



## **Celebrating Our Watersheds – Trails and Tributaries** **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Renfrew County Stewardship Forum – May 9, 2014**

### **Agenda**

9:30 Registration/morning refreshments

9:55 Welcome/Forum Introduction

Kathy Lindsay - Chair, Bonnechere River Watershed Project  
Ole Hendrickson - President, Ottawa River Institute

10:15 Shawna Babcock – Renfrew County Active Transportation Strategy presentation/Q&A

10:45 Alistair Baird – Renfrew County Trails Strategy presentation/Q&A

11:10 Jim Meness – Algonquins of Pikwakanagan- CN Rail/Trails

11:20 Round Table discussions

11:45 Plenary discussion

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Kathy Lindsay- Overview of efforts to steward our tributaries in Renfrew Co./Q&A

1:30 Rosalie Burton, Doug Skeggs, Gerald Rollins, Brian Whitehead - Muskrat Watershed Council update/Q&A

3:30 Evaluation Sheets and Adjourn



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## **Celebrating Our Watersheds – Trails and Tributaries**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Renfrew County Stewardship Forum – May 9, 2014**

The Bonnechere River Watershed Project and Ottawa River Institute co-sponsored the Third Annual Renfrew County Stewardship Forum, held May 9<sup>th</sup> at the Marguerite Centre in Pembroke, with a theme of “trails and tributaries”. Over 40 participants from around the County contributed to lively discussions on a range of topics.

Shawna Babcock, founder and Executive Director of the charitable organization KidActive, coordinator the local Healthy Communities Partnership, and Chair of the Physical Activity Network, kicked off the “trails” portion of the Forum with a presentation on active transportation: human-powered transportation for a range of activities, including commuting, shopping and recreation. Shawna pointed out a specific focus on active transportation creates benefits for health (countering obesity, diabetes, heart disease and improving productivity), community engagement, social interaction, access to the natural environment, jobs, tourism, local business development, and increased real estate values and tax base.

The County of Renfrew adopted an active transportation strategy last year and allocated funding for its implementation in this year’s budget – largely for paved shoulders for use by pedestrians and cyclists. Shawna congratulated the County for this action and for its commitment to public engagement in developing the strategy. She emphasized that active transportation is more than just sharing roads and paving shoulders. A key aspect is connecting natural areas, helping counter “nature deficit disorder”. Kids, in particular, want paths and want access to water. After Shawna’s talk, one participant noted that schools that have dropped their playground “rules” have seen decreased bullying and fewer injuries.

Alastair Baird, Manager of Economic Development for the County of Renfrew and head of the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association since 2003, drew on his background in the adventure tourism industry and his personal interest in white water paddling, cycling and skiing to provide an inside glimpse into the County’s future directions for trail development.

The County’s first major venture into this area is the K&P Trail, on a former railroad line that was originally planned to extend from Kingston to Pembroke, but which terminated in Renfrew. The County owns the 21-km segment from Renfrew to Calabogie, in the municipalities of Admaston-Bromley and Greater Madawaska. Development of the K&P Trail has involved creation of an advisory council, five public meetings and an approved management plan, making it a model for future county-owned trails. Alastair noted that the County of Lennox and Addington is considering a similar management plan for their segment of the rail line extending to Kingston, and that the K&P Trail connects in Renfrew to another rail trail owned by the municipalities of Horton and McNab-Braeside that extends into Arnprior.

The K&P Trail plan accommodates ATVs and snowmobiles, but no cars or trucks. The County clears windfall, and provides signage and gates to prevent larger vehicles and reduce trash. A local snowmobile club grooms the trail in winter, when it can also be used by cross-country skiers. Alastair noted that the County of Renfrew commissioned and “accepted” a broader study (the “Stantec Report”) of opportunities for trail development, but has not implemented it owing to resource limitations. The County’s main focus for future trail development is the recently abandoned CP rail line from Smiths Falls to Mattawa – much of it along the Ottawa River. Together with neighboring municipalities (Lanark County, Township of Papineau-Carleton), Renfrew County is negotiating to buy the right-of-way once it comes onto the market - the mandate is to “keep it intact”.

Jim Meness, representing the Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn, made some additional comments on the CP rail line. The Algonquins want meaningful participation in the development of this trail. Jim pointed out that the route includes historic portages along Ottawa River and intersects several crown land tracts upriver from Rolphton that the Algonquins have included as “selects” in their land claim negotiations. If the CP trail becomes a reality, they would like to develop stop-overs for travellers, cultural tourism, and erect kiosks describing the history of First Nations, trade and logging on the river.

Forum participants then broke into small groups to discuss ways to develop and increase use of land-based “green trails” and water-based “blue trails” in the County. Suggestions included better marketing, maps, guided tours, events like triathlons, and activities aimed at youth and seniors. Some participants supported formation of an inclusive, county-wide trail council to enhance collaboration and minimize conflicts between motorized and non-motorized trail users. See Morning Roundtable Discussion section below for more details.

The Forum agenda then shifted from trails to tributaries. Kathy Lindsay, program volunteer (since 2007) and chair of the Board (since 2009) of the Bonnechere River Watershed Project, began her presentation by stating that surveys show that local people value good water quality in the Bonnechere River watershed and are concerned about its degradation. Results of water quality testing and stream condition assessment done by her organization show cause for concern, yet environmental decision-making in the watershed is not well coordinated across municipalities and other local governments. Kathy said that different levels of government need to work together to monitor watershed health and promote best stewardship practices. The future of the watershed could be very different depending on the level of local engagement in decision-making and whether a long-term or short-term perspective prevails. The need for collaborative governance and collective action within the watershed is particularly pressing given impending effects of a changing climate.

Kathy pointed out that when action is voluntary, (e.g., keeping livestock out of water bodies or maintaining shoreline buffers is not legally required), there is a need to focus on problem areas, such as places where shoreline erosion is evident or people can't swim because of *E. coli* contamination.

Rosalie Burton, chair of the newly formed Muskrat Watershed Council, provided her perspective as a property owner in the Township of Whitewater Region who enjoys fishing, swimming, boating and canoeing in Muskrat Lake. She said "We do have a problem": Muskrat Lake has the highest phosphorus concentration of any lake in Ontario, with recurring algal blooms and impacts on property values, businesses, and the tax base. She called for a collaborative approach – "We're friends not enemies." Early steps are informing and educating residents; seeking partnerships with provincial agencies, municipalities, academic institutions, and non-government organizations; and applying for grants to do scientific studies and outreach.

Rosalie then introduced three other Council members. Doug Skeggs gave a sobering, well-illustrated presentation showing how drainage works have gradually transformed the landscape in the Snake River basin from wetlands to tile-drained croplands and waterways to municipal drains, to the detriment of the health of Muskrat Lake. He said "It's surprising that things were allowed to get this serious," adding that "If you wanted to develop a system to deliver nutrients straight into Muskrat Lake, you couldn't find a better way than what was done with the Snake." Brian Whitehead, who chairs the Council's science committee, noted that several studies have documented the problem and made recommendations, but are "sitting on the shelf." Local beef farmer and Council vice-chair Gerald Rollins described a new project funded by Ontario Farm & Food Care under a federal-provincial program, with multiple contributing partners including the Ministry of Environment, and led by Algonquin College in Pembroke, which should provide the most detailed information to date on pollution levels and sources.

In the question-and-answer session that followed it was noted that while livestock were once thought to be the problem, there is also concern about excess fertilizer run-off from fields, including through tile drains. Similar problems with phosphorus pollution are being experienced in other watersheds such as the South Nation River. New techniques being studied there such as drain tiles that can be shut off in the summer might work in the Muskrat watershed. It was emphasized that the focus isn't just on agriculture – there's "no source too small to look at" – and that community/grassroots acceptance must be part of the solution.

Feedback on the Stewardship Forum was positive, overall, in terms of the topics covered and opportunities for interaction, although some participants would have liked more time to report back on the small group discussions. One suggestion was that organizers actively promote the next Forum to a more diverse suite of organizations and to local and upper-tier governments.

## **Celebrating Our Watersheds – Trails and Tributaries**

### **Presenters**

#### **Shawna Babcock**

Shawna Babcock is the founder and Executive Director of the charitable organization KidActive, a Renfrew County grown charitable organization that supports every child's healthy development, connection to their community and access to natural spaces. KidActive is committed to improving our connections to nature through community development, multi sector partnerships - connecting action to vision and community engagement.

Shawna is currently the coordinator for the local Healthy Communities Partnership and Chair of the Physical Activity Network, Shawna has used her Degrees in Literature, History and Education from McGill University and Queen's University to shape a path that recognizes the value of integrating research, multiple and often non traditional sectors, knowledge sharing, best practices, communication and action.

#### **Alastair Baird**

Manager, Economic Development and Ottawa Valley Tourist Association  
County of Renfrew

Alastair has worked in Economic Development and Tourism Marketing for the County of Renfrew since 2003. Prior to that he was employed as Marketing Manager of Wilderness Tours Whitewater Rafting and Adventure Resort where he had previously been employed in office, retail, sales, photography and video management.

Interspersed with his employment in the adventure tourism industry Alastair was engaged in marketing for the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and various defence and security companies and environmental technology and service firms.

As a young person and student Alastair was engaged in many sports, but mostly those around water. To this day, he remains an avid whitewater paddler, marathon canoe racer, nordic and downhill skier, runner, cyclist, sea kayaker and wilderness river tripper. Along the way he served on the boards of paddling club and provincial and national paddling association boards and managed national and provincial canoeing championships. Sharing his obvious enthusiasm for waterways, paddle sports and the outdoors, he is also a canoe instructor and both a nordic and downhill ski instructor. He, his wife and two teenage children also operate a canoe business, Canadian Voyageur Adventures, offering unique 'historical eco-tourism' excursions in large heritage

Voyageur canoes on the Ottawa, Rideau, Petawawa and Madawaska Rivers and on Georgian Bay and in Algonquin Park.

**Kathy Lindsay**

Kathy Lindsay is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation resident of the Bonnechere River watershed. She has been active with the BRWP since 2007 and has been chair of the Board since 2009. She lives in Renfrew and has a family cottage on the Ottawa River just downstream of the confluence with the Bonnechere River. Professionally, she is Dr. Kathryn Lindsay having obtained a PhD in Biology from Carleton and is an Adjunct Research Professor in Biology and in Geography and Environmental Studies and a co-Director of the Geomatics and Landscape Ecology Research Lab built with funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation. Her graduate students have worked on habitat suitability modeling for wildlife, effects of landscape structure on farmland biodiversity, and systematic assessment for wildlife conservation both now and under a climate change future. She has been employed as a wildlife research ecologist with Environment Canada since 1986 conducting future scenario and ecological risk assessment studies at local to national scales in Canada, the USA and Panama to understand effects of land cover and land use (particularly agriculture and urbanization) on wildlife, water, and people, and to explore approaches for incorporating nature conservation into land-use policy, planning and decision-making.

**Rosalie Burton** accepted the position of Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council February 2014. Holding an Honours Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Ottawa, specializing in human resource management and information management and a Masters Certificate from Royal Roads University, British Columbia, Rosalie fosters continuous learning, partnership, stewardship and community involvement. A recently retired executive of the federal government Rosalie has experience in finance, strategic planning, law enforcement, agriculture and human resource management.

Born and raised in the Renfrew County Rosalie has a keen interest in preserving its natural beauty. She is currently a resident of Arnprior and a property owner in White Water Township. Rosalie enjoys fishing, swimming, boating and canoeing at Muskrat Lake.

## **Attendance List of Organizations**

Algonquin College, Pembroke Campus – Faculty members, Ian Pineau, Sarah Hall, Julie Sylvester, and summer co-op students, Tanner Roderick and Allison Rosien

Algonquins of Pikwakanagan – Jim Meness, Dan Kohoko

Bonnechere River Watershed Project – Science Horizons Intern, William Miller, Riverwatch coordinator, Ben Watson, and summer co-op students, Caio Souza Fonseca and Olga Rocha Silva

Friends of Bonnechere Parks – Kip Bradfield

Innovation Advancement – Dorothy Garlough

Jp2g Consultants Inc. – Brian Whitehead, Mike Fadock, Eric Withers, Jim Hunton, Bryana Kenny

Ministry of Agriculture and Food – Brittney Wielgos

Ministry of Natural Resources, Pembroke – Karen Stokes

Round Lake Property Owners Assoc. – Wendy Engel, Larry Wade, Andy Buffam

Renfrew County Stewardship Council and PAFN – Rob Cunningham

Township of Greater Madawaska – Karin Lehnhardt

Township of Laurentian Hills – Bruce Boucher

Also – Mike Boire, Pat Washington, Don Washington

## **Organizing Committee**

Kathy Lindsay – Chair, Bonnechere River Watershed Project

Ole Hendrickson - President, Ottawa River Institute

John Almstedt – Director, Bonnechere River Watershed Project and Ottawa River Institute

Cheryl Keetch – Coordinator, Bonnechere River Watershed Project and Ottawa River Institute

## **Morning Roundtable Question**

What are some potential next steps and collaborations, and how can the economics of trails be sustained for:

- Land-based 'Green' Trails ie. hiking, walking, biking
- Water-based 'Blue' Trails ie. Lakes, streams, Celebrate Our River paddle series

## **Morning Roundtable Answers and Suggestions:**

- Make access easy
- Youth involvement ie. a triathlon, with community donations to support it
  
- Good marketing ie. maps
- Introduction of a conservation authority or similar
- Promote blue water trails, as much as green trails
  
- Involve youth- participation ie bike trails
- Camping areas for overnight stays along the trail
  
- Collaborations of all types ie. Algonquins of Pikwakanagan, tourist associations
- Tourism/excursions would generate income towards sustainability
  
- Community support essential ie. people and user groups who will use it and promote it
  
- Guided trips and excursions – green and blue
- Council to harmonize users – Motorized machines vs Active Transportation
- Trails for all ages
  
- Cultural norms dictate infrastructure and use- cultural change would be helpful ie. awareness and engagement - priority for community becomes priority for elected officials



## **Lessons Learned**

### **What worked well**

- Format of morning on trails and afternoon on tributaries worked well.
- Issue topics were well chosen and presented
- Break-out session worked well but needed more time and attention to reporting out
- Students/youth add energy, enthusiasm and a different perspective
- Important to have good food

### **For the next time**

- Check with other organizations before selecting date ie. conflict with Shaw Woods event
- Presentations could be shorter especially after lunch; possibly a review of the intended presentations to ensure adequate time allotments
- Need more time for group discussions, plenary and next steps
- Interesting set of future topics proposed by participants (see Evaluation section below)
- Consult with local governments and organizations in advance of setting the agenda
- Include representative from local government and other organizations in the organizing committee
- Actively promote the event to a more diverse suite of organizations and to local and upper-tier government i.e. MNR representation

### **Next Steps**

- Share the Forum report with participants and post on the web.
- Seek partnership and funding opportunities to continue the collaboration initiated at the forum event.

## **Evaluation Form Feedback (21 respondents)**

### **1. Did you find the event useful? What was the best part in your opinion?**

Yes – 20

Muskrat Watershed Council presentation – 6

Renfrew County Trails Presentation – 5

Presentations in general - 3

Active Transportation presentation - 2

Algonquins of Pikwakanagan Presentation – 2

Meeting people/networking – 2

Group Discussions and Q and A's -2

BRWP Presentation - 1

Maps of Trails – 1

### **2. Would you attend this event if held again next year?**

Yes – 18

Maybe – 3

### **3. If yes, would you like to be involved in planning for next year's forum?**

Yes – 3

Maybe – 6

No – 12

### **4. Do you have suggestions for future stewardship forum themes or speakers?**

- Historical/Cultural value of watersheds (archaeological, landscape, built settlement, exploration, aboriginals, etc)
- Update on Muskrat Watershed Council
- Help for landowners
- Conservation Authority operations and programs
- Update to this years topics
- Best practices for communities to develop sustainability into their plans
- More agricultural representation
- Creating a uniform stewardship program i.e. what is involved, and would help organization work together
- Cottage associations and how they fit into watershed management

### **5. Can you think of any other groups/organizations/individuals that were not in attendance/represented at the Forum that should be invited in future years?**

- Watershed-based recreation/tourism organizations
- MNR
- Ontario Woodlot Assoc
- Cattlemen's Assoc
- Soil and Crop Assoc

- MacNamara Field Naturalists
- More Municipal Councillors – 4 attended
- Stewardship Council
- Anyone with an interest
- CPAWS Ottawa Valley Chapter
- Waste Water Treatment People

#### **6. Other comments**

Suggest contacting lake associations at least once annually

Make forum more open to the public so residents can be informed of issues