

Notes of a Sherbrooke Lake Stewardship Committee Meeting

Held virtually via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 03 February, 2021 – 4:00 p.m.

Attendance

Garth Bangay

Robin McAdam

Mike Morrison

William Baldrige

Melanie Kingsburg, Coastal Action

Staff:

Bill Schurman, Director of Recreation - MODL

Chad Haughn, Director of Community Development - MODC

Sandra Challis, Administrative Assistant

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Committee introduced themselves to their new member, William Baldrige.

Garth provided an overview of the current focus of the Committee, namely involving the Municipal Partners and Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) in a pilot project monitoring Blue-Green Algae/Cyanobacteria on Sherbrooke Lake and also raising awareness with property owners on the lake as to some human causes of algae blooms, showing that they can be part of the solution.

2. Review of draft Pilot Program proposal for Blue-Green Algae/Cyanobacteria Monitoring Program in Sherbrooke Lake (Coastal Action)

Coast Action (CA) had prepared a draft proposal for the Pilot project which had been circulated prior to the meeting. CA felt that the proposal balanced feasibility, quality of data collection and no time-wasting.

The Committee discussed the proposal, and the following points were made:

- The proposal did not use the word “toxic” in relation to blooms and talked about “studying” rather than “identifying” blooms.
- The proposal had been packaged in a way to appease funders and to hopefully secure funding. A pilot is something that can be built on.
- Property owners may only be concerned with toxic blooms or blooms that force closure of the lake.
- The Pilot would be able to check the toxicity of any new blooms and could develop an early warning system for the lake.

- Even non-toxic blooms can damage the lake, especially in oxygen levels required for certain fish.
- With the Pilot, pertinent sites could be chosen to study, bays for example, and plans to mitigate potential problems could be considered which would involve residents.
- The Pilot may be viewed as expensive by the funders, should a pared-down version be developed or considered.
- Councils may not feel this is their responsibility, currently NSE respond to possible blue-green algae reports; if NSE are not involved, Councils may not wish to be.
- What will happen to the normal WQM program? Councils would need to see a full picture of the annual financial commitment for the WQM program.
- Both Councils would be interested in good quality lakes.
- If the blue-green algae probe is purchased, it would be available to be used alongside the normal monitoring; it would not be as comprehensive as the Pilot outlines, but it would be able to obtain information from sites that are already being monitored.
- Four sites are currently monitored, any signs of blooms in these areas, the probe could be used for depth samples. This would be an improvement on the current program and the testing would be the only additional costs (capital costs for probe aside).
- Incorporating the probe with the normal YSI monitoring schedule would also reduce the burden on volunteers, although monitoring time commitment would likely increase. The Pilot would really need a dedicated team or additional volunteers/boat.
- Another option could be adding shallow water testing as part of the monthly program and target specific bays.

It was agreed that Garth and Mike would meet with Melanie to pinpoint some likely areas to expand testing for blue-green algae. CA could then come up with a pared-down version, expanding the regular testing, and increasing frequency to bi-weekly in July and August with the extra monitoring focused on blue-green algae. (It could be necessary to include June and September too, should they have unusually high temperatures).

3. Review of draft Blue-Green Algae/Cyanobacteria Communications Strategy (Robin McAdam)

The draft communications strategy, circulated prior to the meeting, was discussed and the following points were made:

- Include Committee contacts (names and email addresses).
- Include document in presentation to Councils & NSE to show that the committee recognizes that residents have a part to play and the Committee is communicating directly to them.
- Circulate initially via Cottage owner's distribution list in the very near future.
- Enlist the municipality's help in additional distribution avenues.
- Consider signage on lake access roads, and direct delivery to green-lawned homes.

- MODC's communications department may be able to help with some catchy graphics to reinforce the message closer to fertilizing season.
- The wording should be changed to reflect that fertilizer is one of the influencers of blue-green algae; there are other contributing factors.
- The source of Barry's factoid regarding 1kg of fertilizer can produce 500kg of algae should be provided to contacts on the document, so they have back-up information if challenged.
- CA offered some links that could be included:
<http://loveyourlake.ca/5-ways-healthy-shoreline/>
<https://www.bluelakes.ca/lake-health-basics/>
<https://watersheds.ca/our-work/love-your-lake/>

4. Review of draft Proposal by Dr. Tri Nguyen-Quang

Dr. Nguyen-Quang's proposal was discussed. The project was a deluxe version for studying Sherbrooke Lake, and appeared to be seeking funding for an academic study. It was agreed that he should be responded to explaining the Committee is currently developing a proposal for NSE, less intense than his. Garth would draft a reply and circulate to the Committee for comment.

5. Update on proposed meeting with NS Environment

After discussion, it was agreed the Bill would talk to NSE to determine their level of interest in the 3-way proposal, with the intent to circulate the Pilot proposal in advance of the meeting; but letting them know that more cost-effective options are being looked in to.

It was noted that the Pilot proposal did not touch on how the monitoring would benefit NSE, or what the mechanisms would be for information sharing. It was suggested that a cover note be sent with the proposal highlighting the need for sharing results and that by working together, the Pilot solves a problem NSE may have.

6. Next Steps

- Garth & Mike to meet with Melanie/Shannah to discuss options for testing locations in bays.
- Have a pared-down version ready by the end of the week.
- Think about budget requirements for both Council's consideration in their budget process – particularly the purchase of the probe.
- Robin to tweak the communications piece.
- Bill to speak to NSE.