

Watabeag-Wildgoose Community Cottage Association

Spring / Summer 2024 Journal

www.wwcca.ca

Message from the President:

With the wildfires in 2023, cottagers are asked to review the fire information provided below and take actions to protect cottages (i.e. having pumps on property, remove combustible items surrounding the cottage).

Thank you to all cottagers for their vigilance in reviewing trail camera footage to assist the OPP and MNR in their investigation.

A reminder that if you do notice a forest fire, call **310-FIRE (3473)** immediately.

Also, in a restricted fire zone, you cannot:

- have campfires (even in outdoor fire grate, fireplace or fire pit)
- burn grass or woody debris
- use burn barrels

The WWCCA wishes all cottagers a relaxing summer at the lake.

To all cottagers:

- enjoy the lake responsibly;
- respect the people and area around you;
- follow all laws (opp.ca) and boating guidelines (www.tc.gc.ca/services/marine);
- be safe.

Sincerely,

Al McLean
President – WWCCA
www.wwcca.ca
pledge96@hotmail.com

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Fire Protection ([Be FireSmart | ontario.ca](https://www.fire-smart.com/ontario)):

a) Protect your property

Follow these steps to keep your home safe from wildland fires by managing your [three priority zones](#) (PDF).

b) Conduct a FireSmart Home Assessment

Download the [FireSmart Home Assessment](#) (PDF) or visit your [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#) to download the "FireSmart begins at home" application. Complete an assessment to see what changes will make the greatest difference in reducing your home's risk from wildfire.

c) Manage the vegetation around your home

- Create a non-combustible zone up to 1.5 metres from your home.
- Reduce shrubs, evergreen trees and dead material within 10 metres of buildings.
- Thin and prune trees within 10-30 metres of your home.
- Ensure power lines are clear of tree limbs.
- Clean gutters regularly to remove dry leaves and other combustibles.
- Grow fire resistant plants.

For more ideas on protecting your property, read the [FireSmart Begins at Home Manual](#) and [FireSmart Landscaping Guide](#).

Committees:

Cottage Watch: The WWCCA participates in the Cottage Watch program and we consult with the OPP. To inquire or report activity, please contact cottagewatch@wwcca.ca.

No break-ins were reported to the executive during the 2023 calendar year. With the increased use of security camera and vigilant cottagers on the lookout for unusual activity, we hope that this trend will continue. A reminder that any illegal activity should be reported to the OPP immediately.

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Dam/Water Levels:

Update from the Abitibi River Water Management Plan committee meeting and Watabeag Lake Dam operations:

Watabeag Lake Dam (OPGI)

Operating Range: 319.00 – 321.70 m

Absolute Range: 319.00 – 322.31 m

Summer Band: 320.57 – 320.82 m Victoria Day weekend to Thanksgiving weekend (new)

Winter Drawdown: 319.00 m but target 319.62 m (new)

Flood Allowance: 321.70 – 322.31 m

Maximum Discharge: Maximum discharge limited to 17 cms at all times.

Minimum Discharge: None

Benefits:

- This operating regime maintains appropriate Lake Trout habitat and the revised drawdown strategy will reduce the impact to Lake Trout. The existing drawdown limit of 0.45 m from October to mid February was removed and replaced with a target to limit the drawdown to a minimum elevation 319.62 m.

Although the minimum elevation of 319.00 m remains the absolute minimum to be used if necessary, the new drawdown target will generally result in higher water levels drawdown minimum. This should reduce the impact to lake trout spawning and incubation, thus improving recruitment from current rates.

- The revised summer band is expected to accommodate the majority of users' navigational and recreational needs. This change resulted from the Wildgoose Cottagers' Association request that the summer band be lowered.

- The maximum discharge of 17 cms protects the integrity of a bridge downstream.

- The drawdown strategy maintains flood mitigation and public safety. This regime also maintains public awareness.

- The water levels are maintained below 321.70 m to minimize erosion in Watabeag Lake.

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Conflicts:

- This regime limits maximum power generation downstream (OPGI – 800 households per year / 9,600 MW-hr per year, ACCC – 88 households per year / 1,056 MW-hr per year and Algonquin – 22 households per year / 264 MW-hr per year).
- Winter recreation downstream of dam may be affected by the drawdown. Users must be cautious due to the possibility of varying ice conditions.

Outstanding Information Gaps:

- There is an outstanding information gap on Fisheries Lake Trout Option 2 to extend the drawdown constraint from October to the March 30th, therefore this Option 2 will be considered once data from the study is available. There is an outstanding information gap to verify 17 cms maximum discharge limit still applies now that one bridge has been removed.

McEvay Landfill:

User fee Structure - Please be advised that there will be no fees this year as the Ministry is not set up yet to collect the fees.

We also ask that cottagers be vigilant against any illegal dumping and to report any illegal dumping activity to the MNRF through their tip line: 1-877-847-7667. Please note that you must also have the license plate number of the vehicle you are reporting.

A reminder that **illegal dumping does impact the length of the landfill site life.**

2024 Landfill Hours: **Sunday (11 am – 7pm) - beginning of May until the end of October.**

Fish/Wildlife:

a) Aurora trout fishing opportunities for 2024

Fisheries Management Zone 8

Big Club Lake (48°27'45"N., 80°48'39"W.) — Bond and Macklem Townships

Nayowin Lake (47°47'27"N., 81°22'39"W.) — Burrows Township

Pallet Lake (48°16'31"N., 80°39'05"W.) — Nordica Township

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Cottagers are asked to **review and comply with all fishing regulations** ([Fishing notices and updates | ontario.ca](#)).

b) Bear Encounters

→ Who to contact

Not every bear sighting is an emergency situation. Here is who to call if you encounter a bear.

Emergency situations

Call 911 or your local police if a bear poses an immediate threat to personal safety and exhibits threatening or aggressive behaviour, such as:

- enters a school yard when school is in session
- stalks people and lingers at the site
- enters or tries to enter a residence
- wanders into a public gathering
- kills livestock/pets and lingers at the site

Police will respond first to an emergency situation, but may request assistance from the ministry during daylight hours.

Non-emergency encounters

Call the toll-free Bear Wise reporting line at [1-866-514-2327](tel:1-866-514-2327) or TTY [705-945-7641](tel:705-945-7641) if a bear:

- roams around or checks garbage cans
- breaks into a shed where garbage or food is stored
- is in a tree
- pulls down a bird feeder or knocks over a barbecue
- moves through a backyard or field but does not linger

This line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from April 1 to November 30.

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c) **Black Bear Encounters:**

If you encounter a black bear, **Stop. Do not panic. Remain calm.**

DO:

- Slowly back away while keeping the bear in sight and wait for it to leave.
- Throw objects, wave your arms and make noise with a whistle, air horn or yelling if the bear does not leave.
- Prepare to use bear spray.
- Get inside a building or vehicle, if you are nearby, as a precaution.
- Drop any food you may be carrying and slowly move away.
- Leave a bear alone if it is in a tree. Leave the area. The bear will come down when it feels safe.
- Play dead only if you encounter a mother bear with cubs.

DO NOT:

- Run, climb a tree or swim.
- Kneel down.
- Make direct eye contact.
- Approach the bear to get a better look.
- Attempt to feed a bear.
- Let your dog off its leash.
- Play dead unless you are attacked by a mother bear defending her cubs.

Roads:

Cutting is continuing around the Wildgoose Lake area and along the Watabeag Road. Cottagers are asked to **be cautious when driving – remain on the right side of the road and be cautious around corners or on hills.**