

Restricting Access to Farm Lake and Mandatory Boat Washing

Presentation by GORA to Municipality of Otter Lake
Workshop, 29 July, 2019



Context

- GORA's strategy to protect the lakes presented to Council Nov. 2016
- Phase I involved public awareness by posting signs at boat launches to show importance of boat washing, and making information on invasive species available through GORA and Municipality newsletters
- Phase II involved the installation of a boat wash station (May 2018)
- GORA's letter to Council, 28 March, 2019 to move forward on the third and final phase - to introduce measures to help ensure protection of our lakes:
 - By-law to require all boat users to wash their boats; and
 - Control access to public boat launch on Farm Lake
- Issue was discussed at Council meeting in April
- Decision taken to discuss further at a workshop



Why is this Important? Threat of Invasive Species

- Single largest threat to our lakes is the very real possibility that invasive species will be introduced to our lakes...if that happens, everything will change...once infected, there is no way to get rid of them.
- Many lakes and waterways near us are already invaded and new lakes are being infected every year.
- Once lakes are infected, property values decrease, less revenue from municipal property taxes, and tourism declines.
- Tourism industry (including cottage owners, renters, sport fishers, etc.) are vital for the municipality's tax base as well as for the livelihood of local merchants. The lakes are indeed a core part of the local economy.

PREVENTION IS CRITICAL



What are Invasive Species? A Few Examples

- Zebra Mussels (Lac Philippe, Rideau Lakes, etc):
 - Sharp-edged shells - cannot step into water or swim without being cut
 - Cling to hard surfaces like boat hulls
 - Clog water intake pipes
 - Wash up onto shore – decomposing mussels have strong noxious odour
- Eurasian Water-milfoil Plant (Blue Sea Lake, 31 Mile, Pemichangan, Cayamant, Beauchamp are all infected):
 - A tiny fragment of this plant can contaminate an entire lake.
 - Forms dense underwater mats that choke out native plants
 - Results in reduced oxygen – fish cannot survive
 - Swimming becomes impossible - plant brings with it larvae that irritates skin
 - Boating becomes impossible - so thick that boat motors get tangled in it
 - Blue Sea Lake spent \$8K to lay jute tarps onto bottom of lake in infested areas; also had to build a special barge to lay tarps; this method is experimental only – it does not get rid of it – an attempt to prevent it from spreading to other parts of the lake



What to Do Now? Boats Coming In from Other Lakes

- Principal way that invasive species spread is the movement of boats from one waterway to another. They are on boat hulls, boat motors, and boat trailers.
- Important to make the distinction between taxpayers and non-taxpayers - this is not about taxpayers on the lake with boats who don't travel off the lake.
- This is about dealing with non-taxpayers that travel from lake to lake.
- Any proposal we have considered has made that distinction so that there is minimal cost to taxpayers and minimal inconvenience.
- Installing boat wash stations is just the beginning – not the end.
- Education and awareness are important but it must be accompanied by a regulations like by-laws, to ensure boats are washed and control access.

GORA MEMBERS FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT THIS ISSUE AND WANT TO CONTROL ACCESS AND PROTECT OUR LAKES



What is Done in Other Municipalities for Prevention?

- Many lakes have locked gates at their boat launches and taxpayers have their own key. However, this means that there are several keys in circulation and taxpayers can easily use their key to open the gate for a boat coming in from elsewhere.
- In 2017, both the municipalities of Messines and Blue Sea passed by-laws requiring mandatory boat washing on all lakes in their areas. All boats, including kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards are required to be washed. Non-residents must pay \$25.00 and non-compliant owners are liable for \$300 fines.
- In 2016, the Val-des-Monts put a by-law in place restricting access to boat launches at Lac Saint-Pierre and Lac McGregor. It also bans sea-doods and wakeboats. Attendants visually inspect boats before they are launched. Everyone must obtain a sticker from the municipality (2 types – one for residents/one for non-residents). Fees charged by size of motor (\$10 - \$120 per day). Fine for non-compliance is \$300-\$1000.



What is Done in Other Municipalities for Prevention?

- Lake Louisa - By-law requiring boat washing and controlling access to boat launch:
 - Boat wash station is available by appointment during certain hours and has an attendant.
 - For non-taxpayers to get access to the boat launch, a wash certificate is required with a fee of \$300.00. They must attest to having read the by-law and agree to comply.
 - Taxpayers are issued an access pass for a fee of \$10.00 (and attest to comply with the by-law).
 - Attendant takes name, address, description of boat, etc. and boat is washed by an employee or under supervision of attendant.
 - Boat launch is locked. Everyone must give a \$300.00 deposit to obtain a numbered key that is recorded in their name.
 - Key must be returned the same day to the attendant or to locked mailbox at Municipal Office and the deposit is returned.



Why Focus on Farm Lake?

- Studies show that while it is critical to require boat washing, the lakes that are the most vulnerable to being contaminated by invasive species are those with accessible public boat launches – this places Farm Lake at high risk
- The stakes are high – Farm Lake is one of the most densely populated lakes in this area with year-round residences as well as summer homes.
- Farm Lake is also at the head of three other lakes (Hughes, Little Hughes and McCuaig) so to protect it means also helping to protect them.
- Given that the boat launch is located in the centre of town, and is easy to access with plenty of parking, on any given day, there are numerous trucks and boat trailers launching pleasure water craft (e.g., ski boats, sea-doods, fishing boats) for the day or weekend.
- A sign is placed at the public boat launch to notify boaters to wash their boats before entering the lake and gives the location of the boat wash station, but washing is still entirely voluntary - there is no guarantee that any boater actually washes their boat before launching.



Recommendation for Farm Lake Boat Launch

- Install a fence and gate with keyed access by Spring 2020
- All residents with lakefront property can receive a key (with a minimal deposit refundable upon return of key) for in/out access
- All non-residents wishing to launch their boat will be required to visit Municipal Hall on a specific day and time to place a deposit for the key, wash their boat, and be issued a time-limited “wash certificate” to affix to their boat
- Deposit for the key would be refunded upon return of the key; key could be returned after hours at the Municipal Hall through a slot in a door for example
- This option is less costly than having remote access via a swipe card and would not require the human resources (full-time attendant)



Recommendation for By-Law

- At a minimum, by-law would apply to the lakes for which GORA is responsible (i.e., Farm Lake, Hughes Lake, Little Hughes Lake, and McCuaig Lake)
- Council could choose to make it applicable to all lakes in the jurisdiction
- Contents of the by-law:
 - Would lay out the process for getting a wash certificate, fees, etc. along with penalty for non-compliance
- Benefits of a by-law:
 - ✓ Sets the tone - shows that the matter is taken seriously by the Municipality
 - ✓ By-laws encourage compliance from all law-abiding citizens. In other words, the fact that resources are not available to constantly enforce every by-law on the books does not mean that by-laws should not be in place
 - ✓ Community at large recognizes the importance of protecting the lakes, and the strategic importance of the health of our lakes to the economy – social acceptance should be high



Funding Sources

GORA will work with Council to get funding – just as it did to get funding for the boat wash station and signs

Council:

GORA strongly encourages Council to include costs of fencing and gate in the next budget cycle

Donations:

GORA will explore possibility of making donations to a Fund as a “donation to the Crown” which would mean donors would get an income tax refund

GORA will appeal to its members for donations

Municipality and GORA could also make an appeal to the public for donations

Potential Government Grants:

GORA will explore options for funding support from provincial government

