LMAA

LAKE MANITOU AREA ASSOCIATION

November 15, 2019

Mr. Ross Hart
Sudbury District Manager
Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry
Suite 5, 3767 Highway 69 South
Sudbury, ON P3G 1E7

Dear Mr. Hart,

We are writing on behalf of the 235 members of the Lake Manitou Area Association (LMAA) in regard to two pressing areas of concern to our membership: water levels causing land erosion, and health of the lake/river and fish.

Please be assured that we want to be proactive and reasonable in our requests and suggestions. We understand that climate change is real and is something that cannot be controlled, but that there are ways in which we can mitigate the damage. Some of that damage control is up to each home/cottage owner, by trying to maintain or return to as natural a shoreline as possible. To that end, the LMAA is looking into various shoreline assessment programs, in conjunction with Manitoulin Streams, that would be available to our members with the possibility of some aid. We are still in the process of working out the details; however, we have started by donating $3,000 to Manitoulin Streams towards this project.

There is however one area which is out of our control and in the control of the MNRF, and that is management of the dam. This was brought to the attention of the Ministry in a letter of April 18, 2016 (appended) and a subsequent meeting. It has been a major topic of concern at our AGMs. Following our July 13, 2019 AGM, we provided a discussion forum on our website with an October 31st deadline, wherein members could submit their particular issues of concern and outline their shoreline damage due to water levels. These submissions were collated. The majority of posts came from people on the east basin of the lake, that is, the dam side where fluctuations were, it would seem, more severe. Most of the damage is due to flooding, erosion causing trees and shrubs to be uprooted or the roots exposed, and the degradation of water due to clay silt. In almost every case where the issue of DRASTIC fluctuations was cited, those drastic changes were usually at times when stop logs in the dam were increased or decreased in a severe, rather than a gradual, way. We understand that severe weather can also cause these drastic fluctuations.

The dam guidelines outline, in table 2, the average water level and stop log settings up to 1986. The guidelines also point out that in 1990 there was a flooding problem which “resulted from an attempt to hold back water to supplement flows in the Manitou River for fall spawning salmon”. The recommendation was “that the manipulation of stop logs on the lake return to its historical operation pattern.” The guidelines then provide, in table 3, a new guideline to be used to set stop logs and water levels on Lake Manitou. This guideline clearly outlines eight times in a year when stop logs would be manipulated … sometimes only 1- ½ logs. It is our understanding that this has not been followed for some time and fewer, more drastic numbers of logs have been manipulated at a time. Is this correct? We understand that someone from Blue Jay Creek Fish Hatchery did the manipulations up until a little over a year ago but now someone is dispatched from Sudbury. Is this also correct?

If that is the case, we would like to recommend that the MNRF hire someone local again who can keep an eye on the situation and make the changes to the stop logs as per the guidelines, up to eight times a year, to mitigate drastic increases/decreases in water flow. This will certainly help the lake and the river.

Again, we understand clearly that no one can control Mother Nature and unforeseen situations may arise.

Our second concern is the health of Lake Manitou, the Manitou River, fish and other aquatic life, as well as our drinking water. The big issue appears to be the clay silt which is a result of erosion. On our forum members talked about “a river of silt” or “the bay was completely clouded by clay silt”.

The following excerpt from the Government of Canada website completely sums up our concerns.

Why is Sediment Important?
Sediment carried in water has a variety of effects: what are they and why are they important?

Toxic chemicals
Sediment plays a major role in the transport and fate of pollutants and so is clearly a concern in water quality management. Toxic chemicals can become attached, or adsorbed, to sediment particles and then transported to and deposited in other areas. These pollutants may later be released into the environment. By studying the quantity, quality, and characteristics of sediment in the stream, scientists and engineers can determine the sources and evaluate the impact of the pollutants on the aquatic environment. Once the sources and impact are known, action can be taken to reduce the pollutants. The association of toxic chemicals with sediment is an issue of national importance.

Fisheries/Aquatic habitat
Streamborne sediment directly affects fish populations in several ways:

- *Suspended sediment decreases the penetration of light into the water. This affects fish feeding and schooling practices, and can lead to reduced survival.*
- *Suspended sediment in high concentrations irritates the gills of fish, and can cause death.*
- *Sediment can destroy the protective mucous covering the eyes and scales of fish, making them more susceptible to infection and disease.*
- *Sediment particles absorb warmth from the sun and thus increase water temperature. This can stress some species of fish.*
- *Suspended sediment in high concentrations can dislodge plants, invertebrates, and insects in the stream bed. This affects the food source of fish, and can result in smaller and fewer fish.*
- *Settling sediments can bury and suffocate fish eggs.*
- *Sediment particles can carry toxic agricultural and industrial compounds. If these are released in the habitat, they can cause abnormalities or death in the fish.*

We hope that the Ministry will take our suggestion seriously. If this works, it will be a win-win situation at a minimal cost. If it doesn’t, at least something was tried that was not a huge cost to taxpayers and would give our members re-assurance that the MNRF listened and was willing to work with us to attempt to mitigate these problems.

We are open to discussion and would welcome a meeting. Contact information is below.

Sincerely,

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cc: Mr. Grant Ritchie, Regional Director, MNRF
Mr. Paul Leale, Resource Management Supervisor, MNRF
LMAA Directors