



**BNIA**

**Winter Newsletter  
2012/2013**



## **Photo Contest – Mary Perdue**

The photo contest for 2012 was a great success. The theme was “Landscapes”. Sandra Lucas won for her photo entitled, “Foggy Morning” which will be featured on the cover of the 2013 Directory. She will receive a free membership in the BNIA for 2013. The runner up was Molly Mulloy for her image entitled, “Bayfield Reefs in Early Evening”, which is on the cover of this Newsletter.

The photo contest is an annual event, so send your images in to be eligible for prizes in 2013! The theme is “Enjoying the Bay”. Use your imagination and send in any image that fits. Each person can submit up to 3 photos. The winning image and the runner-up will be announced and displayed at the Annual Meeting at Springhaven Lodge.

## **Hydro Apologizes for Offensive Letter – Ted Simmonds**

Bayfield customers were shocked to receive a form letter from Hydro One, through CanPar, dated September 19<sup>th</sup>, headed “Your Immediate Attention Is Required”.

After addressing us as “Dear Valued Customer”, it began by telling us that “Our records indicate that after several attempts to read your meter over the past year, we have been unable to obtain an actual read. Without a meter reading it is necessary to estimate your electricity usage. This means your bill may not reflect your actual electricity use.”

Thus, the note continued, in bold print, “It is important that we receive your current meter reading by October 15, 2012.”

After receiving a posted notice on my door stating that I needed to drive to the CanPar office to pick up my mail, and, after driving 20 km, one way, to do so, when I read this note I was not a happy camper.

In my phone call to the office of Hydro One, I identified myself as the Secretary of the BNIA, stating I represented a number of customers, and then told the representative that the letter was inaccurate, and the timing was most inappropriate. Always in the past there has been only one visit by a meter reader, and this year no attempt at all had been made; by Sept. 19, most cottagers had closed up for the winter, thus making it impossible to comply with the stated request/demand.

After listening, the representative backed down, apologizing for sending out that form letter to those of us who had not been served by a meter reader, and agreeing that the timing was unfortunate.

In future, if Hydro One continues to decide to cut costs by neglecting to send out meter readers to island customers, we can expect a different letter, and hopefully the timing will be better.

Perhaps, though, we should add to our list of “close up chores”, the task of recording our meter readings, so we can send in the information when they get around to asking us.

## **BNIA Boating Report – Peter Frost**

I have a few issues to comment on this fall as regards boating.

### **Water Levels**

First and foremost, I believe we will have low water to live with and that requires us to be far more cautious when boating, even in areas we know well. I understand from talking to a number of marina operators that this past summer created a land office business in lower ends and props! At the Canadian Power and Sail Conference in Edmonton, the chief climatologist for Environment Canada, David Phillips, did not paint a pretty picture for water levels in the Great Lakes. Their modeling does not suggest higher water, rather a continual reduction in overall volumes throughout the system. It is immaterial in his view whether the causes are manmade or not (he is somewhat open on this issue); the fact is that climate change is having a profound effect all around the globe. He characterizes the future weather patterns as being “wetter, wilder, and warmer” with higher sea levels from melting glaciers and polar ice caps. Unfortunately for us, the “wetter” does not apply to the Great Lakes basin where precipitation rates are expected to lag behind evaporation rates, lowering lake levels.

While there are all sorts of positions one can take, the only one that makes sense to me is that efforts should be directed towards the fair sharing of the water that does exist in the basin. At the moment, those of us in the middle lakes, Michigan, Huron, and Georgian Bay (in total I think this single hydrological “pool” accounts for the greatest volume of water in the Great lakes) are completely at the mercy of the lock systems above and below us. This is clearly inappropriate and must be addressed. Bob Duncanson, Executive Director of the GBA, commented recently that new and innovative ideas need to be developed and brought to bear on the problem

### **Boating and Transport Canada (from November meetings in Ottawa)**

Until government lawyers reminded Harper’s boys of the Federal responsibility for navigable waters in Canada under the British North America Act, the belief of the Harper Government was that recreational boating issues (and all attendant expense), should be for “other” levels of government and the Office of Boating Safety (largely responsible for pleasure craft matters) should be disbanded. That did not transpire, but the budget of the OBS was drastically cut and the focus shifted to a “fee for service” model and a focus on regulatory issues and the PCOC program, and a complete elimination of any “outreach programs”. Probably the most obvious example is the discontinuance of the familiar “Safe Boating Guide” that had been available at marinas and boat shows free of charge and was often pointed to as about the only useful thing Transport Canada did for recreational boaters. Reduction of services are widespread and may not be readily apparent, but will include all sorts of safety oriented programs that had previously been overseen by the OBS and partly or fully funded by them and which have led to a significant reduction of boating accidents and especially drowning.

What is now being promoted are “partnerships” with groups such as the Red Cross, Canadian Yachting Association, Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons, Coast Guard Auxiliary, etc., to deliver the

programs. It means that all the financial responsibility for the actual delivery of these programs will fall on the already overloaded volunteer organizations that have enough problem raising funds as it is. It is important to realize that there is a sort of a bastard "US Model" being employed here. But there is a difference. In the US, part of the gas tax from boaters is funneled back into marine programs. In Canada that is not the case. So Canadian marine programs are seen by the feds as a "cost" centre only. There is no credit given for the taxes that flow from marine gas sales, or any of the other positive economic aspects of boating – it seems a bit unfair.

What is the most direct effect of the new policy for us? Boat licenses are going to cost and they will not be valid for life or even 10 years, but will probably be valid for five years only. Current expectations are that the cost will be \$60 a boat. The government is restricted to "cost recovery" only, and that is where the \$60 comes from because it represents their current cost estimate to produce a boat license. I believe that given the mandate from Cabinet, Transport Canada has no option but to move in this direction. Apparently TC has had 310,000 requests to deal with this year alone. A more formal explanation and justification is expected from TC sometime soon. There will be public consultations. It won't be buried in a 500 plus page omnibus bill as many of these other cuts in service have been. I suppose we should be pleased about that.

One other major consequence of the cutbacks that will affect all boaters, recreational and commercial alike, is the severe curtailing of Search and Rescue operations and capabilities, in particular on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Experts in the field are very concerned about this move.

A couple of encouraging initiatives include a task force that is working with the US to align a range of standards that affect such things as vessel construction and safety equipment (including life jackets and PFDs).

### **OPP comment on PCOC cards and Marking of Life Jackets and PFDs**

#### ***PCOC***

I spoke with Sgt Karen Harrington, OPP, who is responsible for the OPP Provincial Marine Programs, about the need for carrying the original PCOC when operating a boat. She explained that a copy would normally be satisfactory, despite the fact that the Act requires an original. Other jurisdictions, especially where the RCMP patrol, may well insist on an original. Result – very unlikely you would be in trouble with only a copy, but no 100% guarantee. There is no evidence that TC is interested in amending the Regulations to allow a copy.

#### ***Marking on Life Jackets***

When marking names or island numbers on these items DO NOT MARK, DEFACE, or OBSCURE the Transport Canada Label – this will render them non-conforming. There was concern that any marking anywhere on them would make them non-conforming, but this is not the case.

### **“Pleasure Craft”**

I want to draw everyone’s attention to a situation that has arisen in a couple of policing jurisdictions in the Golden Horseshoe (Hamilton for one), and that was raised at the National Recreational Boating Advisory Council meetings in Ottawa on November 8<sup>th</sup>. There is only one definition of a boat in the Canada Shipping Act and that is “pleasure craft” which is specifically defined as a craft used for the “pleasure” of its operator/owner. Every other craft, by default, becomes “commercial”. What has happened is that some police forces have decided that all boats used by sailing and rowing clubs as safety boats, coaching boats, etc., or a boat used by a real estate agent to take someone to view a property, are not being used for “pleasure” and are therefore “commercial” and must meet all the standards required of commercial vessels as must the operator. So, as a result, for example, Ted Simmonds will have to equip his steel boat with all sorts of expensive safety stuff, have his vessel “Registered” and also get his Master’s papers, before he can legally tow the canoes to the starting line at the BNIA Regatta. Needless to say, this information caused quite a stir at NRBC and with the Transport Canada officials in attendance. I understand that the issue is being taken up with the police forces involved, and surely saner heads will prevail. That is all from the Punch and Judy Show this year.

### **“NO FIRES PLEASE” – Ted Simmonds**

The Georgian Bay Land Trust has encouraged us – whether we are recognized official “Stewards”, or merely caring cottagers – to do more to protect our precious environment.

One way is to monitor the area for fires – which many are in the habit of doing, and to attempt to educate those who light campfires, as well as to try to prohibit inappropriate burning.

This year, for one example, our wonderful First Responders discovered, in two days on one weekend, on two small crown islands, the same group of campers had lit fires in poorly chosen spots, which they could not control. The First Responders put out both fires, and strongly suggested that the campers not try any more! (They took pains to travel by the islands in that vicinity for the rest of the weekend, noting camping activity, and, thankfully, found their services were not required any further!)

Other cottagers have noticed other instances of badly placed campfires.

Thus, a request was made to post “No Fires” signs in several spots.

Next spring, some signs will be available, and requests for posting them can be made – to me in Bayfield, or to Andrew Kolody in Nares.

If you happen to view these signs as “pollution”, I apologize in advance, but advise you that your directors have considered restricted postings as favourable to unsafe fires.

## **Councillor Comments – John Hansuld**

**Water levels** – this is by far the number one topic on the Bay these days. Everyone is talking and every organization that has anything to do with Georgian Bay is getting into the act. The good news is higher level government officials on both sides of the border are becoming aware of the situation and beginning to realize the potential economic severity if the situation worsens. Regardless of who is involved or gets involved and what is decided, any man-made remedy will be so expensive and time consuming it does little to help getting you to your cottage next year. We need to pray for Mother Nature to reverse the downward cycle and start levels to rise as they have done every time we had a low in the past hundred years! Have a look at the water level graph on your BNIA map; it indicates roughly a 20 year cycle from the lows to the peaks., We have been in an extended low for about 10 years, so if history repeats itself, we should soon see a sustained upward trend; “should” being the operative word. Current levels have surpassed the all time low of 1964 which was followed 22 years later by the all time high!! The real question is, have relatively recent events, such as climate change and river dredging, interfered with or overridden the work of Mother Nature to the extent past records mean nothing? The debate is and has been going on for some time and will for years to come. In the meantime we need to address our current problems of getting to our docks and cottages next summer!

The Township (TOA) recognizes the dilemma and challenges many ratepayers may have or will have if levels don't rebound soon. In this regard we need to understand that the Township is fairly limited in what it can do to help its ratepayers. For starters, when it comes to water other government agencies control the situation and the TOA is only a commenting agency. The water bed is under the control of the provincial Ministry of Resources (MNR) and the water itself is the jurisdiction of the federal Department of Fisheries (DFO). Having said that, the TOA is working hard to make it easier to deal with these government agencies. Meetings have already been held and progress is being made with respect to streamlining the processing of the various applications and permits that may be necessary to relocate docks and or consider dredging channel ways. The TOA is also reviewing its own policies with respect to docks and dredging. Bottom line: the TOA will do whatever it can to assist its ratepayers in sustaining water access to their properties. The Reeve will be sending out a letter on this which will be distributed early in the new year and posted on the TOA website.

**Bayfield transfer station** - I am pleased to report that Public Works plans to operate the Bayfield Transfer station next summer with the same hours as this past summer. Except for a few instances early in the season, before we got all the signs posted on the gate, there was little abuse of the station and most people were using the Pointe au Baril station when Bayfield was closed.

**Large Item Pick-Up-** based on usage over the past several years, plans for 2013 are to have it available for one day on each of the two long weekends: Sunday June 30<sup>th</sup> and Sunday August 4<sup>th</sup>.

Compliments of the Season and may 2013 be the beginning of a sustained upswing in water levels!!

## **Painted Rocks and Outer Shoals Campfires – Ted Simmonds**

Members are asked to remember that these rocky areas are precious, and that fires are not encouraged on them. If they were “officially recognized” GBLT sites, then, of course, all fires would be banned.

Every summer when a number of new fire pits is found the “stewards” tear them down. Several of the “best” of these, at Painted Rocks, have been left to encourage use of them only.

If you want to have a fire – when they are permitted - please take your own fuel to the site, build it in a safe place, make sure it is fully out – drowned – when you leave (this means taking a pail with you, and using it to pour a number of loads onto the coals), and please disperse the fire rocks you have erected, as you also remove all your garbage.

If we all follow these suggestions, we will help to preserve the beauty of our wonderful area.

## **President’s Message- Kathleen Kidd**

At the AGM in July, I spoke about my hope to concentrate on communication and history during my term as President. In the six weeks of summer following the AGM, it seemed that the water levels did nothing but go down and now I see that water levels should have been on that list. Hopefully, as I work to keep you informed about water level issues, our chains of communication will improve as well. Besides the pictures and video that have been circulating on the BNIA Facebook page, I had a personal experience which really brought home to me the water level crisis.

I looked out my window one day to see that my floating dock was jutting out of the water in one corner – the one with the swimming ladder on it! The bottom of the 5-step ladder was resting on rock and pushing up that corner of the dock to the point that it was starting to push up the platform boards from the framework. With some difficulty, we were able to remove the ladder. We now have a 4-step ladder! My concern is that next summer it may have to go to a 3-step ladder. Access to our dock is around the back of our island in a bay that is filled with shelves of reefs. On Thanksgiving weekend, reefs that I had never seen breaking the water were clearing the surface by inches. If the water is any lower, we will have significant issues getting to our cottage at all. I suspect there are many people who will be worse off than us.

There are many organizations working on the water level issue. There was excellent information in the Fall Issues of both the Georgian Bay Association Update and Georgian Bay Forever. On the GBA’s website, currently, there is a picture from Go Home Bay showing an expanse of wet sand. The description reads: *This is a picture of the Sand Run at Go Home Bay. Last year you could paddle through this channel. Back in the late 1980’s you could run outboards through here!* In Nares Inlet, the same could be said about Sandy Channel and I’m sure there are similar spots in Bayfield.

The GBA has been spearheading conversations with the government. A letter-writing campaign was organized by the GBA in August. Our letters to various MPs and the IJC to express our concerns were

heard. Since that time the Executive Director of the GBA, Bob Duncanson, and Director John Wilson had a productive meeting with Ministers Baird, Clement and Kent.

In addition, the Sierra Club of Ontario has been active in information gathering and distribution. On Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> they held a meeting at which a number of experts spoke. Doctor Patricia Chow-Fraser of McMaster University spoke on the overall impact of doing nothing. An engineer, Bill Bialkowski, spoke about possible solutions. Finally, Mary Muter spoke, sharing a report that predicts that Lakes Michigan and Huron will reach a new record low level in the next 4-5 months, surpassing the March 1964 previous record. For more information on this meeting and the Sierra Club please go to their website.

The GBA is currently striving to bring all parties together to establish common ground and a unified appeal to government.

On another note, we had a very successful regatta weekend in 2012. On Saturday morning of the long August weekend we had the marathon canoe race leaving from the Perdue dock. There were a large number of boats – canoes, kayaks, rowboats and a rowing skull. Many thanks to the Perdue family for organizing the race for many years. Thanks to Buffy Ash for agreeing to take it on.

In the afternoon, the swimming, diving and short canoe racing events were held. Many thanks to the O`Grady/Stevenson clan for all their hard work for the past two years. In 2013, the regatta will be run by the Bennett/Winter families.

The wind blew so hard for the sailing race scheduled for Sunday afternoon that it had to be postponed to Monday. Our Director in charge of boating, Peter Frost, was in good shape for a win in his class until he tipped twice! All in all, it was a very successful weekend of friendly competition.

At the end of this newsletter is a new membership form. This form includes the new class of membership approved at the AGM in July. The new Associate membership is open to family members of existing Full members who share one cottage address. Associate members have no voting privileges and cannot sit on the Board of Directors. The cost will be \$30.00 and will include a Directory.

As I sit writing this I hear that tomorrow there may be record lows due to wind chill. It makes me long, even more, for summer at Georgian Bay. I hope everyone makes the best of the season and has a very Happy New Year.