

Notes of a Sherbrooke Lake Stewardship Committee Meeting

Held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday July 7, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.

Attendance

Garth Bangay (Chair)

Robin McAdam

William Baldrige

Shanna Fredericks, Coastal Action

Staff:

Bill Schurman, Director of Recreation – MODL

Sarah Kucharski, Communications Officer - MODL

Chad Haughn, Director of Community Development and Recreation – MODC

Jennifer Webber, Communications Officer - MODC

Sandra Challis, Administration Assistant, MODL

Guests:

Kelly Maher, District Office Bridgewater, NSE

Regrets:

Mike Morrison

Communications:

The Committee were updated on the latest blooms detected in the lake - Gully Lake, Southern part of the Lake and the mid-western part of the lake. Samples taken identified low-level neurotoxins, which were below WHO levels of concern.

It was reported that there have been varying reactions to the sightings, from normal to extreme, and communication needed to be informative without being alarmist.

It was noted that the current communications network appeared to cover most property owners through their resident's associations and this group had already received a circular, via email, regarding a Water Quality Monitoring Update. It was noted that the two-pager created by Robin earlier in the year, had not been circulated.

Some comments were made by the Communications Officers of MODL & MOC

- Does the Committee have a responsibility to report blooms/results immediately to homeowners, what is the liability to the Committee and Municipal Units if this is not done?
- Nova Scotia Environment is the body that has the authority to issue advisories and problems were experienced last year with public misconception of responsibility at Lake Mush-a-Mush.

- The Committee should be for educational purposes only.
- MOC have been monitoring areas of concern in their area and have been releasing Coastal Actions results publicly.

NSE reported that the current protocols for the District Office, following a report of a potential bloom, were to visit the site and carry out a visual inspection and take photos. A report is then submitted to the Water Quality Monitoring Specialist and a decision is made on the next action to take. It was agreed that should reports be received, the occurrence would be communicated to the Committee.

The Committee stated that with advisories issued in previous years, there had been no follow-up to let residents know when it was safe to use the lake again. It had been hoped that by gathering data and samples with the pilot project, that NSE would be able to use the data collected and base their advisory decisions and actions on actual science, however no further clarification had been received from NSE, likely due to the problems at Grand Lake. Kelly agreed to reach out to Cameron to see where NSE are on this matter.

It was discussed that there would be significant benefit to be able to analyze samples in-Province, as the natural life-cycle of blue/green algae blooms mean that the conditions sampled were not necessarily the same when results are received.

Coastal Action advised they are beginning preliminary talks with NSE and Spiri Robotics to discuss continuous monitoring of lakes using drone technology.

It was agreed that the desired communication to the public would be to educate homeowners on what steps can be taken to prevent or reduce blooms of blue/green algae, to let them know what they need to do if they see a bloom.

It was agreed that the communication should also include information on things the public can do which, over time, could improve the situation.

It was suggested a mail-out to all property owners on the lake could be facilitated using the municipal property tax information, perhaps requesting owners to sign up for direct email updates relating to water quality monitoring.

It was noted that there could be requests from residents on other lakes for more specific information on the water quality in their lakes and it was agreed that the communication issued, could relate to all lakes in a non-specific manner.

It was added that communication could take place on many different levels, direct mailings, municipal social media pages and websites; the more ways for people to be engaged and informed, the better.

Kelly advised that any communication shared by the Province would have to go through the Provincial Communications team, but she would forward details of useful resources for residents in not “hardening” the coastline that may prove useful, adding that perhaps the Province/Municipalities could look at introducing a Shoreline Naturalization incentive.

Shanna advised there is a group in western Canada offering a Green Shore Home Certification program which would be useful to keep on the radar.

Next Steps:

Garth, Robin and the Communications Officers and Municipal Staff would meet to discuss creating a document for circulation at 10:00 a.m. at MOC Offices on Friday July 16, 2021.

The meeting ended at 11.58 a.m.