

CHANGES TO HOW THE DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA WILL ASSESS WATER QUALITY IN MUSKOKA



As noted in the November 2016 EBLAST (1 of 2), a letter outlining concerns regarding the proposed changes to the District of Muskoka Lake System Health Policy (authored by Ken Riley on behalf of LLSA) was sent to the editor of Muskokaregion.com and to the Muskoka Watershed Council.

For your information, the letter is reproduced below and will be posted to leonardlake.net.

Muskokaregion.com

Dear Editor

Thank you for your article in Muskokaregion.com entitled, "Residents show resistance to changes in water model" highlighting concerns raised at the October 20 public Meeting to address the Muskoka Recreational Water Quality Revision and Official Plan Amendment.

The article incorrectly states that the Hutchinson Environmental Science Limited (HESL) report suggests that the model be changed, when in fact the HESL report recommends the model be abandoned. Our position is to change, not abandon the model by incorporating new science in order to more accurately classify, predict and manage the health of a given lake. In contrast, the HESL report, and official plan amendment propose to drop the model altogether and instead use "triggers" based on phosphorus in the lakes as the sole indicator of lake health. These "triggers" would not be triggered until most Muskoka lakes had doubled or tripled in their phosphorus levels. At these levels, science indicates that we could expect severe algae and plankton problems, and oxygen depletion leading to dead lakes. The HESL report fails to address the need to develop future models.

For the past 20 years, the model has been effectively used to classify the sensitivity of our lakes to lakefront development, to establish when a lake is "over threshold, and hence, to limit further development on that lake. In abandoning the model at this time, we lose the ability to provide any rationale to developers to say "enough is enough". If the HESL report is approved, developers may sever and develop properties on all of our lakes. Limiting development remains the single most cost effective tool that municipalities can use in protecting lake health.

We regard Bob List's remarks that "the threat of phosphorus in the lakes, is not a problem on our lakes in Muskoka ... and the results (in the report) prove that..." as both unfortunate and incorrect. We believe that the "restrictions " in our official plans

are in fact, essential planning and management tools in safeguarding our lakes .

We all agree that the health of Muskoka Lakes depends on more than just phosphorus levels. It has been found that phosphorus accounts for about half the variation of algae and plankton (chlorophyll a) in our lakes, making it a moderately good indicator of lake health. Climate change models, as shown in the excellent recent Muskoka Watershed Council report, "Planning For Climate Change in Muskoka" lead us to understand that we can expect multiple new stressors in our lakes. Yet the HESL report and proposed amendment fail to address any stressor other than phosphorus.

We believe that an updated model must incorporate additional development-related factors as motorboat use, excessive numbers weekend guests trampling lakefront shorelines and over taxing septic systems. An updated model must also include measures of environmental and social changes, incorporating local users' perspectives, and addressing limits to growth on a lake-specific basis . Such changes would make the amendment more in line with the current Provincial Policy Statement.

We fully appreciate that lakefront development is a vital part of our economy in Muskoka. We also know that the environment, including our lakes, is changing. If we do not have the effective tools to manage and sustain lake health, our economy will fail.

As Christy Doyle, Director of Environment and Watershed Programs recently stated, "We have to get this right!"

Or, as the late Ken Black might have said, "Water flows uphill toward money!"

Ken Riley-Leonard Lake Stakeholders Association

Ken is the 5th generation of Rileys to farm at Brooklands, located along the outflow of Leonard Lake. Leonard Lake has been an important part of the family history for over 100 years. Ken Holds a PhD in Plant Science, and was formerly the director for Asia of a biodiversity institute attached to the United Nations.

If you wish to speak to an LLSA representative regarding any aspect of this EBLAST please send comments or questions to
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A sincere thank you to members that have renewed for 2016 and continue to support the Leonard Lake Stakeholders Association. If you enjoy this electronic newsletter please consider joining the association or renewing your membership now at www.leonardlake.net or mail a \$50. cheque to Bev Leabeter, 1128 Leonard Lake RD 2, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1W8. **Membership matters - it allows the association to speak with authority on behalf of Leonard Lake**



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