

Leech Lake **Cottagers' Association** **NEWSLETTER**

New Year 2024

President's Message – Susan Baskin

Happy New Year!

On behalf of the LLCA Executive and me personally, I want to wish everyone in our Leech Lake community the very best for a healthy, safe, and joyful 2024.

2023 was an outstanding year for the LLCA with strong membership, an increased sense of community, excellent maintenance on all of our roads, and continued commitment to stewardship of our environment—with a special emphasis on shoreline naturalization.

As we move into 2024, please continue to be thoughtful neighbours and careful stewards of our beautiful environment. It takes commitment and effort from all of us.

At this time, given the mild December we have experienced, please be especially careful about going out onto the ice. Hopefully we will see consistently lower temperatures in January and February, and the lake will freeze so that we can all enjoy winter sports in a safe manner.

It's That Time Again: 2024 Dues Are Due

At the annual meeting in June 2023, we set 2024 LLCA dues at \$350. This is excellent value compared to other small lake association dues. We also implemented a \$25 discount if dues are paid by January 31, 2024. We did this because it helps us tremendously with budgeting, planning and cash flow if your annual dues are paid early in the year.

The 2024 dues invoice is attached. Please note, you can direct additional contributions to specific areas including roads, lake stewardship, regatta and fish stocking. The dues total will add up automatically as you put in the amounts for additional contributions. If you choose to pay before January 31, please include the \$25 discount by adding -\$25.00 on the appropriate line. Any additional contributions will be greatly appreciated.

The easiest way to handle your dues payment is to fill in the dues invoice on your computer, then email it to our treasurer Shelley Bumstead at leechlaketreasurer@gmail.com. Follow this up with an e-transfer to leechlaketreasurer@gmail.com. If the electronic way doesn't appeal to you, you can print out the completed dues invoice and send it with a cheque to the address on the dues invoices.

If you have any questions about the dues invoice, please reach out to our treasurer Shelley Bumstead at leechlaketreasurer@gmail.com.

Fraserburg Road Construction – by Don Hill

The construction work that was to take place on Fraserburg Road to mitigate spring flooding is officially on hold. The MECP (Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks) has issued an order to the District that it must submit a 'Species at Risk' permit prior to any work being performed. Normally this permit is waived under an exemption for health and safety, but this time it was not waived.

The District is, however, taking mitigating action for spring flooding by purchasing temporary cofferdams (big air inflatable tubes 20' to 40' long). These will be placed on the river banks prior to the spring run-off by the Emergency Management folk from the District.

We will keep you apprised on this project as we get more information.

Ice Ice Baby! Ice Safety on The Leech – by Valerie McCoy and Leslie Wood

The tragic drowning of one of Valerie's neighbours in Trent Lakes in December was a harsh reminder of how quickly a life can be lost in cold water. The time between a person falling through the ice and a successful rescue is extremely short; likely much shorter than the time for emergency services to get to Leech Lake.

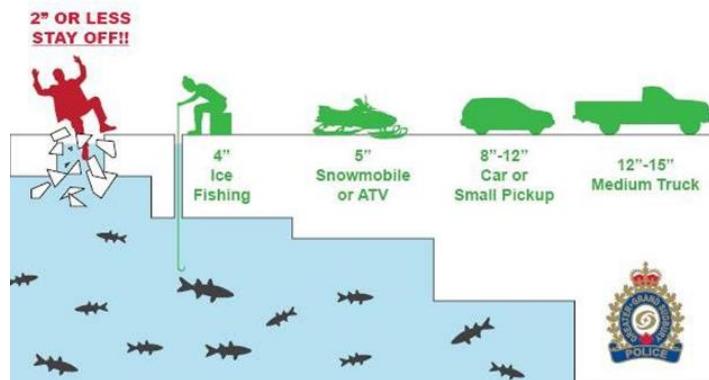
We want to remind our membership to use extreme caution on the ice. If you are new to the lake you may not be aware that "boat launch bay" is especially dangerous at the far end near the outflow. Water runs all year and if it freezes, the ice is thin.

According to the Lifesaving Society - "No ice is without risk. Even thick ice may be weak so be sure to measure clear hard ice in several places. The quality and thickness of ice can change very quickly and its appearance can be misleading".

The following graphic shows guidelines on ice thickness for various activities. It's important to measure the ice where it is clear and hard, and in a few different places. It's also recommended to wear a life jacket while on-ice. Honestly, you can't be too careful.

Recommended Minimum Ice Thickness

(Rough Guidelines for New Clear ice Only)



Be Ice Smart!

The Royal Lifesaving Society of Canada encourages you to be ice smart - know the basics and be sensible. Most winter drowning victims are male snowmobilers. But everybody needs to be careful around frozen lakes, rivers and streams. Year after year we hear of owners drowning while trying to rescue their dogs (incidentally, the dogs usually survive).

The Society's drowning data shows:

- Almost two thirds of ice-related incidents occur on lakes and the rest occur on rivers.
- Most snowmobile incidents involve open water/ice holes (62% of all snowmobiling incidents) or thin ice (38%).

<https://www.lifesavingsociety.com/water-safety/cold-water-and-ice.aspx>

Dock Bubblers Add to Ice Risk

Leech Lake is a small lake and because it is spring fed there is not much current, so the ice does not push structures in the water like fixed docks. This means there is scant benefit from a dock bubbler, but there is absolutely additional risk to the ice on the lake.

If you choose to use a bubbler, be aware of your responsibilities. "Section 263 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada is very clear that those who make or cause to be made an opening in ice are under a legal duty to guard the opening in a manner adequate to prevent persons from falling in by accident, and adequate to warn them that the opening exists. If you fail to perform these duties, the Code states that you may be found guilty of serious offences, up to and including manslaughter."

Please see the attached FOCA information on Bubblers with Risk Management Considerations.

What to do if you break through the ice?**

1. *Don't panic - the clothes you're wearing will trap air and keep you buoyant.*
2. *Turn toward the direction you came from and place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface.*
3. *Kick your feet and try to push yourself forward on top of the unbroken ice on your stomach like a seal.*

Once you are lying on the ice, don't stand up. Roll away from the break until you're on solid ice.

**Royal Lifesaving Society Canada, Ontario Branch

If you enjoy using the lake during the cold weather, please consider storing a ring buoy and rope at your shore. A pole with a hook is even better.

Wishing all of our friends and neighbours a healthy, happy winter.

Snow - Wherfore art thou?

Winter started early up here in Muskoka and by the end of 2023 we had received 28" of snow. Within the month of December most of that snow melted. On Christmas day the lake was 80% open water. Come on up and get one last canoe, or kayak or paddle boat ride before the lake freezes for good.

Winter – Will there be a January Reboot, or Many False Starts?

Many property owners enjoy winters here up in Muskoka and at Leech Lake. We look forward to the walks, snowshoeing and skating on the lake as well as taking in local sites, events and restaurants. Mother nature is making this winter season more challenging for those who embrace winter. Although the lack of snow is disheartening, there are many things one can do in and around Muskoka. See if there is something for you [here](#).

And some other things to do...

- Bracebridge Memorial Arena - Until Sunday, Jan. 7. All public swimming, public skating and indoor climbing is free, thanks to the generous support of Kubota North, B & Trailers and Cavalcade Ford.
- Quality Inn Bracebridge - A meal and some Bowling perhaps?

Garbage Collection - The District gets a Reboot in 2024

The District of Muskoka has rejigged its weekly waste collection schedules across the entire region for 2024.

In 2023 our roadside collection day was Monday. In 2024, starting in May, our roadside collection day is changing to Tuesday. (Guy suspects the dark hand of big bear-bin behind this change.)

If you leave the cottage on Sunday and put out your garbage, there will be more risk than before of critters making a big mess, so please use appropriate containers wherever possible to try and mitigate any problems.

Short term rental property owners need to update your house rules to indicate the new collection day.

Lake Stewardship: Fleming Project – Valerie McCoy

The Fleming Credit for Product report was completed mid-December. Overall, the results were consistent with earlier years and will be shared at the AGM. The students prepared the attached brochure which is a great overview of how we can be good stewards of our lake.

It is important to note that the past number of years have brought in some changes to the project which will be beneficial to the association longer term.

Historically the Centre for Advancement of Water and Wastewater Technologies (CAWT), a research institute that's part of Fleming College, tested some water samples in the lab and we were billed at a subsidized rate. Unfortunately, this subsidization has ended because Fleming's funding is struggling - the low number of International Students who studied in Canada during the recent Covid pandemic dramatically decreased funds to our post-secondary institutions, including Fleming College. We are fortunate that the considerable student labour remains free of charge – we are only responsible for "room & meals" for a weekend.

Due to a concerning decline in pH readings, Murray Hall purchased a pH meter in 2023 and began his own "on-site" testing to look at seasonal trends. We're grateful to Murray for taking this on and look forward to seeing what this additional information can tell us.

With a change in Fleming faculty in 2023 and possibly through pre-project training, the student teams identified variations in test protocols across all the projects run in this program, and the need for standardization. This may alter some of our project's test protocols going forward.

With all these factors in play, we made some decisions for the future:

1. Murray Hall & Kasey McCoy will act as advisors along with other association representatives on a Fleming winter project to create a student field manual. This will help with protocol standardization.
2. LLCA future projects will scale back CAWT testing by using a Multimeter in the field – this will reduce our testing costs.
3. Murray will continue to check pH which is recorded by Kasey McCoy in a shared drive – this will give us additional information on which to base future decisions
4. We will look for a volunteer from the lake to re-join the Lake Partners program in 2024

Consistent with past years, Shoreline Naturalization is the most impactful action our members can undertake. We will continue to support our members as the community “grows together.”

Keepers of the Lake

It takes an army of people to build community. We know there is lots of helping and kindness that goes on around Leech Lake, and we want to call out some of our helpers in each newsletter. If you know someone you'd like to have recognized for something they did, please email leechlakesecretary@yahoo.com and we will get it in our next newsletter.

For this edition, we want to call out and give a big thank you to a few Keepers of Leech Lake:

Lloyd Watson, for his continued support and efforts to make our roads safer and cleaner with his leaf, twig and branch clearing toy. He works tirelessly to widen portions of the roads to make them safe and passable for us all. Thanks from many residents around the lake for the work you've performed over the past few years Mr. Lloyd.

Don Hill, for attending the presentations and council sessions to ensure we still have visibility with the town to keep them focused on the flood mitigation project by Fraserburg and Sherwood Forest Rds. Also a big thank you to Don for providing the North road residents some extra traction with his mad sanding skills.

Ash Drive

Friends of the Muskoka Watershed
Science Driving Solutions

Save the dates for our ASHMusoka drives 2024

- **Saturday, January 20, 2024**
- Saturday, Feb. 17 (Family Day weekend)
- Saturday, March 16
- Saturday, April 20

From 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 1062 Rosewarne Drive, Bracebridge @ the Transfer Station

To learn more about our ash work, visit:
fotmw.org/ashmuskoka-final-research-reports/

Bits 'n Pieces

1. **FOCA Alert:** the most recent Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations newsletter is full of great [information](#).
2. **Alvin & Friends:** Ever wondered how these cute little critters survive our harsh winters? Take a peek at the links [here](#) and [here](#) to better understand how they live.

LLCA Contact Information

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