

UPDATED

Baptiste Lake Plan Implementation Report

David Hawkes, Chair

Baptiste Lake Plan Implementation Committee

June 15, 2016

Introduction

It has been 10 years since we began work to create the Baptiste Lake Plan. It took four years of research, public consultation and stakeholder meetings to draft and approve the Plan in 2009, and we have been in the implementation phase over the past six years. On this tenth anniversary, we want to touch base with you, to report on our progress, and to check on your views as to current priorities. To that end, BLA Directors will be personally canvassing each resident over the summer of 2016.

Implementation activities began in the spring and summer of 2011. A workshop on implementing the Lake Plan was held with the mayor and council members from Hastings Highlands Municipality on June 29, 2011. Its theme was: “Working Together for Mutual Benefit”. In addition, a survey of lake residents was completed on potential actions to implement the Lake Plan in 2013. A workshop involving the Hastings Highlands Municipal Council and lake association members throughout Hastings Highlands took place on June 21, 2014 to address additional issues arising from the Lake Plan and from other lake associations in the municipality. This led the Municipality of Hastings Highlands to create a Shoreline Protection and Preservation Committee, which held its inaugural meeting in October of 2014. The Committee includes representatives from all Hastings Highlands lakes. The Municipality held an “Open House” – a public meeting of Hastings Highlands residents – in May 2015 on a new shoreline bylaw, one that did not reflect the views of lake associations, or apparently those of other Municipal residents. This matter is to be addressed again in 2016, after an appropriate “cooling off” period.

Since the Lake Plan process is now 10 years old, the BLA Board conducted a strategic review of the plan last summer. We concluded that the broad outline of the plan remains relevant today. Water quality remains the top priority, followed by greater protection and preservation of the shoreline and viewscape, together with the general stewardship of the lake. We are planning enhanced water testing, beginning this year, as well as restarting a survey for invasive water species, and organizing a septic pump out for boat access

residents. The BLA plans to continue work with the Municipality on shoreline issues as well in 2016, in addition of a focus on the fishery.

This document reports upon the progress-to-date in implementing the Lake Plan, and who has volunteered to assist in the various tasks. The report is organized into the same five sections as the Lake Plan: (1) lake, (2) shoreline, (3) watershed, (4) built environment, and (5) community.

1. Baptiste Lake

1.1 Water Quality

Encourage more volunteers to continue to collect water quality information through annual or more frequent spot-checking, as well as initiate, with Ministry of Natural Resources staff, the monitoring of tributary streams, and continue to inform residents of the results of this research (including trends over time) in a timely fashion.

- *Establishing a baseline on water quality throughout the Baptiste Lake watershed (including Elephant and Benoir Lakes) is critical to measuring the current and future health of the lake. A baseline water testing plan and feasibility study is required for this purpose. The Ontario ministries of Natural Resources and Environment may be able to assist on the costing of water testing. Lily Mabson (lmabson@rogers.com) is undertaking water quality tests with the Lake Partner Program (FOCA and the Dorset Environmental Science Centre) and Frank Hicks is undertaking temperature testing of the lake and streams (Frank Hicks 613-332-1566 fphicks70@gmail.com) It was concluded that a permanent water testing facility at Baptiste Lake is not a feasible option. Yearly testing has found that water quality in Baptiste Lake is stable, although not pristine, and that values are within provincial standards. Oxygen levels, particularly important to lake trout, become problematic by the fall of each year. These results will be posted in the BLA Newsletter. Further water quality tests, including oxygen testing and water temperature of Baptiste Lake, is beginning in 2016 (Menna Weese (weesehome@sympatico.ca), Adrian Hill (adrianhill@sympatico.ca),*

Paul Coleman, Wally McCall (wallymccoll@gmail.com) and David Hawkes (david.c.hawkes@bell.net).

1.2 Water Levels and Regulation

Get involved in any proposal for a hydro-electric generating facility affecting Baptiste Lake, and ensure that the proponent conducts an assessment to demonstrate that there will be no negative impacts on lake levels and surrounding environments, including lake trout and their spawning activity.

- *Since there is disagreement about actual water levels on Baptiste Lake, a permanent program should be established to monitor water levels in the lake, and to report these levels to lake residents through the newsletter and website. **There are now reports, by year, on official lake water levels available on the BLA website. Water levels, for the most part, have been within the limits agreed to between the Ministry of Natural Resources and lake residents. Wally McColl (wallymccoll@sypatico.ca) and Paul Coleman are the BLA contacts with MNRF on water levels.***

- *BLA has established a committee to monitor hydroelectric activity on Baptiste Lake. No proposals are active, and no further action on this item is required at this time, aside from a watching brief. (Kan Chhatwal chat@golden.net)*

1.3 Fish and Fish Habitat

Not oppose a maximum of two fishing derbies per year, one in July and one in August, outside of fish spawning seasons, until an analysis is completed on the impacts of fishing derbies on tourism and the local economy.

- *An impact analysis of fishing derbies on the environment, as well as on tourism and the local economy, is required. Fishing derbies at Elephant Lake also impact Baptiste Lake, and this intensity of fishing derbies – three on Baptiste and at least one on Elephant – may negatively impact the quality of fishing, as well as the lake environment. (Bob*

*Weese 613-332-5683 weesehome@sympatico.ca and Bryn Weese bweese@gmail.com)
Final Report Sent and recommendations accepted by BLA Board*

Work with the Ministry of Natural Resources on rehabilitation of the fishery.

- *Determine current status, and keep a watching brief. (Max Teitelbaun is reviewing what the BLA can do in enhancing the Baptiste Lake fishery (Max@WhatRunsWhere.com))*

Encourage the provincial government to take measures that will sustain and enhance the Baptiste Lake Trout fishery, since the presence of lake trout is the sign of a healthy deep-water lake.

- *Determine current status, and keep a watching brief. Max Teitelbaun (see above)*

1.4 Boating

Consider posting speed limits for boats in narrow water bodies (rivers, channels and some bays) or environmentally sensitive areas.

- *Chandos Lake has installed speed limit signs. The 2013 fall survey of lake residents produced mixed results on the merits of speed limits for boats. As a result, no further action is being taken at this time.*

Establish a washout station on the lake (site to be determined), and establish a bylaw making washouts mandatory for incoming boats. In addition, signage regarding the washout station and invasive species should be mandatory at all boat launch stations for incoming boats to Baptiste Lake and its watershed.

- *A feasibility study is required regarding a potential washout station, and establishing one will be costly (although perhaps still a long-term goal). Given the many access points to the lake, a single washout station may not be effective. Signs regarding*

invasive species, however, could be erected at each access point. Max Teitelbaun (Max@WhatRunsWhere.com)

1.5 Wildlife and Habitat

Continue to promote Loon Watch, and encourage lake users to respect loon habitat when boating, in order to prevent excessive wake damage or harm to young loons.

- *A loon survey was conducted annually by BLA, and this program should be reinstated. Delmond Belcastro (delmond.belcastro@gmail.com 226-350-9727) reinstated the Loon Watch program in 2013, and a Baptiste Lake Wildlife Network was launched in 2014. Jan Wrenckstern (jwrenck@rogers.com 613-332-5258 or 416-284-5863)*

1.6 Invasive Species (also see 3.7)

Focus activities primarily on education and awareness for lake residents and visitors, to prevent the introduction of new invasive species into Baptiste Lake and its watershed.

- *Determine current activities and programs, and what additional measures might be taken (Jan Wrenckstern Jwrenck@rogers.com)*

Continue to work with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters on monitoring the water quality of Baptiste Lake, and support programs regarding the prevention of invasive water species.

- *restart the program in 2016 Menna Weese (weesehome@sympatico.ca)*

2. Shoreline

2.1 Water Quality

Work to educate lake residents about shoreline preservation and stewardship, and about the shoreline threats to water quality, such as manicured lawns and paved driveways,

which threaten water quality by increasing erosion and runoff, and the use of fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides, which degrade water quality.

- *Continue to work with the Lakeland Alliance on the “shoreline advisor” program, which provides professional advice to lake residents on how to restore and preserve shorelines. Consideration should also be given to establishing a shoreline shrub-planting program in cooperation with the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council. (Pauline Hawkes 613-216-2182 or 332-4736) Pauline.hawkes@bell.net). **The Shoreline Shrub program launched in Fall 2011 Newsletter and ran for three years, when demand slackened. The Shoreline Advisor program was initiated for three years, after which support funding ended. Love Your Lake, a similar program for shoreline evaluation and stewardship, is sponsored by the Canadian Wildlife Federation and Watersheds Canada, and the BLA is hoping to take part in 2016. We need a regional partner in order to access the program.***

- *BLA should consider developing a recognition program for model shoreline preservation and restoration on Baptiste Lake (the Bullfrog Award?), with categories for permanent residents, seasonal residents and businesses. This would provide peer pressure on other shoreline residents who do not have buffer zones. **[BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD APPROACH SPECIFIC COTTAGERS]***

2.2 Land Use

Work with the Municipality of Hasting Highlands to update the official plan and zoning bylaws, and to prepare a communications and regulatory program regarding the rehabilitation and protection of shoreline areas (shoreline buffers prevent erosion and detract Canada geese).

- *The BLA will need to develop a strategic plan on how it will work with the municipality on a range of issues relating to the official plan and zoning. **A workshop was held on June 21, 2014 with municipal officials and senior staff to initiate this process. As a result, the Municipality of Hastings Highlands has established a Shoreline Protection***

and Preservation Committee to strengthen land use bylaw enforcement. Each lake within the municipality is represented on this committee. [David Hawkes (david.c.hawkes@bell.net 613-216-2182 or 613-216-2182, Kathy Irwin (katharineirwin21@gmail.com 613-332-3882)]. The Municipality held an “Open House” on this matter in 2015 which was unsuccessful. We need to restart the process.

2.3 Development

Retain the shoreline landscape on any site development on the lake.

- *See above.*

2.4 Natural Areas of Vegetation

Encourage lakefront owners to restore the shoreline areas back to a natural state whenever possible, and protect and retain native vegetation, in order to reconstitute lost shoreline landscape. Municipal planning documents should continue to require the mandatory protection of shoreline buffer areas.

- *(Peter Oliver 416-346-3886 peter@oliverbonachini.com) launched a three-year education program, providing meals at BLA events, to persuade lakeshore residents to naturalize their shorelines. Also see 2.2 above.*

Support programs, such as Dock Talk and the Stewardship Council (which provides free advice, shrubs and trees), that educate, assist and encourage landowner stewardship, and to encourage the ‘naturalization’ of degraded shorelines.

- *See 2.1*

3. Viewscape and Watershed

3.1 Natural Architecture

Maintain the natural and landscape architecture of the lake in its current status.

- *See Section 2.*

3.2 Viewscapes

Work with the County and Municipality to recognize the importance – both visually and economically – of the viewscape and natural vistas of Baptiste Lake. The viewscapes should be delineated in the official plan, and proposed developments within the viewscape should be compatible with the natural character of the lake.

- *See Section 2.*

3.3 Natural Areas and Vegetation

Encourage the Municipality to develop a tree cutting or tree preservation forestry bylaw to ensure that lots retain a percentage of their natural vegetation, and thereby reduce storm water runoff.

- *Discussions with Hastings Highlands council members are required on this matter, as is research on the situation in other municipalities. **BLA is working with the municipality to develop a shoreline tree preservation bylaw. The Shoreline Protection and Preservation Committee, founded by the Hastings Highlands Council in 2014, should provide the vehicle for progress on this issue. (Kathy Irwin katharineirwin21@gmail.com 613-332-3882)***

3.4 Streams

Complete an inventory and water-test streams flowing into Baptiste Lake.

- *To date, 43 streams (27 permanent and 16 intermittent) have been identified, based on local knowledge and from detailed topographic maps. These streams have not been surveyed, classified, or studied for fish species or benthic invertebrates, and in most cases they are unnamed. A stream survey and assessment is being planned, beginning*

with the most significant permanent streams. Stream temperature monitors have been purchased and measurement began in June 2011, and continues. (Chris Chhatwal coordinator chrischhatwal@hotmail.com 519-669-2938, Frank Hicks fphicks@gmail.com 613-332-1566, Kathy Vandervoet max.vandervoet@sympatico.ca , Pam Gibb-Carsley pgibb-carsley@sympatico.ca 613-747-1698)

Design a ‘name that stream’ program to name all unnamed streams flowing into Baptiste Lake.

- *This activity can begin once the stream survey noted above has been completed. (Chris Chhatwal)*

Continue to recognize the location of all permanent and intermittent streams in official plans and zoning bylaws, and include a policy to protect these against development impacts, especially cold water streams that protect water quality and fish habitat.

- *See above. (Chris Chhatwal)*

3.5 Wetlands

Initiate a wetland evaluation to inventory the wetlands around Baptiste Lake and to determine if these wetlands qualify as Provincially Significant Wetlands. Funding from government agencies should be sought for this purpose.

- *Work with Natural Resources and the Toronto Zoo to develop a wetlands evaluation and inventory. (Kathy Irwin (katharineirwin21@gmail.com 613-332-3882.) An initial survey of Baptiste Lake wetlands was undertaken in 2013 with the assistance of the Toronto Zoo outreach program. A second phase, which was to be undertaken in 2014, was postponed because wetlands private landowners refused permission for researchers to cross or enter their lands.*

Continue to identify the location and size of wetlands in official plans and zoning bylaws, and provide appropriate policy to ensure their protection.

- *This action could begin once the wetlands inventory and evaluation are underway.*
(Kathy Irwin (see above))

3.6 Wildlife and Habitat

Encourage lake residents to identify and protect wildlife habitat areas (e.g., sites for nesting turtles) and to inform BLA of their efforts.

- *We do this now through various means (newsletter, Dock Talk, AGM), but we plan to initiate a turtle and frog-monitoring program in co-operation with the Toronto Zoo. An informal Baptiste Lake Wildlife Network was initiated in 2014. Jan Wenckstern (jwenck@rogers.com 613-332-5258 or 416-284-5863); Desmond Belcastro (delmond.belcastro@gmail.com); Susan Hackett (crazysuehackett@yahoo.ca) (Max and Kathy Vandervoet max.vandervoet@sympatico.ca; Chris Chattwal (chrischattwal@hotmail.com) **Initiated in 2014, with first annual report available on the website.***

3.7 Invasive Species (also see 1.6)

Encourage lake residents to identify invasive species, including purple loosestrife, and report their location to the local MNR and the BLA.

- *see above*

3.8 Rare Species and Species at Risk

Inform lake residents of provincial and federal legislation regarding rare species and species at risk, including information on incentives that are available for private stewardship initiatives. An inventory of such species in and around Baptiste Lake should be conducted.

- *Inform lake residents of rare species and species at risk and incentive programs for stewardship, and conduct an inventory of such species. (Jan and Ralph Wenckstern jwenck@rogers.com 613-332-5258 and 416-284-5863) Initiated in 2014 (see 3.6 above).*

3.9 Minerals and Aggregates

Review all new or expanded existing mineral and aggregate sites and quarry expansions, as well as asphalt plants, to prevent negative impacts on streams feeding the Baptiste Lake watershed.

- *Proponents of such development are required to post their intentions and proposals in the local newspapers. A watching brief will be required to inform the BLA of any such developments. (Wally McColl wallymccoll@gmail.com 613-332-5364)*

Encourage the County, Municipality and Ministry of Natural Resources to amend their official plans and policies in order to prohibit the creation of new pits, quarries, or mining sites within the ‘viewscape’ (site horizon) of Baptiste Lake, which would harm tourism and the quality of life of lake residents and visitors.

- *See 2.2 above*

4. Built Environment

4.1 Built Scale

Recommend that buildings on the lake should be built on a scale that allows the landscape to remain dominant. Developments that substantially change geographic or landscape profiles – the language of the land – should be avoided.

- *This principle needs to be incorporated into the official plan of the municipality. **The workshop with Hastings Highlands on June 21,2014 addressed this issue, and the new Hastings Highlands Shoreline Protection and Preservation Committee will provide a***

venue for further work. The status of this committee needs to be addressed. (David Hawkes david.c.hawkes@bell.net)

4.2 Residential Occupancy

Work with the Municipality to update land-use information and residential occupancy rates, which in turn can assist the Ministry of the Environment and other agencies involved in assessing the carrying capacity of Baptiste Lake, which is stressed by increased seasonal use and increased conversion to permanent residency.

- *BLA will assist the Municipality of Hastings Highlands in any initiative that they take in this regard.*

Maintain current development regulations until there is a solid basis in science – documented in a series of longitudinal studies – that new waste disposal technologies will accommodate increased development without an adverse impact on the cold-water fishery.

- *No action on this matter is required at this time, aside from a watching brief.*

4.3 Septic

Work with residents and the Municipality to promote the proper use of septic systems (e.g., Dock Talk), and encourage a mandatory septic re-inspection program of septic systems around Baptiste Lake.

- *BLA should encourage the Municipality to adopt a mandatory septic re-inspection program, as neighbouring municipalities have done (get examples). Alternatively, a voluntary and confidential approach should be considered. **The 2013 survey of lake residents found limited support for a mandatory septic re-inspection program, while a voluntary approach was more widely accepted with many members indicating that they would take advantage of such a program. [NEED VOLUNTEER]***

4.4 Back Lots

Support the Municipality of Hastings Highlands and Hastings County in the practice of discouraging the development of back lots (i.e., lots behind lakefront lots) that would place further stress on Baptiste Lake.

- *No action on this matter is required at this time.*

4.5 Crown Land Use Regulations

Continue lobbying the provincial government, together with the Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations (FOCA), to keep the “no development” policy on Crown land.

- *Keep a watching brief on this issue.*

4.6 County Official Plan

Work with the Municipality in updating the official plan, and offer specific recommendations for the maintenance of a healthy Baptiste Lake.

- *See 2.2 and other Official Plan recommendations.*

4.7 Municipal Zoning Bylaws

Work with Municipality to update zoning bylaws in areas such as: setting lot requirements so as to achieve a built scale that allows the landscape to remain dominant; reviewing the list of land use issues to ensure that they are compatible with the lake and surrounding land uses; and updating the Environmental Protection Zones for Provincially Significant Wetlands.

- *See above.*

4.8 Narrow Water Bodies (rivers, channels, some bays)

Work with the County and Municipality to include a map in the Official Plan indicating all narrow water bodies on Baptiste Lake, and to amend zoning bylaws by adding a new zone that recognizes the location of these areas and requires a minimum lot frontage for new lots (e.g., of 100 metres), thus preventing the appearance of overcrowding.

- *See above.*

5. Community

BLA provides a number of services that might be termed “community actions”, such as: a Welcome Wagon service to new property owners to promote sustainable shoreline living; Baptiste Lake newsletters and website; spring and fall community events; and the music festival in the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013; a lake regatta for 2014, as well as organizing a Hastings Highlands Lakes Workshop in that year. BLA Board members are conducting a survey of all lake residents during the summer of 2016 on their views of the Baptiste Lake Plan.

5.1 Light and Noise Pollution

Provide further information to lake residents and visitors concerning the damage of light pollution to the night sky, and of noise pollution to the tranquility of the lake environment.

- *The municipality has a bylaw against excessive noise after 11:00 p.m., which is triggered by a formal complaint process to the police. The municipality has no light pollution bylaw. Further education is required on light pollution, and the Green Build Canada program should be consulted in this regard. (Hugh Stephens hucath@hotmail.com) **Discussion Paper on Light Pollution Published in BLA Newsletter.***

5.2 Water Safety

Encourage further awareness on safety issues related to swimming, boating and personal watercraft.

- *Much of this relates to dangerous driving on the lake, and is the province of the police. The matter of posting speed limits in certain areas could be investigated, perhaps as a pilot project. (See recommendation 1.4)*

5.3 Public Amenities

Investigate the lack of public amenities on Baptiste Lake – such as a public beach, public toilets, public walking trails and a community centre – with a view to providing greater public access to the lake.

- *BLA has a file on previous efforts to establish a public beach (see Chris Chhatwal, BLA archivist). A public survey of lake residents would likely be necessary to determine interest in a public beach, public toilets, or a community centre (**Byron Kellar** 332-6397 bkellar@hotmail.com). **There is limited public support for such initiatives. Progress Report on Public Beaches Sent, and report and recommendations accepted by BLA Board.***
- *With respect to walking trails and hiking, BLA members have already taken some initiatives (**Carol Maclellan** cgmaclellan@verison.net 332-1808. What further actions are required at this time?*

5.4 Nautical Map

Make available to all lake residents and visiting boaters an accurate nautical map of greater Baptiste Lake.

- *Providing a map may present potential problems of legal liability in the event of boat accidents. There is no doubt, however, that the community need for such a map is great, and that area businesses would be interested in sponsorship. (**Wally McColl** wallymccoll@gmail.com 613-332-5364) **Progress Report Sent***

5.5 Signage

Review municipal bylaws with regard to commercial signage and its effects on the natural beauty of the lake.

- *The proliferation of signs for local contractors, often hand-painted and posted indiscriminately on roadside trees, ruins the viewscape for lake residents and visitors alike. Hasting Highlands Council did pass a sign bylaw in 2012, but it exempts existing signs, and thus does not address the problem. **Signs are currently being inventoried by the municipality (CHECK).** (David Hawkes david.c.hawkes@bell.net) and Susan Latremaille susan.latremaille@sympatico.ca are keeping a watching brief on Hasting Highlands actions on this front). **Most lake residents who answered the 2013 survey thought that existing signs were a problem.***