



Sand Lake Estates

RR1, Elgin, Ontario K0G 1E0

Newsletter

Summer 2015

Our Backlands – a Managed Forest

At our 2014 AGM a motion was passed to apply for Managed Forest status for our backlands. Our backlands consist of two properties (see your SLEI map for location), one 19.0 acres in size, the other 24.5 acres in size. The financial reason for this application is to reduce the taxes on these properties. The designation of these properties as a Managed Forest will reduce taxes to 25% of the regular rate – in our case from \$630 to \$157 per year.

Another reason for the designation is to maintain the backlands in their natural state, to maintain the environmental protection of the property, to preserve wildlife habitat and to encourage nature appreciation.

The program, administered by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, is called the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program and it requires that a 10-year Managed Forest Plan be prepared that details how we will manage our backlands responsibly. To create this plan we hired a certified Managed Forest Plan Approver to evaluate our properties and prepare the plan. It was submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forest in mid-May of this year for their approval.

The only potential issue that our consultant noted was our roads, which occupy about 2 acres of the total 43.5 acres. It is possible that they may be excluded from the plan meaning we'll pay 100% taxes on the roads and 25% on the rest of the property. We should find out in the next few months whether the plan was accepted and under what conditions.

Features they look for are a minimum of 40 acres of contiguous forest cover which we have when combined with adjacent woodlands. They like to see old growth, which is defined as 120+ year old trees greater than 50 cm in diameter. We're not quite there – we do have trees greater than 50 cm, some now over 100 years old, but lack some other old growth features (which will develop over time). They like to see downed woody debris (fallen logs), over 70% canopy cover (we have 90%) with a mix of supercanopy trees, conifer trees, cavity trees, snags (standing dead trees) and mast trees (trees that produce berries or nuts). These are all rated as "good" on our backlands.

Our general responsibility to the Managed Forest includes maintaining the backlands in their natural state, essentially as we've been doing for the last 50 years. The backlands were originally set up as a buffer to prevent any secondary development from encroaching on SLEI cottage lots. They were meant to be kept undeveloped, in fact SLEI By-Law 7 states "The several parcels of land within lots 12 & 13, Concession VII, owned by Sand Lake Estates Inc. (commonly referred to as the Backlands) shall not be subdivided and offered for sale or lease to members of the Corporation or the general public". A vote by 3/4 of the entire SLEI membership is required to change this by-law.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Date: Sunday, July 5, 2015

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Place: Elgin Municipal Complex (beside the Post Office). Chairs will be provided.

Bring: your annual dues (\$100)

Any and all donations of refreshments (juice/water) or edibles (cookies/muffins) will be graciously accepted. Please call Paula Way Quong 613-359-6236 or email: pwayquong@hotmail.com, no later than June 30.



Entrance to the Brian Clark Memorial Trail near 21D Walnut Point Road.

Comments about the newsletter can be directed to the editor, Ken Watson, at rideauken@gmail.com

The plan also states that we will informally maintain the foot trail through the backlands. This trail, the Brian Clark Memorial Trail (named in memory of Brian Clark who created the trail in 2008), takes you through the heart of the backlands. The plan also requires that we maintain the trail signage.

We are also to generally monitor trespassing, protecting the properties from unauthorized use. We are to maintain the current wildlife habitat for the benefit of the animals and birds that live in the backlands. We are also encouraged to enjoy being surrounded by wildlife and to observe that wildlife.

In terms of don'ts – commercial harvesting of timber is not allowed. However the removal of fallen trees from roads is required (something we already do). Hunting is also banned, something already in place (our properties are posted as being no hunting areas).

The plan will last for 10 years. At 5 years we will be required to submit a progress report, something we can do ourselves (no need to hire a consultant for this).

Thanks to Peter O'Neill who initiated this project and has taken the lead on getting it done with the assistance of Ken Watson. We'll save money and it will further protect and enhance our backlands.

At the 2014 AGM, Mike Miles volunteered to be our Managed Forest Steward until such time as a permanent steward could be found. This person would be required to visit the backlands every so often, make note of wildlife and any other issues related to the plan, and then provide the 5-year update. It's a great volunteer job for anyone who enjoys nature. Please contact Peter O'Neill if you are interested.



The Middle of the Trail

SAND LAKE ESTATES

Our 2014 AGM was held on Sunday, June 29, at the Elgin Community Hall. Several reports were presented including the finances of the association and road maintenance. A major point of discussion was on the Managed Forest designation for the backlands in order to reduce our tax burden (see lead article).

We're running low on volunteers for our Board of Directors. Paula Way-Quong and John Lewis announced at the AGM that they were stepping down as directors. That left 5 existing directors who agreed to serve for another term and one new director, Phoebe Wright who volunteered at the AGM. The sad loss of our Secretary, Stewart Touzel this past winter, reduced our board to 5: Reid Barter, Mike Miles, Peter O'Neill, Phoebe Wright and John Ziegler. Our full slate is 7, so we're two short. So now is your time to shine—contact Peter O'Neill if you are interested in serving.

The current (2014/15) Executive is:

President: vacant

Vice-President: vacant

Treasurer: Peter O'Neill (613-822-9993)

Secretary: vacant

Dues

2015 dues are \$100 and can be paid at the AGM, on-line (see below), or by mailing your cheque and the enclosed annual dues form to Sand Lake Estates, RR1, Elgin, ON K0G 1E0. Questions about your dues can be directed to our Treasurer, Peter O'Neill.

2015 AGM

A reminder that our 2015 AGM is on Sunday, July 5 at 10:30 am. It will be held in the Elgin Municipal Complex, chairs will be provided. The AGM is the best venue to chat with the directors and ask any questions you might have about our association.

HELP!!

We need 2 more directors (our full slate is 7 directors). Any registered property owner over 18 years of age can be a director of Sand Lake Estates Incorporated. Please make your nomination to Peter O'Neill – Oneillinottawa@teksavvy.com or by using the Contact Us page on our website www.sandlakeestates.ca

DUES BY CREDIT CARD

Thanks to Peter O'Neill, there is now a way to pay your dues using a credit card. It can be done by going to our new website: www.sandlakeestates.ca and clicking on the "Dues" link. That will take you to a page with a PayPal "Buy Now" button.

You don't have to be a PayPal member to use this service, PayPal accepts all major credit cards. It's a safe and secure way to make an on-line payment.

Cheques or cash are of course still accepted.

2014 FINANCIAL REPORT

Income Forecast

Dues	4,700.00
Back Dues	0
Road Grant	797.00
Interest	1.00
Total	5,498.00

Expenses

Taxes	929.92
Hall Rental	70.00
FOCA	277.75
Insurance	1,056.24
Roads	1,737.82
Other (signage/AGM)	49.74
Newsletter	0
<u>Website Hosting (to 2017)</u>	<u>297.20</u>
Total	4,418.67

Reconciliation

1 January 2014 - Opening Balance	5,951.11
31 December 2014 - Closing Balance	7,103.08

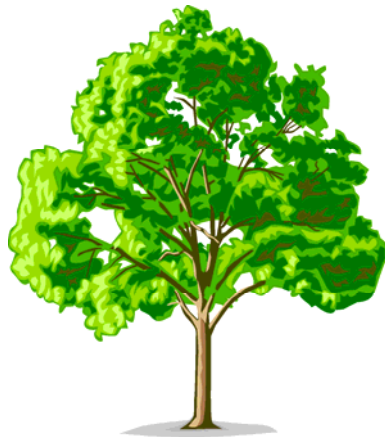
Opening Balance	5,951.12
Add Deposits	<u>5,570.64</u>
	11,521.75
Minus Expenses	<u>(4,418.67)</u>
	\$7,103.08

BMO Term Investment	\$4,337.29
(contingency fund)	

TREES

We want to remind members and their guests that the backlands are a forest, not a park. If people are strolling through the woods they are reminded to be vigilant for partially fallen trees or other hazards. Hiking through the backlands is done at your own risk.

For trees that fall or partially fall on the road allowance, residents are asked to contact i) the Road Superintendent or ii) Ontario Hydro (if trees are or may potentially interfere with hydro lines) so that an assessment can be made to ensure no one is hurt dealing with tricky removals.



ROAD MAINTENANCE

Almost half of your annual dues is used for the summer maintenance of SLE roads. Our volunteer Road Superintendent is John Ziegler who does a magnificent job - **thanks John!** You'll note that this spring our roads were beautifully graded and additional gravel was added to sections that required it.

There are also several volunteers who help out by trimming vegetation that encroaches on the road, cutting grass, filling in pot-holes, digging out ditches and other maintenance work. These include Reid Barter, Bob Haapala, Ken Watson and others. Feel free to help out if you see an issue with any of the roads.

Winter Ploughing

Sand Lake Estates does not do (or pay for) any winter maintenance/clearing of the roads. Private individuals are paying for all winter sanding and ploughing. Winter ploughing costs are shared on a volunteer basis. Contact John Ziegler for Pine Ridge/Eden roads or Bob Haapala for Walnut Point Road if you would like to contribute to the ploughing of the main access roads.

Those wishing to have their driveways ploughed should contact our contractor, Terry French, of French's Trucking, directly at: 613-272-2465.

SAD LOSS

It is with deep sadness to report that Stewart Touzel passed away in January of this year in his 83rd year. Stewart was an active volunteer with Sand Lake Estates, serving for the last few years as the Secretary of our association. Stewart was an energetic person with a positive outlook on life – he will be greatly missed.

NEW WEBSITE

We have a new website which you will find at: www.sandlakeestates.ca It was created by Peter O'Neill to replace our previous less active site. It includes a section where which you can pay your dues on-line (via PayPal—see page 2).

If you have any ideas for the site and/or would like to contribute material, please contact Peter at: Oneillinottawa@teksavvy.com or use the Contact Us page on the website.

GARBAGE PICKUP and CHANGES TO RECYCLING

Garbage pickup by the Township during the summer (starting after Victoria Day and going to Thanksgiving) is at the end of **your driveway** (NOT at the end of the main roads) every Monday (or Tuesday if Monday is a holiday). It is your responsibility to clean up any spills of your garbage in a timely manner. To ensure that spills don't happen in the first place, regular garbage should be placed in a "critter proof" container. Please note that containers you'll see along our roads are private. Organic material should be composted (as opposed to being put in your garbage).

The recycling schedule of paper/cardboard/boxboard recycling one week with plastic and metal recycling the next week, continues in 2015. You find the schedule on each page of your calendar (tiny writing on the left side of the page for each week). Calendars are available at the Post Office in Elgin.

Garbage must be placed in a clear bag and have a Township bag tag attached. A bag without a valid bag tag will not be picked up. Tags can be purchased at Gordanier Grocery in Elgin. Recycling is free and must be in a clear blue bag. Fibres and paper may be bundled but must be tightly tied (or it won't be picked up). There is a limit of 2 bags of garbage and 5 bags of recycling per week and each bag must weigh less than 40 pounds.

Details about the Township's waste collection policy, including a full list of how to sort your recyclables, can be found on the Township website at: www.twprideaulakes.on.ca

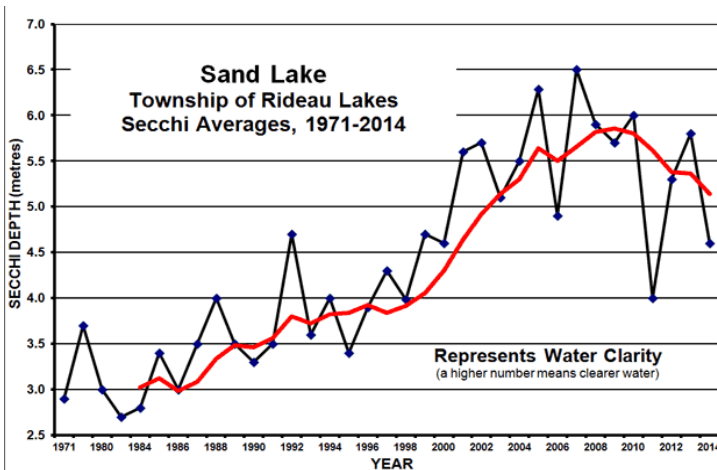
Please ensure that **all users** of your cottage (i.e. guests or renters) are aware of the rules.

WATER QUALITY

Your association's Lake Steward, Ken Watson, participates in the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's Lake Partner Program. This involves taking weekly water clarity readings using a secchi disk, taking weekly water temperature readings and taking six water samples a year that are measured for phosphorus content.

In 2014, the average secchi water clarity reading was 4.6 metres, down from 5.8 m in 2013. The average phosphorus content of our lake (6 samples) in 2014 was 13.1 ug/L, up from 11.0 ug/L the year before (lower is better).

The recent downward trend (see chart below) is due to the decline in zebra mussel populations—the algae in the lake are still adjusting to that. Overall clarity and phosphorus content remain very good for a lake of our type (Mesotrophic, moderately enriched with nutrients).



OUR LOONS

There are a number of artificial loon nesting platforms on Sand Lake. We ask that you and your guests avoid approaching any of these during nesting season, mid-May to mid-June. This can disrupt the nesting loon, sometimes to the point of nest abandonment.

We also ask boaters to please be aware of the small loon chicks, especially during July and August. Also please make all visitors and renters aware of the fact that loon chicks are in the area and that they are very vulnerable to being run over by a boat or PWC. They are hard to spot in the water and too young to be able to avoid boats. It is up to you to avoid them.

The loons in Rancier Bay hatched one chick on June 11 of this year. Last year they also hatched one chick. It survived the summer to fly south in late fall.

ICE IN - ICE OUT

Sand Lake froze over on December 30, 2014 and the ice was gone from the lake on April 17, 2015.

BOATING INFORMATION

- The following is our annual review of some of key boating information items:
- Everyone who operates a powered pleasure boat must have a Pleasure Craft Operator's Card.
- No one under the age of 16 may operate a personal water craft (PWC).
- No one under the age of 12, and not directly supervised by a person 16 years of age or older, may operate a vessel with more than a 10 HP engine.
- No one between the age of 12 and 16, and not directly supervised by a person 16 years of age or older, may operate a vessel with more than a 40 HP engine.
- Make sure you have all safety equipment required for your boat, which includes items such as a buoyant heaving line, a watertight flashlight (with batteries loaded) and a manual sound-signaling device.
- A personal flotation device of appropriate size must be available for each person on board (i.e. if you have children in a boat, you must have child-size PFDs.)
- For most boats (including canoes/kayaks), consuming alcohol on board is against the law. And, just like a car, you have to be sober to operate a boat.
- If you are a tow boat for a water-skier, tuber, etc., you must have at least 2 people and 3 seats in the boat. There must be a driver, an observer and a spare seat for each person being towed.
- While refueling, all occupants of the boat must be ashore, all engines must be off, all open flames must be extinguished. Portable fuel tanks must be filled ashore.



SEPTIC SYSTEMS

This is your yearly reminder to take stock of your septic system - is it working as it should? Have you had it pumped out recently?

An improperly working septic system will allow the release of harmful bacteria such as E. coli (fecal bacteria) into our lake. It can even contaminate groundwater (i.e. your well or your neighbour's well).



Follow these six steps to keep a healthy system:

- Step 1 – Do** have your septic tank pumped out every three years
- Step 2 – Don't** overload your septic system with water
- Step 3 – Don't** give your septic system indigestion
- Step 4 – Don't** drive or park cars or heavy machinery on the septic bed
- Step 5 – Don't** plant trees or shrubs on or near the septic bed
- Step 6 – Do** let your system grow with the family and usage – know its capacity

Does your septic tank need to be pumped out this year?

If you didn't know you had a septic system, if it hasn't been pumped out in the last 3 years, if you can't remember when it was last pumped out, then you should have it pumped this year.

Two local contractors who do this work are Bryan's Septic Service in Westport (**613-273-3078**) and Hogan's Septic Service of Seeleys Bay (**613-387-3432** or **1-800-395-1375**).



The Sand Lake Eagles have returned to their nest



The dense canopy cover in our backlands is the sign of a mature forest

BASS FISHING

A reminder to all that the bass fishing season does **not start until the third Saturday of June** (June 20 this year).

The problem with pre-season poaching of bass is that if the bass are pulled off their nests, other predatory fish (sunfish, etc.) will swoop in and eat the bass eggs or fry. This means that even catch and release fishing is damaging to bass stocks.

It is illegal to fish for or take bass before the **third Saturday in June** or after December 15th.

This means that it is against the law to do any type of fishing which potentially targets bass:

Casting in areas that are less than 1.8 m (6 ft) in depth.

Using bass lures and live bait.

This includes catch-and-release.

If you see a poacher, report the license number of the boat to MNR at **1-877-TIPS-MNR** (1-800-847-7667).



Bright spots that you can see underwater in shallow areas of our lake are bass “nests.” Here we see the male (the one that makes the nest) guarding his nest. Once the water temperature is high enough (about 18°C/65°F) the female will lay her eggs and the male will continue to guard the nest until they hatch. If a bass is pulled off the nest, predators (i.e. sunfish) will zip in and eat the eggs.

OPENING UP THE COTTAGE

FOCA and the Insurance Bureau of Canada have put together a top 10 list of things to do each spring when you open up the cottage:

1. Check your car’s lights, signals, tire pressure and fluids before the trip to the cottage.
2. Check your first-aid kit and replace any missing supplies.
3. Check and maintain cottage smoke detectors and CO detectors – replace the batteries each spring.
4. Check the condition of boat(s), including fuel lines and tanks. Check that all required safety equipment is on board and in good repair.
5. Remove dry leaves and debris from the cottage roof and/or eavestroughs to reduce fire risk.
6. Prepare for extreme weather events – create a family emergency preparedness plan for the cottage.
7. Assemble a disaster safety kit for your cottage and car.
8. Talk to your neighbours – plan ahead for emergencies by identifying vulnerable people and potential community volunteers.
9. Talk to your insurance representative to review your cottage, car and boat coverage.
10. Pass along these tips to friends, family and neighbours.

COMING EVENTS

For more details on events see: www.twprideaulakes.on.ca/rec-events.html

- | | |
|------------|---|
| June 27 | Canada Day Fireworks – at dusk on Big Rideau Lake near Portland (good viewing from Hanna Park in Portland) |
| June 28 | Queen’s University Biological Station Open House, noon to 3 p.m. - on Opinicon Lake |
| July 4 - 5 | Rideau Lakes Garden and Studio Tour (look for brochures in Elgin) |
| July 5 | Sand Lake Estates AGM – 10:30 a.m. at the Elgin Municipal Complex |
| July 11&12 | Elgin Days – includes a BBQ and a parade |
| July 23-26 | Delta Fair |
| August 8 | 100th Anniversary of the Big Rideau Lake Association in Portland. Classic boat show, antique cars, dragon boat races, music, food and more. |

COST OF POWER

Your power bill is going up. That's not really news but it is an issue in a rural setting such as Sand Lake Estates. Ontario has a complicated and very expensive electrical generating and distribution system. We pay close to the highest cost per kw/h in North America. Poor long term planning, government laws preventing the import of cheaper power for other jurisdictions (i.e. Quebec), very expensive plan changes (i.e. termination of proposed gas plant projects), high salaries and a large underfunded pension plan, all have and will continue to contribute to higher rates.

Power generation is done by Ontario Power Generation, a government owned agency formed in 1998. In 1999 it took over the electricity generation assets of the former Hydro One. Power distribution in our area is done by the "new" Hydro One (re-structured in 1999), a company with one shareholder, the Ontario government. That's about to change with the sale of a portion of Hydro One to outside investors. The long-term ramifications of that sale are unclear at the moment but it is generally expected to result in higher costs to consumers (us).

You're electric bill has several components, the pricing of each is controlled by several agencies.

Price of Electricity: The Ontario Energy Board (OEB - a government agency) sets the price of electricity. They do this twice a year, on May 1 and November 1.

Delivery Charges: These are proposed by Hydro One and approved by the OEB – so these are OEB approved Hydro One charges.

Regulatory Charges: This is a dog's breakfast of things. It includes OEB administrative charges, Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) administrative charges, costs for renewable energy, power line energy losses, costs for the IESO to operate the high voltage grid, and more.

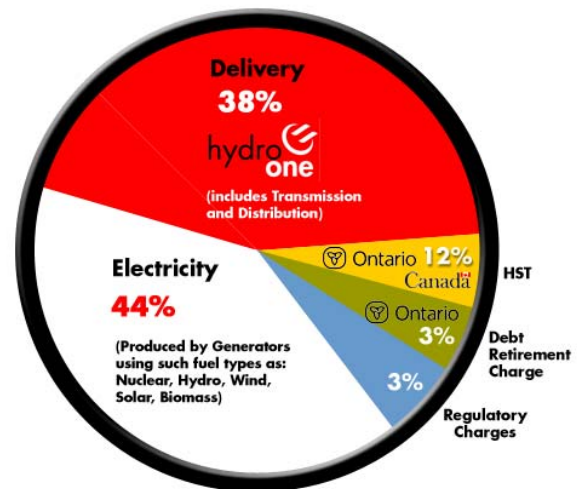
Debt Retirement Charges: to help pay down the debt of the former Hydro One (this mess started long ago). The government has said that it will cease charging this to residential customers in 2016.

Ontario Clean Energy Benefit: this is a 10% reduction in your electrical bill that doesn't actually appear to have anything to do with clean energy. It appears to be a government program to soften the blow of increasing rates and make consumers less unhappy. It was implemented in 2012 and will expire on December 31, 2015.

Hydro One has recently made a decision to remove the seasonal class rate. If any cottage here is on that rate it will be switched to the residential low density rate.

Last year, Hydro One applied to the OEB for a 29% rate increase over 5 years. That was turned down, but the OEB did approve a 19% increase over three years (which is actually a higher annualized rate). The OEB also turned down Hydro One's request for an increase in its vegetation management budget (tree and brush clearing along lines) citing inefficiencies in that system (some of the highest costs for this in Canada). Currently Hydro One is on a 9.5 year tree/brush clearing cycle and wishes to move to a 7 year cycle. It's uncertain how this is going to play out. This does affect us since we see more power outages from fallen tree branches as we near the end of each clearing cycle. The OEB has ordered that Hydro One decrease these costs by 39 million dollars over the next three years. In the short term this will mean less line clearing unless Hydro One can produce the increased efficiencies that the OEB is requesting.

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association, of which SLEI is a member, has intervened in power rate hearings on behalf of cottage owners. However, the bottom line is that the cost of electricity is going up and the reliability of our system may go down in the short term.



OPP COSTS

A major issue for the Township of Rideau Lakes this year was a \$300,000 increase in OPP costs which is the primary reason for our property tax increase this year. To reduce this a bit, the Township has recently (June 9) entered into a new non-contractual agreement with the OPP, reducing costs from \$2.2 million to \$2.15 million per year. This represents \$279.06 per household. It could be worse, if you lived in Smiths Falls you'd be paying \$1,150 per household for policing costs.