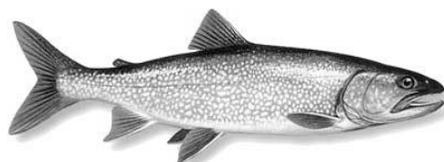


**Association
des Propriétaires du
Lac du Poisson Blanc, Inc.**
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Current situation report on
Lac Poisson Blanc's south section
(November 2014)



In the beginning of summer 2013, Michèle Beach asked me to be responsible for the environmental aspect of our Association. Afterward, our association's executive gave me the mandate to analyse and provide a report on the current situation in Lac Poisson Blanc's south section along with corrective strategies. This report has been established following consultations with various people and organizations and does not represent my personal ideas.

To start, I must say that we are not among the trailblazing associations going green in the Gatineau Valley. While reading FOCA's (*Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations*) website documentation, I realized that rules are much more stringent in Ontario. Within our municipality (Lac-Sainte-Marie), Heney Lake, Pémichongan Lake and Sam Lake associations have already launched a revitalization program for their respective lakes. Here, for lake Poisson Blanc, an island revitalization program has been launched by the Poisson Blanc regional park for the north section. Our lake's south section remains unprotected so I will limit myself to that section of our lake since we do not have any members in the northern section.

I will present to you what I found in 2013, what we have done this year and I will bring some possible solutions for 2015. It will be up to you to implement them because my term ends this year at the same time as our executive.

Based on my discussions, here are the problems occurring here in 2013:

- 1.1. motor vehicles travelling at excessive speeds on sensitive waterways or near the banks;
- 1.2. some cottagers use phosphate products;
- 1.3. natural removal of vegetation from shoreline due to bank landscaping;
- 1.4. some parts of Newton Bay have issues with the proliferation of aquatic plants (water milfoil??);
- 1.5. inadequate or non-compliant septic systems;

- 1.6. urbanization around waterways;
- 1.7. cottagers' and campers' waste management and recycling;
- 1.8. lake contamination (bilge water, mud, plants, fish and bait) due to boats not being cleaned (or properly cleaned) when transported between bodies of water.

The lake's reservoir makes its management difficult. Some sectors are under the Municipality of Bowman's jurisdiction, another sector is under that of Lac-Sainte-Marie and the northern section is managed by the Municipality of Notre-Dame-du-Laus. I do not know if there is any coordination between the three of them regarding the rules and the development of our body of water. As far as I am concerned, I only had contacts with the Municipality of Lac-Sainte-Marie. I visited the furthest south section of the lake (municipal boat launch site near the outdoor recreational area) and also, with COBALI and the municipality, I visited the Newton Bay sector. In order of importance, here are our findings:

- 1.1. several cottages have inadequate or non-compliant septic systems;

What we did in 2014: information further down.

- 1.2. many cottagers are uninterested in the revegetation of their shoreline;

What we did in 2014: information further down.

- 1.3. bank eroding (south side), propagation of aquatic plants due to rapidly circulating motor boats in the channel at the end of Newton Bay and in the furthest south section of our lake;

What we did in 2014: information further down.

- 1.4. proliferation of aquatic plants (a beginning of water milfoil???) in two very small bays (Lafontaine and Synott) and at the end of Newton Bay as well as around the public boat launch in Bowman;

What we did in 2014: Transparency tests on Newton bay for a period of 4 years. Observations for this year are on the final document of transparency tests which was send to you by email on the 16 of September. Meeting (via «Le Regroupement») with Friends of Lake Pémichongan Association about their experience with jute. To date the results are positive but too expensive without financial aid. The project results were sent to our members in 2014 via email.

- 1.5. no water safety patrol (SQ) in the lake's southern section;

What we did in 2014: Members agreed to the proposal to be part of the community surveillance SQ program for monitoring properties. Details will be provided in 2015. Some members are reluctant to officially ask the SQ in monitoring Lake Poisson-Blanc and the Newton Bay.

- 1.6. for boat safety purposes, there is a lack of buoys in the south section indicating where the shoals are;

What we did in 2014: information further down.

- 1.7. lack of interest on the part of certain cottage owners to recycle;

What we did in 2014: No action has been taken this year but at the next corn-roast there will be recycling bins for cans and plastic packages installed.

- 1.8. Vandalism on camping sites on the islands (eg Île verte).

What we did in 2014: information further down.

In so, I thought necessary in 2013 (especially to comply with the municipal and provincial rules and with regards to other associations) to:

1. for our Association to officially adhere to the COBALI organization and the «Regroupement pour la protection de l'eau dans la vallée de la Gatineau»;

What we did in 2014: We're not yet a member of the COBALI organization but I am an administrator in the «Regroupement» as a individual member. As an association, however, we are not a member of the «Regroupement». I have to motivate our executive in 2015 on the importance of joining with other local associations to be stronger.

2. bridge the gap with the Poisson Blanc Regional Park organization;

What we did in 2014: We join the RSVL network (water testing and transparency) in partnership with the regional park. Some members joined a committee (summer 2015) for the revitalization of some orphan camping sites. Our goal in 2015 is to maintain certain campsites on Île verte in coordination with the «Base-de-plein-air-Air-Eau-Bois».

3. ask the Lac-Sainte-Marie municipality by means of a formal request to inspect the septic systems of all cottages built prior to 2000 or that have been built within 15 meters of the water's edge in order to reduce the addition of phosphates and nitrogen to Newton Bay;

What we did in 2014: The municipality has provided funds to hire a person to inspect all properties in our sector. No report on that matter was given to us at this time except for the respect of the shoreline.

4. ask the municipalities of Bowman and Lac-Sainte-Marie by means of a formal request for COBALI's permission to undertake the revitalisation of the banks with our association's support;

What we did in 2014: The municipality of Lac-Sainte-Marie has provided funds to hire a person to inspect all properties in our sector. A letter was sent to all the owners indicating correctives to be undertaken on their shoreline before the official visit of the MRC . COBALI is interested in helping us (with the purchase or in giving discounts for shrubs or plants) only if we become a member of their organization in 2015.

5. after consulting with the Poisson Blanc Regional Park organization, to ask for our adhesion to the 'RSVL' program (water testing) in order to allow us to better know our lake and avoid its deterioration in order to protect it

for future generations;

What we did in 2014: Our Association has joined the RSVL network for the next 2 years. Our membership costs in 2014 (\$ 330) have been fully paid by the COBALI organization (a thank you note should be send to them) but we did not take advantage of a \$ 200 grant from the Lac-Sainte-Marie municipality to our association in 2014. However, on the 25 November 2014, we sent a new letter to the municipality asking for a grant to help us in the cost for 2015 membership (\$ 270) to the RSVL network.

6. ask at the Association's annual meeting for the participation of its members in a chore for the improvement of the environment and the protection of our lake. Our executive can decide on the annual chore;

What we did in 2014: This year we want to secure our lake by installing some buoys. A committee was formed for the purchases and where to install them. A logo of our Association should be on the buoys. Everything will be submitted to the members at the general meeting of 2015. Members in that committee will be notified shortly ... as an association we should promote buying locally.

7. for security reasons and the protection of the banks, to formally request the Lac-Sainte-Marie municipality to install speed limit signs (10 km/h) at both ends of the channel between Dave Gibson's and just before the new boat launch in the opposite direction. Some members also ask to install one at the entry point of Newton Bay;

What we did in 2014: The municipality was to provide us with speed limit signs in the summer of the 2014 but we have not heard from them since. The buoys Committee will be mandated to study this issue and report at our annual meeting.

8. distribute pamphlets and other environmentally educational brochures (COBALI and others) at meetings and through all correspondence with our association's members;

What we did in 2014: All information is available in our meetings and send by e-mail if necessary. Capsules of information provided by COBALI will be sent to members during the summer 2015.

9. Finally, asking members to sign a Code of ethics of cooperation and respect between members . This code would be given to everyone during the annual meeting and would also include a list of all possible committees to join during the year and a suggestion box. The last page would be given to the secretary when paying their annual dues. In this way, we can create a sense of belonging and mission in our association. This Code of Ethics is to be discussed by the Executive and by a association committee. There are other models on the net;

What we did in 2014: This year we voted and accepted the establishment of an ethical code for all our members. The final version will be effective at our next general meeting which I hope will take place in the municipal hall of our municipality. No one was interested in changing the code via a committee. The last page will be modified to accommodate the dissenting members (suggestion from the Executive). A copy will be given to each member prior to the payment of dues and the last page must be submitted to the Secretary to compile the interests and suggestions of our members in various committees. We must encourage community cooperation in our association and not individualism if we want to progress. The Code of Ethics should be given to each member annually (maybe in the form of a booklet).

Thank you for reading this document and I hope that several aspects presented here will be accepted by the majority of our members. I am realistic and I understand that we will never 100% agree regarding the implementation of these ideas, but little by little, through the example of other members and the use of incentives (ex.: small signs to be installed to indicate the revegetation project of a property, the Association's annual chore, etc.) we can do it.

For 2015:

I hope that in the next election of our executive committee that a person will be appointed to fulfill the environmental aspect of our Association (with annual reports). Also a coordinator should be appointed to contact the various committee members and other members when necessary. Finally, we, as an association must

represent all potential owners of our lake and not only Newton Bay. In the spring of 2015, a poster will be installed at the Bowman boat launch (with the cooperation of the Regional park) to indicate that our Association is recruiting new members. In addition, I intend to personally deliver a flyer (from our Association) to each resident door to door, if anyone wants to join you're welcome. In addition, our association has to be more visible through concrete actions in our municipalities (Lac-Sainte-Marie and Bowman) as in 2014 with our fundraising for a local organization «Contacts-femmes-enfants».

I hope that I have met our association's executive committee's requirements. I'm available for any questions or suggestions.

Pierre-Jean Charlebois
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Translation note: RSVL stands for Réseau de Surveillance Volontaire des Lacs, which can be loosely translated as Voluntary Lake Monitoring Network.