



Pigeon Lake Watershed Association Newsletter

PLWA News Letter - Volume 5

April 2010

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PLWA MESSAGE

The PLWA wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to all of its members and all of the individuals and groups in the Pigeon Lake community who have provided time, effort and support for the past two years. We are beginning to see progress on the government front and we have expanded our stewardship programs significantly. We have taken time to review our Association's priorities and have important initiatives in 2010.

NEW CAMPAIGN

MUST BE PULLED!!

Help PLWA Eradicate This Weed



Himalayan Balsam

A Prohibited Noxious Weed

An escaped ornamental, this fast growing aggressive weed has invaded the shores of Pigeon Lake. It grows between .6 to 3 metres tall rapidly out-competing other plants. Once developed, the seed capsules are very brittle and explode upon contact.

Disposal: Pull, bag, seal and dispose in a landfill bound garbage. NEVER put invasive plants in the compost.

Cut stems do re-grow from the roots. This plant has a shallow root system and can be controlled by hand-pulling, ideally before the seed pods form.

Join the Team: The PLWA is taking a leadership role in eradicating this weed from around Pigeon Lake. Volunteers are required for Beach Captains and shore patrols. **Contact:** Don Davidson (donald_d@telus.net)



WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place.

OUR PIGEON LAKE WATERSHED

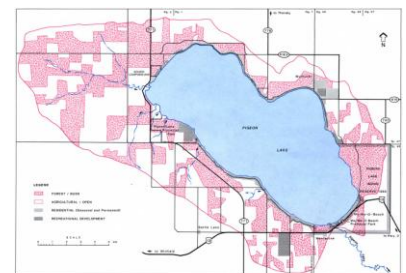
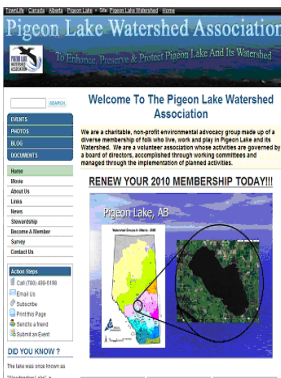


Figure 1: Boundaries of the drainage basin of Pigeon Lake, Ontario, also known as (L) St. Anne Bay, with 1974, 1975. Updated with 1987 aerial photos.

FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit our website

www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com





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DID YOU KNOW?

Pigeon Lake was home the first Hudson's Bay trading post in Alberta, It was established on the West shore of the lake in 1868 to promote trade with local first Nations Communities.



Stewardship Programs

Building on the great work done in 2009 the Association has an expanded stewardship program for 2010 and is tailoring activities for each summer village and county beach area.

- *Shoreline Cleanups*
- *Markets, Fairs and Picnics*
- *Home site Assessments*
- *Shoreline Demonstration Site*
- *Workshops*
- *Love The Lake*
- *Public Information and Education*

Ten small changes that have a big pay back for a healthier Lake...

1. Don't use fertilizers; grass clippings feed the lawn not the algae.
2. Don't use pesticides, herbicides or fungicides as they end up in the lake.
3. Plant some groundcover at the front of your property to stop erosion.
4. Leave the shores' native plants, reeds and weeds alone to sponge up excess nutrients and to make a home for fish.

5. Replace an active septic field or outhouse with a holding tank.
6. Come out for the shoreline cleanup and eradication of the Himalayan Balsam.
7. Sign up for a confidential home site assessment to get some new ideas.
8. Attend an Environmental Stewardship Workshop to get free information.
9. Join the PLWA to save the lake... you can start with your small piece!
10. Sign on for the "**Love the Lake**" program to demonstrate your commitment to the lake.

Green Alert



For 2010 we will be publishing a **Green Alert** on our website to provide members with more information on steps to take to enhance preserve and protect Pigeon Lake and its watershed.

Water Quality



PLWA continues to work with Alberta Environment to review short term solutions to lake water quality issues while longer term mitigation measures are implemented.

These measures include:

- water-shed residents adopting best environmental practices,
- the installation of the regional wastewater system,
- restoration of the riparian and littoral areas around the lake, and
- the elimination of fertilizers.



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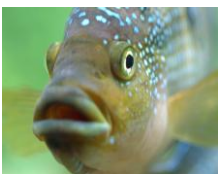
Lake Habitat



Low precipitation over the past 10 years has led to a significant drop in Alberta lake levels. Pigeon Lake has seen a dramatic drop over the past two years. The PLWA recently retained a hydrogeological consultant to help us better understand the water balance (input and output) of the lake. This report is currently being reviewed by the PLWA Board and members will be informed within the next month.

Low lake levels or, less water will make the lake subject to a more rapid rise in water temperature. Prolonged periods of high water temperature (say beyond 15 C) will lead to increased algae blooms at the surface (including blue green algae). It will also impact fish habitat and ultimately jeopardise the survival of some species. Two years ago many Alberta lakes experienced prolonged water temperatures beyond 20C and fish kills were evident. This included Pigeon Lake.

Fisheries



Re-establishing Walleye in Pigeon Lake has resulted in continuous changes to the number, size and age structure of different fish species including Lake Whitefish. The fishery is expected to move toward a more balanced state.

The advisory committee considered the public feedback in the final draft of the fisheries management plan which was then submitted to SRD. The following recommendations are being implemented:

Recreational Fishery

- Northern Pike catch limit: 1 fish over 100 cm.
- Burbot catch limit: 1 fish.

Commercial Fishery

- On a test basis the commercial fishery is planning to allow quotas to maximize the catch of Whitefish while minimizing the by-catch of the Walleye. Follow the link for more details:

www.srd.alberta.ca/ManagingPrograms/FishWildlifeManagement/FisheriesManagement/SoutheastRegionalFisheriesManagement/documents/PigeonLakeFisheriesManagement-Jan2010.pdf

By-Law Recommendation

PLWA recommended that all Summer Villages pass a by-law banning the use of fertilizers. We must stop adding nutrients to our lake.

MEC Water License

Alberta Environment granted approval of MEC's application to use groundwater from the underlying aquifer, with a renewal period of 5 years and a diversion quantity of 31,390 m3.

MEC's initial renewal application to Alberta Environment requested a diversion of 91,980 m3 of groundwater. PLWA, on behalf of the membership had issued a statement of concern this request and may have been instrumental in the significant reduction of the amount.

See the December 2009 Flash for details.

Write your government. Write the municipalities. Voice your concerns.

Appeal to halt approvals of water licenses from the pigeon lake area. Cite the reports from the PLWA website that the lake cannot sustain substantial withdrawals of water from either the aquifer or the lake.

Appeal to officials to approve funding for the waste water system.



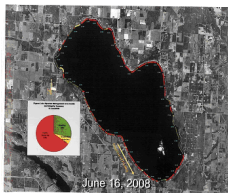
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Quatro's Application

In response to requests from members, PLWA submitted a letter to Fekete Associates Inc. and was copied to the ERCB. It outlined concerns about the application to "Establish a Holding for the Production of gas in the Pembina Field immediately to the west of Poplar Bay. This letter is posted on the website.

Videography

Pigeon Lake
Shoreline



In the June of 2008, the AB Government - Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) Department completed a video assessment of the Pigeon Lake shoreline.

The assessment indicated that:

- 65% was highly impaired
- 11% was moderately impaired
- 24% was healthy

View a copy of the video and/or pick up a summary of the assessment by visiting the Association booth at the Farmers' Market, Lakedell Fair or other events. The video demonstrates the importance of natural vegetation around the lake. The summary is also available on the PLWA website.

Learn more: See the Riparian / Shoreline Plants of Pigeon Lake presentations via the website.

Environmental Law Center (ELC) Reports

The ELC was retained by the PLWA to provide key information for much of the PLWA's work. Together the two reports create a strong base for PLWA to work cooperatively with the municipalities in, and around, the watershed.

- Phase I Report - The Law and Policy Framework Operating in the Pigeon Lake Watershed summarizes the existing

watershed legislation, regulations and policies relevant to the health of the Pigeon Lake watershed. We are governed by numerous, often disparate, rules, regulations and policies across 10 municipal, provincial, federal and First Nations governments.

- Phase II Report - Regulatory and Policy Actions for a Healthy Pigeon Lake Watershed is the ELC's recommendations for regulatory and policy "best practices" in relation to watershed management. **These are not to be construed as being the position of the PLWA.**

These reports will be posted on the website.

Residential Development

The County of Leduc is preparing an area structure plan for its portion of Pigeon Lake.



The County of Wetaskiwin is reviewing its Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw.

The PLWA has taken this opportunity to make a submission stating that any development permitted in the watershed, should demonstrate that it provides mitigation measures so that it will not negatively impact water quality and that it will maintain or improve the natural vitality of the total ecosystem. View a summary of the submission on the website.

The Province of Alberta is also conducting a review of its Land Use Framework.

Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP)

Wouldn't it be more effective if we had key players in the whole water basin working together? Well, if you think this way you'll be pleased to know that PLWA is working to establish an IWMP.

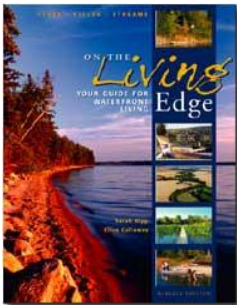


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IWMP Continued from page 4 ...

Early this spring work got under way. Attendance included participants from Alberta Environment, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, the Battle River Watershed Alliance, the County of Leduc, Summer Villages and PLWA members from the agriculture, cottager and permanent resident communities. The Lakedell Agriculture Society, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and the Pigeon Lake Chamber of Commerce also intend to participate. The next meeting will draft a Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee, define the objectives and work on the scope of the IWMP.

Get your copy of "On The Living Edge"



PLWA secured some copies for their members. It is a terrific resource filled with important and interesting information. Members who attended the 2009 AGM were given a copy. If you are a member in good standing and did not get one, while copies

last, you can request one by sending an email to: info@pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com

Authors, Sarah Kipp and Clive Callaway, share their experiences of living by the water in this friendly handbook. Whether you're a seasonal or year-round resident, this book will help you increase your enjoyment of waterfront living by helping you avoid costly mistakes, protecting your property's value, and assisting you with the unique challenges of waterfront living.

Content includes: Shoreline erosion, Native plants on your shoreline, Protecting your water-quality, Building by water, Caring for your yard and garden, Recreation and boating, and Co-existing with wildlife.

AB Environment Central AB Lakes Workshop

The PLWA was invited to a weekend workshop with several other watershed advocacy groups to discuss the challenges we face. We concluded that the top two issues were:

- 1) Environmental Protection of water quantity and quality, and
- 2) Enforcement of laws.

A second workshop is planned for Spring 2010 to follow-up on our recommendations so that we can all work together within our regulatory framework to bring awareness and education to the challenges with central Alberta lakes.

Waste Water System Update

Phase I, the preliminary layout and costing for the waste water system has been completed, and work with the native bands to run the system through their land, collecting their waste along the way, is going well.

The submission for funding is in, and a key question is whether funding approvals will be granted for 2010 or 2011. There have been some cutbacks yet it is rumoured to be near the top of the priority list. For more details, see the latest update on our website.



DID YOU KNOW?

The lake was once known as "Woodpecker Lake", a translation from the Cree name *Hmi-hmoo*, but by 1858, the name Pigeon Lake was in use (Holmgren and Holmgren 1976). The name probably originates from the huge flocks of Passenger Pigeons that once ranged over the area (Falun Hist. Soc. 1974)



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SAVE THE LAKE - YOU CAN HELP!

- Encourage others to become PLWA members.
- Decrease your impact on the lake. Stop any use of fertilizers and pesticides on your lawn.
- Give the gift of your valuable time by joining one of the Association's Committees or volunteering for a PLWA event or activity.
- Provide your suggestions on Association activities to a member of the Board.
- Post a blog / comment on the website.
- Help to restore or preserve your shoreline.
- Donate to the Association - help fund our activities.
- Express your concerns to your elected representatives (Summer Village, County Council, Member of the Legislative Assembly and Member of Parliament).

Planning



The Association's Board of Directors engaged in their annual spring planning session to reflect on work accomplished and to determine PLWA's priority work. The review portion revealed that over 2009/10 considerable work was accomplished. This is quite amazing, and perhaps not sustainable, given that PLWA is all volunteers.

The Directors use a balanced planning approach with consideration for the environment, economics, social and governance in the Pigeon Lake Watershed.

The Directors work on behalf of the PLWA members. Keeping that PLWA exists to: Enhance, Preserve & Protect Pigeon Lake and

it's Watershed; the planning aim is to make the most difference possible, given:

- what you have been telling them,
- what they have learned through studies and expert advice, and,
- the current resources which includes:
 - the numbers and capabilities of willing, committed people with time for PLWA initiatives, and
 - the funds necessary to cover associated costs.

Progress Highlights & 2010/11 Priorities on Members Concerns:

Lake Water Quality - Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

The PLWA has used a three way approach on this concern:

1. Minimizing Large Algae Blooms when they happen: This last year the Technical Committee considered a long list of technical possibilities and had to rule most out. We now know that minimizing algae blooms will be extremely difficult to achieve. However, investigation this year will continue on the harvester and/or booms to minimize or contain algae outbreaks.
2. Healthy Shorelines. Through workshops, highly informative home site assessments and information booths, the PLWA has been educating and promoting the preservation and restoration of healthy riparian / shorelines. Versions of these will be continued this year along with new website resources to assist everyone to do their bit to help save our lake.
3. Reducing key contributing factors:
 - Fertilizers. Educating people about why these are bad for the lake. The PLWA has requested all Summer Villages to pass bylaws prohibiting fertilizers.



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- Holding Tanks. The PLWA circulated temporary measures to stop the leaching of waste from septic fields into the lake.
- Park Sewage. Improvements have returned Zeiner to acceptable levels and the PLWA advocacy has improvements lined up to address the Provincial Park's leaky sewage lagoon.
- This year PLWA will also be notching up the work with the Summer Villages and other regulators to get serious and stop nutrients from going into the lake.

Waste Water System Expansion – Progress!

Last year PLWA played a key role in moving the WWS forward and will continue to support those folks working directly on bringing in this system. We will keep our members informed and as need be, use our individual and collective voices for funding. (Also see page 5).

Water Levels (See page 3) The PLWA has been learning as much as we can about the complex water level concerns and will soon be updating our membership on this work.

Development around the lake This complex concern involves many parties and interests. The foundation has been laid, and the people that we need to participate are now committed, so work will progress this year on an Integrated Watershed Management Plan to address develop around our lake. Our target is to achieve a reasonable development plan for implementation by 2012 which will help preserve our valuable resource. (See page 4)

Lake and watershed ecological stewardship

This continues to be a main focus for PLWA with either direct or support roles for numerous events around the lake. Some are mentioned in this newsletter and as dates are confirmed, we will post them on the website, along with

more resources (shoreline health, weeds etc) to enable watershed residents to make healthy choices for the lake. The new campaign is highlighted on page 1, to eradicate the Himalayan Balsam. All lake residents are encouraged to help with this important project.

Fishery Catch Limits – (See page 3)

Being Kept Informed – Communication was underscored in the planning session as key for our members, all watershed residents and for strong relationship with statutory authorities and municipal governments. Members will receive quarterly newsletters. Please ensure we have your email to ensure you received the newsflashes and look at the website on a regular basis to keep informed. We will be monitoring and reporting on our members concerns. (e.g. See in the news section on the website, the PLWA responses to the concerns expressed at last years' AGM).

The PLWA Sustainability – There is an on-going folk need for new Directors, more volunteers, increased membership, key funding and other forms of support and contributions to keep up the important work of the PLWA. (See the membership form on last page)

If you wish to influence the work of PLWA, plan to attend the 2010 AGM. ***Put this date on your calendar!***

**2010 AGM August 21st
Lakedell Hall**

To see what members were concerned with at the 2009/10 AGM along with the PLWA responses, go to:

http://www.pigeonlakewatershedassociation.com/uploads/files/0004/9872/2009_AGM_Posted_Concerns_Responses.pdf



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Update Your Information!

This newsletter is distributed to members via their e-mail addresses, or by surface mail if we do not have an e-mail address on file.

To lessen the impact on the environment, members are encouraged to register their e-mail addresses via the PLWA website or by email to the Association’s Membership Chair at twounderpar@xplomet.com.

Please, include the names of all family members who live in your household – the larger our membership, the more effective our advocacy on your behalf!

Membership

The PLWA was about 1000 members strong in 2009. The PLWA has more work than we have the people and/or funds to do. ***Your help, membership and donations are very much appreciated.***

While membership fees help with the expenses, larger numbers of members are absolutely essential to the success of projects like the regional wastewater system, effective land use and the funding of larger scale projects. Increasing the numbers of our members for when the Association represents our members with government.

To become a member OR to renew your membership, fill in the information under “Become a Member” and send it, along with a cheque for the fee to the:

Box 79, Ma-me-O Beach, T0C 1X0

... or if you are a member already, grow the ranks – strengthen our voice. Invite others to become a member. Give them this page.

BECOME A MEMBER

Individual: \$10 or Family: \$20 (up to two adults and all youths in the same family residing at the same address - 1 vote per adult)

Complete the following and return with your cheque to address on the back of this brochure

First Name(s): _____

Last Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Alternate Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/Town: _____

Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

E-mail: _____

NOTE: you are consenting to the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association storing your personal information and providing you with information and updates via the e-mail and/or the surface mail addresses provided

Lake/Watershed Location: _____

Type of Property (Acreage, Back Lot, Farm, Lakeshore, Ranch or Other): _____

Volunteer Area of Interest (Please Circle):

Shoreline Cleanup, Membership, Communications, Public Education, Government Liaison, Technical/Research, Fundraising, Website Mgt, Database Design/Mgt, Special Event Planning, Hospitality/Social and Phoning Committee

Pigeon Lake is a special gift, let’s protect it.