

**FEBRUARY 2007**



WATER ACCESS ON LONG LAKE



Prepared for ECOPLANS:  
A Study on the Past, Present and Future  
Of Water Management on the  
Trent-Severn Waterway

Coalition for Equitable Water Flow -  
Haliburton Sector, TSW  
P.O. Box 481, Minden ON K0M 2K0  
705-286-6141



**STATEMENT OF  
INTEREST AND  
CONCERN**

|           |                                                           |           |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1.</b> | <b>Introduction.....</b>                                  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2.</b> | <b>The Organization.....</b>                              | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>3.</b> | <b>Scope of Interest .....</b>                            | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>4.</b> | <b>Issues of Particular Interest and Concern.....</b>     | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>Key Findings .....</b>                                 | <b>6</b>  |
| 5.1       | ECONOMIC IMPACT .....                                     | 7         |
| 5.1.1.    | Direct Economic Impact – Actual and Potential .....       | 7         |
| 5.1.2.    | Indirect Economic Impact .....                            | 8         |
| 5.2       | ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE.....                                 | 8         |
| 5.3       | SAFETY CONCERNS .....                                     | 9         |
| <b>6.</b> | <b>CEWF Recommendations for Equitable Solutions .....</b> | <b>10</b> |
| 6.1       | MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR THE TSW SYSTEM .....             | 10        |
| 6.2       | EQUITABLE WATER LEVELS.....                               | 10        |
| 6.3       | ADJUSTING PRIORITIES TO CURRENT CONDITIONS .....          | 11        |
| 6.4       | MAINTENANCE AND MODERNIZATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE.....      | 12        |
| <b>7.</b> | <b>Future Participation .....</b>                         | <b>13</b> |
| <b>8.</b> | <b>Conclusion .....</b>                                   | <b>14</b> |
| <b>9.</b> | <b>Appendix A – Member List.....</b>                      | <b>14</b> |

## 1. Introduction

Since the creation of the Trent-Severn Waterway system a century ago, the lakes of the Haliburton Sector have been used as reservoirs to allow for the management of water levels in the system through a series of dams.

The TSW was originally an important economic artery, designed to allow the transportation of goods and people by joining lakes and rivers in Central Ontario. As time passed, the economic conditions and demographics of the area changed markedly. Today, the TSW is primarily a recreational route and the reservoir lakes – formerly barely inhabited – now provide permanent and seasonal homes to tens of thousands of people, support dozens of towns and the local livelihoods of many thousands more, and support a diverse and relatively healthy ecology of fish and wildlife.

In recent years, seasonal water flows out of the reservoir lakes have created issues for both shoreline and non-shoreline residents. Water levels typically fluctuate between two and seven feet, depending on the lake. With the threat of climate change and competing economic interests, Parks Canada is seeking a way to better satisfy the many stakeholders in their management of the TSW system.



**As water levels drop each summer, an island appears on Loon Lake, creating hazards for boaters and a source of pollution from scavenging sea gulls.**

The area residents have long waited for such a review. Many are tired and angry about constantly shifting water levels and the effect this has on the enjoyment of their properties and property values. Every year, hundreds of boats are damaged and children endangered by hazards that suddenly appear, earlier and earlier in the season.

Residents are incurring inordinate costs extending docks and repairing shoreline structures and boats. Some with water access cannot even get to their homes, and others find their watercraft beached, impossible to remove for the winter. They are fed up with paying waterfront tax rates when their waterfront disappears for months a time, leaving nothing but muck, and they fear for the long-term impact this activity will have on the environment and their ability to live in the area. A reduction in the number of waterfront residents would have a devastating effect on local economies.

## 2. The Organization

The Coalition for Equitable Water Flow, TSW was therefore formed in August 2006 to represent the interests of residents in the Haliburton Sector of the watershed areas feeding the Trent-Severn Waterway in this evaluation process. It represents the residents of 44 lakes and rivers in the region and the people who use them for recreation, transportation and economic activity.

The address of the CEWF is:

P.O. Box 481  
Minden ON K0M 2K0  
Telephone 705-286-6141

The Coalition is co-chaired by:

Bonnie Fleischaker      Bill Cornfield      Bram Lebo  
[40285bf@interhop.net](mailto:40285bf@interhop.net)      [Corwyn@attglobal.net](mailto:Corwyn@attglobal.net)      [bram.lebo@canadianproject.ca](mailto:bram.lebo@canadianproject.ca)

The following lake associations have so far joined and are represented by the Coalition. Associations with an asterisk have responded to the survey:

Little Bob and Big Bob Lake  
Little Glamour and Big Glamour Lake  
Canning Lake \*  
Contau Lake\*  
Drag Lake \*  
Eels Lake\*  
Gull Lake\*  
Horseshoe Lake\*  
Halls Lake\*  
Little Hawk & Big Hawk Lake\*  
Kashagawigamog Lake\*  
Kennisis Lake\*  
Kushog Lake\*  
Loon Lake\*  
Long and Miskwabi Lake\*  
Minden Lake\*  
Mountain Lake\*  
Percy Lake\*  
Little & Big Redstone Lake\*  
Soyers Lake\*  
12 Mile & Boshkung Lake\*  
White Lake\*

A list of representatives with email addresses is attached as Appendix A.



|                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Title</p> <p><b>Reservoir Lakes of the<br/>Trent Severn Waterway</b></p> <p>Date: August 2008</p>   | <p><b>Legend</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Lakes (&gt; 50ha)</li> <li><b>Ontario Road Network</b></li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Expressway / Highway</li> <li> Freeway</li> <li> Collector</li> </ul> <li><b>Tertiary Watersheds</b></li> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Gull</li> <li> Kawartha Lakes</li> </ul> </ul> | <p></p> <p> 0 2 4 8 12 16 Kilometres</p> <p> Glenside Ecological<br/>Services Limited</p> |
| <p>Client</p> <p>The Coalition for Equitable<br/>Waterflow - Haliburton Sector, TSW</p> <p>Project</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                           |

### **3. Scope of Interest**

The Coalition represents the lakes within the Gull River, the Burnt River, Nogies Creek, Mississauga River, Eels Creek and Jack Lake Watersheds which are sub watersheds of the Trent River system. The Gull discharges into the TSW at Balsam Lake and the Burnt into Cameron Lake. Nogies Creek flows into Pigeon Lake; Mississauga Lake into Lower Buckhorn Lake; Eels Lake and Jack Lake into Stony Lake. Balsam Lake is the high point in the TSW. It is understood that all water in Balsam Lake flows eastward in the Trent River; none flows to the west, into the Severn portion of the TSW.

The area of the Haliburton Sector is estimated to be some 4,740 square kilometres which represents about 38.5% of the total area of the Trent /Otonabee River watershed and an even larger percentage of all of the lakes within the Trent watershed. See attached map.

The number of shoreline residents within the Haliburton Sector is approximately 35,000 with an ever increasing number being permanent residents. The estimated property value represented is about \$3.6 billion dollars. The annual economic contribution to the area is a major portion of the support for local, permanent, non-shoreline residents and is estimated to be on the order of \$126 million dollars inclusive of property taxes.

### **4. Issues of Particular Interest and Concern**

A simple, qualitative survey was sent by email to members of the CEWF in October, 2006 asking for feedback on local experience with annual water draw-downs. Of 28 member waterways, a total of twenty four surveys representing some ten thousand+ residents was returned. This was a good response during low season when many of the lake associations are dormant. The uniformity of the responses suggests that the problems experienced are also issues for non-responding lakes.

Not all respondents answered all questions in the survey and several questions were open-ended. Figures represent the percentage of respondents who answered that particular question.

### **5. Key Findings**

The survey revealed widespread concern about current water-flows and about the potential for worsening conditions if precipitation patterns change with the climate. These concerns fall into three general areas: economic impact, environmental damage, and safety.

## **5.1 Economic Impact**

Shoreline homes represent approximately \$3.6bn in property value and an annual economic contribution to the region of between one and two hundred million dollars in taxes, goods and services. Respondents identified areas of direct and indirect, current and potential economic damage.



**Long Lake – Early in the season.**



**Long Lake – The same location in August. Visible is the same dock, now stranded, and 20-30 feet of muck before water. An entire bay full of residents loses water access each summer.**

### **5.1.1. Direct Economic Impact – Actual and Potential**

The loss of water through the summer results in navigational hazards and access issues for watercraft and people. As the water levels fall, rocks, logs and sand bars appear unexpectedly. These in turn are causing damage to property and negatively impacting the quiet enjoyment of shoreline properties. Some shorelines see the water mark moving 100 feet or more off shore.

Some shoreline residents are questioning the requirement to pay taxes at waterfront rates when their waterfront disappears half-way through the year or when their water-access property becomes inaccessible.

- 100% of respondents commenting on navigation reported major problems and negative effects on their shoreline rights to navigation and deep water access.
- 81% of respondents commenting on boat safety report damage to boats caused by submerged hazards which become dangerous when water levels fall.
- 44% of respondents report the need to extend docks in the second half of the summer; 50% report problems with beached boats or boat removal.
- 50% of respondents report specific property damage caused by ice flows and erosion from fluctuating water levels.

### 5.1.2. Indirect Economic Impact

Respondents were not asked to identify any indirect economic damage, however the potential impact on the region of a decrease in population or decrease in development due to waterfronts becoming unusable is huge.

- 27% of respondents already see navigation significantly reduced or becoming impossible by July 15 of each year with an additional 11% reporting problems from August 15, for a total of 38% experiencing serious navigation restrictions which could lead them to leave the region for more stable waterways. This issue was not asked in the survey and therefore the actual figures are expected to be higher.
- 55% of respondents report problems with access to deep water.



**Changing water levels are eroding shorelines, leaving trees without soil or footholds. They eventually fall and die.**

Many of the towns in the region are supported by the tax base from seasonal properties and are relying on these and more, permanent waterfront residents for future growth. Potential residents seek properties with deep water access, healthy shorelines and fisheries, and safe boating. Loss of these features would have a serious impact on the potential of the region to sustain local economies.



**Stranded docks make water access impossible and fish spawning grounds dry up, often after fish have already spawned.**

## 5.2 Environmental Damage

The Ministry of Natural Resources along with other organizations in the public and private sectors have implemented fish and wildlife management programs in the regions. The result has been mostly positive, with stronger fisheries, healthier wetlands and wildlife populations returning to the region.

However, annual water fluctuations for the TSW are subverting these efforts to create a healthy ecology and sustainable environment.

- 61% report damage to fish habitats caused by exposed spawning areas, increased water temperature and pollution due to shallow waters, and increased turbidity.
- 17% report damage to wildlife habitats, mostly from the drying-up of wetlands, flooding and destruction of shoreline.
- 39% report major erosion problems causing shoreline degradation, changing water flows and emergence of sandbars which attract birds and the pollution their waste produces.
- Several respondents reported significant silt accumulation in various locations on the lakes.
- Many respondents reported increased weed growth as well as weed growth in areas of their lakes that have not experienced such growth in past years.
- Almost all of the respondents indicated great concern for the potential of back lot development that will further stress an already tenuous environmental situation.
- Major concern was expressed for decreased water quality caused by issues created by lower water levels, including pollution from birds and increased turbidity.

### **5.3 Safety Concerns**

Changing water levels are creating serious hazards for boats and people in the form of underwater obstacles and rushing water. Respondents reported injuries and suspected drownings due to variable and unpredictable depths.

- As mentioned above, 100% of respondents report navigational hazards to boats, water-skiers, and swimmers. Parents are particularly concerned about their children having to go many metres from shore to find water deep enough for swimming, potentially putting them in the path of watercraft and out of reach of assistance.
- 67% report specific safety hazards. These include rushing water through channels that makes access to homes



**Dams are deteriorating and in serious need of repair. Logs provide only crude control of water levels.**



hazardous and submerged rocks dangerous for swimmers and boaters.

- Risk from infrastructure deterioration - members are very concerned about the obvious deterioration of the dams along the reservoir lake system. Failure of even one of the dams may be catastrophic.

## **6. CEWF Recommendations for Equitable Solutions**

Based on the responses to the CEWF, the Coalition has developed a set of recommendations for consideration. CEWF welcomes the opportunity to work with stakeholders and TSW management to further develop these and other recommendations in the interests of better water management.

### ***6.1 Management Structure for the TSW System***

The TSW oversees the control of water in two major regions in the heartland of Ontario, both of which have significant economic, environmental and recreational value. Water management policy affects interests covered by all levels of government.

The CEWF therefore recommends:

- A recognition of the negative impacts water-level fluctuations have on the environment, water safety, access and economy including their effect on property rights and values.
- A consideration of these impacts on any proposal for improved water management and a commitment to find a solution which lessens their severity.
- That the operation and management of the TSW should involve municipal, provincial and federal government representation.
- That the operation and management of the TSW should provide for the input of stakeholders within the watershed areas, including shoreline property owners and business owners.
- A policy of information sharing among the many government agencies involved and with all stakeholders, to eliminate duplication and waste of taxpayer dollars and to promote a spirit of co-operation. This could be achieved by construction of a TSW website.

### ***6.2 Equitable Water Levels***

The principal issue as CEWF sees it is the achievement and maintenance of adequate water levels on an equitable basis for all shoreline residents within

the Trent River watershed for at least the prime summer months of mid June to mid September.

The CEWF therefore recommends:

- That any proposal for future water management contain adequate water management as an objective where adequate is defined as high enough to:
  - Access waterfront property by boat where land access is not available.
  - Navigate safely within lakes, and between lakes through channels and waterways that are navigable at the start of the season. There are a number of multi-lake chains through which boaters can navigate but which become impassable as early as late June.
  - Remove boats at the end of the season.
  - Reasonably support the direct and indirect economic activity generated by healthy lakes.
  - Provide spawning grounds for fish and consistent habitats for wildlife.
  - Prevent deterioration of water quality, including prevention of excessive weed growth.
- The elimination of “handshake” agreements that serve particular waterways or lakes independently of the water management process.
- Ending the issuance of permits to draw large quantities of water from the watershed.

### ***6.3 Adjusting Priorities to Current Conditions***

The TSW was initially designed to allow the transportation of goods and people by joining lakes and rivers in Central Ontario. It became an important economic artery in the early to mid-1900s, but with significant demographic, social and economic changes over the last century, the relative importance of the TSW for transportation and as a generator of economic activity in the region has declined significantly.

The TSW is no longer used primarily for transportation but has become a recreational route. It is believed that even for that purpose, few boaters use more than small stretches of the waterway and its general use has declined by 50% in the last 20 years.

The CEWF therefore recommends:

- That priorities in water management be adjusted to reflect current realities, specifically the importance of adequate

water levels to the environmental and economic health of the watershed regions.

- That access to safe navigation on and between the watershed lakes be assigned equal priority to navigation within the TSW itself.
- A reconsideration of the public policy objectives in maintaining the TSW for what have become purely recreational purposes and a balancing of these objectives with environmental and economic objectives of the watershed lakes regions, including:
  - (a) Recognition of the economic contribution of the watershed lakes regions and its long term potential.
  - (b) Evaluation of environmental impact of transit through the TSW versus “local” recreation and the effect of continued or increased water flows and traffic on the environment.
  - (c) Recognition of property rights of waterfront owners, including the right to navigation.
  - (d) Consideration of alternative strategies for satisfying the requirements of stakeholders which do not involve large flows of water.
  - (e) Recognition of the long-term effects of climate change and falling water levels and the possibility that a waterway such as the TSW may be unsustainable.
- That water be recognised for the important natural resource that it is to the region and that it not be diverted for purposes that are environmentally damaging or detrimental to overall economic sustainability.
- That environmental health and integrity, while not having direct economic benefits, be recognised as an objective of water management policy.
- That where necessary, federal or provincial legislation be enacted to protect and preserve environmental, economic and property interests.

#### **6.4 Maintenance and Modernization of Infrastructure**

The TSW system is large and complex and the demands on it are many. The existing control structures do not allow for fine tuning of water levels to meet the system’s demands; they do not allow for remote adjustment, requiring instead manual manipulation which often cannot be done in a timely manner. These factors lead to waste and difficulty maintaining equitable water levels.

Parts of the system – dams in particular – are deteriorating, creating the potential for serious danger to life and property were one to break. Local

residents have not been provided with disaster plans and in most cases are not even aware of the possibility.

The CEWF therefore recommends:

- The implementation of an immediate interim solution for improving water management. Suggestions include:
  - Hiring additional staff or summer students to manage log insertion and removal.
  - Replace 12" logs with smaller logs that provide finer control.
  - Decreasing the target levels in canals and locks, at once or as the season progresses.
  - Use of holding ponds and/or recycled water where possible.
- A timely review and assessment of infrastructure conditions and speedy repair where safety is a concern.
- Consideration of creative alternatives such as:
  - Creating new reservoirs to be designated as non-residential areas.
  - Sourcing additional water from rivers and lakes which are not currently controlled within the system in order to even out water flows.
  - Segmenting the TSW to maintain water levels, economic and recreational activity but without end-to-end navigation.
- That whatever water management policy is enacted in the future, the TSW study, propose and invest in modern water management infrastructure to maximise efficiency and equitability of water management and to minimise environmental and economic damage.

## **7. Future Participation**

The Coalition for Equitable Water Flow, TSW is prepared to participate on an on-going basis in a decision-making body that would be responsible for recommending solutions to water management issues and concerns.

## 8. Conclusion

Through the survey process, the residents of the watershed lakes for the TSW, Haliburton Sector have identified serious problems with access, navigation and safety due to annual water-level changes, all of which seriously impact their ability to securely enjoy their homes. They have also noted extensive actual and potential damage to both the local economy and environment of the region and the threat this damage poses to the region's future.

Many residents are finding the situation intolerable. They have concluded that they will no longer accept being an afterthought in the water management process given their contribution to the economy and tax base of the region and given the recognised importance of healthy and stable ecosystems to animal, plant and human life.

The threat of climate change, increased development and a trend towards lower water levels not just in the area but in the Great Lakes, make the resolution of this issue a critical step in the long term development, sustainability and health of the region. The Coalition looks forward to participating in the process of achieving equitable water management.

We would like to thank Parks Canada and Ecoplans for the opportunity to present this information and for their recognition of CEWF as stakeholders in this process.

February 12, 2007

### **CEWF Co-Chairs**

Bonnie Fleischacker  
Bill Cornfield  
Bram Lebo

## 9. Appendix A – Member List

List of Lake Associations, contact persons with e-mail addresses:

|                        |                   |                                                                                |
|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Little/Big Bob Lake    | Ken James         | <a href="mailto:mindenrocks@hotmail.com">mindenrocks@hotmail.com</a>           |
| Big/Little Glamor Lake | Lorrie Saville    | <a href="mailto:isaville@sympatico.ca">isaville@sympatico.ca</a>               |
| Canning Lake           | Gus Janca         | <a href="mailto:gandijanca@yahoo.ca">gandijanca@yahoo.ca</a>                   |
|                        | Al Dyson          | <a href="mailto:tdyson10@sympatico.ca">tdyson10@sympatico.ca</a>               |
| Contau Lake            | Cathy Graab-Logan | <a href="mailto:cathygraab@hotmail.com">cathygraab@hotmail.com</a>             |
| Drag Lake              | Martin Rist       | <a href="mailto:martinrist@aol.com">martinrist@aol.com</a>                     |
|                        | Bram Lebo         | <a href="mailto:bram.lebo@canadianproject.ca">bram.lebo@canadianproject.ca</a> |

|                         |                                      |                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eels Lake               | Paul Slightes<br>George Clark        | <a href="mailto:slighteshaven@sympatico.ca">slighteshaven@sympatico.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:Joanne-geo.clark@sympatico.ca">Joanne-geo.clark@sympatico.ca</a>           |
| Gull Lake               | Siobhan Carmichael<br>Wayne Krangle  | <a href="mailto:Siobhan.Carmichael@cadillacfairview.com">Siobhan.Carmichael@cadillacfairview.com</a><br><a href="mailto:kayaker156@rogers.com">kayaker156@rogers.com</a> |
| Horseshoe Lake          | Bonnie Fleischaker<br>Bill Cornfield | <a href="mailto:40285bf@interhop.net">40285bf@interhop.net</a><br><a href="mailto:Corwyn@attglobal.net">Corwyn@attglobal.net</a>                                         |
| Halls/Big & Little Hawk | John Perkins<br>Carole Russell       | <a href="mailto:perkins5@sympatico.ca">perkins5@sympatico.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:Carole.Russell@td.com">Carole.Russell@td.com</a>                                     |
| Kashagawigamog          | Anne Nickson<br>Stan Peck            | <a href="mailto:anne.nickson@sympatico.ca">anne.nickson@sympatico.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:stanpeck@rogers.com">stanpeck@rogers.com</a>                                 |
| Little/Kennesis Lakes   | Chris Riddle                         | <a href="mailto:ChrisRiddle@sympatico.ca">ChrisRiddle@sympatico.ca</a>                                                                                                   |
| Kushog                  | Norma Goodger                        | <a href="mailto:ngoodger@kidsan.com">ngoodger@kidsan.com</a>                                                                                                             |
| Long Lake               | Sheldon Meslin                       | <a href="mailto:smeslin@sympatico.ca">smeslin@sympatico.ca</a>                                                                                                           |
| Loon Lake               | Joe Harwood<br>Stephen Foster        | <a href="mailto:jdharwood@cogoco.ca">jdharwood@cogoco.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:geoapply@interlog.com">geoapply@interlog.com</a>                                         |
| Miskwabi Lake           | Norm Fowler                          | <a href="mailto:nlfowler@sympatico.ca">nlfowler@sympatico.ca</a>                                                                                                         |
| Minden Lake             | Gord Theenan                         | <a href="mailto:sangor@interhop.net">sangor@interhop.net</a>                                                                                                             |
| Mountain Lake           | Don Benson                           | <a href="mailto:rdbenson@nexicom.net">rdbenson@nexicom.net</a>                                                                                                           |
| Percy Lake              | Gerry Roberts<br>Gary Portway        | <a href="mailto:gerry.roberts@sympatico.ca">gerry.roberts@sympatico.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:g.portway@sympatico.ca">g.portway@sympatico.ca</a>                         |
| Little/Redstone Lakes   | Dave Nichols<br>Terry O-Loane        | <a href="mailto:Dave_Nichols@toyota.ca">Dave_Nichols@toyota.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:twoloane@sympatico.ca">twoloane@sympatico.ca</a>                                   |
| Soyers Lake             | Dennis Good<br>Dave Pengelly         | <a href="mailto:dennis.good@lennowind.com">dennis.good@lennowind.com</a><br><a href="mailto:pengelly@mcmaster.ca">pengelly@mcmaster.ca</a>                               |
| 12 Mile/Boshkung Lakes  | Susan Pethick<br>Bob Helwig          | <a href="mailto:susanohnpethick@yahoo.ca">susanohnpethick@yahoo.ca</a><br><a href="mailto:Bobbykahuna@sympatico.ca">Bobbykahuna@sympatico.ca</a>                         |
| White Lake              | Roger Cunningham                     | <a href="mailto:roger.cunningham@sympatico.ca">roger.cunningham@sympatico.ca</a>                                                                                         |