effort. We hope you enjoy this edition.

Do drop us a note to info@olra.ca with questions / comments / photos. You can reach me at kerryemuller@gmail.com / 519-463-5454.

Have a great spring! See you at the AGM, at the BBQ and around the lake. too!

Otter Lake Marina Update

By: Deb Smith



The winter weather was certainly different this year as there is already very little ice left on the lake. We saw very little activity on the lake this winter with the ice coming in late and the warmer than normal temperatures.

The good news is we are already seeing the signs of an early spring and if the weather continues to co-operate, we will certainly have an early start to the launch season!

Once the ice is gone we will be open for gas, however the store will re-open on the May long weekend.

While we always enjoy our time off we look forward to the spring season and seeing everyone again soon!

OLRA Lake Stewardship Report

By: Brian Hindley

I hope you all had a great winter and are looking forward to the good things spring brings....well except for potholes, pests in winter storage areas and spring cleaning!!

We had a busy year on the lake last year, with our regular monitoring programs as well as other activities.

Lake Partner Program (LPP) Water Sampling

Our lake partner water sampling program has been ongoing for almost 3 decades now. We collect water samples and the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks analyses these samples for total Phosphorus.

Location	Date	Depth	Secchi	Temp	TP1	TP2	Ca	Cl
Little Otter Lake								
	May 22 2023	5.2	4.1	14C	5.65	5.31	3.22	6.56
	June 18 2023	5	4.2	20C	23.1	14.7	3.5	7.67
	July 3 2023	4.9	4.2	23C	7.35	7.3	3.56	8.11
	August 1 2023	4.8	4.1	24C	6.71	6.32	3.46	8.18
	Sept 1 2023	4.9	3.5	22C	7.06	6.18	3.57	7.14
	Oct 1 2023	5	4.8	19C	5.59	5.52	3.87	8.01
Otter Lake								
	May 22 2023	16	4.2	13C	4.49	4.45	2.16	1.98
	June 18 2023	16	4.2	19C	6.55	6.7	2.18	2.1
	July 3 2023	15	4.2	23C	5.75	5.84	2.18	2.26
	August 1 2023	15	4.25	24C	5.07	5.03	2.08	2.12
	Sept 1 2023	14	4	22C	5.02	4.53	2.19	2.05
	Oct 1 2023	14	4.8	19C	5.23	5.22	2.24	2.06

OLRA Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

Other than a total phosphorus concentration in water from Little Otter Lake collected on June 18, which was likely contaminated, total phosphorus concentrations have remained stable and low, consistent with "oligotrophic" lakes. These are lakes that have low productivity and very clean water.

Calcium concentrations have remained slightly above 2 mg/l, which indicates that they are generally not vulnerable to acidification (such as acid rain). Natural sources of calcium include the weathering rocks and soil from the watershed and though pre-Cambrian shield lakes are susceptible to acidification effects, these sources of calcium are currently sufficient to protect the lake and its aquatic life.

Chloride enters our lakes from runoff carrying road salt, but concentrations in Otter Lake and Little Otter Lake are very low suggesting that there is little or no impact from road salt. Concentrations that exceed 10 mg/l are reason for concern.

Benthic Invertebrate Sampling Project

We received the [Georgian Bay Mnidoo Gamii Biosphere \(GBB\) report which summarized the past 5 years of "bugs in the mud" sampling](#). While some of the numbers of benthic invertebrates were down slightly, the benthic invertebrate numbers and species diversity at the stations sampled indicate that Otter/Little Otter Lakes are in good health that is characteristic of the better quality lakes in Muskoka.

Figure 1 on the opposite page shows examples of some of the benthic invertebrates (bugs in the mud) that we find when we sift through the samples of detritus and bottom substrates in the shallow lake waters.

The three groups shown on the next page, Ephemeroptera, Odonata and Trichoptera are particularly sensitive indicators of good water quality and bottom habitat quality. When they are

expressed as a percentage of the total number of benthic invertebrates present (%EOT) they show just how good our lake water and habitat quality is. 😊

(See page 14 for %EOT data)

Table 1. Monthly Water Sampling for Total Phosphorus (TP1 and TP2 in µg/l), Calcium (Ca in mg/l) and Chloride (Cl in mg/l)

OLRA Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

Highly pollution tolerant - most likely to be found in poor, fair, and good quality water



Semi-pollution tolerant - most likely to be found in fair and good quality water



Pollution sensitive - most likely to be found in good quality water



Figure 1 Examples of different benthic invertebrates found in shallow bottom sediments

Lake Stewardship Report Cont'd on page 14

OLRA Membership Report

By: AJ Mueller

2024 membership renewals had a strong start with 89 families already renewed within the first three months as compared to 68 at the same time in 2023. Your memberships and donations make it possible for OLRA to perform vital lake health monitoring along with reports and studies plus community focused initiatives. Renewing memberships early in the year allows OLRA to more accurately budget and plan. Thanks for supporting your lake community!

	Dec. 31 2023	April 6, 2024
Families	184	90
Additional Family Members	295	149
Totals	477	239

Please share this newsletter with new owners on the lake and others who may like to support OLRA's initiatives. A membership form is on pg.12. Member benefits are on pg.13 and our website [here](#). Thanks for your support!!!

Seguin Township Spring 2024 Report

By: Mayor Ann MacDiarmid

What a winter it has been – or perhaps not been - depending on your love of winter sports and ice fishing. It looks like spring is virtually here and several of the larger lakes never iced up so we expect a very early arrival of the boating season. The weather has not been kind to our roads and our crews have been fighting with the freeze/thaw cycles for the past few months. While we understand that many of the roads are very slippery and muddy we urge everyone to be patient, drive slowly and respect the half load limits that have been implemented for more weeks than ever before. We hear your frustrations and have every available crew working hard to improve the situation.

Council has recently approved new, updated bylaws for site alteration (blasting, fill and earth moving), tree cutting and fireworks. A communication plan to advise everyone of the changes is in the works. If you plan any work on your property and you are in doubt, please reach out to the Township for advice on what is permitted. The overall goal of the new strengthened bylaws is to ensure that we are all doing our utmost to preserve our precious environment.

At Council's December meeting, the operating and capital budgets were approved in principle with a combined tax rate increase for the average ratepayer of 4.59%. This includes a first time 1.5% capital levy to establish a Capital Asset Management Reserve Fund to ensure that we are building a healthy sustainable financial future for Seguin. The details of these tax rates will be confirmed as all of the external levies are received by the Township.

I am proud to share Seguin's 2023 and Beyond Strategic Plan which you can find at www.letsconnectseguin.ca. While prioritizing the environment, we plan to Lead, Grow and Connect to build a future for many generations to come. The environmental and site planning work continues on the north Seguin lands that were rezoned last year for attainable housing. It won't be long until we will be announcing the first of the public consultation on these lands. We are working closely with our partners at the Wasauksing First Nation to ensure that all development respects the traditional values of these lands.

And the West Parry Sound Recreation and Culture Centre – better known as “the pool” - will start construction this spring at 44 Joseph Street – next to the new Parry Sound High School. We expect you will be swimming in the new pool in 2026. We urge the OLRA to get involved and help build this long awaited community facility. You can learn more at www.letsmakeasplash.ca

I appreciate the opportunity to share Council's news with everyone on Otter Lake. We do depend on you and your families to keep us posted on your news and your concerns. I wish everyone a safe and happy cottage season.

Ann MacDiarmid 705-346-2210

annmacdiarmid@seguin.ca

Ward 1 Councillor Report, Seguin Twp.

By: Councillor Ken Adams

Now the second day of spring and winter has decided not to leave just yet. I want to thank the Lake Associations for including me in their newsletters and welcome the seasonal cottagers back and the residents for hopefully another great summer.

The weather played games again this year but the 39th Annual Dog Sled Mail Run held February 24th was a huge success again with 12 mushers, opening remarks from the Mayor, MPP Graydon Smith and Wasauksing First Nation Chief Warren Tobobondung.

As you know, Mario and I attended the delegation presentation in Toronto with Jason Inwood to MPP Mathew Rae - Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The delegation was to bring the Septic permits, approvals and inspections in house to Seguin Township to help with the process of the building permits. The township now has to wait approximately 6 weeks to get approval from North Bay Mattawa to finish the process to obtain a building permit. If approved, this change will cut the wait time and the cost in half. Seguin staff is well trained and qualified to add this to their building permit process.

The By-law department is rewriting a number of our by-laws and feed back from ratepayers is the best tool for me as a Councillor, I value your opinion.

The Community Climate Action Plan is targeting a 6% emissions reduction by 2030 which is the goal we all need to take a part in to help the natural environment.

Seguin Township Waste Strategy plan provided the township with 12 options to help improve the infrastructure and maintenance levels.

Short Term Rentals to me was one of the biggest issues when I started on council. We stopped the licensing but we still have third party commercial renters Airbnb etc..

The Ferris Road hill is a safety issue that's been on going since before the amalgamation. The Roads Need Study is a great tool to tell us the conditions of our roads and give us a 10 year plan but council, with the help from staff, have to come up with a plan to implement the work involved in the study without to much burden on the taxpayers.

The students will be starting soon at the Township which is a big help for Seguin staff.

The Ice will be back in at the Humphrey Arena July 1st for hockey camps, private rentals and public skating, great opportunity if you are looking for something different for you and your kids this summer.

I wish all of you a safe spring, summer and fall.

Thank you.

Ken Adams

Cell 705 471 7549

adamsken038@gmail.com

kenadams@seguin.ca

Ward 2 Councillor Report, Seguin Twp. **By: Councillor Mario Buszynski**

While the Township saved money on snow removal this winter, the strange freeze thaw cycles at the end caused a lot of damage to our roads that will require more work than anticipated. Please don't hesitate to contact the Public Works Department directly to identify problem areas.

Two of the big issues that I worked on over the winter included parking at the Otter Lake Marina and use of the Long Arm access point.

I am pleased to report that the Township will be reinstating the public parking at the marina that was removed last fall as well as paving the area and painting lines to promote angle parking. Single lane parking will still be allowed parallel to the rock wall. The stones in front of what will become angle parking will be moved back to ensure there is enough space to launch boats down to the water. Since this work has to be undertaken in warmer weather there may be a minor disruption to people using the parking area.

An issue arose late last summer with the use of the municipal access point on the Long Arm. A complaint was lodged with Seguin's by-law department regarding use of adjacent private property by a contractor installing septic systems for water access cottagers. This complaint somehow morphed into a charge under the Township's Parks By-law for the extended use of the access point for storing of materials by the contractor. There are many water access cottagers (including myself) that depend on this access point for delivery of large loads. The contractor felt that he was being harassed by the by-law inspector.

Since this access point has no docking facilities or recreational facilities, I have been working to have it removed from the Seguin Parks By-law. A first revision was submitted to Council but was sent back for further revisions. I am strongly in support of contractors using this access point to service water access cottagers and would like your support on the issue.

While not directly affecting Otter Lake, a donation of two million dollars was given to aid in the renovation of the Rosseau Memorial Hall, a municipally owned historic building that acts as a community center in Rosseau. This money means that funds originally budgeted for this use can be saved for other purposes.

If you have any other issues do not hesitate to contact me.

Mario Buszynski

416-254-6614 (cell)

mario.buszynski@gmail.com

2024 Otter Lake BBQ – Outdoors at the Foley Fairgrounds!

By: Rob Cribbie and Naama Levy-Cooperman

During the 2023 summer season, OLRA conducted a survey of Otter Lake residents, requesting feedback on events, information and other OLRA services. One of the take home messages was that Otter Lake residents were interested in a more traditional BBQ-type event, including classic hamburgers and corn-on-the-cob, games/activities, and an opportunity to get to know their neighbors. In response, OLRA is organizing the 2024 BBQ at the Foley Fairgrounds on Sat. August 10 from 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm. The event will be outdoors, with an indoor option in case of inclement weather. Admission is free!

The main goal of this event is to bring residents of Otter Lake, young and old, together to socialize, eat, play games and have fun while getting to know one another.

The planning committee has several exciting offerings! First (and possibly most important) is the food. There will be a traditional BBQ including hamburgers/veggie burgers, hot dogs, corn-on-the-cob, potato salad, desserts, and a drink. Meal tickets are available now with early bird pricing (save \$2 / meal). **See our posters on pages 8 & 9.** Email treasurer@olra.ca to order tickets.

Second, there will be numerous free games, activities, and organized events including a corn-hole tournament, a youth craft fair, games (with prizes) for all ages (e.g., bean bag toss, mini-putt), etc. In addition, the Georgian Bay Biosphere will have a booth with information about lake conservation, creatures in and around the lake, and other interesting environmental facts.

We want this year's BBQ and social to be the best yet and will need some volunteers to help make this possible. We are looking for help with the BBQ and food stations. In addition, since we plan to have several children's games, we are looking for high school/ university students to help run these events. For students looking to fulfil their mandatory volunteer hours, we will be providing "proof of volunteer hours" letters.

Finally, we are looking for corporate sponsors for the event. If you have a business and would like to sponsor the event or have any contacts/suggestions for local businesses we can contact for prize or monetary donations please let us know as soon as possible.

We are also looking for donations from Otter Lake residents of new or gently used games and toys that will be used as prizes for kids (and adults) such as puzzles, games, beach toys and books. Please contact info@olra.ca if you can help out! On the day of the BBQ, we will also be accepting donations for the food bank.

As the days get longer and the birds start to sing, lets start getting excited for the summer season. Open your calendars and mark down the date/time of the BBQ so you don't miss out! Also, don't miss the early bird pricing (pay by July 31 for a \$2 discount). More details regarding the corn-hole tournament, etc. will be available soon! Looking forward to seeing you at the BBQ!!

Come and join your friends and neighbours at OLRA's 2024 Family BBQ Fun & Games for all Ages

- Bean Bag Toss
 - Bushel Basket Toss
 - Basketball Free Throws
 - Plinko
 - Mini-Putt
 - Fishing for Prizes
- And more

On the Menu per Meal Ticket:

A Hamburger, Hot Dog or Veggie Burger

Plus - Toppings such as Mustard, Ketchup,
Relish, Tomatoes, Onions

- Cheese Slice
- Potato Salad
- Cob of Sweet Corn
- Dessert
- a Drink



Early Bird Meal Pricing:

Save \$2 per Meal Ticket at only \$ 8.00 each **OR**
for the best deal get 4-Packs for only \$ 30.00 each

Pricing after July 31st: \$10.00 per Meal Ticket



To order meal tickets, please email and send eTransfer to
treasurer@olra.ca

Ticket Confirmation will be sent back to you.

Saturday Aug 10th, 2024, from Noon until 3 PM

At the Foley Community Fairgrounds

Free Admission — bring your guests

Donations of non-perishable food accepted for the Food Bank



CALLING ALL OTTER LAKE YOUTH TO SHOW OFF YOUR TALENTS!!



AUGUST 10, 2024 BBQ CRAFT PROJECT RULES

- Theme: Otter Lake nature, environment, biodiversity. It's a stage for the next Otter Lake Generation to show off your talents and ideas. It can be anything from art, poster, project, poem/prose (one page), craft, etc.
- Must have been completed by the entrant
- For all children and youth up to the age of 18
- Must be made from environmentally friendly materials
- Must be brought to the BBQ by noon on August 10 (and picked up at the end of the BBQ if you want it back)
- Must have entrant's name, age, Otter Lake address, entrant/guardian's contact information (email and phone number)
- Every entrant will be given a ticket to pick a prize



Otter Lake Ratepayers' Association

Loon Report

By: Kerry Mueller

Can Loons easily recognize each other? Humans can do this with other humans, often from afar. However, Loons are very hard to tell apart. Even the markings of a male vs a female are much alike to our eyes.

The question of whether Loons are able to easily recognize each other has been a puzzle. However, the [Loon Project](#) is studying over 200 marked breeding pairs of Loons in Wisconsin and Minnesota and so has observed many Loon pairs reuniting. On [March 18, 2024 the Loon Project reported](#) observing that when one Loon of a pair returns to their lake, the Loons are quite cautious. The returning Loon often lands 50 meters or more away from the other. Both Loons tend to assume an alert posture. It takes minutes before they relax and begin behaving in a normal way. There is no spontaneous, "Hi, honey! Great to see you again!" Why are humans and Loons so different in this regard?

One reason is that humans evolved in cooperative groups that share resources. Therefore, quickly recognizing family, friends and allies is integral to our survival. On the other hand, Loons are very self sufficient and territorial. On a small lake like Little Otter, only one nesting pair will claim it. Territories are vigorously defended, possibly to the death.



Photo by: AJ Mueller, taken on Otter Lake July 17th, 2023

Non-breeding Loons may gather in feeding groups (see above photo) but then split up again to feed alone.

The Loon Project bands Loons on their legs to tell them apart from a distance and better understand their behavior, age, cause of death etc.. It is [now known that Loons can live 35 years, maybe more.](#) AI may also help identify Loons on photos by their subtle marking differences.

How can [we help our Loons thrive](#):

- switch out lead sinkers for non-toxic ones.
- remove discarded fishing lines from the lake.
- don't stir up sediment when boating making it hard for Loons to see their prey when feeding,
- give Loons lots of room to enjoy the lake too and keep wakes low to not swamp their nests and young chicks.

Thanks for looking out for our Loons!

Tales from Otter Lake

By: Richard Hood

Otter Lake has a rich shared history with those of us who love it. With your submissions and ideas we can share our stories to enrich our Lake community. R.H.

Cottage Opening 2024 - The Yin / The Yang

Scene 1

BUZZ...SLAP!

"I HATE mosquitos!!!"

"Me too. They're everywhere! I layered myself with Muskol. I smell like a moose!"

"Yeah, and it stained my Lululemon top. It's ruined!"

"I need some help putting the kayak in the water. You two grab the other end...we'll trek through the mosquito-infested swamp to the lake."

"NOT FUNNY!!!"

So began the 2024 version of life at the cottage. It's an annual rerun of the same movie. The opening scene is in the car: kids on ipads watching god knows what; me accompanying Jeff Lynne and ELO, 'Don't Bring Me Down'.

"DAD, not so loud!"

On Hwy 400 northbound, the passenger in the car next to ours glares at me, as though I'm the cause of the bumper-to-bumper line of brake lights in front of us.

"O.K." I switch to James Taylor...'Fire and Rain'.

"DAD, this music sucks."

"Oh sorry, didn't know you were listening."

Scene 2

The cottage road. The trees skeleton bare; up and down the bumpy hills; swinging through the tight 's' curves; stones skipping up to chip the paint. I open my window. Breezes jump in, a mixture of the dead-leaf smell of winter and the perfume of spring blooms.

Jenn and Steph can't resist. They close their pads and open their windows.

Forest voices whisper, 'Welcome back...we missed you!'

Big smiles from the back seat.

Scene 3

Parked on the marina hill. Nervous about the car sliding into the watery abyss, taking us all to our untimely end.

"Did you put the parking brake on? You do remember the guy whose car rolled into the water?"

"Let's get unloaded."

Tales from Otter Lake cont'd

Jenn and Steph head to the dock dragging their duffels full of Lululemon and Aritzia tops, hoodies, joggers, jeans, shoes.

They look back impatiently to me unloading the car. "What's all that other stuff?"

Scene 4

Drive the loaded boat to the island, dodge deadheads, wince at seagull shrieks, look for loons.

Jenn: "There's one, just off the dock!"

Steph: "I see it! Remember last year we saw a snake swimming right where we swim?"

Jenn: "OMG! And that snapping turtle that nested under the dock!"

Dad: "I feel fortunate that our dock wasn't highjacked by some Titanic iceberg and carted off to a remote bay."

"Dad, did you invent the concept of 'hyperbole'?"

Scene 5

A blizzard of preparations... shutters off and stored; solar batteries topped up to run the fridge, lights; stock the cupboards; return furniture to the deck; vacuum, sweep; check for mouse remnants; link and anchor the dock components (don't fall in); bolt down the umbrella.

At dinner Steph twirled her spaghetti. "That was a hard day's work. We got it all done!"

Jenn: "Yeah, now dad just has to plant a million flowers."

Dad: "Guilty! You guys were awesome today. It means a lot that you help to open the cottage. It would be hard to do it myself."

Jenn: "Don't even try. We'd come up and find your corpse in some mosquito-infested swamp!"



2nd Place - Adult People by Rob Van Geest

Tales from Otter Lake cont'd

Scene 6

I yell up the stairs. "Good night you guys. Are you warm enough?"

Jenn and Steph: "Yeah. Thanks for a good day. "

"You guys are the best! Sleep well."

Lying on the couch, I dozed and read in equal measure. Just before going to bed, we heard a train in the distance, followed closely by a loon symphony.

The music of the cottage.

Richard Hood

I encourage you to share a story, reflection, wondering about the Otter Lake Community.
richardhood3@gmail.com

Lake Levels Lately

By: Martin Chepesiuk

The MNRF has improved the dam at the outflow of Little Otter Lake to the Boyne River with a winch system allowing much easier placement and removal of stop logs (you can visit the dam at the end of Come By Chance road off of Otter Lake road, or by boat).

The logs are removed by the MNRF in the fall to lower the lake levels for the winter, hopefully before the lake trout spawn on shallow rocky shorelines. Ensuring the eggs are not exposed if the lake levels fall too much over the winter allows the eggs to survive.

Lake levels usually dramatically rise in the spring freshet as the snowpack melts, perhaps damaging docks or boathouses if these are still encased in ice. The dam has little effect on levels at this time as the Boyne River can be quite high.

This winter the erratic and unusually warm weather has completely melted the snow several times, so lake levels have not risen this spring as much as in past years.

The stop logs are replaced after the spring melt has finished, and are not usually adjusted otherwise. Lake levels rise quickly with rain events, gradually fall to the height of the dam when there is no rain and will slowly fall below the top of the dam if there is a prolonged drought. The dam was made deliberately "leaky" to always maintain some flow in our lakes and the Boyne River.

You can monitor the current and the recent past lake levels (and temperature) though the link [to the MNRF site](#) on the [OLRA website](#), using the "graph" tab.

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

1 st Family Member			\$30
2 nd Family Member			\$5
3 rd Family Member			\$5
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5 th Family Member			\$5
6 th Family Member			\$5

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

Consider Donating:	Reserve Fund
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Mailing Address	Otter Lake Address
Phone #	Phone #

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

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).
- 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 26st, 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!!!

Lake Stewardship Report Cont'd from page 5

Figures 2 and 3 below show how Otter Lake and Little Otter Lake compare to other Muskoka area lakes. The Percentages across the bottom of the graph show the percent of a total benthic invertebrate sample made up of the 3 sensitive water/habitat indicator groups = %EOT.

The green area shows the results for the most common group of lakes sampled (between 10 and 90% of the lakes sampled). The orange and red areas (on both sides of the green area) together show results for lakes between 0-10% and over 90%. The black line plots the relative frequency of lakes scoring each % EOT. The black line spikes at about 2-3% EOT representing a large group of lakes. Both Otter Lake (figure 2) and Little Otter Lake (figure 3) scored above this group, meaning that the health of our water and habitat is better than most lakes sampled.

Typical Range of EOT values, Biosphere Sampled Lakes

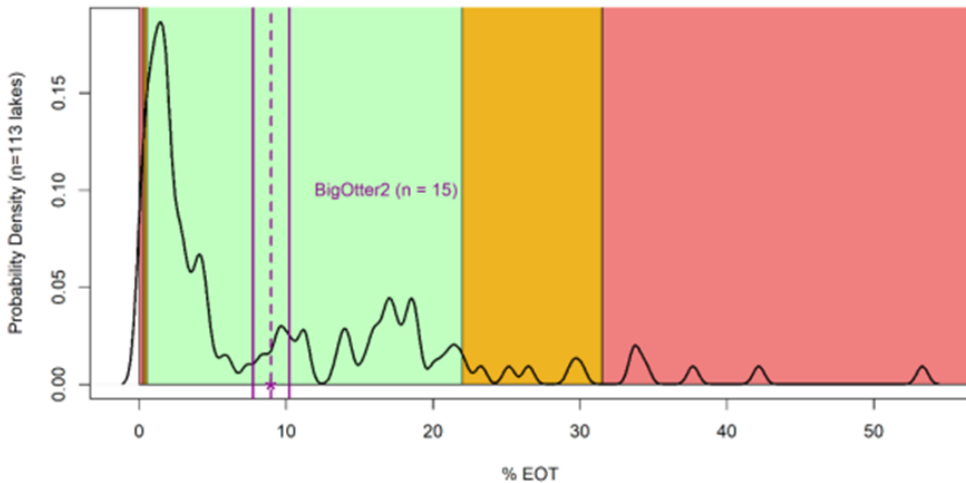


Figure 2. Comparison of Otter Lake to other Biosphere sampled lakes

Typical Range of EOT values, Biosphere Sampled Lakes

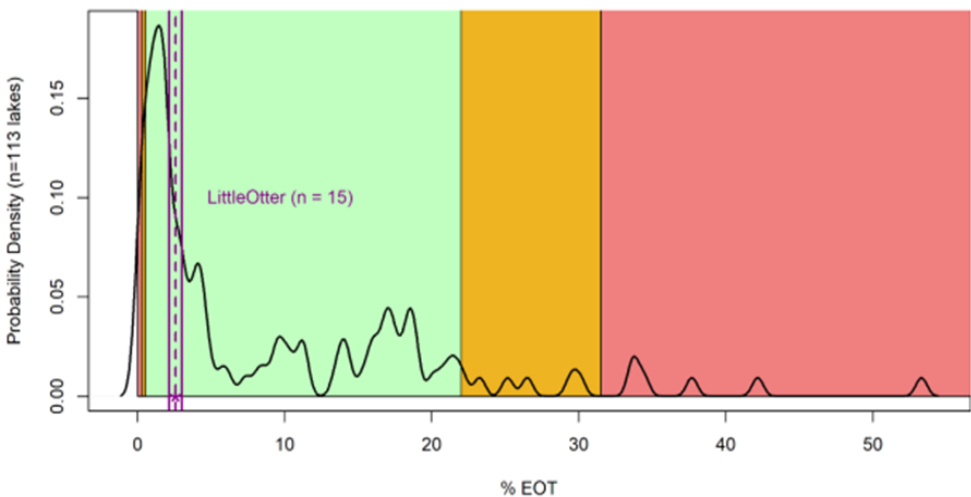


Figure 3. Comparison of Little Otter Lake to other Biosphere sampled lakes

Lake Stewardship Report cont'd

Some benthic results in 2022 were lower than expected. 2023 results show recovery from those lower values. We are not sure why, but are glad to see results improving back to historic levels. (See [Full report-appendix C](#))

2023 eDNA program

White Sucker	Central Mud-minnow	Iowa Darter
Northern Redbelly Dace	Rainbow Smelt	Yellow Perch
Common Shiner?	Rock Bass	Logperch
Golden Shiner	Pumpkin-seed	Lake Whitefish/Cisco
Bluntnose Minnow	Smallmouth Bass	Lake Trout
Creek Chub	Largemouth Bass	Brown Bull-head?
Northern Pike		

We are excited to see lake trout appearing in our samples at both of our deepest sampling sites, as well as some other coldwater species – rainbow smelt and lake whitefish/lake herring. In total there were 21 species of fish detected, similar to last year and substantially more than the 10 species captured by OMNR’s netting program. The primary difference between eDNA and conventional netting is that eDNA detects many fish species that are not typically captured in nets.

There were no turtles this year, but green frogs and mudpuppies were found.

The invertebrate fauna was quite different from last year and although midges (chironomids) were still dominant, zooplankton (rotifers, copepods, cyclopods), other insects (beetles, mayflies, blackflies) and aquatic worms were detected. There were also many more midges identified in our samples compared to last year, which may indicate that the database of invertebrate DNA types has improved.

Our detection of lake trout, combined with the OMNR confirmation of lake trout reinforces our position that Otter Lake continue to be protected from development as one of only a few sensitive lake trout lakes in the province.

We will post more information on our website as we “dig” further into these results.

Lake Stewardship Report Cont'd

2023 Wave Study

In 2023, [Dr. Chris Hauser](#) (University of Waterloo) through a team of his grad students lead by Abigail Car-swell, installed a number of “wave monitors” hosted by volunteers on Otter Lake. These monitors collected continuous water level data at locations throughout the lake during the active boating season in order to compare the characteristics of boat wake generated waves to waves from weather related events.

This study included 38 sites across 7 lakes in Ontario, Canada between 2020 and 2023.

Final results of this study will be published later this year, however preliminary results suggest that boat wakes accounted for most of the total wave energy, and Otter Lake had an average % wake energy of about 80%.

Shoreline erosion, property damage, safety concerns and degraded water quality have all been identified as impacts of oversized wakes by property owners on Otter Lake.

Vessel-generated waves (or wakes) are perceived as an important stressor in both marine and freshwater systems, and they are an increasingly important focus of coastal management.



Photo by Ben Van Geest

Our Wonderful Watershed

By: *Martin Chepesiuk*

All of life depends on water, and clean water has become the most precious of resources. As you know, [Otter Lake and surrounding lakes are exceptionally clean](#), their water coming from rainfall, springs or from rain filtered by the soil surrounding the lakes. There is no upstream river that feeds into Big Otter Lake, only several local lakes such as Blue Lake, Rankin Lake and Salmon Lake. All of these local lakes exist within a slight depression in the rocky Shield probably carved out by the glaciers, and drain into Georgian Bay through the Boyne River and form our “watershed”.

There are no landfills or waste dumps within our watershed, and no significant agriculture takes place here any more. The acid rain from Sudbury has stopped. Less coal-burning from Ontario and the US mid-West is lowering mercury levels, so the water in Otter Lake is in some ways cleaner than it used to be. But the large fish in our lake still have enough [mercury or PCBs in them to make frequent fish meals hazardous](#) and now [micro-plastics are being found everywhere](#).

The main source of contamination of our lakes is directly from humans like the sunscreens and repellants we use, our vehicle and boat exhaust and from our septic systems. [Septic Systems are designed to remove contaminants such as organic solids, bacteria, and viruses, but not to prevent the release of nutrients](#), just to slow them down.. Phosphorus is one such important plant nutrient that can cause algae blooms. When they die, algae blooms rob the deep waters of oxygen, potentially killing lake trout that need cold oxygen-rich water to survive. [Certain algae blooms produce toxins](#), like the one detected briefly in Mud Bay in 2018 that OLRA extensively investigated. Too many nutrients also promote water plant growth making swimming unpleasant. [FOCA has lots of tips for good septic maintenance](#).

OLRA has been doing basic water testing now for decades, consistently showing low phosphorus and chlorophyll (algae) levels though varying through the year. A recently added test is chloride levels, reflecting use of road salt (sodium chloride) within our watershed. Road salt is causing damage to some lakes and streams near highways, but the 400 is not within our watershed. Because Otter Lake gets a lot of lake effect snow, the lake gets flushed out in the spring when that melts. Powerful storms dump a lot of rain sometimes, also flushing out the lake.

On May 10, 2016 Kerry and AJ Mueller did a chemical analysis of their tap water taken from the lake after filtration and UV sterilization. This showed very low levels of all chemicals, even chloride. It was almost like distilled water, except for low levels of “tannins”. These come from the soil surrounding the lakes, like a tea made of steeped decaying vegetation. You can see this in some streams that feed into the lake – they can be as brown as cola. Tannins impart an unpleasant taste but seem to be safe, much like drinking tea as both are made of polyphe-nols. If you know of any prior lake chemistry (not bacteriology) results, please forward these to us for comparison.

continued on pg.17

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Our Wonderful Watershed cont'd from pg.15

Please indicate the location, depth at which the tap water was drawn into your system, time of year and the treatment of the tap water tested.

Water quality worsens after periods of drought and varies with water depth. In summer Big Otter Lake develops distinct layers, with a warm upper layer over the deep cold waters below 10-30 feet (3-10 meters), not mixing until fall when the upper waters turn cold again. If your cottage water intake takes water from the cold depths it should be more consistent than water taken from the warm upper layer, which changes more with rainfall.



Photo by: Cathy Morrison

Our lake water is a weak tea made from pure water collected by the watershed – let's try to protect our watershed so that our precious water remains among the cleanest in the world. We shouldn't wash or pee directly in the lake, but instead where our septic systems can do their job. Please pick up and discard any plastics you find along the shore before sunlight and waves smash them into bits. [Remove or protect your foam floats from chewing animals with wood or wire mesh.](#) Don't burn coloured paper in your stove, as the ash may be full of metals. Sadly, even [fireworks produce lead, perchlorate and microplastic pollution.](#) not to mention the effect the noise has on wildlife, so use them sparingly. Though imperfect, lead shot and sinkers now have less toxic replacements. Boating no longer spreads lead ever since it was removed from gasoline (not aviation fuel), but wakes can crash over shorelines and propellers churn up nutrients. In Little Otter lake the sediments may be full of phosphorus from the infamous Canada Motor Lamp Company incident and should never be disturbed!

Otter Lake is blessed in many ways, particularly with our clean water. Please think of activities that could impact our water quality – think of what goes on within our wonderful watershed.

OLRA 2023 Survey - Events and Opportunities 2024

By Rob Cribbie and Gerry Doyle

The results of the 2023 OLRA survey showed that Otter Lake residents have an interest in socializing with other Otter Lake residents in events in and around the area. As a reminder, the results can be found at: [OLRA Survey Results](#)

Many of the highly endorsed events could come to fruition if there are volunteers willing to organize and lead them. Examples of events that were popular are:

- Walking/Nature Hiking Group
- Kayaking Event
- Golf Event
- Native Plants Event
- Cycling Group
- Book Club

For example, a regular weekend kayak group could enjoy a leisurely paddle mixed with a history lesson of the lake or a discussion of shoreline preservation. A hiking/walking group could enjoy a beautiful day while discussing native (and invasive) plants. A golf event could bring together lake neighbours to tee it up for a day of fun and friendly competition.

If there are volunteers interested in leading and organizing these events, OLRA would be happy to help promote them via email, OLRA's website, and newsletters.

In addition to events that could be organized by Otter Lake residents, there are also opportunities to participate in local events. A few examples are posted below.

Parry Sound Bikes Cycling Events: Cycling enthusiasts can enjoy weekday evening and weekend morning rides around the Parry Sound District by contacting Parry Sound Bikes ([Rides & Events - Parry Sound Bikes](#)). It's free!

Foley Book Club: Those looking to read books and discuss them in a social setting can join the Foley Book Club. Details can be found at: [Seguin Library Events](#). For more info email staff@seguinpubliclibraries.ca

Georgian Bay Biosphere Native Plant Fundraiser : If you'd like to [learn about native plants and actually order some from a wide selection](#) check out this event running now until May 24th.

White Squall's Kayaking Franklin Challenge 2024: This 20 km kayaking event will be held on June 23rd this year. Details are being finalized so [watch this page for more info.](#)

Hundreds of Otter Lake residents have told us that they would like to enjoy fun events with their lake neighbours! All that is needed is organizers to make things happen.

If you are interested in organizing an event, please contact OLRA with your event info. OLRA will help you publicize it to connect with others who would like to join in. Please email info@olra.ca with the event details.

Our Local Advertisers cont'd



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OLRA 2024 Photo Contest

By: Julie Hoffman



It's that time again!!

Time to grab your phone and camera and click away. Share your Otter Lake moments with your fellow OLRA members. Prizes will be awarded in the Adult and Youth (16 and under), categories of People, Scenery and Wildlife. **Contest opens Saturday, May 18th and closes Tuesday, October 15th, 2024.**

Voting will take place shortly after the contest closes. Photographs will be posted on our website, OLRA.ca, and may be shared in [OLRA Newsletters](#) and other communications. Winners will be announced in the fall newsletter, on [olra.ca](#) and via email.

While we welcome entries from family and friends, all photographs need to be tied to a current OLRA member. Only OLRA members and their immediate family are eligible to receive prizes. Category prizes are as follows: 1st prize \$25, 2nd prize \$20 and third prize \$15. Overall winner receives \$25 and ultimate bragging rights! Congratulations again to [Jillian Hurley, our 2023 overall winner](#), for her adorable critter pic.

Send your photos from any season, taken on or around Otter Lake, to: OtterLakePhotoContest@gmail.com

Remember one photo per adult category. Youth (16 and under) may submit up to 3 entries. Photos must be 6 MB or smaller in size. Along with your photo, please include the following information in your email: the preferred category, contact information (email and mailing address), the OLRA membership name tied to the entry and a brief description of the photo. You may also complete this information by using this [form](#). It's that simple!

Keep a lookout for a reminder email in May, before the contest starts, with all the details. We are looking forward to seeing all your special Otter Lake moments.



1st Place - Adult Wildlife Category
By: Adam Walton

FOCA Spring Seminar and AGM Updates

By: Kerry Mueller

250 people attended the "Water Matters" Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) spring seminar and AGM to hear several speakers, to [wish Terry Rees a fond farewell after 20 years of being FOCA's Executive Director](#) and to welcome FOCA's [new Executive Director, Lesley Lavender](#), formerly CEO of the Prince Edward County Chamber of Commerce.

Uplifting [Stories of Cottage Climate Champs](#) was presented by [Leslie Garrett of BlueDot Living](#) who spoke about inspiring people protecting our environment from [Turtle Guardians headquartered in Haliburton](#), to [Tracy Williams cleaning up Lego washing up in massive amounts on UK beaches](#), to Doug Tallamy who started the [Canoe Garden Network](#) stretching now from Cape Breton to Vancouver Is. and beyond.

Kaleigh Mooney, FOCA plant specialist, described a FOCA guide to underwater plants coming soon. It will help identify native plants vs invasive ones, how each is important (or harmful) to its ecosystem and what to consider before disturbing any species.

Trevor Ferguson, [Municipal Equipment](#), talked about Fire Safety for rural properties and how water pumps and roof top sprinklers can protect dwellings from fires.



Photo courtesy of Trevor Ferguson

[Sgt. Dave Moffatt, Provincial Marine Coordinator, OPP](#) spoke about boating safety. Of the 201 fatalities in ON in the last 9 years, 43% of people fell overboard and 39% capsized, most in small boats. Of the 23 fatalities in 2023, 22 of them were male and most older than 45 years. 87% of people who died in the last 15 years were not wearing a life jacket. [Sgt. Moffat's main message was lead by example and always wear a good life jacket.](#) He himself experienced inhaling a lung full of water from the shock of being unexpectedly dunked.

For cottage insurance, you can check out [CADE Insurance's CottageFirst program](#) which is a benefit of being a FOCA member, as all OLRA members are.

For access to these presentations and more email info@olra.ca Have a wonderful time at the lake!

Join the Otter Lake—Little Otter Lake Team here: <https://www.wpshcf.com/fundraisers/OtterLake-LittleOtterLakeTeam118> or by donating to our team at [LoveOurHospital.com](https://www.LoveOurHospital.com) Group walks start at 10:00 am. For questions please email Little Otter Laker Kim Karges at kkarges@wpshc.com

YOUR HEALTH YOUR WAY

MOVE FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



Virtual Movement Challenge
May 1st - 31st from anywhere!

In Person "Meet Ups"
Four locations throughout the region

Wednesday, May 1, 2024: West Parry Sound Health Centre

Tuesday, May 7, 2024: Rosseau NPLC

Friday, May 17, 2024: Whitestone NPLC

Sunday, May 26, 2024: Pointe au Baril NPLC



Jamie Pitre, MRT with WPSHC's outdated Bone Mineral Density Machine

We have a goal to update the Bone Mineral Density Testing equipment at WPSHC

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