

Rideau Lakes Watershed Management Plan
Summary of Public Meetings
Sept. 15, 2005

Over the last four months, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has been working to ensure that representatives from all sectors of the Rideau Lakes watershed have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Rideau Lakes Watershed Management Plan. Local lake associations, businesses and the general public from the Rideau Lakes watershed were invited to attend one of four consultative meetings to share their vision for the Rideau Lakes Watershed and the actions they felt should be undertaken to overcome the challenges facing the area.

Following presentations about watershed planning and current state of the Rideau Lakes Watershed, participants were asked to imagine themselves in the year 2025 describing what the watershed looked, felt, and smelled like once the watershed management plan had been implemented for 20 years. Participants were able to incorporate the natural, social and economic components of the watershed into their vision:

One's first impression of the Rideau Lakes Watershed in 2025 is the marvelous green space preserved through a detailed planning process and the education of property owners and users of the watershed. Hardened shorelines have been restored and there is an abundance of natural vegetation surrounding the lakes and wetlands. Low density homes, cottages and associated septic and renewal energy systems blend effortlessly with the natural surroundings.

Water and other natural resources are managed in an environmentally sound manner by coordinated government agencies while residents and seasonal users are aware of their role as guardians of the watershed. Government agencies have provided financial assistance to property owners to offset the cost of septic and other upgrades and monitoring. Property owners and businesses no longer worry about having to sell because of the financial burden.

Resources including surface water and fish are managed locally with greater input from lake associations and local interest groups. Legislation and regulations are developed and enforced by the RVCA with consideration for the unique character of each lake, and have greater influence than many Federal and Provincial laws.

The watershed is marketed to visitors who want to enjoy the pristine environment in a respectful manner and participate in the protection of the watershed. Activities for both residents and visitors to the watershed include touring the lakes in noiseless, non-polluting watercraft, catching a diverse array of fish and swimming in water clean enough to drink. People can also enjoy interacting peacefully with the plentiful resident and migratory wildlife on land and water and traveling between communities and abundant protected areas on bicycle paths or by public transportation.

Visitors are also drawn to the area for rowing and sailing competitions, harbour facilities and quality resorts that work in concert with residents to protect the health of

the watershed. Local businesses and farmers markets enjoy a healthy, four-season economy that provides jobs for local residents. The tax revenue from tourism is returned to the community to further develop programs and services to help people become better stewards of the watershed while maintaining a vibrant economy.

With a clear vision for the watershed in mind, participants set out in pairs to address the present situation, including current challenges and suggestions on how to improve the current situation and set a path for their vision of the future. Participants were also asked to list the three top priorities that the management plan should address first. A summary of the results of this exercise are listed in the table below.

Current Challenges

- ◆ Threatened ground, surface and drinking water quality
- ◆ Trend of bringing city concepts to cottage properties
 - Light pollution
 - Water use
 - Manicured lawns/ pesticides and herbicides
- ◆ Management of invasive species

- ◆ Water level management and its impact on the environment

- ◆ Lack of community voice, control over local resources

- ◆ Lake carrying capacity
- ◆ Increased demand on land and water resources
 - Commercial fishery
 - Poor recreational fishing
 - Groundwater
 - Parks and greenspaces
- ◆ Fisheries management (sustainable)

- ◆ Lack of communication within government as well as between government and the public about environmental issues
- ◆ Lack of education (public and government) about environmental issues
- ◆ Public apathy/ transient users/ lack of respect for the environment

- ◆ Water craft size, speed and type
- ◆ Erosion of shorelines

- ◆ Environmental issues are not a high enough priority
- ◆ Government regulations are too broadly applied, lack of consistency
- ◆ Mining interests supersede municipal, environmental and private rights
- ◆ Overlapping and ambiguous government responsibility of water resources.

- ◆ Lack of government resources, regulations and enforcement
- ◆ Over-regulation of drinking water
- ◆ Lack of monitoring/study of present state of resources

- ◆ Noise

- ◆ Poor waste management

- ◆ Media coverage of poor resource management and effect on economy
- ◆ Balancing the environment and the economy
- ◆ Safe recreation

Solutions

- ◆ Education, education, education
- ◆ Initiate a media program to educate everyone (TV, radio, print),
- ◆ School programs to educate the next generation

- ◆ Educate visitors about responsible tourism
- ◆ Market the watershed as a prime destination for environmentally friendly tourism

- ◆ Improved communication about the issues (more meetings) with all government, regulators and residents
- ◆ A hotline number for active lake associations
- ◆ Interactive website for local information

- ◆ Binding agreement that new landowners will maintain/restore shorelines and septic systems upon purchase
- ◆ Monitor holding tanks on yachts prior to allowing them to lock through the system
- ◆ Enforce existing grey/black water discharge regulations
- ◆ Enact a law to prevent cattle access to waterways
- ◆ More holding tank pumping stations
- ◆ Stiffer fines and penalties for poor environmental practices
- ◆ Legislation and penalties focused on preserving water health
- ◆ Septic re-inspection and increased standards
- ◆ Watershed based source water protection
- ◆ Pesticide by-laws

- ◆ Invasive species checks at boat launches
- ◆ Provide education and action strategies to the public to prevent the spread of invasive species

- ◆ Develop criteria for lake use based on lake capacity
- ◆ Stricter building restrictions based on lot size
- ◆ Increase land-use management legislation

- ◆ Mandate conservation technology for new homes (e.g. cisterns)
- ◆ Limit size of homes and number of bathrooms

- ◆ Increased monitoring of resources and contaminants
- ◆ Develop a nutrient management act
- ◆ Ban the sale of lake and groundwater
- ◆ Revised and enforced sport fishing regulations
- ◆ Monitor levels of mercury and other metals in fish
- ◆ Commercial harvesting of fish only after the resource has been deemed sustainable
- ◆ Revise mining laws so environmental, municipal and private interests are protected
- ◆ Increase funding for Authority specific programs (water testing)

- ◆ Better balance commercial fishery to ensure a healthy sport fishery for all fish species

- ◆ Ban commercial fishing
- ◆ Improved education about commercial fishery benefits to the sport fishery

- ◆ Enhancement of shoreline vegetation/health
- ◆ Enforce speed limits and boating regulations
- ◆ Increase boater safety awareness
- ◆ Education of property owners
- ◆ Limit boat size based on lake size

- ◆ Clearly defined roles with adequate funding
- ◆ Standardize water testing
- ◆ A firm coordinated land use plan
- ◆ Municipal governments enforcement of regulations
- ◆ More direct link between community groups and legislative bodies
- ◆ Conservation Authority regulations should supersede some federal and provincial laws and regulations
- ◆ Government assistance programs to help businesses and property owners meet standards and new legislation (e.g. drinking water, septic upgrades)
- ◆ Better communication between government and the public
- ◆ More tax dollars should stay in region
- ◆ Government needs to take environmental issues into consideration when making decisions e.g. water levels
- ◆ Regulatory bodies work more closely together e.g. Ministry of Northern Affairs and Mining, RVCA and Ministry of Tourism

- ◆ Develop a more accessible system to dispose of toxins, recyclables
- ◆ Treatment of stormwater by municipality prior to discharge
- ◆ Community support of alternative energy sources
- ◆ Long term solution to local garbage
- ◆ Townships should facilitate means of getting rid of garbage, recycling and household hazardous waste through reduced fees and increased opportunities
- ◆ Well advertised and accommodating environmental cleanup programs with incentives

- ◆ Legislate use of clear garbage bags to encourage recycling
- ◆ Modify seasonal water level regime to prevent ice scouring and destruction of natural shoals
- ◆ Make MNR and Parks Canada accountable to lake associations
- ◆ Control of water levels by local groups

- ◆ Ban fireworks on holidays
- ◆ Restrict float plane use of lakes
- ◆ Develop noiseless gas engines
- ◆ Limit construction noise to specific days/times

Top Priorities

Education

- ✓ Education of all stakeholders including transient/seasonal, about watershed issues

Water Quality

- ✓ Surface water quality improvement
- ✓ Continued monitoring of water quality indicators
- ✓ Septic re-inspection programs
- ✓ Stricter legislation regarding discharge from watercraft
- ✓ Pesticide by-laws and education
- ✓ Control weed and algae growth

Shoreline Health

- ✓ Mandatory shoreline improvement
- ✓ Decreased water craft speeds near shore
- ✓ Reduce erosion

Fisheries

- ✓ A moratorium on commercial fishing in Upper Rideau Lake until such time as the resource is deemed to be sustainable
- ✓ Control commercial fishery and improve sport fishery

Stewardship

- ✓ More environmental clean-up programs
- ✓ Manage invasive species
- ✓ Lake specific shoreline planning

Communication

- ✓ Improved communication between government and lake residents about water levels
- ✓ Better communication of water quality results
- ✓ Improved communication and coordination between government agencies

Governance

- ✓ New regulations relating to boat size relative to lake size
- ✓ Enforcement of existing laws and regulations
- ✓ Give community a bigger voice in resource management
- ✓ Government assistance programs to help businesses and residents meet new standards
- ✓ Better management of water levels

Economy

- ✓ Increase tourism and marketing of the waterway
- ✓ Balance the economy, growth and conservation