

ALGONQUIN ECO WATCH ANNUAL UPDATE – 2008

Greetings; During the past year, Algonquin Eco Watch has been involved in many activities pertaining to the well-being of the Algonquin Ecosystem. Following is a brief summary of some of our ongoing issues.

Owing to lack of progress regarding the decommissioning of the Canadian National Railways main line through Algonquin Park, 2 members of our executive submitted a shareholders' petition, which was presented at this year's CN annual general meeting in Chicago. Prior to that event we sent out a letter to members requesting that if they held shares in CN, they vote in favour of our petition. The response was overwhelming and resulted in our petition receiving 33,913,980 (10.05%) favourable votes! This is felt to be most impressive by experts in that field. This was our first attempt at such a tactic and we expect to do much better next year if a further petition is needed. In the meantime, we are most grateful to all those member/shareholders who provided such outstanding support. As a result of that support, a dialogue has begun with CN management, which we hope will lead toward clean-up efforts along the abandoned line. We sincerely thank members of the Dianne Saxe Law Corporation for their assistance in this matter.

Being in Chicago for the CN meeting gave us a chance to visit several agencies regarding the Chicago Water Diversion from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River Basin. Since Lakes Michigan and Huron share the same basin, declining water levels in one affect the other and will adversely influence the "lake effect" that replenishes the 8 rivers sourcing on the Algonquin Dome. The Chicago diversion has the capability of removing more than 2 billion gallons of water from the Great Lakes Basin per day and as such is felt to be a major influence in the continuing drop of the Lake Huron water level. We visited the following 4 agencies while in Chicago; Illinois Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, Metropolitan Water Reclamation of Greater Chicago, and Alliance for the Great Lakes. The following points are noteworthy. Metro Chicago conducts intensive sewage treatment – making it (almost) feasible to return treated water to Lake Michigan – except for the growing threat of human-introduced pharmaceuticals, which cannot be removed without extraordinary measures. The city is actually using less water from Lake Michigan than previously, thanks to infrastructure upgrades and conservation measures. An electric barrier has been constructed downstream from the city to stop upstream emigration of the Asian Carp from the Mississippi River, but this is not yet considered safe, owing to the possibility of electrical arcing to metal ship hulls. The city is extending an already extensive system of underground tunnels in which to store run-off from severe rain events, until such time that the sewage treatment facilities can handle it. This significantly reduces the amount of pollution reaching Lake Michigan and the Mississippi. Many North American cities could follow this example. Ultimately, it would be desirable to return Lake Michigan water to the lake in a pure state. That would eliminate the need to maintain an open connection with the Mississippi River, preventing the introduction of exotic species into the Great Lakes and eliminating a major diversion. This was an excellent opportunity to hear the "other side of the story". We will continue to monitor this issue.

Algonquin Eco Watch continues to sit on the Local Citizens committee of the 2010 Forest Management Plan for the Algonquin Park Forest. We feel that unless wild-fire control were to be discontinued, a highly unlikely development, good forest management together with prescribed burning, where feasible, is the best way to maintain sustainable diversity throughout the Algonquin Ecosystem. While present management practices are generally satisfactory, Algonquin Eco Watch feels that there is still considerable room for improvement. Further, we feel that it behooves the Algonquin Forestry Authority and Ontario Parks to "lead the way" world-wide, if logging is to continue in Algonquin Park. We can and must show the world that good ecosystem management and good forest management can be compatible.

Due to unexpected administrative problems it was not possible to begin the Algonquin Park Septic survey during the 2007 field season. Those problems have since been overcome and Mr. Chris Gerrits of Gerrits Drilling and Engineering Ltd., the successful contract bidder, advises that the program has begun, is progressing well and is expected to be completed by the end of the 2010 field season. This project, a partnership between Ontario Parks, the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority, the Algonquin Park Ratepayers Association, the Haliburton County Health Unit and Algonquin Eco Watch, will ensure that Algonquin Park waters retain their pristine qualities.

A recent meeting with the Regional Director of the Ministry of Natural Resources has moved us one step closer to obtaining "special status" for a number of high-priority Algonquin Park headwaters, which source outside the Park, but were not included during the Lands For Life/Ontario's Living Legacy program. Algonquin Eco Watch feels that these headwaters deserve special consideration in the event of development proposals, to ensure that the quality and quantity of Algonquin waters remain constant in the future.

Algonquin Eco Watch has received funding to produce a book, which will tentatively be titled "An Analysis of the Human Impact on the Algonquin Park Ecosystem". It will be comprised of chapters relating to all aspects of human interaction with the Algonquin Ecosystem and will also include a chapter describing specific issues as identified and dealt with by Algonquin Eco Watch. Completion timing is uncertain, but progress to date has been very encouraging.

Membership in Algonquin Eco Watch may be obtained or renewed by forwarding a cheque or money order for \$15.00 or more to "Algonquin Eco Watch, RR#1, Spring Bay, ON, P0P 2B0". You will receive a tax-deductible receipt.



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