

# The Loon's Call



VOLUME 20, ISSUE 3

JUNE 2020

## President's Message – Donna McLean

### SUMMER TIME AND THE LIVING IS EASY

Hello Summer—it's nice to see you back again ... Time to stain the deck, make rhubarb crisp and fill the planters. The birdfeeders are out and the new bug spray is open. We are ready.

But what are we ready for? The guest calendar is empty. We have no plans. The boats are in the water but will we be casually dropping in on our friends at any point? One of our faves is have a few folks over for an Aperol on the dock around 5 pm. Not happening anytime soon. Lined up for the bottles return yesterday at the Beer Store. That's ok — we weren't in any hurry. It's Muskoka—the place we come to, NOT to hurry anymore. What's a few lineups cost? A little dock time perhaps? No worries. **And know this — the Town Merchants are OPEN for business and waiting for cottagers to shop!** Just bring your mask and practise healthy Covid 19 shopping! For even as Gravenhurst moves up in Opening Stages we still want to keep flattening the curve!

And here is the good news — for over 50 years I have come here to swim, sit on the dock with coffee, marvel at the hummingbirds at the feeder, venture out in the kayak, watch the forest fill in, smile as the dragonflies land on my arm, cheer as the beaver makes it across the bay safely once more and admire the wing span of the herons and hawks. So none of that has changed. I come for respite, for community, for the warmth of the sun, for starlit smoky campfires listening to Freddie Mercury, for barbecues and candle lit dinners. I come for peace. And these are the moments that the virus won't diminish. The magic of Muskoka continues ...



### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

We have made the decision to meet virtually this summer on **Wednesday July 8th at 7:00 pm**. Stay tuned for call-in details. We look forward to seeing all of your familiar faces — but at a safe distance. We will review: our finances, water testing for 2019 and 2020, best practises for safety and quiet on our lakes, and environment and Town matters. Mark your almost empty calendars and plan to be with us. We value your input!

### TOWN MATTERS

For the most up-to-date information please refer to the Town website at [www.gravenhurst.ca](http://www.gravenhurst.ca).

#### Shortcuts:

- Gull Lake Park is open. The Beach will be unsupervised. Buoy lines are placed for swimmers safety. The facilities are closed but temporary portable toilets are available.
- The Farmers Market is open but only for foodstuffs, no artisans work available
- Property taxes—penalties and interest have been waived on late instalment payments until July 31st
- Building and Planning Depts.—are open for telephone and email communications. They are accepting permit applications and staff are making on-site inspections
- Muskoka Steamship cruises and Discovery Centre on hold until further notice
- No Music on the Barge is planned
- Boat races are cancelled but the Severn Bridge rowers are back!

### VOLUNTEERING

**What's your favourite place on Earth?** If it happens to be Muskoka, one way to make sure that it continues to be everything you want it to be, is to get involved. Come out and serve on the GSLRA Board or one of its committees. Come serve for 2 years. Pick an area of interest — membership, finances, development, water quality, Official Plan, noise and light pollution, water safety etc. Whether you are seasonal, a retiree or permanent resident here, we all love our Muskoka, so why not volunteer a little of your time and a lot of your heart to ensure it stays pristine, safe and welcoming. Contact any director for more information.

\*\*\*

### MEMBERSHIPS

Keep up-to-date and be part of an active, vibrant, caring, community-minded lakes association. See <https://www.gull-and-silver-lakes.ca> for form and payment details.

\$\$\$

## WATER TESTING FOR 2020

For more than 15 years we have tested and tracked the lake health of Gull and Silver Lakes under the umbrella and guidance of the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA). Due to Covid 19, the MLA has canceled all water testing programs for 2020, but the GSLRA will not be deterred!

We have purchased enough “coliplates” to carry on bacteria (coliform & e.coli) testing at all four (4) sites on Gull Lake, and one (1) site on Silver Lake, on the same schedule as every other year. Unfortunately, we are not able to test for deep-water phosphorus this year, but our understanding is that annual variations are typically small, so to miss a year is not of great consequence.

With relatively reduced human lake use of all sorts, the GSLRA sees this year as a historic opportunity to observe any changes in water quality. In particular, will there be any effect on the results from the testings at Gull Lake Rotary Park? Will the overall bacteria counts be reduced, or will the effects of waterfowl waste continue to be the dominant factor? Stay tuned. Results will be published on the GSLRA website and in a Fall/Winter Newsletter. *Bruce Elliott, Gull Lake*

### HEWITT ST. GARBAGE BINS

Although the bins remain in place, they are still scheduled to be removed once the Region is back to normal (COVID 19 has diverted their attention and resources for the time being). See <https://www.muskoka.on.ca/en/live-and-play/Landfill-and-Transfer-Stations.aspx> for the hours and rules of the Gravenhurst and Bracebridge transfer stations. We are allowed 2 bags of garbage free-of-charge, weekly.

**NOTE—ASH MUSKOKA** is not collecting ash at this time but is asking that we store our ash safely until such time as they can start accepting it again. Go to <https://ashmuskoka.ca/> for more info. Big 2021 planned. Stay tuned ...

### GOOD EARTH & LAKE STEWARDS

#### How can we enjoy our life on the lake AND protect our water quality?

#### Realize that nitrogen and phosphorus (nutrient pollution) come from man-made sources like:

- ◇ Fertilizer runoff... DON'T use chemical fertilizers
- ◇ Sewage runoff from septic tanks.... GET them checked and pumped regularly
- ◇ Grass clippings.... DON'T let them rot in a pile
- ◇ Animal waste... PICK UP animal scat, including pets and geese
- ◇ Fossil fuels... ENSURE proper engine maintenance and PURCHASE 4-stroke rather than 2-stroke engines — it all helps!  
Soap and detergent wastes...USE phosphate-free and environmentally friendly/biodegradable products — AND NOT near the lake!
- ◇ Contaminants — SEE proper disposal guidelines on the District of Muskoka website (contaminants put down storm drains then enter waterways)

#### Realize that through responsible property design and maintenance, we can reduce runoff:

- ⇒ MAINTAIN or re-establish a shoreline buffer, using plants native to our area. Riparian (shore vegetation) buffers reduce the runoff of sediments and pollution.
- ⇒ MINIMIZE foot traffic near your shoreline. It reduces soil oxygen and encourages water runoff.
- ⇒ KEEP natural areas as large as possible. Avoid fragmentation. Encourage wildlife corridors.
- ⇒ MAINTAIN natural forest floor coverings including brush and logs (& encourage wildlife).
- ⇒ USE Rain Barrels to collect water for gardens and reduce runoff.
- ⇒ HAVE Rain Gardens to collect roof runoff and grow plants while directing water to the soil.
- ⇒ CHOOSE permeable materials like mulch or chips or gravel to allow water infiltration.
- ⇒ USE vegetated shallow swales to slow runoff and filter it. Berms redirect it for infiltration.
- ⇒ During construction, MINIMIZE exposed soil and use straw bales or silt fencing to filter runoff



### GSLRA CURRENT DIRECTORS

**President**  
Donna McLean  
Mississauga, ON  
1250 Gull Lake

(416) 417-8349 (cell)  
[donna.mclean@rogers.com](mailto:donna.mclean@rogers.com)  
[gullsilverlakes@gmail.com](mailto:gullsilverlakes@gmail.com)

#### **Development Chair**

Jim Davis  
Barrie, ON  
**880 Silver Lake**  
(705) 220-3430 (cell)  
[jgdavis880@hotmail.com](mailto:jgdavis880@hotmail.com)

#### **Membership Chair**

Dave Stephens  
Calgary, ALTA  
**910 Pinedale Rd.**  
(403) 617-3207  
[davestph@shaw.ca](mailto:davestph@shaw.ca)

#### **Treasurer**

Paul Temple  
Toronto, ON  
**1441 Silver Lake**  
(416) 520-5164 (cell)  
[pjtemple@rogers.com](mailto:pjtemple@rogers.com)

#### **Environment Chair**

Joanne Smith  
Gravenhurst, ON  
**610 Phillips St.**  
[ryleigh@bell.net](mailto:ryleigh@bell.net)

#### **Sustainability Chair**

Carole Anne Simpson  
Gravenhurst, ON  
**1216 North Shore Dr**  
(416) 453-4282 (cell)  
[rand.e.simpson@sympatico.ca](mailto:rand.e.simpson@sympatico.ca)

#### **Past President**

Jonathan Hutcheon  
Toronto, ON  
**120 Gull Lake**  
(416) 807-6645 (cell)  
[gullsilverlakes@gmail.com](mailto:gullsilverlakes@gmail.com)

## GRAVENHURST IS HURTING

In a report compiled in 2018, thirteen per cent of Muskoka's full time population was living in poverty. There were 11 food banks and the median employment income was 21 per cent lower than the rest of Ontario. Low paying jobs, expensive rental housing and lack of daycare all impact families and their challenging lifestyles here.

### So how can we help?

- **G.A.P.—** Gravenhurst Against Poverty — more than ever this is a vital service offered to those needing a hand up. The need and the work of providing meals and food supplies continues especially through the pandemic! Find out how YOU can help. GO TO [www.gravenhurstagainstpoverty.com](http://www.gravenhurstagainstpoverty.com).

**NOTE:** I see G.A.P. is collecting bottle returns at the Beer Store, to fundraise—you may consider giving your empties to this worthy cause.

- **Free Stuff For Daily Needs—** Barry and Theresa Buker continue to provide hope for a better future by matching up donated goods to whomever has need. Find out how you can help at <http://freestuff4dailyneeds.com/>

## YIKES—WE HAVE PIKE!! —

And this is NOT good. They are carnivorous and will quickly gobble up the indigenous fish ...If you catch one—**please** 1. Do not return to the lake and 2. Take a photo and let us know. We will report to the Ministry.



## ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

First, a HUGE thank you to **DAVE FRIESEN**, who for over 20 years has been looking out for the Environmental concerns of our Gull & Silver Lakes. When recently chatting with him, he promised to “pass the torch” re resources and programs...

As your new Environmental Chair, I have much to learn and share as we go forward. We can also address concern details at our Virtual AGM, rather than here.

**Water Quality Program** - As with so many other civic projects, the MLA Water Testing Program has been cancelled for this summer. We are planning the continuation of part of that program on our own, thanks to **Bruce Elliott**, who has so capably and carefully done our water testing for the past several years. This would include the bacteria testing that includes the E. coli tests. However, it would provide a continuum of the data, and an interesting peek at the lake data with (probably) less human activity. Phosphorus tests must be analyzed by a lab that is also closed for COVID-19; however as its trends are studied over 3-5 years, we are okay with that one, for now.



## WATER QUALITY RESULTS - 2019 (Also see GSLRA web-site for the MLA report)

### GULL LAKE - Summary & Recommendations:

- ⇒ Spring turnover phosphorus at the deep station (GUL-0) in 2019 was below the historic DMM threshold of 8.1 ug/L (lowest recorded to date). readings here are below the current DMM threshold of 20 ug/L.
- ⇒ The yearly mean of phosphorus at GUL-0 was substantially higher than spring turnover, resulting in a Yellow Light classification in 2019.
- ⇒ E. coli counts continue to be well below the MLA limits, and decreased from the 2018 levels found at all nearshore sites.
- ⇒ The Secchi depths remain stable.

*Beacon Environmental recommends sampling continue to monitor long-term trends at all sites.*

### SILVER LAKE - Summary & Recommendations:

- ⇒ Spring turnover phosphorus and yearly mean phosphorus continue to remain well below the historic DMM threshold of 13.3 ug/L. The spring reading was the lowest recorded to date. All phosphorus readings remain well below the present DMM of 20 ug/L.
- ⇒ E. coli yearly mean value for SVR-2 in 2019 remains well below the MLA limits.
- ⇒ Secchi depths vary through the sampling years and decreased from 2018 (3.8 to 2.9 m).

*Beacon Environmental recommends sampling continue to monitor long-term trends.*



*Joanne Smith, Gull Lake*



The GSLRA welcomes and congratulates Diana Piquette on becoming the new Chair of Safe Quiet Lakes. This is a not-for-profit community group of boaters that promote safe, respectful boating. This year they have just launched a pilot program on Mirror Lake and the Indian River to see if the NO Wake buoys, signs and outreach will reduce wakes and speeds in smaller waterways. This is something near and dear to the hearts of the GSLRA. The boats get bigger every year but our small lakes do not. Disruption to the natural habitat, dock damage and the safety of swimmers are among the concerns that many of our members have with large wakes. And remember the law calls for NO WAKE within a distance of 30 metres (98.42 feet) from shore. SEE BOATERS CODE—[www.safequiet.ca](http://www.safequiet.ca)