

Public Advisory Committee Establishes Goals and Objectives for the Rideau Lakes Watershed

The Public Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Rideau Lakes Watershed Plan held their second meeting on Jan. 19, 2006. This committee, made up of citizens residing in the Rideau Lakes watershed (the area of land that drains into Wolfe Lake downstream to the outlet below Lower Rideau Lake), provide advice and opinions on the issues, problems and solutions facing the natural, social and economic environment of the Rideau Lakes area.

The Rideau Lakes Watershed Plan, initiated by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, is a strategy, designed by the stakeholders within the community, to identify the steps and methods needed to improve the overall ecological health of the Rideau Lakes area. Watershed plans identify how the water, land use, animals, and people all inter-relate. The plan identifies, among other things, how we can improve our water quality in our lakes, how we can increase fish populations and how we can ensure lots of species of animals, fish and plants for the future

The vision for the plan, as set by the watershed community is: *All residents, visitors and other stakeholders are knowledgeable environmental stewards committed to working together to ensure this unique watershed is diverse, healthy, safe and clean, where the thriving local economy exists in harmony with the thriving ecosystem for future generations.*

In realizing this vision, the participants of the study have come up with a number (not a complete list) of goals and objectives. Of major importance is the objective to protect and improve surface and groundwater quality. In this area, the water we drink and the water we recreate in have enormous value. Its health must be protected to maintain our quality of life. The need to manage the amount of water in the system for use by people and animals drives the objective of managing surface water resources to meet current and future needs of all users (human and otherwise).

Shoreline development around the lakes directly affects environmental health and quality of life. The objective to manage to the carrying capacity of the watershed i.e. allow development to the point where more would negatively impact water quality and other factors, was devised. The link between the economy and the environment is so pronounced in this area the objective of promoting a thriving local economy that operates in balance with social and environmental needs was set. This ensures that the economy does not flourish at the cost of environmental and social health and vice versa.

The next step of the process will have the group suggest, at its meeting slated for March, the steps that must be taken to reach these goals.

If anyone would like to contact a member of the Public Advisory Committee with comments or concerns about the watershed plan, its process or issues affecting this area, please contact one of the following members.

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Maggie Leach, Bass Lake	284-8344
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Bob & Anne Bradley	273-4466
Pat Chamberlain, Big Rideau Lake Association	environment@brla.on.ca

For more information on the watershed plan or if you would like to be a member of the PAC, contact Lynn Preston, Watershed Planning/Community Monitoring Co-ordinator at 1-800-267-3504 Ext 1171 or lynn.preston@rideauvalley.on.ca . For copies of minutes, the complete list of objectives and other information, see the RVCA webpage at: http://www.rideauvalley.on.ca/programs/watershed_planning/index.html