

Summary of findings of the Rideau Lakes Watershed Management Plan Public Meeting

July 16, 2005, Westport

Members of the general public and business community attended the second consultative meeting concerning the Rideau Lakes Watershed on July 16, 2005 in Westport. The purpose of the meeting was to hear from the public about their vision for the Rideau Lakes Watershed and the actions they felt should be taken to overcome the challenges facing the area. Many business owners were unable to attend Saturday's meeting and as a result, the RVCA is planning to hold another meeting to accommodate the local business community.

When asked what they envisioned for the watershed for the year 2025 (what the watershed would look, feel, and smell like.) participants integrated the natural, social and economic components of the watershed into one cohesive vision. One's first impression of the Rideau Lakes Watershed in 2025 is the marvelous greenspace preserved through planning and 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. Homes, cottages and their associated septic and renewal energy systems blend effortlessly with the natural surroundings.

Residents and visitors to the watershed enjoy touring the lakes in noiseless, non-polluting watercraft and swimming in water clean enough to drink. Others enjoy peacefully interacting with the abundant resident and migratory wildlife on land and water and traveling between communities and abundant protected areas on bicycle paths. Visitors are also drawn to the area by the rowing and sailing competitions, the harbour facilities and quality resorts that work in concert with residents to preserve the health of the watershed. Local businesses and farmers market are frequented by residents as well as the seasonal visitors that travel to the area using public transportation.

Having set out a clear vision for the future of the watershed, participants set out in pairs to list and prioritize the issues facing the area and suggest ways to address them. The summarized results of this exercise are listed in the table below.

Current Challenges	Solutions
Shoreline erosion and removal of natural vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enforce boating regulations ◆ Education of property owners
Waste management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 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
Surface water quality/Source water protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop a nutrient management act ◆ Coordinated study for biological and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chemical contaminants ◆ Pesticide By-laws ◆ Fence cattle out of creeks and streams ◆ Watershed based source water protection ◆ Use natural controls of invasive species
Control of water levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Modify seasonal water level regime to prevent ice scouring and destruction of natural shoals
Aging and poorly managed septic systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ mandatory septic re-inspection ◆ regulations restricting size of house by house lot size
Declining fish populations/commercial fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Stop commercial fishing ◆ Enforce fishing regulations ◆ Monitor levels of mercury and other metals in fish
Reluctance of property owners to get involved/lack of environmental awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education and awareness of issues, effects on human health ◆ Encourage lake associations
Government organizations and agencies need to be more coordinated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A firm coordinated land use plan ◆ Municipal governments enforce regulations ◆ More direct link between community groups and legislative bodies ◆ Develop a government organization that will promote communication and respond quickly to problems
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ban fireworks on holidays ◆ Restrict float plane use of lakes ◆ Develop noiseless boat engines ◆ Limit construction noise to specific days/times

When asked what priorities should be addressed right now or in the near future, participants were clearly concerned about **surface water quality** and behaviors such as **pesticide use, greywater discharge and vegetation clearing** that affect water quality. **Mandatory septic re-inspection, pesticide By-laws, education** about harmful behaviours and **treatment of stormwater** prior to discharge into a waterbody were only a few of the suggestions made for improving water quality. **Limiting the size of structures by lot size and improving municipal waste disposal** were also suggested. **Preservation of fish and wildlife** were also top priorities that are linked to **maintaining shoreline habitats and wetlands**. Participants were unanimous that property owners and users of the watershed need to be better **educated** about the issues, and **communication and coordination between government agencies** needs to be improved.