



MRPOA River Ripples Fall 2007

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this final Fall President's Report, I am reminded of how far we have come and how pleased I've been to be your President. I must take this opportunity to remind you, however, that this is my final term as President of MRPOA. The organization has a fine board and every member contributes, so the President's role is not onerous.

Summer 2007. There are many events and projects of which MRPOA can be very proud. Membership is over the 230 mark. We have one new board member, Cathy Brown. Our two new events, the Pig Roast and Meet & Greet, and one revived event, the Jazz Cruise, were great successes. Even the weather co-operated for the Regatta which was enhanced by the presence of the Marine Safety van from Canada Coast Guard. The golf tournament lucked out on weather and grew to an all time high of 16 foursomes. There is a new dock at the River Street Landing. River hazard markers are in the process of being legalized, standardized and covered under MRPOA liability insurance. Our water testing program was faithfully carried out and our results are good.

This success is all the result of considerable volunteer effort. I have not listed names as some would be missed because many quietly contribute without official record and all are appreciated. I do encourage everyone to make a volunteer commitment to the organization in 2008 and actively recruit new members.

River Stewardship Plan. At our AGM, David Sculati volunteered to lead a steering committee to investigate a *River Stewardship Plan* for

MRPOA's membership catchment area. This group has held one planning session, and an application for grant funding for consulting assistance has been submitted to the Ontario Trillium Foundation. If this application is successful, the steering committee will be ready to begin the process early in the spring. A Stewardship Plan is more of a process than a document, and its development should include of all those affected. Participation of all property owners will be essential.

This undertaking is significant and the timing is excellent. The Township of Muskoka Lakes is in the process of reviewing its Official Plan and the draft revision makes clear reference to encouraging Lake Plans. (Our proposed Stewardship Plan is a type of lake plan.)

The river is experiencing considerable redevelopment and an increase in permanent residences. There is an Environmental Screening underway for the Bala North Dam project. All of Muskoka is facing development pressure. It is time for us to have a collective vision for our Moon River to ensure our voice is heard to influence future changes.

North Dam Power Project. Anna Mallin and I have had many follow up email discussions with the Swift River Energy Ltd. principals, John Wildman and Ian Baines. We also attended the Ontario Waterpower Association conference in Huntsville recently, compliments of Chair Baines, and it was an extremely worthwhile experience. The principals of SREL are listening to our concerns about maintaining recreational use of the Bala North Falls; they have promised a rationale as

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to why it is not feasible to use the South Dam site; they are redesigning the power plant structure to be more suitable; and they are communicating on a regular basis. That said, the specific site has not been settled; the financial feasibility has not yet been ascertained and we have not seen the redesign. However, we remain cautiously optimistic of a good outcome.

Bala Streetscape. In other Bala news, many members have expressed dismay that no progress has yet been made on the Bala streetscape project. The plan has not been discarded; it will be re-rendered by the Township and I am, again, cautiously optimistic, that work will begin in the spring.

Other Activities. MRPOA continues to connect with WRAFT/CAPTR but there has been limited new action there re taxes. The Muskoka Heritage Foundation would like us to review our area for potential heritage sites of merit, both natural and built and to submit nominations for heritage awards. Through the District and Muskoka Watershed Council, we are confident that there will be a shoreline inventory next season (we were bumped from the list last year). Please check out www.muskokaheritage.org for the latest MWC Report Card and an excellent Dark Sky Lighting bulletin.

Communications. Many thanks to all members of the board for their ongoing support. I would be remiss, however, if I did not specially acknowledge the huge contribution of Anna Mallin in leading MRPOA's communications. Many have expressed appreciation for the timely updates and the limiting of the volume. Our website is excellent and current, thanks to Anna's diligence and vigilance. If you have input, do not hesitate to contact any member of the board either directly or through the info@mrpoa.org.

Finally, I wish all a wonderful holiday season, a safe winter and I look forward to a very busy 2008 for MRPOA.

Patricia Arney, President

Taxation

Jeff Mole is looking for volunteers for his taxation committee. Contact jjmole@hotmail.com. Jeff notes that the assessment cap will be removed in 2009 and this may pose some hardship for some members.

Things Lost/Found

At least one dock, one water toy, and one boat (of a non-member!) was reunited with its owner last summer through our lost and found communication efforts. We are hoping to increase our rate of happy reunions by posting pictures of Things Found on our website. Please e-mail digital photos of Things Found to info@mrpoa.org together with a location where the item can be retrieved or some other contact information. If you can't send a photo, Anna will use the report as an excuse for a paddle (unless there is ice!) and take a photo.

Pesky Question of an Audit

For those who can't believe that tiny not-for-profit corporations are required to have an audit, please see the discussion of this pesky topic in an excellent document published by the law firm of Borden Ladner Gervais. See blgcanada.com/publications/current.asp and search for *not for profit* and click on Update Fall 2007. There is also a link on www.mrpoa.org. The publication confirms that the mechanism of obtaining unanimous consent to dispense with an audit is the correct way to avoid the \$3,000 - \$5,000 expense. Anyone wanting to check out our some 50 or so annual transactions (mostly membership fee deposits) may contact the Treasurer! Financial reports are on the website - click on "Corporate".

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership renewal form is included in this mailing. Make sure we have your e-mail address!

Additional information re the Stewardship Committee on the back of the renewal form!

MOON RIVER STEWARDSHIP PLAN

At the 2007 AGM it was agreed to form a committee to create a Moon River Stewardship Plan (e.g. a “Lake Plan” for the Moon River). David Sculati agreed to chair the committee. Members of the Committee are: Doug Ball, Bryden Currie, Dave MacIntosh, Dodd Patterson, Bob McTavish, Bob Pozzobon, David Sculati, Marlene Sculati, Walt Scott, Caren Turner and Tony Turner. There are two goals – to create a Stewardship Plan and to have appropriate elements of our Stewardship Plan included in the Township of Muskoka Lakes Official Plan and By-Laws.

Initial topics for discussion by the committee include:

- 1) Preservation and rehabilitation of the character of the Moon River community including:
 - a) shoreline flora and fauna habitat (shoreline being defined as that area next to the watercourse which the Township considers appropriate as a shoreline vegetative buffer)
 - b) the preservation or enhancement of the cottage/residential mix versus resort/commercial use
 - c) cleanup, preservation, and monitoring of the area around the Chutes
 - d) preservation of the touristic nature of the Bala Falls
 - e) geographic mapping to include ownership information on undeveloped land
 - f) maps and signage to encourage the use of bicycles, canoes, and kayaks and to discourage the use of loud speed boats by transit visitors
 - g) zoning by-law review – status of plans for changes
 - h) availability of tax relief for specific heritage buildings and conservation land

- 2) Maintenance of a good water quality and good habitat for fish and other desirable wildlife (loons, blue heron, mergansers, mallards, etc.) including:
 - a) septic system inspections
 - b) ways to encourage responsible boating behaviour to preserve shoreline vegetation, soil, waterfowl and fish nesting areas and habitat
 - c) biological mapping and monitoring
 - d) promotion of eco-friendly products and practices

- 3) Suggestions of means to help promote good neighbourliness (in addition to the present Moon River Code) such as:
 - a) boat speed limits
 - b) dark sky friendly lighting
 - c) limitations on amplified noise
 - d) noise curfew
 - e) guidelines for floating docks and water toys
 - f) concept for a volunteer marine educational patrol
 - g) wake zones and boat sizes
 - h) four stroke versus two stroke education

Please let us know if there are topics we’ve missed or if you have any comments on the above discussion topics. E-mail to David Sculati dsculati@mahdeen.com or to info@mrpoa.org, contact one of the committee members, or send us a note with your membership renewal.