



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

Civic Holiday Weekend 2025

Leech Lake REGATTA This Sunday, August 3RD 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm at the Boat Launch

Come one, come all to the Leech Lake Regatta this Sunday, August 3rd.

Do you like burgers and dogs? We've got those, and vegetarian options as well.

Do you like chips, brownies, juice boxes and watermelon?
Come on down!

Do you like games? With ribbons and prizes? Can't wait for kids of all ages to come and play!



It's a good idea to bring a water bottle, and some chairs or a blanket to sit on. Some of the games may involve getting wet, so dress accordingly!

Thanks to all the volunteers who are stepping up to bring the regatta to life this year. We'll give them special mention in the next newsletter.



Annual Bottle Drive begins this Sunday - Wobbly pops for Local Charities!

During the month of August a band of volunteers will be doing pick-ups of your previously enjoyed beverage containers. If you wish to donate please leave them a few feet away from your regular garbage, compost and recycling bins. We will drop by early Sunday evening or early Monday morning. The funds generated from the bottle drive this year will be donated to the Manna Food Bank, Salvation Army Food Bank and the Alzheimer's Society of Bracebridge.



2025 Benthic (Bug Count) Results

Results are in from our 19th year of benthic monitoring event that took place July 19th. Our Biotech technician from the District of Muskoka (DOM) arrived early to collect lake bottom samples at 2 sites. Rick McCoy took Mary by boat where she carried out the “Kick and Sweep” collection (see photos). From the collected samples, volunteers of all ages helped capture 200 benthics which were taken back to the DOM for further analysis. The kids collected tickets as they collected bugs, which went into a

raffle for prizes. Shelley and Vaughn Bumstead prepared and served a BBQ lunch then helped take down after the event was over. Thank you Shelley, Vaughn and Rick!



Result summary from DOM:

1. Richness (a measure of biological diversity. Richness increases with increasing habitat diversity, suitability, and water quality) should be high (close to the average for Muskoka or above).
2. % EOT (collection made up of mayflies, dragonflies, damselflies, and caddisflies, which are very sensitive to pollution and habitat alteration) will decrease and % Chironomids (collection made up of midges, which signify water quality problems) will increase over time with water quality impairment.
3. % Predators should be less than the other types of benthos (shredders, collector/gatherers) and these percentages should remain relatively constant over time.
4. The Hilsenhoff Index value (a score of organic pollution) should be close to the average for Muskoka or less, as a lower value indicates healthier water

The 2025 results from Site 1 indicate moderately healthy water quality. Richness (14) is strong and above average, while % EOT (10%) is relatively low and % Chironomids (67%) is quite high—potentially signalling some organic pollution or stress. However, the Hilsenhoff Index value of 5.95 is below the Muskoka average of 6.27, suggesting that the overall water quality is still within a healthy range.

Site 3 also shows moderately healthy conditions. Richness is good (12), and while % EOT is slightly higher (13%) and % Chironomids slightly lower (57%) compared to Site 1, the balance still suggests a potential shift toward more pollution-tolerant species. The Hilsenhoff Index of 6.01, being below the Muskoka average, supports the conclusion that water quality remains acceptable, though continued monitoring is recommended.



Conclusion

The results are cautiously optimistic. Individual efforts are required to support water quality such as restoring shoreline buffers by renaturalization, elimination of pesticides and other chemicals in and around the property and septic pump-outs. For more information please check out

<http://www.muskokawaterweb.ca/>

The Lazy Cottager

Dear Leech Lakers,

Let sleeping logs lie; it's worth it.

Driftwood and fallen trees along the shoreline may appear cluttered, but they serve as essential hiding, feeding, and spawning grounds for fish, frogs, and salamanders. Resist the temptation to clean up. Instead, relax on your dock and enjoy the natural habitat.

Yours truly,

The LazyCottager



Septic Services – Leech Lake got Pumped Out!

Our septic service provider was onsite earlier in July to empty the holding tanks of residents who signed up for the service. We managed to get 11% of the cottages on the lake pumped out this year. Think about this kind of ongoing maintenance before it's too late! We'll do another callout next spring.

Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA) News:

We are including this in the newsletter as we are now a member of the MLA and want to share. Anyone interested in participating in advocacy or other roles with MLA can approach them through their website www.mla.on.ca.

Ontario Land Tribunal Dismisses Appeals of Township of Muskoka Lakes Official Plan – July 25, 2025

The MLA and partners Skeleton Lake Cottagers Organization and the Leonard Lake Stakeholders Association support the Township of Muskoka Lakes Official Plan and its environment-first approach. In May, the MLA filed a motion with the Ontario Land Tribunal to dismiss the appeals of the plan by a small group of developers and two aggregate industry players. We are pleased to report we were notified this week the Tribunal ruled in our favour. This is a huge win, one which we can all be proud of.

The appeals, had they been successful, would have resulted in the removal of long-standing policies protecting the unique environment of Muskoka, including limits on lot coverage and a 2,000-metre buffer zone from lakes for aggregate pits and quarries.



Flying Solo?

Everyone is wondering about loons on the lake this year. Many of us have seen only one, but treasurer Ann Hampton reports that she spends her afternoons on her dock with binoculars. Just the other day, she saw two loons showing affection, possibly indicating a late baby chick. This wouldn't be the first time on our lake, so let's keep our fingers crossed and a sharp eye out when we're enjoying our watercraft – may they have a safe August.

For Sale

Looking to get your friends and family up to Muskoka more often? There are some real estate opportunities on our lake for those who are interested.

You can search for these available and soon-to-be-available properties:

#1002 - Point Rd
#1019 - Lakeshore Dr North
#1032 - Lakeshore Dr South
#1102 - Lakeshore Dr South
#1230 - Lakeshore Dr South



Future water quality testing in partnership with the Muskoka Lakes Association (MLA),

Leech Lake purchased a \$150 annual MLA membership in July to access resources of a larger more influential organization. MLA was founded 1894 and its mandate is as follows;

The Muskoka Lakes Association is a volunteer membership-based organization advocating for responsible stewardship and enjoyment of the unique environment of the Muskoka Lakes.

Our priorities are to:

- Monitor, communicate and advocate for Muskoka's natural environment;
- Advocate on behalf of all Muskoka property owners for responsible land use and reasonable taxation;
- Promote the Muskoka Lakes culture and give back to the greater Muskoka community; and
- Increase partnerships with like-minded organizations throughout Muskoka to advocate and educate collectively on important Muskoka matters.

LLCA Stewardship representatives attended Muskoka Lakes Associations Leadership Forum June 28th. We went with a preconception that the attendees would be all from the big lakes with potentially different issues. Development of resorts on these lakes was a hot topic – but these and smaller lakes represented shared common issues and priorities with Leech Lake. We were impressed by the experience in the room. We had ample opportunity to speak to leaders such as Deborah Martin-Downs - a retired environmental professional with 40 years of experience and now both the President of FOCA a MLA Board member.

We learned of the MLA Water Quality Initiative" (WQI), a monitoring program started in 2002. The MLA Environment Committee manages over a hundred volunteers to collect annual water quality data. Samples are collected for analysis of total phosphorus (TP) and bacteria (E. coli and total coliform), with water and air temperature and Secchi depths recorded at each site. Hutchinson Environmental Sciences Limited (HESL) analyzes the data and to provide recommendations and program modification/development options. An annual report is then released detailing findings and trends. See figure showing the sampling sites across Muskoka.

We visited the MLA Port Carling office to pick up brochures (literature provided at Bug Count & Regatta) and learned more about the sampling program. There is a fee for each sample and an approx. \$250 styrofoam type incubator required. There will be a spring training session offered for volunteers. We will have an estimate of the full cost after this. We are expecting this will be an economical replacement for Fleming.

If anyone is interested in seeing a past Water Quality Initiative Report – please contact us at leech.lake.stewardship.committee@gmail.com



Looking for things to do around Bracebridge in August?

If the idea of enjoying wonderful scenery, wildlife, waterfalls and nature at its purest is not exciting enough for you then take a look at these events for all ages.

<https://www.discovermuskoka.ca/30-things-to-do-muskoka/>

Interested in upping your paddleboarding game, or just staying upright more often on your paddle board? Head to Liv Outside (271 Ecclestone Drive) for some hands-on training, tips, then go out with a guided tour of some waterways.

Afterwards head over the bridge to "The Burger Shop" for a bite to eat (followed by ice cream at the Ice Cream Shoppe). If you still have the energy then you can try the mini putt course at Northern Escapade (301 Ecclestone Drive). If you have found your second wind after your putting game, cross the street over to the Riverside Quality Inn for some bowling.

Huntsville Outdoor Gallery

There is a cool installation of murals dotting downtown Huntsville. The pieces are reproductions of iconic paintings from the Group of Seven artists. Check it out [here](#).

Star Power

Hey, wasn't that Martin Short, David Beckham, Cindy Crawford and Eugene Levy? The best place to view the stars is in Muskoka. Who knows who you will meet at the Torrance Barrens Dark-Sky Preserve. The Perseids meteor showers are active from July-17 to Aug-24 with its peak of approximately 100 meteors per hour between Aug-12-13. More info [here](#).

If you enjoy casting your eyes skyward, check out these upcoming events.

<https://www.discovermuskoka.ca/four-celestial-events-muskoka-fall/#:~:text=Viewing%20Tip%20Find%20an%20open,the%20night%20of%20the%2015th.>

Are you a Skip, Lead, Second, or Third?

If these terms resonate and bring a smile to your face then head down to The Gravenhurst Opera House in August to get in your curling fix. From Aug-12 to Aug-22 you can catch either afternoon (2:30pm) or evening performances (7:30pm) of the new play "Hurry Hard" - A comedy about love on the rocks. More info and tickets can be found [here](#).

Two goats, a mini horse and a pig (sounds like one of those 'walking into a bar' jokes...)

If you're looking for some end-of-season plants, shrubs, annuals, trees, and perennials then head north on Hwy#11 to Sandhill Nursery. Every Sunday in July and August from 10 AM to 12 noon, the Sandhill playground transforms into a joyful barnyard where laughter, sunshine, and furry friends create lasting memories. Whether it's your first visit or you've been every week, this event is a must-do for families this summer.

They also now serve food, drink and refreshments at their Rusted Rake eatery. There is no other kind of Nursery like Sandhill, you have to experience it. Go [check it out](#).

Muskoka Farmers Markets

Find farm-fresh produce and baking, meat and fish and one-of-a-kind crafts! It's great fun to try each of the markets over the course of the summer.

Monday – Bala

Wednesday – Gravenhurst

Thursday – Port Carling

Friday – Rosseau

Saturday – Bracebridge

Forest Fire Season is Upon Us: How You Can Stay Safe

(Mostly reproduced from the MLA newsletter and the District of Muskoka Climate Corner Newsletter)

As we approach the beginning of the summer season in Muskoka we also start the fire season. We have already had a number of wildland fires in the District, most human caused, and forest fire warnings were high at the end of May due to the dry conditions and excess brush on the ground from the ice storm in March.

Living in a forested environment, wildland fires are a reality for us here in Muskoka and it is best to be prepared and aware of how we can prevent forest fires as well as ensure properties are not damaged. As the climate changes we are likely to see more intense and longer forest fire seasons. To stay up to

date on current fires in the area and air quality measures you can view a Forest Fire Preparedness Storymap on the Muskoka GeoHub.



Air quality degradation from large scale forest fires, like in 2023, can negatively impact those with asthma and other lung and health conditions. When air quality is extremely poor, it's difficult to go outside and enjoy the summer season and for those without access to air filters or air conditioners it can be detrimental to their health. Negative health impacts were seen during the 2023 forest fire season in Ontario with

asthma-related visits for medical care were briefly elevated after the wildfire smoke among children (40% higher), with a more sustained effect among adults (48% higher, lasting 1 week). You can also check out the smoke forecast here: <https://firesmoke.ca/forecasts/current/>

During the 2023 forest fire season 441,000 hectares of forests burned between April and October in Ontario. That is almost three times as many hectares as the 10-year average. There were 741 fires that season – 51 fires more than the 10-year average. Research shows that wildland fire activity across Ontario is likely to increase significantly as will the number of wildland fires that escape suppression efforts. Specifically, projections indicate that total fires in Ontario could increase by 15 per cent by 2040, and by 50 per cent by 2100. That means more wildfire seasons like what we saw in 2023.

There are a number of ways you can make your home and property less prone to the impacts of forest fires from [FireSmart Canada](#). We all love having an outdoor or campfire in the summer, but it's important to practice fire safety. You can find more information on the Government of Ontario's website – [How to Prevent Forest Fires](#). To stay up to date on current outdoor burning rules, check out the Bracebridge fire [webpage](#).

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.

A big Thank You to Lloyd Watson for his tidying up of the boat launch access road and for improving its drainage as well, in preparation for the Regatta. Also, for his efforts to detour run-off water from going onto a resident's drive and instead routing it into the ditching. He also relocated one of our gravel piles to a drier location. We are grateful for all of his time and equipment contributions.

Also, a shoutout to recognize Valerie McCoy, our Chair of Stewardship. Valerie shares her passion for our lake health in a multitude of ways – she has organized our annual Bug Count for many years and has shepherded the Fleming Project through its iterations, all to capture data and find trends that can help keep our lake healthy for years to come. She has spearheaded our shoreline renaturalization project

over the last few years, and most recently has connected us with the Muskoka Lakes Association and its many resources. What's more, she was the mastermind behind the very successful Leech Lake merch program! Thank you, Val, for your energy and passion for our lake.

Bits 'n Pieces

1. **FOCA Alert:** the most recent Federation of Cottage Associations newsletter is full of great [information](#).
2. More info on Friends of the Muskoka Watershed (FOTMW) can be found here – <https://fotmw.org>. For the kids, check out how you can become a Citizen Scientist with FOTMW.

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