

The Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association Bulletin Issue No. 31 – October 2017

Priorities for the New Board of Directors

The Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association held its 9th Annual General Meeting on July 15th, 2017 at the Blue Sea Church. There we reviewed the events and activities of the previous twelve months and elected board members. Among the most important new developments was the work undertaken with the mayors of Blue Sea and Messines to establish a mandatory boat washing program for the Blue Sea Lake Watershed. The mayors also reported significant progress on two long-standing issues: enforcing the shoreline regulations, requiring shoreline property owners to maintain a minimum band of vegetation along their shorelines, and the cleaning of septic systems on the islands.



From left to right, W. Robert Roe (new Director), Brian Lahey (new Director), Francis LeBlanc (President), Benoît Belisle, Sally Southey, John Turnbull (Treasurer), Don Karn (Vice-President), Robert Duval (Vice-President) and André Beauchemin (Secretary).



As has been our practice, an important part of the AGM was devoted to hearing the questions and concerns from the membership in attendance. The spread of invasive species, beginning with Eurasian Milfoil (already a major problem on the Blue Sea Lake) remains a serious concern. Members expressed strong support for the mandatory boat washing initiative and urged the Association to press ahead with plans to install jute tarps as a way of controlling the spread of Eurasian Milfoil. Members raised an important new concern, the unusually high water levels in Blue Sea Lake and asked that the Association work with authorities to address this issue.

The Board of Directors met for the first time on September 1st to review the issues raised at the AGM and to establish priorities for the 2017-2018 year. We agreed to the following set of priorities:

- Continue to work with the municipalities of Blue Sea and Messines to fully implement the program of mandatory boat washing established this year.
- Continue water testing in Blue Sea and other lakes in the watershed under the RSVL program.
- Continue our efforts to control the serious Eurasian Milfoil problem in Blue Sea Lake by generating public awareness, expanding the network of demarcation buoys, and the implementation of a jute tarp program (see below).
- Search for a resolution to the high water levels, with consequential shoreline erosion and property damage, affecting Blue Sea Lake, Blue Sea Stream, and Grant Lake.
- Encourage a broader participation in our watershed protection activities through volunteers residing along

Blue Sea and other lakes in the watershed.

- Expand our outreach efforts to other watershed organizations in the region and beyond, in order to identify common issues and share knowledge.

We will, of course, keep members informed of our progress, through this newsletter and other communication.

Boat Washing on Blue Sea: A Very Good Start

On July 29th, the municipalities of Blue Sea and Messines officially launched the first mandatory boat washing program for the Blue Sea Lake Watershed. All motorized and non-motorized watercraft entering these lakes were obliged to be washed by their owners at stations set up by each municipality for this purpose. A fee of \$25/vessel was



charged to non-residents. Residents could wash their boats for free. A system of vignettes was established to manage the program and generate useful information to improve the program in the future. By the end of the season, a total of 565 boats had been washed by the two municipalities.



The new boat washing program was the work of many hours of planning and consultation by the two municipalities under the coordination of the Blue Sea Lake Watershed Association. We commend the mayor of Blue Sea, Laurent Fortin, and the mayor of Messines, Ronald Cross, for their leadership in this effort and their commitment to the environmental health of the watershed.



Both mayors and the Association recognize that there will be lessons to be learned from the program launched this summer. We also believe that a well-designed mandatory boat washing program is an essential protection for the future of our local waterways and the economy that depends on them, especially with dangerous invasive species, like zebra mussels, so easily transported from lake to lake in the hulls and bilges of watercraft.



We are encouraged by the support this program has received so far. Boat washing is a small price to pay for a healthy lake. We hope that, ultimately, the practice of properly washing your boat before entering a new body of water will become as natural as putting on your seat belt before driving your car.

Update on Milfoil Control

Combating the widespread Eurasian Milfoil infestation in Blue Sea Lake has been a priority of the Association. This invasive species now occupies more than 1 million square meters on the lake in monospecific and multispecies beds located in populated areas such as at public docks and in front of many properties. It reproduces by fragmentation and therefore is easily spread by motor boats travelling through the beds and chopping up the stalks. To date, our approach to dealing with this problem has been, essentially, twofold.

Yellow Buoy Program: this year 77 yellow buoys were placed throughout the lake to identify the worst areas of milfoil and to urge boaters to avoid them. These buoys are painstakingly installed in the spring and lifted up in the fall by volunteers under the direction of Dick Ryan and Bernard Asselin. We are grateful to them and their teams for their hard work. They need more help. If you think you'd like to help with this program, please write to us at info@associationblueseae.org. Next spring we'll give you



the necessary training and get you started.

Jute Tarp Project: Our second approach is a plan to lay down jute tarps in selected public areas in order to suffocate the milfoil beds. Results of experiments in other lakes have proved promising and a commercial technology has been developed that has the ability to deploy the large tarps at a reasonable cost. After much preliminary work and effort, we had hoped to be in a position this past summer to proceed with the project in three selected areas of Blue Sea Lake.

However, permission is required of the Government of Quebec to install the tarps and although we have received permits they have come with conditions that make it impossible to use the technology. As a result, we have been unable to install the jute tarps this summer, as planned.



We intend to make representation to the Government of Quebec to ask for reconsideration of the restrictive conditions which are preventing us from proceeding. We are also reaching out to other Associations whose lakes and watersheds face similar issues and continue to investigate other approaches. We are striving for an environmentally responsible solution to this problem.

Municipal Elections: Issues to Raise with your Candidates

On Sunday, November 5th, people from Quebec, or with property in Quebec, get to elect their municipal representatives. For residents or persons with property within the Blue Sea Watershed, that means electing the mayor and councilors for the Municipality of Messines or Blue Sea. The position of Warden of the Vallée-de-la-Gatineau MRC is also up for election.



If you care about the health of the Blue Sea Lake Watershed, these elections are important. The Municipalities of Blue Sea and Messines have been indispensable partners of this Association since its inception. We need elected municipal leaders who are knowledgeable and interested in the environmental health of the watershed and will continue to work constructively with the Association for its benefit.

Specifically, we need municipal councilors who are prepared to support mandatory boat washing for Blue Sea Lake, who will ensure that regulations requiring shoreline vegetation are maintained and enforced, that efforts to control the spread of Eurasian Milfoil and other invasive species are supported, and who will act to preserve the future health of the watershed in the decisions that they make.

Nearly every seat, including the position of Mayor in both municipalities, is being contested. So your vote has a chance to make a real difference. Ask your candidate what they will do for the future of the watershed and don't be afraid to challenge them on their positions. In particular, make sure they support mandatory boat washing. Some, we understand, do not.

A list of the candidates for Mayor and Council for Blue Sea and Messines, as well as the candidates for the position of Warden of the Vallée-de-la-Gatineau MRC can be obtained by visiting the website

www.electionsequébec.qc.ca¹ and clicking "Municipal Elections November 5th". This website will also address other questions you may have about how to participate in these elections.



Voting will take place on Sunday, October 29th from noon to 8pm (advance polls) and on Sunday, November 5th from 10am to 8pm (Election Day). **Make sure you vote!**

1. www.electionsequébec.qc.ca/english/index.php