



23 June 2024

ALSJ President's Update- June 2024

Highlights

- ALSJ has three new executive members and has achieved its budgetary goal for dues collection for 2023-24.
- Both the roads and emergencies task forces are on track to deliver their reports to the 19 October AGM.
- A Conservation Lakefield project will now aim to conserve the Summit hill of Domaine Lakefield in its natural state. This follows intense engagement by our community and partners. Fundraising will start soon, with charitable receipts provided.
- Lachute has completed a long-delayed lake water level consultant study which we are reviewing. We have requested a technical meeting followed by a second meeting with the mayor in July to achieve a workable solution on the management of our lake water level.
- Please join our work parties and summer activities to help build our community.

Introduction

Our summer has started with a heat dome followed by torrential rains. As we head into the prime summer season, it is timely to update you on some significant developments that affect our lake community. The summer activity plan is on our alsj.ca website, and we are hoping for lots of participation. By participating in work parties you share the workload, meet your neighbours and reduce our overall costs. We also have expanded our summer activities to respond to changing demographics and our young families. Finally, we will attempt some fun fund-raising activities to contribute to our association needs.

New Executive and Team Members

Following some magnificent work by our Board, I am pleased to announce three new members of our Executive Committee, plus an additional role for a current officer:

- Chris Romer, grandson of the original developer, is our new social coordinator, to be mentored by Terry Brew,
- Jen Lankshear will be our new records officer, mentored by Susan Anastasopoulos,

- Robert Woodrough will be our new external relations officer, mentored by Doug Dempster, and
- Louise Chambers, in addition to her role as Secretary, will take on the role of Welcoming Officer.

It is apparent that the Roads and Environment portfolios require significant effort and a supporting team. Several members have indicated their willingness to contribute as part of a team, and we are therefore setting up two new teams. Volunteer team members so far are:

- Roads and Beach Team, led by Wayne Chambers- Louis Dicaire, Ken Bunker, Max Laflamme, with others willing to help on specific efforts.
- Environment Team, led by Mariam Bowen- Helene Parenteau, Kayla Eisenstat.

If you would like to add your name to one of these teams, please let a Board or Executive member know.

Roads and Beaches

As you may recall, last fall we cleaned out our road ditches. This worked well during our minimal spring melt last spring. In May we successfully added 75 tons of crushed stone in the low point of the road between 1138 and 1150 off Entrance 1, an area where the road was constantly saturated and prone to potholes.

We also conducted a standard road maintenance in May using our new drag. This drag, built by Derek Morrow, has six inclined blades that bring material from the roadsides back into the road centre. It also has a flap at the back that smooths out the road surface. We no longer need to rent a drag, and got a great result, including on the causeway. We will see how our roads survive the rains.

On our roads task force, we have clearly identified the problem. Our roads were originally constructed with round pit rock, now scraped off after decades of dragging and with roadsides overgrown with trees and bush. We shared a report and sketch map to all members in March. We are now proceeding to consider options and to cost the necessary improvements for our roads, with the report for decision at the October Annual General Meeting. Certain of you have said that you see a good gravel road as an investment in our community and in your properties. Equally we are conscious that we live in more expensive times.

Last year we had one family of Canada geese. This year we have two families with 15 goslings living on our lake and seeking flat waterside places to hang out. These geese foul our beaches, private land and water. We can expect further population increases. We have again erected our rope system on Boathouse Beach and will also protect Sunrise Beach (between 1140 and 1150) now being visited. Geese do not like having obstacles between them and the water where they can seek safety when threatened. Canada geese are protected by the federal migratory birds

convention act (MBCA) of 1994. Your executive will examine this issue at its 26 June meeting. Your concerns and suggestions are welcome.

We will be having work parties to clean up our beaches. Please note that we are suppressing a small infestation of poison ivy on the South side of Sunrise Beach. Please be careful there with your children and dogs.

Emergencies Task Force

Livio Merlo has kindly generated two reports based on best practices to allow you to prepare your home for a wildfire emergency or for a sustained outage of electricity and internet. These guides will now be reviewed by the Executive and then circulated to our property owners.

I believe each of us would like to be contacted if a community member sees our house on fire or with broken-in doors or windows. Louise Johnston is updating our community map and emergency call list. This document will be shared in a paper version when ready. Your consent will be required to include your emergency phone numbers.

We are also preparing a standing operations plan for organizing our community response to an emergency situation, such as a windstorm, ice storm or wildfire, in conjunction with first responders. The 2022 derecho confirmed the need. Lachute has designated the chief of their fire department as their coordination point. This plan needs to be effective regardless of who is around at the time of the emergency. It will identify key community resources, emergency contracting processes and support for our more vulnerable residents.

Lake Water Level

You will have noticed that the lake level was lower than it has been for many years until early June. It went up mid-June as Lachute lowered the blade on the exit dam. I requested that the blade be raised to achieve the target level, and the level has dropped a bit.

We formally asked the Mayor of Lachute in 2022 and 2023 to stabilize the lake water levels. This is an issue of immense importance to our residents. Peter Nicholson has monitored the water levels and temperatures daily for the past three years. There has been enormous variation in level and increasing water temperatures, the latter possibly explaining the increase in aquatic plants.

Our basic position is that the Lake Beattie/Lac Sir-John watershed is not being managed in the best interests of our residents and our community, and that we lack a mechanism of voice. The situation has of course evolved with the recent creation of Lake Beattie Park.

In response to our request Lachute commissioned an engineering consultant study in 2022 which was delayed. The resultant technical report has now been shared with us. It makes several assumptions and is complex. We are now reviewing it. I have proposed to Lachute that

we meet first with officials to ensure a mutual understanding of what this report means, and then proceed to a decision meeting with the mayor, now planned for mid-July. You will certainly hear more on this issue across the summer.

Environment

Thanks to Mariam Bowen you have recently received a one-page environmental newsletter. Please help us to reduce light pollution and turn off unneeded lights. Timers work well.

At the annual meeting of the Alliance of Gore Lake Associations there was an excellent presentation by Mathieu Madison on the natural aging of lakes. Contact Mariam for more information.

We will participate in the RSVL water testing program again this year and will conduct an aquatic plant survey.

We will continue to suppress invasive and harmful land plant species.

One existential threat to our lake is Eurasian milfoil, an invasive and aggressive aquatic plant that has the potential to choke off our shorelines. Properties on infected lakes face loss of enjoyment and reduced property values. Mariam has convened aquatic plant surveys in the past two years, and we have not detected any Eurasian milfoil. This spring we have acquired our own aqua scope that will let us see into the water.

Please ensure that you have a Lac Sir-John decal for your watercraft so we can determine non-resident trespassing boats. Wash any boat or electric motor new to the lake before using it. Contact any executive officer to get decals, and please challenge boats without decals.

Domaine Lakefield Summit Development

In February we became aware of a possible development of the Summit hill in Domaine Lakefield in Gore. The developer was preparing to submit his application. This sensitive forested area is surrounded by watercourses is adjacent to our buffer space at the northwest part of our lake between the Pomet house at 1732 and the Anastasopoulos house at 1754. The proposal was for a 16-lot development on the top of this hill, to be visible from our lake. Water runoff from this project had the potential to pollute Lac Sir John and Undermount Farm.

We formed an ad hoc team to address this immediate threat. I would like to recognize Mariam Bowen, Terry Brew, Susan Anastasopoulos, Susan Bishop, Rocky Poulin and Louise Johnston who worked diligently throughout our campaign. We did an enormous amount of research and strategy development. Throughout this campaign we worked closely with the Domaine Lakefield property owner's association (SPDL), with Conservation Lakefield, and with Undermount farm.

In March I shared with all our members a comprehensive letter that we sent to the mayors of Gore and Lachute. In April, with more facts available, I sent a second comprehensive letter to the mayor of Gore arguing that such a development contravened their own bylaws. Conservation Lakefield had a property value appraisal conducted for the possible development and for selling the property for conservation, with the bottom line for the two options being surprisingly similar.

I am pleased to report that following our pressure campaign, the developer signalled in late May his willingness to sell the property to Conservation Lakefield for the appraised value. At its meeting on 23 June Conservation Lakefield confirmed that this conservation project will now proceed. They will now conduct a charitable fundraising campaign. Our Lac Sir-John members will be invited to participate. Conserving this property is in our best interest and would serve to extend our buffer space. There is potential for trails in this area. Please be generous.

Administrative Progress

Thanks to splendid work by David Bouskill and Jane Preville, we have now achieved our 2023-24 budgetary goal for dues collection. Jane now tracks our budget execution monthly on a spreadsheet.

Our website has been updated, with more content that is easily accessible. We are including a new protocol for members listing their homes for sale.

With the hard work of Susan Anastasopoulos and others, we have developed new policies on privacy that are required by new Quebec Law 64 as well as on records management.

We have updated our registry of property owner information. If you wish to update your “designated voting member” or new “adult co-habitants”, please send an e-mail to Lacsirjohn@hotmail.com.

Conclusion

The new Association is forming up well in its first year. We are improving our outreach to other lake associations and our two municipalities. Following extraordinary efforts and subject to successful fundraising, the Summit hill at the north end of the lake will not be developed.

Thanks to the efforts of many people, we are on track to achieve our priorities by the Annual General Meeting on 19 October. Please join our work parties and summer activities.

Doug Dempster
President