



## 2021 ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN

I thought it might be useful to our members to give them a review of what environmental projects we plan to do in 2021. Most of the plan is what we had intended to do in the past year, but you know what got in the way

### **NEW!**

#### **Natural Edge Program**

Nothing is more important to the long-term quality of our lake water than the 3-meter strip of land at the water's edge. Often called "The Ribbon of Life" or the riparian zone, clearing native plants from this zone will ensure that harmful nutrients enter the lake much more quickly. Leaving this zone to Mother Nature to cover with native plants is the right thing to do. It will act like a huge filter. A bonus is that often the most beautiful flowers are native plants and weeds that you will enjoy every summer. Later this summer, we will have the people from the Love Your Lake program do an assessment of each property on Loon and Turtle Lakes (this will be done from a boat so nobody sets foot on your property). Each owner will receive a custom analysis of their water's edge along with suggestions on restoration, if any.

But you can also participate in an adjunct program, the Natural Edge Program, free of charge. If you would like to receive a site visit this summer by a qualified biologist, you can sign up at <https://www.muskokawatershed.org/programs/the-natural-edge/>. Participation in Natural Edge will include a site visit and put expert information in your hands along with discounts at local nurseries for native plants and bushes. When it comes to the quality of water in Loon and Turtle Lakes, we're all in this together. Your participation in Natural Edge will help ensure our lakes continue to have the water quality we expect.

#### **Lake Partner Program**

The central pillar of Loon and Turtle Lake's water quality is the Lake Partner Program water testing administered by the Dorset Environmental Station. The LTLCA has been a full participant of this program for over 40 years and gives us a nutrient number in our water. In early May before the water column turns over, samples are taken in the same spot every year for both lakes and couriered to the DES for analysis. Every lake has phosphate "signature". What we are looking for are spikes in the amount of phosphate. Spikes can be caused by a number of things including removing natural weeds within 3 metres of shore, a poorly performing septic system or hot tub, covering a property with short grass that speeds up run-off of nutrients into the lake and spraying weed killing chemicals on properties

around the lake which all eventually end up in the lake.

### **Benthic Testing**

Benthic testing, conducted for the last few years by Michael Clarke, is the census of invertebrates at the waters edge, a key factor in the food chain and health of our lakes. With the assistance of a District of Muskoka biologist, samples of mud and sand in a specific location are taken. Then a census of the types and quantities of living bugs are taken. Healthy lakes have a diverse population of invertebrates as well as a good representative number which is compared to previous years counts. We will publicize when and where this years testing will take place. For young children, it is highly educational to see what is in the mud and to understand how each creature contributes to the health of our lakes.

### **Love Your Lake**

Loon and Turtle Lakes are on the list for this project this year after having to cancel it last year. The Muskoka Watershed Council along with the District sponsor this plan and it has had great success on other lakes in Muskoka. Love Your Lake is primarily concerned with the riparian zone or the waters edge on our lakes. Two biologists take pictures of each waterfront and give each cottager an assessment of improvements, if any, to the 3 meters zone.

### **Water Weeds**

We plan to put together a team of 2 or 3 volunteers to take samples of existing water weeds in our lakes and identify them. The Muskoka Watershed Council has agreed to help with this. Hot summers with lots of sun, if that is the future, will encourage more water weeds every year. Harvesting water weeds around your waterfront and dock is perfectly sensible. Making sure your septic system or hot tub are working properly is critical. We also need to be aware of the threat of invasive weeds that are affecting lakes around us, especially Eurasian water-Milfoil and Invasive Phragmites. Neither is welcome on our lakes as they have the potential to change the ecology quickly. If you would like to volunteer and help with this, give me a call at 416-231-1098.

### **Canada Geese**

There is no quick fix to lessen the number of geese families on our lakes. The year we hired Muskoka Goose Control, we had only 2 or 3 goose families, but MGC is so inundated with work they have not been available to help us since then. Non-native grass has been a huge attractant to these geese as it is their major food source. The *No Grass, No Geese* program does not seem to have much effect, although some members are letting their grass grow long which discourages geese. Thank you for this. There are other deterrents such as special laser lights and recorded distress calls. If you'd like to volunteer, investigate the options and make suggestions, please call me.

With every good wish,

Peter Helston  
Environment Co-ordinator  
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