

The Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association Bulletin
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AGM 2014

The Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on 26 July in the Messines Town Hall. Attended by close to 100 people, the sixth edition of this meeting had an ambitious agenda which included the tabling of reports from both the President and the Treasurer; a presentation by beaver expert and consultant, Mr. Michel Leclair; a Q & A period; and the election of four board members.



The President gave a brief summary of his [written report](#)¹, a report that focused on the two major challenges facing the lakes in our watershed: premature aging (eutrophication) and the threat of invasive species.

In his [report](#)², the Treasurer noted that the Association's finances were in good order and that the organization was on a solid financial footing.

The feature presentation on beaver management covered the evolution of the fur trade in Canada; the consequences of the collapse of the fur market in the mid-20th century; and the means by which individuals and communities can meet the relatively new challenge of cohabitating with the beaver.

Mr Leclair's presentation was followed by a Q&A period that covered both beaver management concerns as well as a variety of other watershed-related issues. An article dealing with these questions/issues will be featured in a future bulletin.



As a last item of business, the Assembly elected Mr. Robert Duval to the Board of Directors and renewed the two-year mandates of Paul R. Ouimet, Marlène Thonnard and Don Karn. They join sitting members Bernard Asselin, Dick Ryan, John Turnbull and Francis Leblanc to form the 2014/2015 Board of Directors.

We should note that, in an effort to stay within the promised two-hour time limit, the English version of Mr Leclair's talk was condensed to the point where some ideas might not have been adequately explained. To correct this and, at the same time, to share Mr Leclair's insights with anyone who was unable to attend the meeting, we invite you to read the below-noted summary of his presentation.

For the same reason, the Q & A period also had to be shortened. Accordingly, we urge any of you who did not have a chance to raise a question/concern at the meeting to send us a message via our website detailing the issue you had wanted to raise. Alternatively you can call one of our directors regarding your concern ([click here](#)³ for phone numbers). As always, we will address any comments or suggestions made by our members. We also plan to determine ways of improving the format and bilingual content of future AGMs.

We would like to thank all of those who helped plan, organize, and support the meeting as well as all of you who were able to attend. The draft minutes of the meeting will be posted on our website once they have been reviewed by the Board of Directors.

Summary of Beaver Management Presentation

As noted above, for the benefit of those members who could not follow Mr. Leclair's presentation and of those of our readers who didn't attend the meeting, we offer the following summary of his presentation.

- Prior to the colonization of our country, there were millions of beavers in Canada.
- Spurred by high demand and high prices (at one point a beaver pelt fetched the equivalent of over \$500), trappers decimated the beaver population in the 1700s and 1800s.
- With the advent of the anti-fur movement in the 1960s and the availability of synthetic alternatives, the demand for beaver pelts plummeted, driving the price down to the point where trapping these animals became cost prohibitive.
- The collapse of the fur market led to a resurgence in beaver populations and the challenges those populations pose (eg, damned streams and rivers; raging floods when dams collapse; felling of trees on private property, etc.).
- At the time these challenges first emerged, there had been little or no research on how best to cope with them.
- The initial - and still preferred - solution was to try to eradicate the beavers through trapping. This normally did not work as new groups of beavers simply replaced those that had been trapped.
- A better solution is to control the beavers by managing their ecosystem in a way that will satisfy their needs and minimize the damage their "building" can do. This can be done by manipulating the two stimuli to which beavers naturally respond - sound and vibration. When they hear and/or feel rushing water, they swing into action, constructing or repairing a dam that will either cause the water level to rise or prevent it from falling and thereby threaten their safety.
- By creating the sound of rushing water at a distance from highway culverts and/or by installing flow thru pipes under a beaver dam, you can control the water level and thereby avoid future disasters.
- However, there are situations in which this type of "cooperative engineering" just won't work. If, for example, you need to keep a waterway "dam free" so as to maintain navigability, the only solution may be to eradicate the local beaver population. However such eradication must be done throughout the adjacent area so as to stop a new family from simply replacing the one that has been trapped.
- Beavers clearly favour certain tree species, a point worth considering if you are planning to re-vegetate your property. However, be aware that beavers are extremely adaptable and that the only sure way of protecting your favourite trees and shrubbery is by fencing either your entire property or individual trees/shrubs. Depending on the number of trees you wish to protect, this may prove to be a labour intensive and, initially, an expensive operation. However, it is the only long term solution to this frustrating problem.
- One of the greatest challenges in managing beavers is convincing authorities to spend money on preventative action even though studies have clearly shown that the cost of doing so is much less than that involved in repairing the damage caused by beaver dam-induced flooding and destruction.



Mr. Leclair's presentation prompted several questions about beaver concerns in the local area, many of which were the subject of an association-coordinated study that he conducted last spring. The results of that study will be publicized on our website once Mr Leclair's report - which was received just before the AGM - has been discussed with municipal officials.

1. www.associationblueseas.org/sites/default/files/files/AGA%202014%20Rapport%20P_R00_en.pdf
2. www.associationblueseas.org/sites/default/files/files/Bilan_r%C3%A9sultats_2013_en.pdf
3. www.associationblueseas.org/en/board_of_directors

Shorelines is a production of the Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association.

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