

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2018 FOCA FALL SEMINAR

COTTAGE COUNTRY: What's Coming & How to Prepare for it

FOCA reports that 120 Lake Association representatives met at the 2018 FOCA Fall Seminar at the Boulevard Club in Toronto on October 27th. I had the pleasure of attending that meeting and here is a short summary of the highlights, most of which derives from the summary prepared by Michelle Lewin of FOCA.

INTRODUCTORY – FOCA'S WORK

The President of FOCA, Marlin Horst opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and spent some time talking about FOCA initiatives:

1. One FOCA initiative was intended to encourage waterfront owners to vote in the **October Municipal Elections**, in those ridings where their cottages are located. FOCA will be seeking feedback in their next E-Alert to find out if people voted. FOCA reports that in Ontario 120 municipalities acclaimed their head of council while in 26 municipalities the entire council was acclaimed.
2. THE **FOCA AGM and Spring Seminar** will be held March 2, 2019.
3. FOCA released a 10-minute video about **rural septic systems**—their parts, maintenance and signs of trouble. Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VeTGVnkYA4>.

FOCA has brochures on Getting to Know your Septic and on Septic Systems, which are available to members on request.

4. FOCA's recently released report titled: The Role of Waterfront Property Owners in Rural Economic Development. It is available at the FOCA website: <https://foca.on.ca/wpo2018/>.
5. FOCA has been working on its new strategic plan 20/20, using recent survey data to frame the organization's goals for the near future. FOCA's primary roles of communication, education and advocacy will continue. However, the surveys indicate that members want FOCA to "inform the public", "raise awareness" and "be inclusive of permanent and seasonal waterfront owners and visitors". Specific issues noted are cottage rentals, boating issues and assistance for new members of lake associations. There are resources on the FOCA website that assist with each of these specific issues.

SPEAKERS and GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Dan Sandink, - Rain, wind & fire: Reducing risk and learning from experience in Ontario's cottage country

Dan is the Director of Research with the Canadian Institute of Catastrophic Loss Reduction. This is an association funded by the insurance industry for the purpose of focussing on property level risk reduction. One of his messages was that cottages are not covered under Ontario's Disaster Relief Program and coverages for buildings built in the flood plains zones (as mapped by the Conservation Authorities) are either extremely expensive, or non-existent. He talked about flooding, extreme rainfall, tornadoes and wildfires. He referenced the Ontario Fire Smart Manual which is available at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/home-owners-firesmart-manual> and the FOCA fire resources available at: <https://foca.on.ca/fire-safety-overview/>.

Dan's slides are available at:

<https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Dan-Sandink-ICLR-presentation-FOCA-Fall-Seminar-2018.pdf>.

In his slides he points out some of the vulnerabilities in construction that lead to losses and he also suggests some ideas for reducing risk of loss to property. Finally, his slides contain a link to more sources of information on reducing risk.

Table Discussion –Emergency Preparedness and Tips for Resilient Waterfront Communities

During the morning, time was allotted so that the group at each table could interact and answer a set of pre-determined questions concerning their experiences with disasters at the cottage. Ninety percent of participants had experienced power outages, floods, high winds etc. at their cottages and until then were not well prepared. FOCA has prepared a two-page summary of the discussion which dealt with gaps in personal preparedness and what Lake Associations can do. You can find the report at:

<https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/FOCA-Emergency-Discussion-Group-Notes-Oct2018.pdf>

Emily Shapiera—Lake Partner Program (LPP) Update

Emily is responsible for processing the samples and data that the 600 “citizen scientists” collect from 550 lakes at 800 sites. The program has been in place for 16 years and is the largest program of its kind in Canada. Here are the general results for the data and tests for our waters:

1. Total Phosphorus (TP)—the more of it in the water the more susceptible the lake is to algal blooms. TP is the most important factor measured and the provincial standard is “under 20 mg per litre”. The studies have found that 93% of the partner lakes are under this standard and there have been no serious changes over 10 years—TP is stable.
2. Calcium (Ca)--needed for zoo plankton and other organisms. Ca is declining due to acid rain in the 1970, and timber harvesting. The ideal range is 1.5 to 2.00 mg/litre and 15% of the lakes in the study are below the acceptable range.
3. Water Clarity (measured with the secchi disk)--the clearest lakes are in granite bedrock areas. The 14-year trends show that 65% of the lakes are not showing any changes, 14% are getting clearer and 21% are getting less clear due to dissolved organic carbon and algal blooms. Dissolved organic carbon gives the water a brown orange colour. Unfortunately, the organic carbon content is hard to analyse as it only lasts for 3 weeks and there are times when samples do not get to the lab and are not analysed within 3 weeks of collection.

4. Chlorine (Cl)—large amounts of road salt are being used and the Cl is now in the soil and in run off in the lakes. The lab is building up a data base to track the movement of the Cl.

Emily reported that the LPP data is being used for academic research to track algal blooms, calcium decline and property values. It is also being used by Lake Associations to improve the quality of their lakes and by governments to develop policy and information (e.g. the Lakeshore Capacity Assessment Handbook). For more details on the testing results and uses of the data see Emily's slides at:

<https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Lake-Partner-Program-presentation-Fall-Seminar-2018.pdf>

Emily's final remark was that many of the LPP volunteers who do the sampling have been doing so for many years. She encourages the Lake Stewards to take the young kids with them when they do their surveys, so that the kids will develop an interest and may become successor Lake Stewards.

Before Emily's presentation on the Lake Partner Program, the President pointed out that the current Ontario government may consider cutting transfer payments to partners and service delivery agents, such as the funding for the LPP. He urged associations to sign and forward letters to their home MPPs, their cottage MPPs and the Minister advising of the value of the LPP and the loss if that program were to be discontinued. Standard form letters are available on slide #4 of Emily's slides noted above.

Anne Egan – Septic Maintenance Programs Update

Anne is President of the Ontario Onsite Wastewater Association which has been working with FOCA and others to investigate septic maintenance programs. The study is not yet completed, but Anne gave some preliminary results. Under the *Clean Water Act*, a re-inspection of a septic system is mandatory every 5 years if it is located in a Source Water Protection area or within 100 metres of Lake Simcoe or its tributaries. Otherwise it is up to the municipality to enact a bylaw if it wishes to make re-inspections mandatory. There are no real guidelines for what is required in an inspection. If you wish to review Anne's slides, find out more about the operation and maintenance of a septic system and get an update on the project go to:

<https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Anne-Egan-Septic-Maintenance-Programs-presentation-FOCA-Fall-Seminar-2018.pdf>.

Holly Shipclark – Climate Adaptation: Creating Resilient Shorelines

Holly works with the Kawartha Conservation Authority and she referenced the FOCA pamphlet that was included in the RLCA membership drive in 2018: *Managing Your Waterfront Property in a Changing Climate*. Holly noted that we are experiencing dryer soils, increased erosion, more ice-free days and an earlier spring freshet. She spoke about "ecological resilience" and "engineering resilience" and provided a list of resources for more information on what action can be taken to combat the changes in climate. Emily also referenced the fire resources mentioned by Dan Sandick and noted above. See her slides at:

<https://foca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Holly-Shipclark-Creating-Resilient-Shorelines-FOCA-Fall-Seminar-2018.pdf>