

**LSEMS CONFERENCE
RESTORE THE LAND...RESTORE THE LAKE....
WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT LAKE**

Session:	Restoration Initiatives – Case Studies
Date:	Thursday, October 20, 2005 – 1:00 p.m.
Moderator:	Deb Styles, Ministry of Natural Resources
Scribe:	Pamela Dennis, Watershed Technician, LSRCA

Presentations provided by:

- Keith Sherman, Coordinator, Severn Sound Environmental Association
- Mike Walters, Director, Watershed Management, LSRCA
- Mike Williams, Conservation Specialist, Ducks Unlimited Canada

Question:

As has been reiterated throughout the Conference, this is not just another passive conference --- this is about the need for broad and active community engagement --- it is time for a strong and co-ordinated thrust ---

Based on the presentations you have just heard regarding restoration initiatives across the province, how do we develop a “One Voice Action Plan” that ensures restoration efforts are getting the results required to restore Lake Simcoe and its watershed?

We need community involvement ...

- community involvement on issues such as development pressures
- communities need to rally their municipalities to protect important areas

We need mechanisms to protect wetlands...

- mechanisms for protection of wetlands
- to have definitive identification of wetlands before we can try to protect them
- as a result of the new regulations that are being enacted – the Conservation Authority will have the authority to protect certain wetlands planning needs to be present at all levels to ensure that wetlands are protected
- stronger planning is therefore needed

We need to learn from others...

- In my experience with Toronto Region Conservation Authority, advertising programs are easy and getting participation is excellent for projects such as tree planting
- the big problem is engaging those who aren't already involved or concerned
- we need to get to projects that haven't been done

We need work on developing peer pressure within target audience segments...

Converting Landowners:

- one of our solutions is to utilize our Ontario Federation of Agriculture representatives to try to “convert” some landowners
- most of the “unconverted” would not participate on their own, but if their peers encourage them to participate, they will

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We need to protect natural heritage features & clarify who does what...

Protecting natural heritage features is important.

- there seems to be confusion over whether sites are provincially, regionally or locally significant
- we need to apply pressure on all levels of government to identify and classify natural heritage features

We need a united force...

- one strong voice which needs to be consistent
- small groups are the voice representing the science that the Conservation Authority presents to us
- we need to educate people who live in the watershed but not on the lakeshore (e.g. Newmarket, Aurora, etc)
- there are many agencies that can address issues

We need to support and coordinate efforts with municipal councils...

- the support of mayor and council is important
- I recall a move to create a “Lake Watch” organization with enough representation throughout the watershed to put pressure on politicians
- an umbrella group that incorporates all groups and agencies is important.
- MNR has done something similar with TIPS where people can anonymously call about violations
- people in the watershed who could do something similar to TIPS
- for a one voice plan for LSEMS, everything seems to come back to the Conservation Authority
- LSEMS should be more visible around the watershed, as it is a partnership
- signage (e.g. municipal offices, libraries)

We need cabinet support....

- the “One Voice Plan” to be signed-off by Cabinet
- Cabinet will ensure that agencies work together to solve problem

We need to involve and educate citizens...

- representatives from the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition (RLSC) to sit on the LSEMS program
- we already have government agencies - we need members of the public at the table so that they have a voice
- I sit on LSEMS, but if someone asks me a question about the lake, I always have to defer to the CA to answer questions
- representatives need more information to be involved
- we don't necessarily need technical representatives - we need someone to promote LSEMS at municipalities
- this would help with an all-encompassing vision for the next phase
- a broader public involvement on LSEMS would be desirable
- perhaps half of the population in Ontario is within an hours' drive of the lake

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We need to communicate and promote our messages better...

- our message needs to be spread further
- people fishing need to be aware
- the Environmental Commissioner's Office would be willing to help promote the lake and programs
- the issue of communication has come up many times before
- the funds received for communication is a fraction of that for other projects
- we need to start taking some of the funds to build identity in the community and spread the message
- this may mean we do 1 or 2 less projects each year, but we're hearing that this may be more important
- groups like the RLSC should be supported and encouraged by agencies like LSEMS
- most of us listen more carefully if messages aren't coming from the government
- this will help to build one overarching public organization
- the Media around the lake should be promoting a healthy Lake Simcoe, rather than charging for advertising
- is there an opportunity for the area to become more visible – thousands of tourists use Highway 400 – can we mark the watershed boundaries? This raises visibility of conservation and may get more people involved.
- to communicate beyond "the choir"
- what are the benefits of a healthy environment?
- we need to do a better job of communicating knowledge to general public
- we won't be successful until we do that
- we will ultimately take a grassroots effort

We need easily understood performance measures and more frequent report cards...

- to achieve restoration objectives, we need some better measurements of what it is that we want to achieve and how we're achieving them
- more frequent reporting
- we're seeing increasing problems in the lake, and feel confused when we hear that we're gaining ground
- we need more frequent reporting and measurements that the general public can understand
- the Public needs to be involved in how this is reported

We need to establish new targets...

- to look at water use as a target
- in the next Phase, we have to better define what the targets and goals should be

General Comments

Municipalities are required to review their OP's every 5 years. This is a good time for the public to give input.

When the IGAP process is completed, folks will be able to have some input under the "Places to Grow" Act and an opportunity to approach and lobby their MPP.

Q There is a parcel of land in Keswick – proposed big box store. The developer has already said he's cutting all trees down and moving a naturalized creel into a storm water pond. The LSRCA told him it is doubtful that will be done but it has been written in the paper that it has been approved.

A The developer is coming to the LSRCA's Board to give a deputation – they may get approval. We will allow people to move a watercourse, but only conditionally.

That watercourse is a drain/ditch which doesn't provide much habitat. We've placed many conditions on what they want to do – we're asking for buffers, monitoring, enhancements in the area and tree planting.

The Board will have to look at this and weigh the benefit to the environment. The onus is on developer to prove that they will be making improvements.

This has not been approved yet, but we may end up with a better situation. In most cases we don't allow watercourses to be moved.

Q This is going to be a large parking lot – won't this interfere with that watercourse?

A We're going to insist on a pond for storm water control to minimize the impact. We're recommending low-impact development for all new proposals.

Q Why are they allowed to cut all the trees down?

A Under *The Planning Act*, a landowner is allowed to cut vegetation if there are no significant forest features or environmentally significant areas.

Q We have a wetland that has been partially destroyed (McNab drain). Part of MOE considers this to be a dysfunctional and unstable drainage system. Other parts of MOE issued a certificate of approval retroactively for a storm management facility already constructed on the LaFarge property. This system is not working.

We recommend that LSRCA look at the possibility of intervening as an initiative for correction. Downstream properties and Lake Simcoe are being polluted. But, if you don't have the cooperation of the municipality, what can LSRCA do?

A This is problem with *The Drainage Act*. The LSRCA has been doing some sampling on the drain.

Q Can you use *The Drainage Act* as a tool?

A With new policies you can't put a drain through a wetland anymore.

- there is a section in the Act that allows you to modify part of a drain and include that in the report - that change would have to be maintained
- people want alternative solutions to drain clean-outs and are looking for alternative ways to drain lands
- we need to have cooperation with municipalities to utilize new drainage techniques
- it's time to have the Act changed
- these watercourses are the ones that are contaminating the lake
- 10 years ago, I never would have thought that the ORMCP would have been passed – it took a lot of people to lobby the government to enact it
- if enough people approached their MPP's about *The Drainage Act*, the changes might come about
- the province sets legislation, so they need to make changes
- the people will make this difference
- there has been more emphasis through *The Drainage Act* to act on more environmental solutions.
- there needs to be support from all levels of government throughout the process – it's not just the Act, it's the other agencies that need to cooperate

The Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition tries to represent ratepayer groups from around the lake. They are an advocacy group – involved with "Campaign Lake Simcoe," Ladies of the Lake and the Wave program.