



ALGONQUIN ECO WATCH GROUP

Members update Summer 2005

INTRODUCTION

In past years it has been our custom to print "The Algonquin Eco Watcher", which would illustrate and describe the issues dealt with over the previous year by Algonquin Eco Watch (AEW). Copies would be sent to members, with additional copies being made available to the public. This year we have become involved with an issue relating to forest management within the Algonquin Ecosystem that necessitated hiring the services of an outside consultant. Owing to this unexpected expense and in view of our limited budget, we decided that funds normally used to publish the "Eco Watcher" would be best spent in addressing that issue. This abbreviated, un-illustrated update summarizes our most "active" issues.

Since 2006 will be our 10th anniversary, we plan to publish an expanded "Algonquin Eco Watcher" next year highlighting all the issues that we have dealt with during our first 10 years. Included in that issue will be a "score card" rating our success in dealing with the various issues. Based on our "score", we will be better able to plot our future.

Forest Management

While AEW is generally very favourably impressed with the level of forest management within the Algonquin Ecosystem, we have repeatedly identified the uniform shelter wood system of harvesting pine as being less than ideal from a wildlife point of view. We are presently working with Ontario Parks, the Algonquin Forestry Authority and a private consultant in an effort to resolve this issue cooperatively.

The Kearney Graphite Mine

To date, fines totalling over \$70,000 have been imposed upon the owners of the Kearney graphite mine by provincial and federal authorities, for various pollution and non-compliance offenses. Algonquin Eco Watch is presently attempting to have mining claims that lie within the headwaters of the Tim River and are associated with that operation, permanently withdrawn from future mining activity by the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. In the meantime, we will continue to conduct aerial monitoring of the site.

Lands for Life – Ontario's Living Legacy

Those areas identified outside Algonquin Park by Algonquin Eco Watch, as "Algonquin Park Headwaters" during the Lands For Life exercise, have now been re-mapped in greater detail by the Ministry of Natural Resources. We hope to eventually have all Algonquin headwaters included within that category, now that greater accuracy has been achieved. We met with MNR personnel in June regarding that goal.

The Algonquins of Pikwakanagan

Algonquin Eco Watch also met this June with the Chief of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan (Golden Lake). The main topic discussed at that time was fishing by First Nations within Algonquin Park.

The Muskoka River Plan

Algonquin Eco Watch has sat on the Public Advisory Committee of the Muskoka River Water Management Planning Project since its commencement in August of 2002. The plan is now in the final stages of development and should be completed soon. Our interest in the plan stems from the fact that both the north and south branches of the Muskoka River source in Algonquin Park. The overall "philosophy" of the plan has been to mimic natural annual water flow cycles as closely as possible. Such concerns as protection of lake trout spawn during winter drawdown and maintaining water levels during the loon-nesting period were identified by Algonquin Eco Watch as primary considerations. Much hard work has gone into developing the plan, which may well serve as an example for other river plans within the province.

Road Salt

As a result of sample analysis obtained during our "Algonquin Headwater Study", road salt (calcium chloride) was found to occur at elevated levels in lakes adjacent to the Highway 60 corridor. This year, Professor Denis McGee of Sir Sandford Fleming College (Lindsay Campus), working in conjunction with Professor Hugh Banks, also of SSFC, will be analyzing and presenting that data in paper form. We are hopeful that this document will provide impetus to provincial authorities to accelerate efforts in finding alternative, non-polluting options to road salt as a de-icing agent.

Algonquin Septic Study

On September 9th, 2004, and again on January 19th, 2005, Algonquin Eco Watch chaired meetings aimed at initiating a multi-year program to ensure that domestic sewage and gray water are not allowed to enter Algonquin Park waters. Present at these meetings were representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, the Ontario Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs, the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority, FedNor, Ontario Parks/Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the Algonquin Park Residents Association (APRA), Renfrew County District Health Unit and Algonquin Eco Watch. While these initial meetings ended on a very positive note, considerable work yet remains regarding administrative responsibility and funding before a science based sampling and testing program can begin.

Canadian National Railway Right-of-way

Working with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, we also convened a meeting between all interested parties, intended to resolve the problems created by washouts and unmaintained culverts along the old CN railway line through Algonquin Park (see photo essay, "2004 Algonquin Eco Watcher"). Hopefully this will be the first of a series of meetings aimed at dealing with all the many problems left behind when that rail line was abandoned in the mid 1990's. Participants included representatives from

Ontario Parks/Ministry of Natural Resources, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Environment Canada, Algonquin Eco Watch and the Dianne Saxe Law Office. Canadian National Railways did not send a representative.

Sulphur Dioxide

While repeated requests to International Nickel (INCO) regarding actual annual sulphur dioxide emissions from the Sudbury "Superstack" have so far not yielded results, we remain hopeful that the requested information will soon be forthcoming. This will enable us to better understand the negative effects of this toxic substance on the Algonquin Ecosystem.