

Redstone Lake Cottagers: Internet, Acid Rain, and Lake Plan

Stephen Patrick
Editor

The Redstone Lake Cottagers Association (RLCA) held its Annual General Meeting last Saturday at the Haliburton Forest Reserve. About 60 or so of its over 200 members braved the cold and rain to hear a variety of reports and presentations. President Shal Gewurtz welcomed the gathering and in his president's report introduced an attractive map that the RLCA has produced with the cooperation of Haliburton County, and which will be free to all association members.

Gewurtz also brought the members up to speed on the RCLA's Board of Directors decision to become a part of the Coalition of Haliburton Associations (CHA) which was formed recently in an effort to pool sometimes scant resources between the different cottagers and property association memberships. He cited the proposed production of a Manual for area property owners, as well as the possible sharing of newsletter articles as examples of what this cooperation could do. The ongoing efforts to produce a Lake Plan were also mentioned as a top priority for the RCLA. Some members questioned the rationale for the Lake Plan, and Gewurtz replied that it could be a valuable tool for all cottagers and permanent residences in defining just what kind of Lake environment they wanted. It could answer such questions as "Do you want a marina on Redstone?", or "Should boathouses be allowed?" or, "Should clear cutting of properties to the shoreline be allowed?"



RLCA President Shal Gewurtz

Local Dysart Councillor Janis Parker pointed out that for a Lake Plan to become official, fully 75 percent of property owners would have to approve it, including both RCLA members and non members. "It's really a best practices guide to how we want to live together on our lakes," said Parker, who noted that "It's sometimes difficult to tell someone who's just spent \$450,000 on a lot that they really shouldn't clear all the trees off their land." It was also pointed out that there would be an Open House for public input into Dysart et al's Official Plan deliberations on August 21st.

Gewurtz then welcomed the County of Haliburton's Broadband Coordinator Jamie Parks to the meeting to report on the state, or lack of, of broadband access in the area. Parks began by pointing out that he was indeed an employee of the County, and not Bell Aliant, as has been reported elsewhere. He admitted that there would be limited increased availability of DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) on Redstone Lake, despite the recent injection of \$ 1million from the province, and an additional \$2.8 million from Bell Aliant. "It all comes down to how many miles of fibre optic cable can serve how many people. Bell is expanding our 'cabinets' - which are distribution centres that can accommodate residences with a 5.5 kilometre range - but these cost \$250,000 each. There is also a Xittel wireless option available for some areas of Redstone that DSL doesn't reach. The tower is by Kennis Laker and, Xittel is looking for permission from a landowner to build a repeater, or bounce-back tower on the east side of Redstone." Xittel is the successor to Connex3, which built the government wireless infrastructure a few years back. Parks reminded the group, to its amusement, that

any cottager who would agree to having a tower built on their land, "would be a very popular person indeed, and would certainly get free internet, possibly a small payment, and maybe even a T-shirt," for their troubles.

Parks also reminded his audience that both Bell and Rogers were selling Internet connection 'sticks' that connect to your laptop, and then to the nearest cell tower. If your cell gets excellent reception at your cottage, you might well get up to about 2 mg speed on your laptop.

Finally, Parks announced that the County would be providing wi fi 'hot spots' at various locations and he hoped to be able to announce soon that the West Guilford Community Centre would be one of them. That would allow cottagers to bring their laptop to the Centre, or just sit outside in their cars, and access their email and the web. Other locations where both access computers and wireless internet access include the libraries in Minden, Cardiff, Gooderham, Highland Grove, Wilberforce, and Dysart Libraries. Wireless will also be available at the County headquarters in Minden, the Minden Arena, and the Dysart Arena. As well, Parks outlines a number of courses the County is sponsoring at the Fall session at Fleming College Haliburton Campus.

The meeting then heard reports on the RLCA's rapidly expanding website, (408 visits in June 2009, up 77 percent from 2008), and heard of ongoing plans to use the website as a more effective tool for members, and for increasing membership. Lake Steward John Jackson reported that

Redstone, Little Redstone, and Pelaw Lakes were all essentially very healthy bodies of water, with little evidence of the conditions that can lead to excessive algae, for example. He also reported that the Association purchased acid rain/alkaline testing equipment and had resumed testing of those levels in the lakes (which governments had ceased to monitor in the 1990s). The last government measure, in 1990, showed that the acidity was at a 6.6 level: Jackson's readings, taken in the last six months, showed the level well into the alkaline side of the scale at 8.2 to 8.5. In other words, the acid rain problem looks to be over, but the alkaline content of the lake is now perhaps a little high. Further testing will be done as the summer progresses.

Board Director John Anderson reported on the progress, or lack of, on the Coalition for Equitable Water Flow, and expressed some frustration that the Trent Severn Waterways management had not reacted quickly, if at all, to the many CEWF recommendations contained in their report "It's All About the Water". Apparently any action has been slowed down by current economic conditions, and Anderson urged the members to lobby their federal and provincial representations to get going.

Finally David Flowers, the Ministry of Natural Resources Fisheries Extension Biologist for the Minden Area informed the meeting of a "Broad-scale fisheries monitoring program on Redstone Lake to be conducted in September. The Voice will have a full report on the program in next week's issue. ■

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