

2018 YEAR IN REVIEW



FOCA is...
*protecting thriving and sustainable
waterfronts across Ontario*

F  **C A**
Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations

Strategy, Action & Results

FOCA had a busy and productive 2018, with more members, more media coverage, and more on-the-road meetings and events than ever before.

The Board of Directors led a strategic planning process that included an extensive member survey, and has led to the creation of **FOCA's 20/20 Vision: A Strategic Framework for the period 2018-2020**. Review it, here: <https://foca.on.ca/our-work/>

FOCA's efforts in 2018 focused on four priority areas:



Strengthening Lake Associations



Effective Government Relations



Science into Action



Bridging Gaps in our Rural Communities

Throughout 2018 we continued FOCA's successful communications in print and digital formats, and expanded our social media efforts.

We managed ongoing files and new programs and collaborated with academic and environmental partners on new reports.

FOCA rallied our rural communities to participate in the municipal election process and supported our 500+ lake association members across Ontario with more tools and resources to help them thrive.

Read more about our 2018 accomplishments, on the following pages.



Strengthening Lake Associations

- FOCA circulated to members new benchmark statistics on Lake and Road Associations from our 2018 member survey. Contact the office for your copy. Call 705-749-3622 or email info@foca.on.ca
- FOCA created new print and video resources on important topics for Associations including Septic System design, maintenance & signs of trouble; and a new video featuring **"Lake Associations in Action."** Visit <https://foca.on.ca/publications/> for links.
- Ongoing risk management for Associations was made available through the FOCA Insurance Program. Find out more: <https://foca.on.ca/insurance-risk-management/>.

MORE ABOUT INSURANCE

The FOCA Insurance Program for Associations is underwritten by Aviva Canada, and administered exclusively by Cade Associates Insurance Brokers. 2018 saw many catastrophes and commercial property losses across the insurance industry. FOCA has learned that industry-wide rate increases are to be expected in 2019, for CGL (Commercial General Liability) as well as personal insurance products such as CottageFirst, the insurance solution for FOCA member families underwritten by Travelers Canada.

- FOCA held sold-out member events including our Spring Seminar (titled **"Lake Associations: rising to the challenge"**) with sessions on cottage country first aid, responsible cottage rental, and road issues; and our Fall Seminar on **emergency preparedness and extreme weather** in cottage country; as well as **cottage succession seminars** with estate lawyer Peter Lillico (Keeping the 'Family' in the Family Cottage; Cottage Sharing Agreements; Targeting Tax). Members can download summaries and slide presentations, here: <https://foca.on.ca/events/>.

MORE ABOUT EVENTS

In March, 2018 at the FOCA Annual General Meeting and Spring Seminar, the **FOCA Achievement Award** was presented to the **Skootamatta District Ratepayers Association**, for their successful efforts to increase membership engagement in the association!



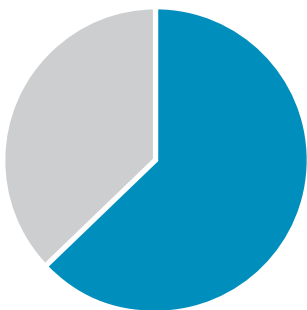
Comments from FOCA's 2018 event attendees:

About the AGM & Spring Seminar: "This is the very best and only event where you can access all of your fellow cottage associations' leaders in one place, and gain insights on the great work happening throughout the province!"

About the Fall Seminar: "[The sessions] were all so informative and reminded me, once again, that we are increasingly in a dangerous place environmentally, which just makes FOCA all that much more important."



43%
of Associations
covered under the
FOCA Insurance Program
include some road
maintenance among their
reported activities.



63%
of the groups
in the FOCA Insurance
Program are Incorporated
(note: the average size
of such groups is around
100 members)

Effective Government Relations

Vote for Your Future



FOCA created a Municipal Election engagement guide for Lake Associations titled **“Vote for your Future”** with tips about ways to spread the word, hosting candidates meetings, and much more.

Our goal was to see more seasonal residents participate in elections in their waterfront municipalities.

Government Liaison



FOCA maintained year-round liaison with government officials and partners on key and emerging issues, including the transition from the Ontario Municipal Board to the **Local Planning Approval Tribunal model** for land use planning decisions.

Now your new Municipal Government is in place for the next 4 years. Watch for more tools from FOCA in 2019 about why and how lake associations should engage with their councils.



Did you vote?

Throughout the year, FOCA encouraged you to participate in the election process and gave you tools to do so.



For over 55 years,

FOCA has been the voice of the waterfront. Find out more: <https://foca.on.ca/our-history/>



OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE GROWS

Followers on two of our social media channels—Facebook and Twitter—grew 40% each, over the past year! Thanks for connecting with us there, for quick updates and news posts.

If you, or your Association, has recently joined social media, connect with FOCA today.

Environmental Advocacy



FOCA submitted comments to the Environmental Registry, and campaigned with our colleagues across Ontario to write MPPs in support of the office of the **Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO)**. We remain committed to the importance of an independent environmental watchdog. Thousands of Ontarians signed the online petition to the Premier, in support of the ECO (see <http://www.greenprosperity.ca/eco/>). FOCA was very encouraged to see so many of our member Lake Associations represented on that list!



5,000 Ontarians

petitioned the Premier, in support of the ECO.

Lake Partner Program



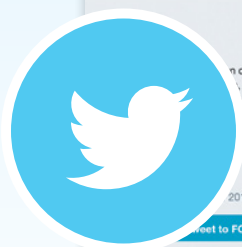
In the face of provincial spending changes, FOCA rallied our constituents to write the **Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks** in support of the ongoing efforts of the **Lake Partner Program** of volunteer water monitoring of Ontario's inland lakes.

Our members responded to the call and copied FOCA on their own letters to the Premier and Ministers, in support of the Lake Partner Program, and the Office of the ECO.



47 FOCA members

answered FOCA's calls-to-action in late 2018 and wrote the Premier and Ministers.



TWEETING THE LATEST NEWS

Twitter (https://twitter.com/foca_info) serves FOCA as a news feed, and a place to connect with our environmental, media and governmental colleagues.

FOCA's tweets in 2018 garnered over 70,000 impressions.

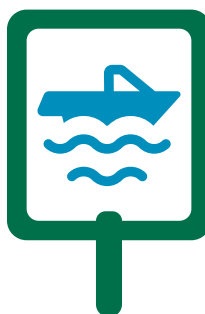
Science into Action

- FOCA's 2018 *Aquatic Invasive Species Program* supported 29 projects with our member associations, to install educational signs at boat launches, to commission experts to perform lake inventories, to manage aquatic invasive species populations and to raise awareness about invasives. Get more information here: <https://foca.on.ca/aquatic-invasive-species-program/>
- Ongoing water monitoring by FOCA's Lake Stewards continued at hundreds of locations across Ontario, for the *Lake Partner Program*. Find out more at <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program-overview/>
- In response to member inquiries, FOCA published a new resource: *A Guide to Citizen Science at the Lake*, outlining water sampling considerations for volunteer monitors. Download a copy at <https://foca.on.ca/citizen-science/>
- FOCA worked with partners in academia, government and community organizations to communicate about water quality, climate change, and other environmental issues. Keep up-to-date with developments: <https://foca.on.ca/latestnews/>



\$21,000+
was allocated

in 2018 by FOCA to Member Associations for aquatic invasive species projects in cottage country.



200+
outdoor signs

were distributed across Ontario, reminding boaters to Clean+Drain+Dry their vehicles to prevent transporting invasive species between waterbodies



FRIENDS ON FACEBOOK

On Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/foca.on.ca>) we had high engagement on 2018 posts about invasive species, in particular.

Our September post, **"Cottage closing season – don't be the reason (for spreading invasive species)"** reached over **41,000 Facebook feeds** and enjoyed **194 shares**. Thank you for helping us to spread the word.

Bridging Gaps in our Rural Communities

- FOCA released a report titled, *The Role of Waterfront Property Owners (WPO) in Economic Development in Rural Ontario*, resulting in much media attention. The study includes results of a survey of WPO in eastern Ontario, peer stories of those who have already made the move to live and work from their waterfront communities, and interviews with municipal partners on the potential to engage WPO as untapped resources for enhanced economic development. Get the details, here: <https://foca.on.ca/wpo2018/>
- FOCA undertook a collaborative research project with industry & academic partners to explore municipal septic maintenance programs. The project documents successes, challenges and lessons-learned across Ontario. Watch for the final report in 2019. <https://foca.on.ca/septic-systems/>
- FOCA's Elert (monthly e-news) was circulated across Ontario cottage country to thousands of subscribers, government partners, and environmental colleagues. Get on the Elert list for important updates, even in the off-season: http://bit.ly/FOCA_Elert.



55%
average open rate

for FOCA's Elert, in the first 48 hours after sending, means you like us – a lot. Tell a friend about the Elert.



FOCA Cottage Country Septic System Video

WATCH US ON YOUTUBE

Videos on FOCA's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/FOCAprograms>) had over 25,600 minutes of watch-time in 2018.

Leading the pack: "Cottage Country Septic Systems" is a 10-minute overview about rural septic systems, their parts, maintenance and signs of trouble. This video alone had over 3,500 views. Have you shared this resource with others, yet?

Membership Survey 2018

In August 2018, FOCA sent a survey invitation to over 7,000 members, partners and Elert (e-news) subscribers.

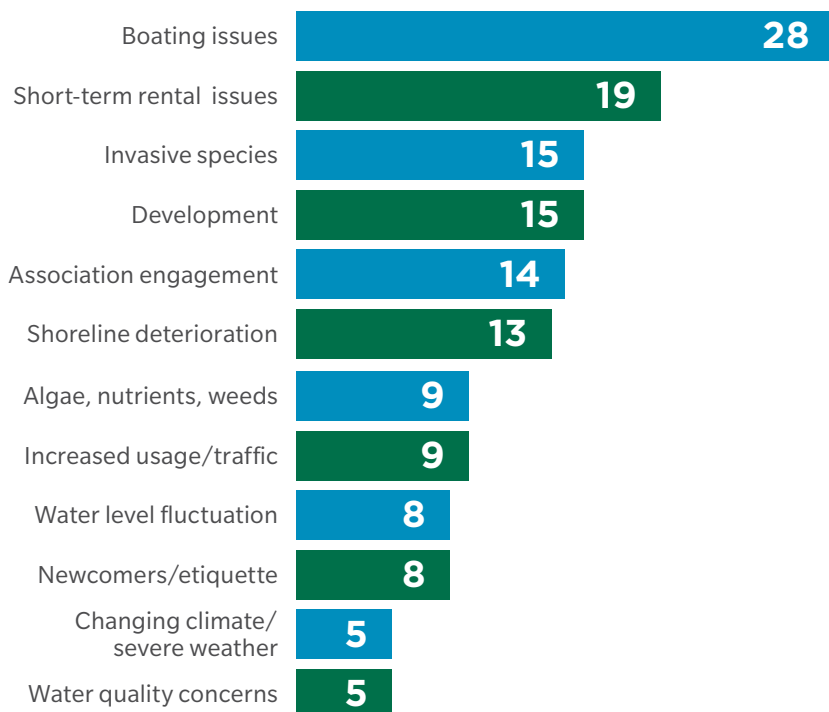
Altogether, we received 1,298 responses to the survey. Approximately one-quarter of our 500 member Associations' Presidents or Chairs participated; these respondents received an additional series of questions, targeted at association membership statistics and emerging trends. The response rate from small versus large associations was proportional to FOCA's overall membership figures (*see pie chart*).

FOCA has made the survey results available to our members, broken down for small-, medium-, and large-sized lake associations, and for road associations.

Contact the office for your digital copy:
info@foca.on.ca • 705-749-3622

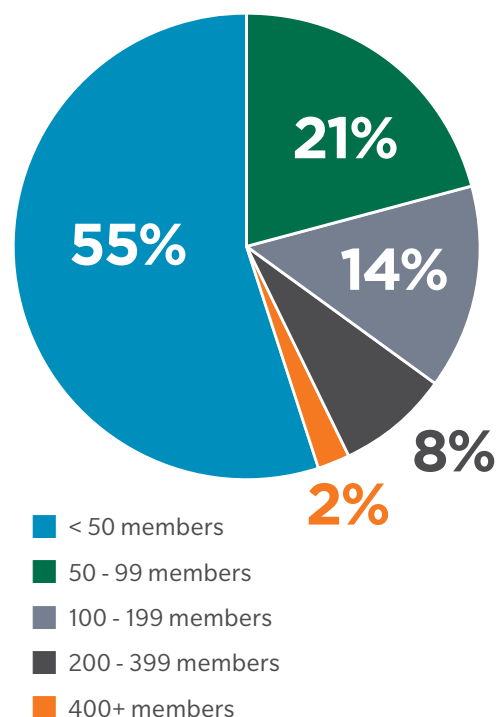
Here are some survey highlights:

What changes are you observing, affecting your waterbody, Association or cottage country experience in general?

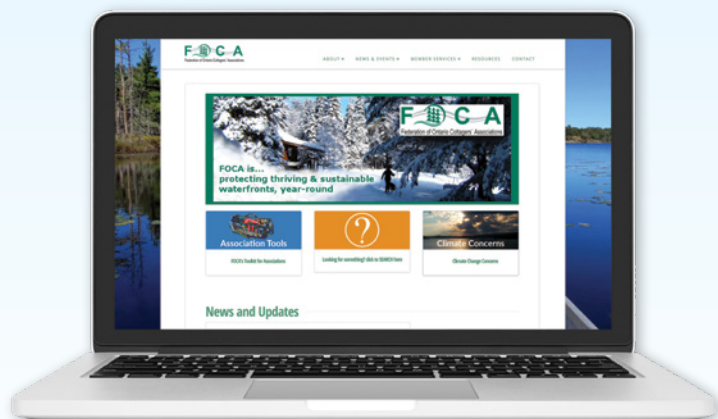


* Responses from Member Presidents/Chairs

How large or small are FOCA's ~500 member Associations?



Source: 2018 FOCA Member Statistics



FOCA'S DIGITAL DETAILS

Visits to the FOCA website (<https://foca.on.ca/>) were **up by 11.5% this year**, with more than **37,147 unique users** in 2018. One-third of all visits now occur on mobile devices, and FOCA will be making updates to the web platform in 2019 to continue to accommodate our users.

Remember: If you've got a cottage-country question, FOCA likely has the answer! Start your search by keyword, here: <https://foca.on.ca/resources/>.

Top issues & FOCA's primary roles

From all 1,298 survey respondents, recurring concerns included:

- water quality and water levels
- septic systems
- invasive species
- land use planning
- bylaw enforcement
- property taxation, and more.

Responses to the survey reflect FOCA's dual personality, with an emphasis on both environmental AND 'pocket-book' issues. **The top word you used to describe FOCA was "informative"** (or "informed"), followed by "relevant", "helpful", "proactive" and "knowledgeable".

You told us you want FOCA to:



Focus on **communication, education and advocacy**



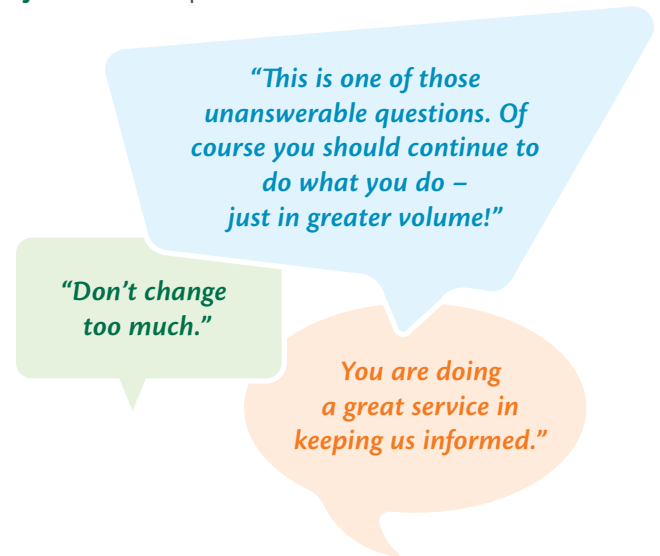
Keep members informed on ongoing priority files and emerging topics



Remain non-partisan while acting as the **voice of the waterfront**.

Our membership's input matters

To make space for these many priorities, FOCA asked **what we should do LESS OF over the next three years**. You responded:

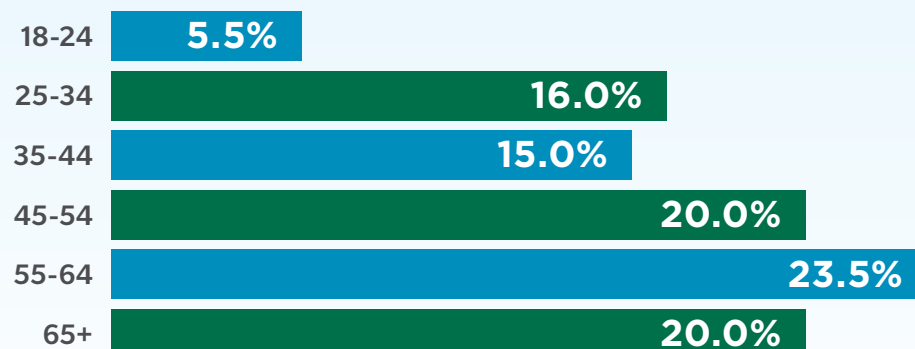


Finally, you challenged FOCA to **look beyond our traditional 'lakefront' audience**:

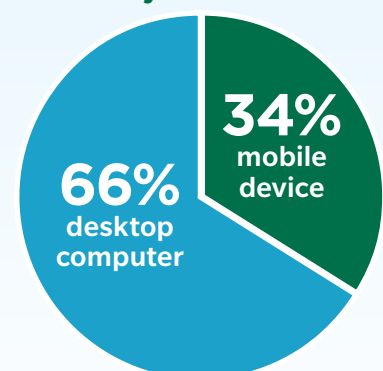


Thank you to everyone who took time to share their thoughts and impressions in the survey!

FOCA website users, by age:



By device:



2018 HIGHLIGHTS



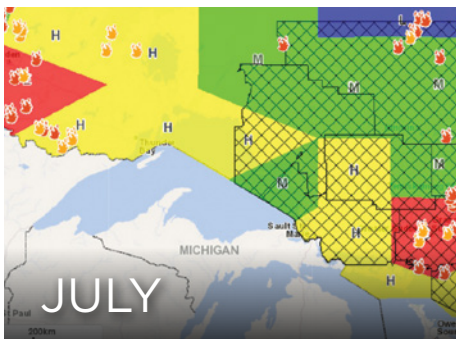
FOCA presented at the **Rural Ontario Municipal Association's annual conference** about septic systems.



FOCA launched "**Vote for your Future**" election engagement campaign, looking ahead to provincial (June) and municipal (October) election dates.



FOCA's video "**Lake Associations**" was selected for inclusion in the **Reel Green Film Fest** in Manitoba. Our **Annual General Meeting & Spring Seminar** brought together more than 100 lake association representatives from across Ontario.



FOCA was interviewed on topics such as real estate values and foreign ownership, the Algonquin Land Claim, and FOCA's waterfront economics report. Our **Lake Stewards Newsletter** was mailed in early July. The month ended with forest fires threatening parts of cottage country, as shown in the Ontario Fire Map of July 31st, above.

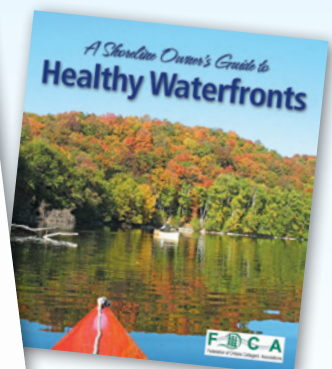


FOCA was "on-the-road" to dozens of member events. Our member Associations wrapped up their **2018 invasive species projects** and began submitting program reports and pictures to FOCA. As part of the Board's strategic planning process, FOCA sent out an invitation to take **our member survey**.



Terry Rees was on Lake Erie off Long Point on "**carp patrol**" with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Terry also presented the results of FOCA's WPO report to the Ontario East Municipal Conference.

HOW MANY OF THESE FOCA PUBLICATIONS DID YOU READ IN 2018?





FOCA released our report on **The Role of Waterfront Property Owners in Economic Development in Rural Ontario**



Marlin Horst became the President of the **FOCA Board of Directors**, and new Board members Pat Drew and John Hickey were welcomed. Emily Shapiera joined FOCA as the Assistant Lake Stewardship Coordinator of the **Lake Partner Program**. Find out more: foca.on.ca/about/team



FOCA spoke at member and regional events across Ontario, including the **"Lake Stewardship Planning Seminar"** in North Frontenac Township, **Cottage Succession** Seminars in Haliburton, Muskoka and the Kawarthas, and "Poop Talk and Aliens" (**Septics and Invasives**) in Maynooth.



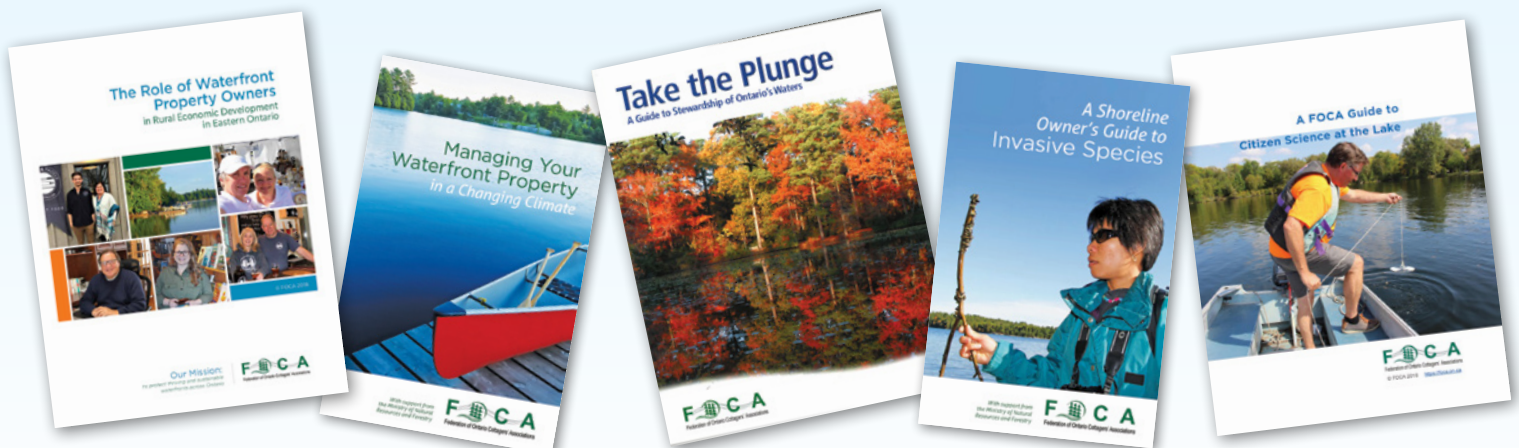
FOCA hosted another sold-out event: The **Fall Seminar for Associations** about cottage country extreme weather and preparedness.



After advocacy by FOCA and others, a **Coroner's inquest** was finally completed into the investigation of a 2013 fatal cottage country boating accident and 911 response. We participated with national partners at a roundtable in Ottawa on **community-based water monitoring**.



FOCA submitted comments in opposition to the **Cormorant Hunt Proposal**, and **Bill 66**.





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