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## Water Levels - Relief But Not Redemption

by John Wilson, Chair of GBA Water Levels Committee and Director for Manitou,  
and Bob Duncanson, Executive Director, GBA

Last April was a harbinger of good things to come on the water levels front. Southern Ontario experienced 200% of its normal rainfall in that month. A wet summer and fall and a cold winter have followed, all adding up to some relief for Great Lakes water levels. We started 2013 with record low water levels in Georgian Bay but, thanks to the wet spring and summer, we came through the summer with about the same amount of water in the Bay as we had in the summer of 2012. Then we did not experience the dramatic drop in water levels this fall and winter that were experienced in 2012, which is a real improvement. As a result, Georgian Bay is currently 14 inches ahead of the record low levels recorded last January and it is being predicted that water levels going into the 2014 cottage season will be 6-8 inches higher than in 2013.

So, you may ask, are we out of the woods? Have we turned the corner? Are we on the upswing of a long awaited cycle?

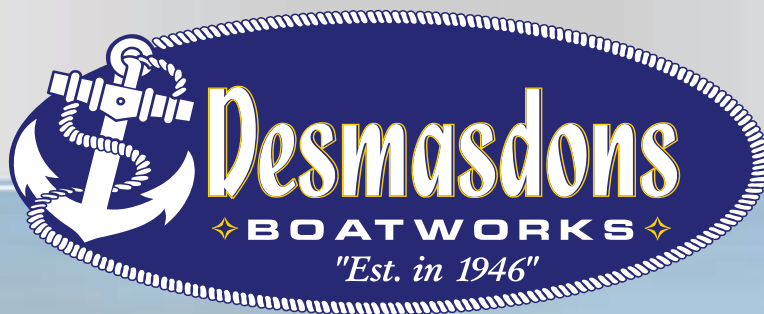
The simple answer is that one wet year does not make a trend. If you look closely at water level trends across the Great Lakes there is still a major challenge facing the Middle Great Lakes (Michigan-Huron), which includes Georgian Bay.

The US Army Corps of Engineers produces a weekly water levels report for all of the Great Lakes (charts below). GBA publishes these reports and a short analysis each week on our web site ([georgianbay.ca](http://georgianbay.ca)) and our FaceBook site ([www.facebook.com/GBayAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/GBayAssociation)). We have watched closely as water levels in the Great Lakes responded to more precipitation throughout 2013. What we saw was levels in all of the Lakes increase, but not all to the same degree. As of January 17 all of the Lakes were above their prescribed Chart Datum except Lakes Michigan-Huron. And, more notably, Lakes Michigan-Huron were still 15 inches below their long-term average level, while all of the other Lakes were just above or just below their long-term averages. We believe that this clearly points to an underlying issue with the Middle Lakes that needs to be addressed by the two Federal governments.

GBA put forward an argument to government that first and foremost we would like to see water levels in Georgian Bay returned to and maintained in a healthy historic range. We have used the 1993 Water Levels Reference Study that was produced under the direction of the International Joint Commission as a guide for identifying what this healthy range should be. The bottom end of this range is 3 inches higher than current water levels in Georgian Bay. We have also pointed out that the vast majority of climate models indicate that there will be future downward pressure on water levels due to less precipitation and more evaporation. The experts predict that there will be more "one in a hundred years" storms interspersed by prolonged periods of drought. In the face of all this we have been advocating for the governments to explore methods to hold water back in the Lakes during relatively wet periods to offset the stress on the Lakes during droughts.

The task of getting governments to take action is difficult at the best of times. Given the current fiscal environment it is even more challenging. This is the reason that we are placing so much importance on the Study that is underway by the Mowat Centre at the University of Toronto that will evaluate the economic impact on the Great Lakes region caused by low water levels.

*Continues on page 3*



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We believe that this Study will show that water levels contribute greatly to the economy of the region and that a reduction in water levels could cost the economy billions of dollars. This Study has been sponsored by the Council of the Great Lakes Region, which is a consortium of stakeholders around the Great Lakes including municipalities, industry, landowners and other non government organizations. The shipping industry in particular has expressed its concern with low water levels. Our sister organization, Georgian Bay Forever, should be given kudos for their efforts in making all of this happen. GBA has been pleased to make a financial contribution toward this Study and sits on the Study's Steering Committee.

The results from the Mowat Study should be released in late January or early February. The next stage in our action plan will be to work with all stakeholders who have an interest in this matter to present the results of the Study to government and continue to seek government action on the water levels issue.

*Continues on page 4*

## Welcome New GBLT Executive Director

A warm welcome to the new Executive Director of the Georgian Bay Land Trust (GBLT), Bill Loughheed. Bill is a life-long cottager in the Madawaska Club at Go Home Bay community where he is actively involved in that cottager association. Bill brings to his new job a passion for the Bay and a work background that includes science and management. We look forward to working with Bill and his GBLT team. Speaking of which, Bill informs us that GBLT is continuing its summer student programs in 2014, hiring two individuals to help with stewardship, education and outreach programs primarily based in the communities of Cognashene, Wah Wah Taysee and Go Home Bay. The deadline for applications is March 13, 2014. For details go to the GBLT web site at: <http://www.gblt.org/>.



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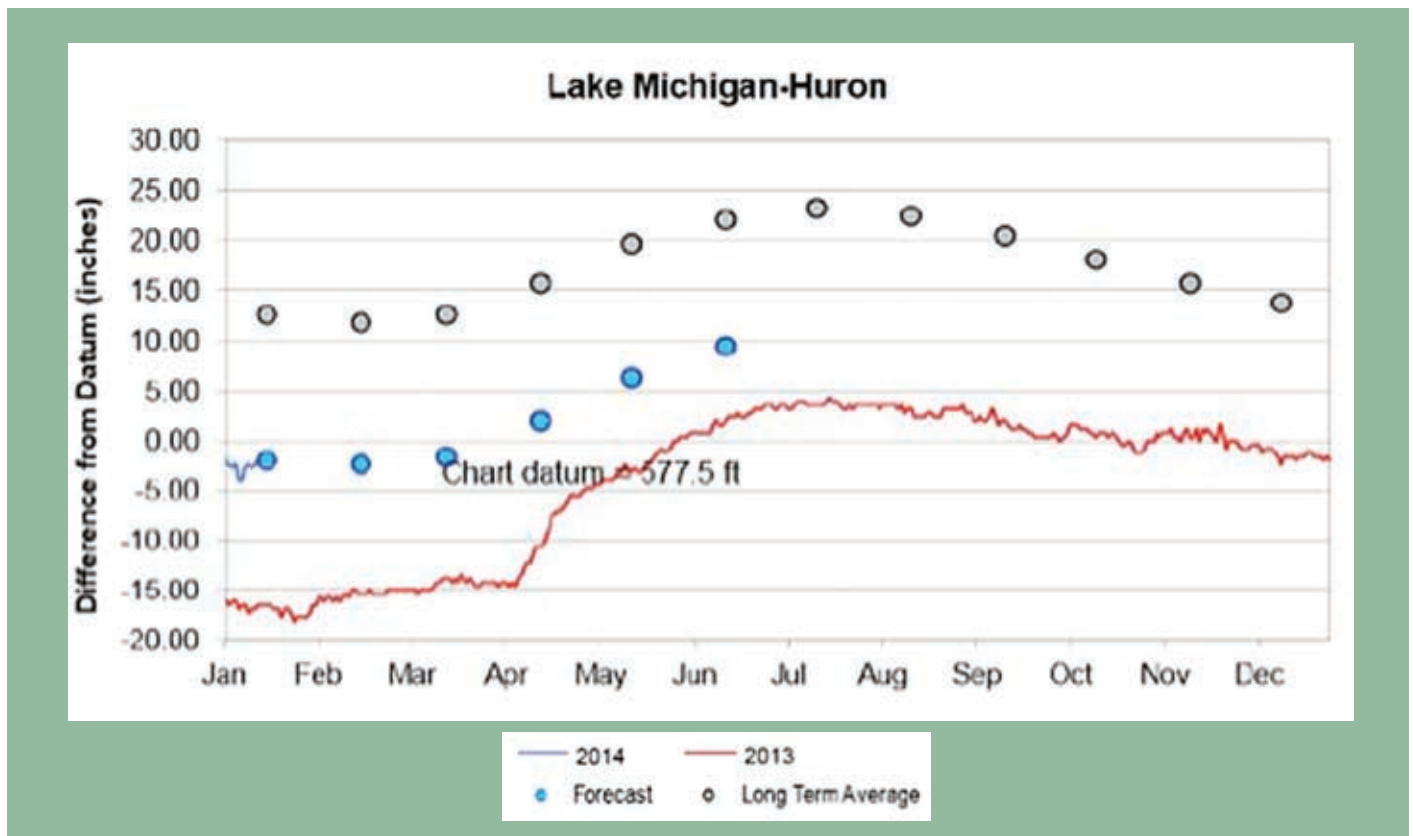
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**rayfaust@riceinc.ca • chrisrice@riceinc.ca**

The following charts were produced by the US Army Corps of Engineers date January 17, 2014. ■■

	SUPERIOR	MICH-HURON	ST. CLAIR	ERIE	ONTARIO
Forecasted Water Level for Jan 17, 2014 (feet)	601.35	577.2	573.03	570.9	244.95
Chart Datum (feet)	601.10	577.50	572.30	569.20	243.30
Difference from chart datum (inches)	+3	-4	+9	+20	+20
Difference from average water level for Dec 17, 2013 (inches")	-2	-1	-5	+5	+6
Difference from average water level for Jan 17, 2013 (inches")	+13	+14	+2	+6	+11
Difference from long-term monthly average of Jan (inches)	-1	-15	-7	+1	+4
Difference from highest monthly average of record for Jan (inches)	-16	-49	-45	-33	-20
Year of highest recorded monthly mean	1986	1987	1986	1987	1946
Difference from lowest monthly average of record for Jan (inches)	+18	+13	+31	+31	+33
Year of lowest recorded monthly mean	1926	1965	1936	1935	1935





GBA's Annual Spring meetings provide us with a chance to look back at our accomplishments over the past year and then forward to the challenges ahead.

We are pleased to announce that we have two exceptional guest speakers lined up for this year:

**Matthew Mendelsohn** is the Director of the Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation. The Mowat Centre has been contracted by the Council of the Great Lakes Region to do an Economic Impact analysis of low water in the Great Lakes. The results of this analysis will be released this spring. Matthew will share some of the insights that have come from this study.

**Gordon Walker** has just been appointed as the Interim Canadian Chair of the International Joint Commission. Consequently he has been in front of government on both sides of the border to discuss water levels and what can and should be done to relieve the chronic low water situation that the Middle Great Lakes have been experiencing over the past decade and earlier.

We look forward to a lively discussion and, as always, will encourage participation from all who attend the meeting.

# The Georgian Bay Association's Annual Spring Meeting

## Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014

International Centre

6900 Airport Road, Aviation Ball Room

Entrance 5 (use the south entrance to the International Centre from Airport Road – see map below)

LOCATION

TIME

Registration and

exhibit area open .....9:00 am

Meeting ..... 9:30 am to 11:30 am

Once again we are excited to hold our Annual Spring Meeting at the International Centre at the same time as Cottage Life is holding its Spring Cottage Life Show. We will be meeting in an adjacent ballroom with direct access to the Show after we wrap up. Cottage Life is offering a special discount off the admission price to their show for GBA members and our guests who attend this meeting.

*Spring Cottage Life Show Discount Coupon*

**SAVE \$4**

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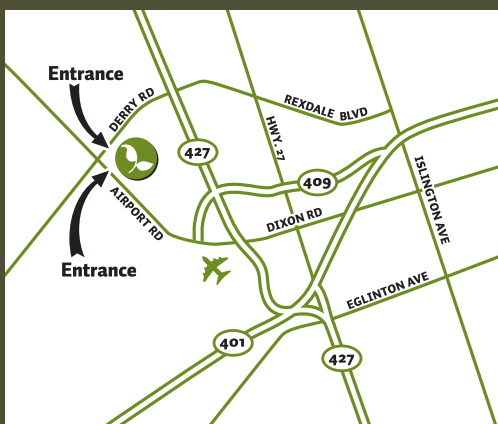
**MARCH  
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\*This coupon is valid for one or two people, one coupon per couple.  
Valid on \$18 adult admission only and not on senior discount or Friday night special.  
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To redeem for online ticket sales, visit  
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Cottage Life  
SHOW**

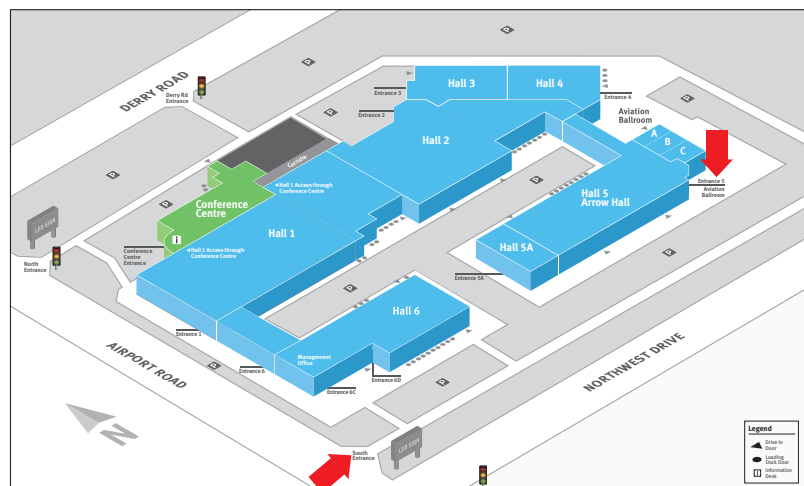
MAP



Visit GBA website  
[www.georgianbay.ca](http://www.georgianbay.ca)  
link to Events

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**THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE!**



# The Importance of Ice

John Wilson, Chair of GBA Water Levels Committee and Director for Manitou,  
and Bob Duncanson, Executive Director, GBA

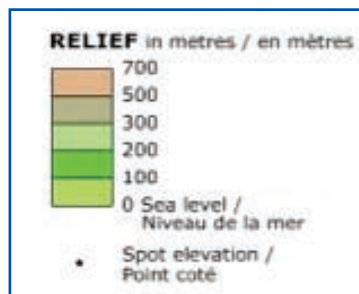
Water levels in any body of water are dependent on what scientists refer to as “net basin supply”. In simple terms this means that you need to *add together* all of the water coming into any given body of water from rivers, streams, underground aquifers and through precipitation (rain and snow) and *subtract* the water leaving the body of water through rivers, stream, underground aquifers and evaporation. What most people do not realize is that evaporation accounts for about 1/3 of the water that Georgian Bay loses every year. And most of that evaporation takes place in the winter time when the air mass over the Bay is drier than in the summer and hence acts like a sponge. The picture below illustrates this dramatically. This picture was taken on Christmas Eve, 2013 when the outside temperature was – 25 degrees C. The shore ice had formed a short distance out. The warmer open water created a steaming effect as water evaporated and became dense clouds over the Bay.

Photo Courtesy of Will Crawford-Brown, Go Home Bay



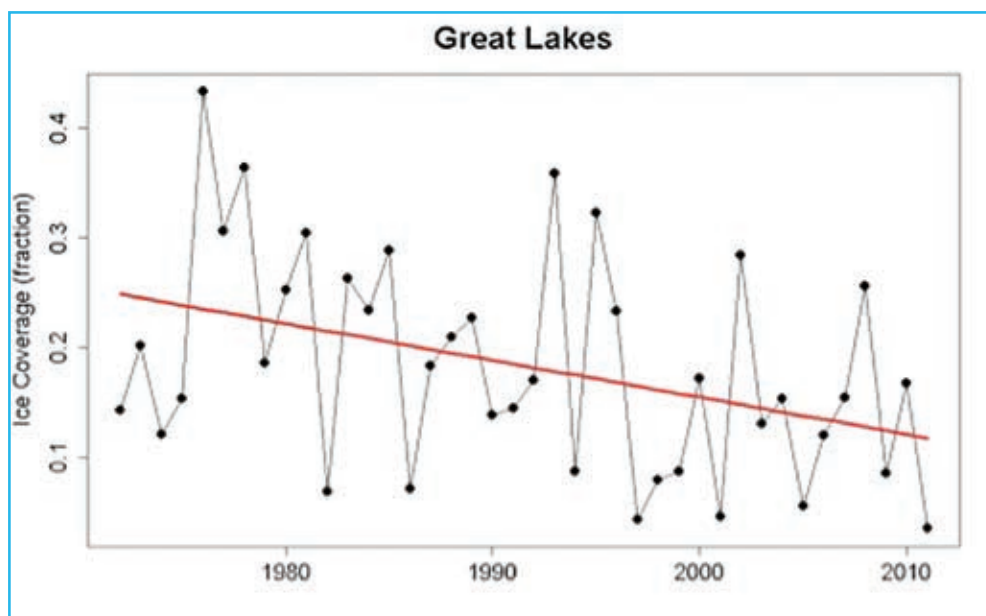
The real damage is done to water levels when these clouds of Bay moisture are blown inland to deposit their water elsewhere. This is the lake effect snow that you often hear about in winter weather reports. Unfortunately for Georgian Bay, the prevailing winds are from the north-west which pushes these clouds over Muskoka, and ultimately to the Algonquin highlands (see illustrations below). 5 of the 7 rivers that drain the Algonquin dome run east toward the Ottawa Valley. So the snow and rain that makes it all the way to the Algonquin dome is lost to the Bay forever.

This is where ice cover plays an important role. When we get a cold winter (such as the one we are currently experiencing) a good part of Georgian Bay freezes over, particularly along the eastern shores (see satellite picture on next page). Not only does this mean that there is less open water to evaporate, but, when there is lake effect snow, it tends to be deposited along the eastern shore and Muskoka area with less making it all the way to the Algonquin dome. Muskoka and near shore communities such as Parry Sound end up with very deep snow and potential for spring floods. Georgian Bay eventually gets its water back during spring runoff.



While this is not a current picture it illustrates typical ice cover in a year such as the one we are having.

Unfortunately, over time ice cover in the Great Lakes has been on the decline (see graph below). Years like the one we are currently experiencing are becoming abnormal.



Climate modelling for the Great Lakes has predicted that, over time, there will be an increase in average air temperatures and average lake water temperatures. This will lead to a continuing decline in ice cover and more evaporation over the winter months. Lakes Superior and Ontario have dams in the rivers that drain them which provide some ability to hold back water in those Lakes when desired. GBA maintains that the Middle Lakes deserve some similar ability to hold back water in wetter years to mitigate the impact of lower water brought on by droughts and increased evaporation. This is the basis of the argument that the GBA will continue to take to governments to motivate them to take action on low water levels in the Middle Lakes. ■■



# The Endangered Species Act 2007 – A Primer

by Robert Moos, GBA Secretary & Director, Blackstone Lake

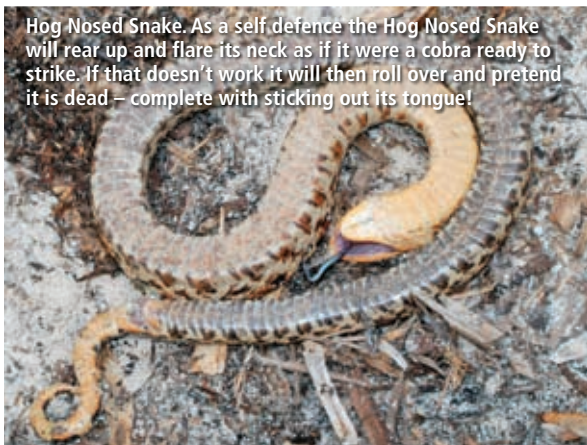
## Background

Six years ago Ontario's Legislature passed the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA). Ontario's ESA protects endangered and threatened species and their habitat on public and private land. The Georgian Bay biosphere has a wealth of biodiversity, including a number of species that are either endangered or threatened with possible extinction. These species are protected by the ESA and landowners are responsible for complying with the legislation.

While the ESA is complex, some key points are worth knowing:

- The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) administers and enforces the ESA.
- A scientific committee recommends species as being extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or of special concern after review of the best available information,
- Recommended species are placed on (or removed from) a regulated Species at Risk in Ontario (SARO) List.
- When species are listed as endangered (at imminent risk of extirpation or extinction) or threatened (likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to protect them) it is an offence to kill, harass or harm them. It is also an offence to damage or destroy their general habitat (areas which a species depends upon for its livelihood).
- "Habitat regulations" may be approved to more clearly define what constitutes habitat for a species. Habitat regulations provide more precise descriptions of the habitat of each species at risk.
- There are provisions for Ontario to develop recovery strategies and government response statements (GRSs) for individual species at risk.
- Permits may be issued for work that will affect species and their habitat. Where appropriate, permits may include conditions for recovery and stewardship of the species.

**Hog Nosed Snake.** As a self defence the Hog Nosed Snake will rear up and flare its neck as if it were a cobra ready to strike. If that doesn't work it will then roll over and pretend it is dead – complete with sticking out its tongue!



## What Georgian Bay Species are Listed as Threatened or Endangered?

The species at risk section of MNR's website includes a map feature that allows users to find out what species are listed under the ESA for various regions, including three regions that border Georgian Bay: Muskoka, Parry Sound and Manitoulin (which includes the Bay's north shore as well as Manitoulin Island). The following link can be used to access this map feature:

[http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/MNR\\_SAR\\_WHTS\\_RSK\\_MY\\_AREA\\_EN.html](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/MNR_SAR_WHTS_RSK_MY_AREA_EN.html)

Based on this map feature, the species at risk that may be found around Georgian Bay are listed in the table below.

Species**	Status		
	Endangered	Threatened	Special Concern*
<b>Birds</b>			
Henslow's Sparrow ( <i>Ammodramus henslowii</i> )	X		
Piping Plover ( <i>Charadrius melodus</i> )	X		
Loggerhead Shrike ( <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> )	X		
Barn Swallow ( <i>Hirundo rustica</i> )		X	
Bobolink ( <i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i> )		X	
Eastern Meadowlark ( <i>Sturnella magna</i> )		X	
Eastern Whip-poor-will ( <i>Caprimulgus vociferous</i> )		X	
Least Bittern ( <i>Ixobrychus exilis</i> )		X	
Cerulean Warbler ( <i>Dendroica cerulea</i> )		X	
Black Tern ( <i>Chlidonias niger</i> )			X
Perigrine Falcon ( <i>Falco peregrinus</i> )			X
Bald Eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> )			X
Yellow Rail ( <i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i> )			X
<b>Fish</b>			
Lake Sturgeon ( <i>Acipenser fulvescens</i> )			X
Northern Brook Lamprey ( <i>Ichthyomyzon fossor</i> )			X
<b>Snakes</b>			
Massasauga Rattlesnake ( <i>Sistrurus catenatus</i> )		X	
Eastern Foxsnake ( <i>Pantherophis gloydi</i> )		X	
Eastern Hog-nosed Snake ( <i>Heterodon platirhinos</i> )		X	
Eastern Ribbonsnake ( <i>Thamnophis sauritus</i> )			X
Milksnake ( <i>Lampropeltis triangulum</i> )			X
<b>Turtles</b>			
Blanding's Turtle ( <i>Emydoidea blandingii</i> )		X	
Eastern Musk Turtle a.k.a. Stinkpot ( <i>Sternotherus oderatus</i> )		X	
Northern Map Turtle ( <i>Graptemys geographica</i> )			X
Snapping Turtle ( <i>Chelydra serpentina</i> )			X
<b>Lizards</b>			
Common Five-lined Skink ( <i>Plestiodon fasciatus</i> )			X
<b>Insects</b>			
Rusty-patched Bumble Bee ( <i>Bombus affinis</i> )	X		
Aweme Borer Moth ( <i>Papaipema aweme</i> )	X		
<b>Plants</b>			
Gattinger's Agalinis ( <i>Agalinis gattingeri</i> )	X		
Engelmann's Quillwort ( <i>Isoteles engelmannii</i> )	X		
Forked Three-awned Grass ( <i>Aristida basiramea</i> )	X		
Hill's Thistle ( <i>Cirsium hillii</i> )		X	
Houghton's Goldenrod ( <i>Solidag houghtonii</i> )		X	
Lakeside Daisy ( <i>Tetaneuris herbacea</i> )		X	
Pitcher's Thistle ( <i>Cirsium pitcheri</i> )		X	
Branched Bartonian ( <i>Bartonia paniculata</i> )		X	
Dwarf Lake Iris ( <i>Iris lacustris</i> )			X
Hill's Pondweed ( <i>Potamogeton hillii</i> )			X
Broad Beech Fern ( <i>Phegopteris hexagonoptera</i> )			X

\* Species of special concern and their habitat and not legally protected but health of the species populations are monitored.

\*\* Some species may be located only on Manitoulin Island or inland areas of Muskoka. This list is based on information available from the MNR website on January 1, 2014.



## Meeting Your Responsibilities under the ESA

The ESA is relevant to Georgian Bay cottagers, because a large portion of the Georgian Bay shoreline, as well as some inland areas, provides habitat for species at risk. Rock barrens, marshes, wooded areas and shallow waters with muddy bottoms - all may host species at risk. While charges under the ESA are not common (MNR's focus is on education and stewardship), there are potentially serious penalties for harming endangered and threatened species or, once habitat protection is in place, their habitat. Most landowners want to protect biodiversity on their properties. Consequently, landowners should take some precautions:

- Take the opportunity to learn about species at risk that may occupy your property by talking to neighbors, your cottage association, MNR employees, and investigating the websites of MNR, Ontario Nature and other organizations.
- Do not disturb, harm or harass any species - birds, snakes, turtles, other reptiles and amphibians, or their nests or dens.
- Minimize disturbance to natural habitat of any kind, especially aquatic and littoral habitat.
- MNR's advice about what routine activities are compatible, or incompatible, with protection of the Eastern Foxsnake may be useful when considering protection of other species:
  - *Generally compatible activities include:*
    - yard work such as lawn care and gardening
    - continuation of existing agricultural practices such as annual harvest
    - renovations or the building of small structures such as a shed or a deck.
  - *Generally not compatible activities include:*
    - significant reduction or clearing of natural and semi-natural features, such as forests, woodlands, wetlands, shorelines, rock outcrops, hedgerows, and meadows
    - Large-scale construction, such as a housing development or roads.
    - Removal or alteration of documented nesting sites that may be found in rotting logs or compost piles. If these features are man-made, they are protected during the season that they are being used by the snake.
- Construction of new buildings, additions to existing cottages, and



Five Lined Skink (aka Blue Tailed Skink)

replacement or construction of docks, will generally require a building permit from your township. Because building permits are issued under Ontario's *Building Code Act* municipalities do not ensure applications comply with the ESA. Therefore, the onus is on the landowner to ensure that endangered or threatened species are not harmed, or their habitat destroyed. Contact your local MNR office if you suspect a planned activity may harm an endangered or threatened species, or damage protected habitat.

- The *Provincial Policy Statement* under the *Planning Act* requires townships to ensure that habitat protection is considered before issuing approvals under the Planning Act for community plans, severances, variances, official plan amendments and subdivision approvals. Townships do not have detailed information about endangered and threatened species habitat on your property, nor do they have the expertise to assess your proposal's potential effect on habitat. MNR are also unlikely to have detailed, site-specific information. Consequently, if you apply for one of the approvals mentioned above for an area that likely constitutes protected habitat, the township may request an assessment by a qualified biologist. The consultant will consider your proposal and assess potential impacts on endangered and threatened species and their habitats. The consultant's report will be reviewed by the township and, in some cases, subjected to peer review. The study and peer review will be at your expense. If this sounds expensive, it might be, depending on the scope of your proposal.

Information about the ESA and endangered/threatened species may be found on MNR's website at: <http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/index.html> ■■

## Upcoming Events

We have received the following information updates from our sister Georgian Bay organizations and pass them on for your information.

### Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve

**Trails Symposium:** connecting trails & tourism in eastern and northern Georgian Bay

March 4, 2014 from 9:00 to 4:00 at Canadore College, west Parry Sound Campus – Contact [info@gbbr.ca](mailto:info@gbbr.ca) to register.

**Films that Make You Think:** Show times are all 7 pm at the Museum on Tower Hill (17 George Street Parry Sound):

March 11	If a Tree Falls
April 8	Chasing Ice
May 13	Carbon Rush

**Earth Week:** April 21-25, 2014. Watch for details on activities in the Parry Sound area!

### Georgian Bay Land Trust

**Winterlude** will be on Thursday, March 6, 2014 at Bishop Strachan School, 298 Lonsdale Rd., Toronto. Welcome Reception is at 7:30 pm and Screening is at: 8:00 pm.

**Watermark** is the featured documentary from multiple-award winning filmmakers Jennifer Baichwal and Nick de Pencier, and renowned photographer **Edward Burtynsky**, marking their second collaboration after *Manufactured Landscapes* in 2006. The film brings together diverse stories from around the globe about our relationship with water: how we are drawn to it, what we learn from it, how we use it and the consequences of that use.

# Beech Bark Disease in Ontario

by Freda Klassen, Lands and Forests Committee,  
Director for Northern Georgian Bay Association

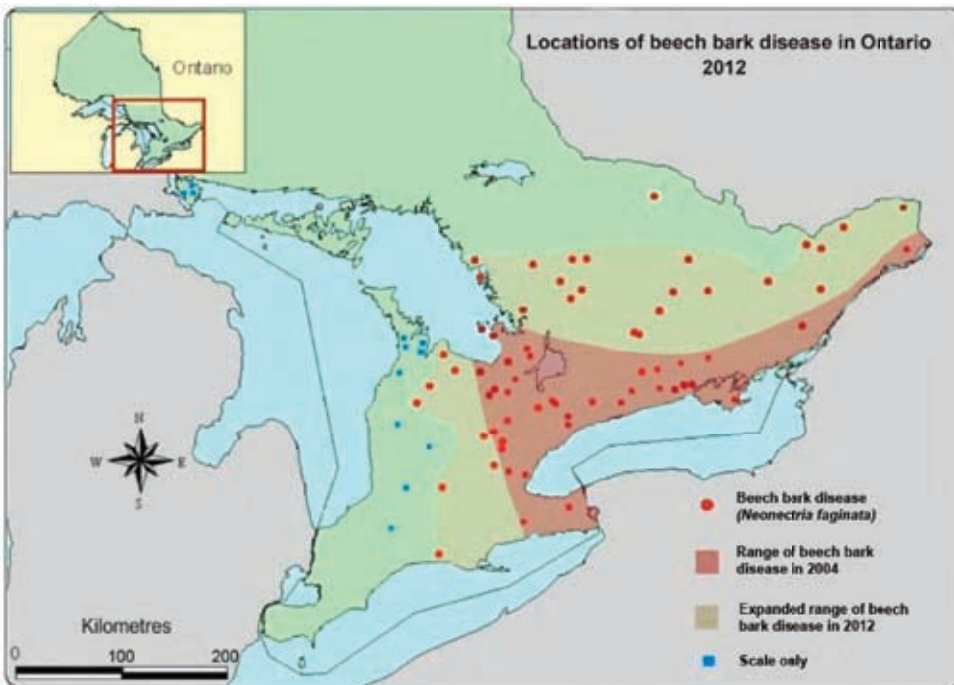
## American Beech

You know the one, it is easily identified by its smooth grey bark, resembling an elephant's leg.

American beech is one of the seven principal tree species comprising Ontario's tolerant hardwood forests. In Ontario, beech can reach 250 years of age, with a maximum diameter of 80 cm and heights up to 27 m. It is nut-producing and an important food source for black bears, deer, birds and various rodents.

## Beech Bark Disease

This disease is a new threat affecting beech in Ontario, first reported in Elgin County in 1966. As of 2012 it has spread throughout most of the province affecting the southern end of Georgian Bay, working its way up the eastern shore, changing the canopy of Killbear Provincial Park where hundreds of trees have been removed in the past year. The MNR believe that incidence of the disease occurring far from its main range might be the result of moving firewood from infested sites.



Source: Ontario Forest Research Institute

The disease is caused by a combination of a beech scale insect (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*) coupled with a canker fungus (*Neonectria faginata*). The scale insect was introduced into North America in the 1890's on European beech seedlings shipped from Europe to Halifax. While the canker fungus was likely native to North America, the introduced scale insect provides a vulnerable host tree for the fungus.

The disease is initiated when the scale insect feeds on the outer bark of the tree. Usually the larger trees in a stand are attacked first. Although the scale insect does not kill trees, it reduces the tree's vigour and growth and lowers its resistance to fungal infection. Within 2 to 10 years of the arrival of the scale insect, the feeding wounds become infected with the fungus.

## The Spread

Three distinct phases in disease development may be observed as BBD spreads.

- On the *advancing front*, beech trees are colonized by the beech scale (a small oval insect about 1 mm long — see picture). Larger trees are usually the first to become infested. Scale infestations contribute to the decline of beech affected by other stresses such as root disease or drought.
- A few years after the initial scale colonization, the disease progresses into the *killing front* phase during which scale populations build rapidly, the canker fungus infects colonized trees, and cankers develop. Many beech die within 3 to 6 years of canker fungus infection.
- After this first wave of beech mortality the disease remains in the *aftermath forest*. In this phase, the remaining large beech trees continue to gradually decline and stem breakage is common. Younger trees also become infected and gradually decline.

Under certain climate conditions additional waves of BBD may occur in the aftermath forests resulting in extensive tree mortality. For example, winters that remain above  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  can allow the build-up of beech scale populations, and several years of drought will increase the likelihood of tree mortality from the disease.



### What You Can Do

- **Do not move infected firewood as this will spread the disease to other areas.**
- Learn how to properly identify the signs and symptoms of BBD.
- Report all sightings to the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711 or report a sighting online at [www.invadingspecies.com/invasers/pathogens/beechn-bark-disease/](http://www.invadingspecies.com/invasers/pathogens/beechn-bark-disease/) ■■

Best Condition

Worst Condition



## NOT EVERY DAY ON THE WATER IS AS PICTURE PERFECT AS THIS...

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*"Just wanted to let you know how much we are loving our Rossiter 17 Runabout. The design is beautiful and it rides great. We've been picnicking, tubing, wakeboarding etc. and it's been awesome."*  
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# Juniperus Virginiana

a.k.a. Eastern Red Cedar or Eastern Red Juniper

by Wendy Parker, Chair of Lands and Forest Committee  
and Director for Cognashene



Some horticulturalists reject the name 'cedar', as they claim that this tree is not a true cedar but a juniper. Nonetheless, Red Cedar is its most commonly used name.

This tree can reach a height of 66', although 25'-30' is more common in Georgian Bay. It frequently looks more bush-like when growing in poor soil, especially along shorelines. Leaves on the juvenile tree are spreading and needle-like, while the leaves of the mature tree are flattened, scale-like and often arranged in groups, or whorls, of 3.

The leaves are soft, unlike the prickly sharp needles of juniper bushes. The seed cones and pollen occur on separate trees. The seed cones are blue berries with a white waxy coating that easily rubs off on your hand. Pollen is shed in the late winter and early spring.

The Red Cedar is one of the first trees to populate cleared or damaged land and has consequently earned a reputation as a 'pioneer invader'. It can live for up to 850 years. Cedar waxwings and turkeys are especially fond of the blue berries. They can digest and excrete them in a matter of minutes and berries "processed" in this way are 3 times more likely to germinate than berries that fall directly off the tree.

The wood is brownish red in colour and very aromatic. This feature makes it repellant to moths and an excellent choice as a liner for closets and chests. Other parts of the tree have many uses as well... for example: flavouring for gin, medication for kidney ailments, wind breaks for large open areas (esp. during the 'dust bowl' drought of the 1930's) and as garden cultivars.

Small pieces of dead wood from these trees have been placed in our cottage cabinets and drawers for many years making the aroma of our cottage clothing very special. ■■



# Great Lakes Protection Act - Update and Call to Action

by Bob Duncanson, Executive Director, GBA

As first reported in our Fall 2012 GBA UPDATE newsletter, the Government of Ontario has proposed the establishment of a Great Lakes Protection Act. This Act has had a bumpy ride since it was first tabled for approval. It was first a casualty when Premier McGuinty prorogued the Ontario Legislature, as all proposed legislation at that time was withdrawn. The Act was revived when Premier Wynne was sworn in and called the Legislature back into session. Since then it has received first and second reading in the Legislature and, as is the case with all proposed legislation, was referred to an all-Party Standing Committee for their review and comment. This Committee invited interested persons to make deputations before it, in support or in opposition. The Georgian Bay Association was one of the organizations chosen to appear before the Committee. Your Executive Director made the deputation and spoke in favour of the legislation (copy of his text below). Unfortunately, politics has crept into the Committee hearing process (as is often the case when there is a minority government). Some opposition members of the Committee are stonewalling the process, which could result in the legislation not going back to the Legislature for third reading and being voted on.

We would encourage all GBA members to contact their local MPP and ask them to push their Party to support the Great Lakes Protection Act. A list of MPPs complete with contact information can be found on the Georgian Bay Association web site ([georgianbay.ca](http://georgianbay.ca)).

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

## GBA Comments to Legislative Committee re Bill 6 – The Great Lakes Protection Act

Good morning and thank you for giving us this opportunity to appear before you in support of Bill 6, The Great Lakes Protections Act.

My name is Bob Duncanson. I am the Executive Director of the Georgian Bay Association. The Georgian Bay Association is an umbrella group representing 20 community associations along the eastern and northern shores of Georgian Bay. We have been advocating on behalf of our landowning members since 1916. We represent 3,200 properties and approximately 18,000 individuals.

You will have had no doubt other deputations that have pointed out the economic value of the Great Lakes Region to Ontario, Canada and North America. In 2011, the economic output for the region was \$4.7 trillion US, placing it amongst the largest economic regions in the world. One of the main engines behind this economic success is the water in the Great Lakes. The 5 Great Lakes combined contain the earth's largest single supply of surface fresh water.

In the Georgian Bay context property owners alone contribute over \$100 million to the local, provincial and federal economies annually through taxes and goods and services purchased. When you add in campers, boaters and fishermen to this mix the numbers get significantly larger. Without water in sufficient quantity and quality this economic input would be threatened.

### **The Great Lakes are indeed under great and unprecedented stress.**

Water levels in the Middle Lakes hit a record low last January and are still 14 inches below their long-term average. Climate change

accounts for most of this downward pressure. Experts tell us that we can expect more of what we have seen over the past few years, which are torrential downpours interspersed with prolonged periods of drought. There is a growing realization that, as a society, we need to get a lot better at managing our water resources, reacting to frequent “one in a hundred year” storms, to not only protect infrastructure but to hold some of this water in our system to support us and our ecosystems during droughts.

### **We believe that the Great Lakes Protection Act can help with this.**

Water quality is a growing concern. You have all heard or read about the return of toxic Blue Green Algae in Lake Erie. What you may not know is that we have seen regular outbreaks of Blue Green Algae in parts of relatively pristine Georgian Bay. When there is an outbreak of toxic algae no one can drink the water, or swim in it or even let one's pets near it. Excess phosphorous has been identified as the fuel feeding these outbreaks. Further research is needed to figure out a prevention for this.

### **We believe that the Great Lakes Protection Act can help with this.**

Terrestrial and aquatic invasive species are bringing their own challenges. Phragmites, Eurasian Milfoil, Zebra and Quagga Mussels, and Round Gobis to name a few. There is a perfect storm brewing below the placid surface waters of the Great Lakes including Georgian Bay. You may have read about the thousands of fish and waterfowl that die each year and are washed up on beaches around the Great Lakes such as Wasaga Beach. These animals are dying from botulism that is created when mussels which contain botulism die at the bottom of the lakes and are bio-accumulated up the food chain until Round Gobis eat them. Predator fish then eat the Round Gobis and water fowl eat the predator fish. While the problem has been identified, no one has yet identified a remedy.

### **We believe that the Great Lakes Protection Act can help with this.**

We are also worried about “chemicals of emerging concern”. Class IV septic systems, like those used by most cottagers, and municipal treatment facilities, have not been designed to treat or eliminate many chemicals that are in the human waste stream. Chemical compounds from pharmaceuticals and many household products pass right through these systems and into our water bodies. No one knows what the impact will be as these accumulate in nature and interact with one another. We need to get much better at understanding and managing chemicals in our waste stream before we poison our lakes beyond the point of no return.

### **Again, we believe that the Great Lakes Protection Act can help with this.**

Our hope is that you, as legislators, will support the Great Lakes Protection Act and that this Act will enable us as a society to address the stresses that are impacting the Great Lakes. We hope that you agree to help protect this life sustaining resource for many generations to come. ■■

## GBA Update Winter 2014

by Sue Grundy, President of GBA

2013 was another very busy year for the GBA, especially in connection with water levels.

The year began with a water level crisis, when Lakes Huron and Michigan hit an all-time low in January. In face of this crisis we recognized that we had a two pronged challenge, one short term and the other longer term.

The short-term challenge was to engage with regulatory bodies (both Provincial – Ministry of Natural Resources and Federal – Department of Fisheries and Oceans) to ensure that Georgian Bay residents could get to their water-access-only properties in the 2013 cottage season.

The longer-term challenge was to increase our engagement with politicians and other stakeholders on the lakes and to advocate for a permanent solution to what we see as a chronic long-term low water problem in Georgian Bay and the Middle Great Lakes. Our objective was to build on a successful meeting the GBA had with Ministers Baird, Kent and Clement in the fall of 2012 to raise our concerns about the impact of the alarming drop in water levels.

A key priority for our Water Access Committee was to ensure that red tape around dredging, blasting and dock relocation would not be an impediment to our members getting access to their property. Specific actions that the Committee took included:

- Working with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and, through them the Federal Department of Fisheries, to streamline the approvals process. We were pleased that the MNR was as

sensitive to this issue as we had hoped they would be.

- Working with the various municipalities on the Bay to ensure their by-laws were tweaked to reflect the low water situation. Again we were pleased with the leadership we saw at the municipal level and in particular the Township of the Archipelago.
- Reaching out to the marina operators to see what help we could provide to ensure that they remained in business.
- Meeting with representatives of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation to sensitize them to the possible impact on property values due to low water.
- Numerous media interviews by Bob Duncanson, which were aimed at keeping this issue at the top of our elected officials' minds.
- Preparing and publishing a "Water Access Primer" detailing rules and regulations for maintaining access to properties and a "Private Navigation Buoy Primer" detailing how to safely mark reefs.

Fortunately, due to a very wet spring, water levels rebounded from the January all time low to levels that were close to the levels of the 2012 season. Many marinas ended up dredging but there was limited dredging required at private properties. We dodged a bullet!

On the long-term permanent solution front, our position has been to ask our politicians to work with their agencies and other third parties with an interest in water level issues to identify and implement solutions that would see water levels in Huron-Michigan return to a healthy historic range (i.e. well above the historic low experienced in January 2013).

We were pleased to hear that Canadian government elected officials met with the International Joint Commission (IJC) shortly after our visit to Ottawa in the fall of 2012. We think that the IJC's final advice to the US and Canadian governments in April of 2013, which recommended that action be taken to address the Huron-Michigan water levels crisis, was in part a reflection of what the IJC heard from the Canadian government a few months earlier.

We were very pleased when the Canadian government appointed new Commissioners to the IJC in June 2013 and chose Gordon Walker as one of the Commissioners. Gordon is a former IJC Commissioner who has established relationships in the agency and knowledge of the water levels issues. He is also a Georgian Bay cottager who is directly affected by water levels to access his family's cottage. The fact that the Canadian government chose to appoint someone of Gordon's calibre and knowledge of Georgian Bay was a further indication to us that our federal government is taking the water levels issue seriously.

We recognize that Georgian Bay cottager interests alone will not be enough to make the Canadian or US government take action on water levels. Much of our time this year involved meeting and working with other stakeholder groups who share our concerns about water levels, including Georgian Bay Forever, Stop the Drop, Restore our Water International and the Canadian Ship Owners Association. We also supported the Economic Impact Study commissioned by Georgian Bay Forever and the Council of the Great Lakes Region on the economic impact of low water

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levels on the Great Lakes. GBA has made a financial contribution toward this study and has a seat on the Steering Committee. We expect that the results of this study will show that there would be a very large economic impact on both Canada and the US if water levels in the Great Lakes continue to be low (or go lower). This economic argument should help to justify investment by the two federal governments to get water levels back to their historic healthy range. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to make as strong a case as possible for action.

At a more local level, Bob Duncanson also worked with the Steering Committee of Mayors of Georgian Bay to examine the short-term economic impact of the critically low water levels last year, especially in the winter and early spring. Bob assisted them in lobbying the federal and provincial governments for relief and support for local communities and business owners.

While water levels clearly dominated our time it was not the only focus for GBA last year.

On the water quality front GBA has:

- Worked with other non government organizations as the renewed Great Lakes' Water Quality Agreement started to be implemented.
- Worked with the Ontario Ministry of Environment as they developed the Great Lakes Protection Strategy and Plan. Bob Duncanson made a presentation to a legislative committee at Queens Park in support of the plan as it was being studied by the Legislature.
- Monitored the progress that the Township of Georgian Bay has made working with Georgian Bay Forever, Muskoka Watershed Council and Severn Sound Environmental Association as they have developed a water testing protocol for coastal Georgian Bay.
- Supported several associations and other organizations as they have made submissions for funding under the Lake Simcoe – South Eastern Georgian Bay Clean Up Fund.

Our Lands and Forests Committee has been monitoring invasive species such as Phragmites and reviewing various programs that have been developed to try to control or eradicate this shoreline threat. They have also engaged on the Species at Risk legislation as it has evolved into regulations and has started to impact local planning decisions. The Committee has prepared a primer for cottagers on the new legislation and how to work with the requirements that affect cottage properties (please see the article from Rob Moos in this UPDATE issue).

Boating issues flared up in parts of the Bay last summer as some popular anchorages, particularly at the south of the Bay, became very crowded for extended periods of time. The Boating and Safety Committee will be meeting with boating association representatives, marina operators and the OPP to try to arrive at a new 'Code of Conduct' through which mutual respect can be maintained between boaters and cottagers, and how to communicate this to all concerned.

There was an encouraging development in connection with the GBA's long-running concerns about the environmental impact of the cage aquaculture industry. Blue Goose Pure Foods, a large, well-financed producer of organic beef and chicken recently purchased some of the existing cage rainbow trout operations around Manitoulin Island and in the North

Channel. We have had several promising discussions with senior executives of Blue Goose about the merits of using closed containment systems to support the future growth of this industry. Closed contained systems would enable the capture and treatment of the waste from these operations instead of discharging this waste into the public waters of Georgian Bay and the North Channel. We will continue to monitor developments regarding Blue Goose and other operators.

The Fisheries Committee has also continued to monitor the Asian Carp situation. While we have been pleased with Ontario MNR's efforts to prevent live Carp from entering Canadian waters though trucks or other means of transport, we have been frustrated with the slow progress that is being made in the US to prevent Carp from entering the Great Lakes through rivers and canals. GBA will continue to push as aggressively as we can for comprehensive barriers to entry (please see the article on Asian Carp in this UPDATE issue).

The Georgian Bay Association will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2016, just two years from now. We are proud of what we have accomplished on behalf of our members. Our strength comes from our membership. We represent 20 community associations and through them, about 3,200 member properties. As many of these properties are used by many family members and extended families, our reach and responsibility is great. Please encourage your families, especially the younger generations, to get involved with your local community association and, through them, get involved with the work of the GBA. We are mostly a volunteer organization and need and appreciate your assistance and support. ■■



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# Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

by Alan Waffle, Director for Honey Harbour

The Great Lakes Executive Committee (GLEC) met in Toronto on December 3rd and 4th, 2013. The meeting was well attended in person and on the phone by organizations representing governments, environmental groups and First Nations from both Canada (61) and the United States (42) plus the secretariats from both countries that are party to the Agreement. Mr. Mike Goffin, Regional Director General of Environment Canada (EC), and Susan Hedman, Regional Administrator for Region 5 of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), (based in Chicago, Illinois), chaired the meeting. The Georgian Bay Association is a registered observer to the GLEC.

## The agenda consisted of the following topics that were open for comment, input and advice from all GLEC members and observers:

Approval of the June 2013 GLEC minutes of meeting held in Chicago.

A summary report of the purpose, attendance and public comments received at the first Great Lakes Public Forum held on September 9-10, 2013 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The Forum voiced concerns about excessive algae, ongoing chemical inputs, radioactive wastes, mercury in fish, hydraulic fracturing for shale gas extraction, the deteriorating state of the Lakes, sodium chloride (road salt), nuclear waste, existing chemical lists and virtual elimination of chemical contaminants.

Overview of the Great Lakes Summit held on September 11, 2013 in Milwaukee. The Summit provided an opportunity to hear the 3 commissions (International Joint Commission (IJC), Great Lakes Commission (GLC), and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission (GLFC)) discussing how they could all work together to achieve their mutual goals of restoration and protection within the Great Lakes, in conjunction with the Parties of the GLWQA (Canada as represented by Environment Canada and the United States as represented by US Environmental Protection Agency). The Commissions discussed 3 priorities for enhancing coordination:

- Lake-wide action and management plans;
- Science and monitoring; and
- Nutrients in Lake Erie.

An update on the implementation of the GLWQA Annex's was also provided:

Annex:

1. Areas of Concern
2. Lake-wide Management
3. Chemicals of Mutual Concern
4. Nutrients
5. Discharge from Vessels
6. Aquatic Invasive Species
7. Habitats and Species
8. Groundwater
9. Climate Change Impacts
10. Science

The annex co-chairs provided the attendees with a summary of the purpose of each annex, an overview of the proposed task teams that would address priorities and finally a status report on current work plan activities and next steps which included timelines in some cases.

The balance of the meeting was spent receiving advice from the GLEC on priorities for science and subsequent action on the same, updates from GLEC members and comments from observers and Commissions. A review of GLEC action items from the meeting formed the final presentation and the next meeting was set for June 2014 in Chicago.

## GBA Observer comments:

First, while some of the annex subcommittees of the GLEC have task teams that are focused on advisory and outreach activities and/or public engagement, many of these only include limited input by non-government representatives in what have been designated: "annex extended sub subcommittees". The extended subcommittee will not necessarily be involved in the decision making of the primary annex subcommittee. We therefore feel that the GLEC has failed to ensure public engagement and overview. They have not mandated public engagement in each of the annex sub-committees structures to provide transparency and include public concerns.

Second, there is no additional allocation of funds to support the undertakings and activities within the GLWQA from either Canada or the United States. Funding (including human resources) must be found by reallocating resources from other national or regional priorities. We feel that the current lack of funds is unsustainable and will reduce the scope of the actions that need to be taken within the Great Lakes, and/or lengthen the timeline for implementation. Funding will be in competition with all other environmental priorities on an annual basis.

Third, it is hoped that the Provincial Government, under a new Canada/Ontario Agreement respecting the Great Lakes, will have a stronger voice in directing the implementation of the GLWQA.

Eventually, proceedings from this meeting will be posted on [binational.net](http://binational.net) ■■





With the turning of the calendar into 2014 I realize that I am approaching my sixth anniversary as your Executive Director. Where has the time gone?

One thing my time in this job has taught me is how passionate Georgian Bay cottagers are about "the Bay" and how willing many are to step forward to collectively volunteer thousands of hours to attend meetings, write letters and take on specific activities to protect the Bay for generations to follow. Thank you all for your support.

This time of year gets ones *cottage juices* flowing as we start to think about the next season. The Toronto Boat Show is upon us and will be closely followed by the Spring Cottage Life Show. These shows provide us with a great opportunity to meet friends and neighbours, window shop and dream. On a practical level, GBA will be using this year's Boat Show as an opportunity to network with the boating community and the OPP to discuss how boaters and cottagers can get along better, particularly in the prime anchorages at the south end of the Bay.

Later this winter GBA will again be holding our Annual Public Meeting in conjunction with the Cottage Life Show at the Toronto International Convention Centre. The date and time for this meeting is Saturday March 29 starting at 9:30am. Details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter and posted on our web site at [georgianbay.ca](http://georgianbay.ca). We hope to see many of you there.

As you will read in other articles in this newsletter, 2013 was a busy year for the GBA, and 2014 is shaping up to just as busy. Water levels, water quality, aquatic and terrestrial invasive species, boater-cottager codes of conduct and aquaculture are all requiring our attention.

Add to this the fact that we are entering a heavy year of politics, with Municipal elections in the fall, a likely Provincial election at some point during the year, and a lead up to a 2015 Federal election., There will be many opportunities to interact with our various elected officials and those who wish to be. GBA will continue to provide our members with specific questions and requests that we feel should be put to the candidates.

One of the real challenges that GBA has is how to communicate effectively with as broad a cross section of our "membership" as possible. The way we are structured poses a challenge in that we are an association of associations. Fees, and hence "memberships", are gathered through our Member Associations and are often assessed one per property with the person on title as the primary member. Hence, when we send out our newsletter,

it usually only goes to one person in any given cottage. We hope that GBA UPDATE makes it to the coffee table (or another favourite reading spot!) in most cottages where others who use the cottage will be able to read it.



But we know that this is not always the case. We have received numerous calls from people who have passed on the ownership of their cottage to the next generation (hence relinquishing their primary relationship with GBA) requesting that they continue to receive our newsletter. And we know that our communication with younger generations in any given cottage is suspect. We have started to take steps to address these issues. We have revamped our web site: [www.georgianbayassociation.com](http://www.georgianbayassociation.com) and launched a FaceBook page: [www.facebook.com/GBayAssociation](http://www.facebook.com/GBayAssociation) (please "friend" us). And we will shortly be engaging with our Member Associations on how to broaden our communication across generations. If anybody reading this message has any thoughts or suggestions on this topic, please send them to me. We are always open to new ideas.

In the meantime stay warm and keep praying for snow and rain! ■■



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# Asian Carp Action Needed

by Bob Duncanson, Executive Director, GBA

Asian Carp are knocking at the door of the Great Lakes and the gatekeepers lack any sense of urgency to do anything about it. The Canadian and Ontario governments have done a reasonable job closing the door to the importation of live Asian Carp for ornamental and culinary purposes. Unfortunately the US government has not been as diligent in seeking a permanent barrier to entry through streams, rivers and canals linking, or potentially linking, the Great Lakes and Mississippi basins.

The long anticipated report from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on how the US could stop Asian Carp, amongst other invasive species, from entering the Great Lakes has now been published (<http://glmr.is.anl.gov/glmris-report/index.cfm>). In the report the USACE reviewed 96 technologies that could control the transfer of aquatic invasive species between the two basins. They boiled these 96 down to just 7, including a continuation of the electronic barriers that are currently in place and maintained by the Corps. The 7 alternatives to the status quo have price tags ranging from \$68 million to \$15 billion; and the subsequent reduction in the probability of Asian Carp entering the Great Lakes could take up to 25 years *after* the agreed project is approved.

This lack of urgency is staggering given the extent of the disaster that will result from the introduction of Asian Carp into the Great Lakes. Asian Carp would run amok amongst native ecosystems. They would denude the foodstuffs at the bottom of the aquatic food chain which would eventually starve out the larger predator fish such as bass, trout, pike, pickerel, muskellunge and sturgeon. The cost to the \$7 billion a year commercial and recreational fishing industry on the Lakes would be devastating. And the economic hit from lost tourism and diminished cottage values would add up to billions of dollars more.

There is a window of opportunity for your voice to be heard.

The USACE are asking for public input (Canadian and US) on their report. They have created an online form to make it convenient to provide feedback (<http://glmr.is.anl.gov/glmris-report/comments/>). We have until March 3, 2014 to respond.

The Georgian Bay Association will be providing our comments to both the USACE and our Canadian elected officials. It is important for as many people to respond as possible as the number of concerned citizens is the only currency most politicians respect.

Some of the key points that GBA will be making (and that we suggest others may want to make) are:

- Governments at all levels on both sides of the border must recognize the devastation that will be caused, and the economic costs adding up to billions of dollars each year, if Asian Carp get into the Great Lakes.
- The most effective solution is to create a “physical separation” between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.
- We urge Congress to fast track the strongest permanent solutions presented in the report, including either:
  - **Option 5:** Lakefront hydrologic separation with physical barriers separating the basins at four locations along the lakefront of Lake Michigan, or
  - **Option 6:** Mid-system hydrologic separation with physical barriers separating the basins at two mid-system locations.
- We don't want our children and grandchildren, who will suffer the most from an Asian Carp Great Lakes invasion, to look back at the governments that were in place in 2014 and wonder why they were so short sighted and did not act, when action could have prevented a disaster.

The Asian Carp are a real and present danger to the Great Lakes. Please take 5 minutes to make your voice heard. It's definitely worth the time and effort. ■■







GBA UPDATE is published by  
the Georgian Bay Association

President: **Sue Grundy**,  
email: susan.grundy@sympatico.ca

Executive Director: **Bob Duncanson**,  
email: rduncanson@georgianbay.ca

Editor: **Rupert Kindersley**,  
email: rupert.kindersley@innland.ca

Advertising: **Richard Crouch**,  
email: rwcrouch@me.com

Webmaster: **Eric Armour**,  
email: e.s.armour@gmail.com

GBA website: [www.georgianbay.ca](http://www.georgianbay.ca)

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## GBA Mission Statement:

To work with our water-based communities and other stakeholders to ensure the careful stewardship of the greater Georgian Bay environment.

The Georgian Bay Association is a volunteer umbrella group representing 20 community associations with over 3,200 dues paying property owners and over 18,000 residents.

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