

2021 YEAR IN REVIEW



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

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

What FOCA Sees

From the Executive Director &
President of the Board of Directors

As we reflect on 2021, we are pleased to report that FOCA and our members remain strong, and a vital part of rural waterfront Ontario.

Despite all the challenges of the past two years, people continue to support their local associations, and these associations are well engaged with FOCA. Though it has been a very unusual time, our community has adapted and found new ways to thrive. Together, we'll keep the focus on the important issues facing waterfront Ontario.

FOCA's community is:

525+ **Member Associations**
representing 50,000 waterfront families

338 **Additional Annual Supporters:**
Individuals, Families, "Friends of FOCA" and
"Waterfront Champions"

24 **Corporate Sponsors** whose annual
contributions support FOCA's investment in
the future of Ontario's freshwater communities

And to our great FOCA team:

Thank you to our dedicated volunteer Board of Directors, our small but mighty staff, and to all of you who support FOCA's ongoing work and **Our Vision** of *"thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario, now and for future generations!"*



Terry Rees
FOCA Executive Director



Ian Crawford
FOCA Board President

OUR MISSION

FOCA effectively serves and represents Ontario's lake associations, waterfront property owners (WPO) and waterfront communities through education, communication and government advocacy.

Strategic Priorities



Promoting Healthy Lands,
Lakes and Rivers



Championing Affordable
and Safe Rural Living



Serving Lake and
Road Associations



Building Organizational Capacity
& Strategic Partnerships



Advocating for
Responsive Government



Fostering Community
in Rural Ontario

Digital Expansion

While in-person events were mostly cancelled in 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic, FOCA was busier than ever. Our digital reach has never been stronger and engagement with our community was at an all-time high.



170

**Fall Seminar
participants**

presented virtually
for Lake Associations
in November 2021

*(that is the highest participation
rate of the past decade)*



813

**attendees at
12 member AGMs**

facilitated by FOCA on Zoom to
help members conduct annual
association business digitally

**1 in 3 reported
more attendees**

than regular in-person AGMs



3,346

**viewers of 18
topical webinars**

presented by FOCA on
subjects ranging from
environmental and invasive
species concerns, to
cardiac safety and cottage
succession planning

Add this to our website, social media channels and Elert statistics, FOCA's messaging reached over 750,000 people throughout 2021! What a year. See the following pages for more details.

Supporting Our Communities

In our rural communities, things are changing: the exodus to the lake is like nothing we've seen before. Never has it been more important to have a voice for waterfront Ontario – FOCA's role for the past 60 years.



Changing Demographics & Succession Plans

Changes in population are the most important driver of house prices in areas of the province outside of large urban centers, and house price appreciation accelerated in 2021, eroding housing affordability. We've seen the signs of a population shift away from large urban centers, toward rural Ontario. This influx has implications for rural utilities, internet and cell availability, garbage, roads, retail, and contractor services in our small towns. FOCA continues to participate in discussions around rural economic recovery, and to educate waterfront property owners about how to manage their own cottage or camp succession plan, as generational shifts in ownership continue.

Rural Roads & Short-term Rentals

FOCA stepped up our work around rural roads, as more of our members stretch their time in cottage country into the shoulder and winter seasons, and as liability and maintenance issues have continued to pressure road managers. We are also investigating municipal responses to short term rentals, and continue to support a philosophy of responsible use. FOCA has Working Groups devoted to both roads and rentals, and will continue to release information and facilitate member guidance, such as the *"Ask us anything" session* about roads at the *2021 Fall Seminar*.

SOCIAL MEDIA SUCCESS

500,000
combined reach
through FOCA's
various social
media channels

 355,179
 97,900
 54,297



53%
increase
in YouTube
channel
subscribers

Sustainability

FOCA reached out to new waterfront property owners with important messages about sustainability, through our participation in the *2021 Virtual Spring Cottage Life* event and by publishing a new webpage devoted to welcoming folks to cottage country: <https://foca.on.ca/cottage/>. We encourage you to share the video resources and links on this webpage with new owners in your waterfront communities. Contact FOCA for more about creating a **“Welcome” sheet or binder** to help folks connect with the local lake association, and increase your membership numbers in 2022.



Be #WakeAware

FOCA launched the campaign in 2021 with our partners at the *Muskoka Lakes Association* and *Safe Quiet Lakes* in response to recent increases in boat traffic, boat power, and new inexperienced drivers. Find the video and related resources on the campaign website bewakeaware.com. Please share this digital resource through your association e-news, website, and social media pages, now and throughout the 2022 boating season.



“Power Line” Campaign

FOCA encouraged property owners to send letters to MPPs in 2021, letting them know how the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) decision to eliminate the seasonal rate class of Hydro One electricity customers will negatively impact tens of thousands of families. In its final decision released late in 2021, the OEB acknowledged the impact of all this stakeholder input, and has directed that the changes be phased in over a decade which will save seasonal customers thousands of dollars in the interim. FOCA remains an intervenor at the OEB and continues to post updates here: <https://foca.on.ca/electricity-pricing/>.

1,956 letters and calls delivered to MPPs.
Thanks for answering our call-to-action!



INCREASED COMMUNICATION



174,948
Elerts sent

with 58% open rate

*37% above the industry average,
according to our e-provider,
Constant Contact software*



30%
increase

in Evert subscribers

*We passed our initial goal of
15,000. Help us reach our
new goal of 50,000*

Environmental Programs

FOCA was busy throughout 2021 on many environmental committees and collaboratives, working on issues that affect all waterfront property owners including land use planning, shoreland best practices, climate change adaption, and source water protection.

Clean, Drain, Dry

The environment is feeling the impact of rural in-migration as well. With international borders shut for parts of the year, domestic travel increased in 2021. There were more boats on our Ontario waterways than ever before, and we recognize boats as a potential pathway of spread for aquatic invasive species. FOCA supported the 2021 move to amend the Ontario *Invasive Species Act*: starting in January 2022, watercraft are regulated as a carrier of invasive species. We will help our member groups continue to spread the word about the “*Clean, Drain, Dry*” principles of boat management.

IsampleON

In 2021, FOCA helped to launch “*IsampleON*” (Invasive Species Awareness and Monitoring Program for Lakes Education Ontario), a citizen science program for on-the-ground invasive species prevention and detection. Volunteers at 25 selected high-risk lakes monitored for invasive mussels and spiny waterflea, and also collected water samples for some cutting-edge eDNA analysis. Find out more here: <https://foca.on.ca/isampleon/>.



Green Shovels Collaborative

Through the *Green Shovels Collaborative*, of which FOCA is a partner, FOCA funded projects undertaken by our member associations to identify and manage invasive Phragmites at Ontario waterfronts. Find out more, and download the new Best Management Practices guide, here: <https://foca.on.ca/phragmites/>.

14 projects funded in 2021; over \$35,000 in funding provided to our member Associations for on-the-ground management of invasive Phragmites!

Invasive Carp Species

In partnership with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, FOCA continues to inform members on the Great Lakes about Asian Carps awareness and prevention. Our members are the eyes on the front line of this invasion, and we urge you to watch the webinar on identifying Grass Carp, posted to our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/carp>.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT



148,596
webpage views



62,000
online users



OUR INVOLVEMENT

FOCA's committee participation includes:

- Muskoka Economic Recovery Task Force
- CELA Healthy Great Lakes Advisory Committee
- Green Shovels Invasive Species Collaborative
- Phragmites Technical Advisory Group
- Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment Participant
- Abandoned Fuel Sites in Ontario Stakeholder Group
- District of Muskoka New Leaf Climate Change Community Working Group
- Ontario Recreational Boating Advisory Committee
- Planning For Shorelands Steering Committee
- Canadian Safe Boating Council
- Asian Carp Partnership Committee
- Ontario Biodiversity Council

Lake Partner Program

The province-wide Lake Partner Program (LPP) has been a shining beacon of citizen science for over a quarter of a century. FOCA's Lake Partners are the backbone of the program, noting water clarity changes through Secchi disk observations and collecting annual water samples which are analyzed by scientists in the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation & Parks.

This data is available online – now also part of the new Great Lakes DataStream launched in 2021 – and the data informs policy and program decisions, including ongoing research about trends in algal bloom frequency in Ontario lakes. Despite the pandemic, LPP sampling continued in 2021, and just over 100 new volunteers joined the program! Learn more here: <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program/>.

700+ LPP volunteers sampling more than 550 lakes at over 950 sampling locations



1,635
responses

to 12+ FOCA surveys

Thanks for sharing your thoughts!

What's Next?

FOCA works year-round on behalf of our members to promote thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario. We will continue to do so, with your help, through 2022.

The Importance of Elections

2022 is an election year, at the provincial and the municipal level, where services we rely upon are managed including roads, policing and emergency services, parks and recreation, transit, and water. Once every four years, you have an opportunity to vote for your Municipal Councillors and Mayor/Reeve; the next Municipal Election is on Monday, October 24th, 2022. You can vote in each municipality where you own property. You can also run for office. Get more details here: <https://foca.on.ca/municipal-election/>.

Member Associations' Governance Updates

Throughout 2022, FOCA will help guide our incorporated member associations to comply with governance changes under ONCA (the *Ontario Nonprofit Corporations Act*) which finally took effect in late 2021. FOCA has been preparing our members for this moment over the past decade and will update our own organizational documents (henceforth referred to as Articles of Incorporation) and will consider any necessary bylaw updates prior to the October 2024 deadline. Watch for news of a FOCA webinar in early 2022, dedicated to ONCA compliance for lake association members and access handy links and information: <https://foca.on.ca/onca-overview/>.



Stay Informed & Get Involved!

Get on FOCA's Elert list for regular e-news updates throughout the year on hot topics. Join over 15,000 fellow subscribers by confirming your [opt-in here](#).

Thank you for your ongoing support, which makes our work possible, now and for future generations.

Find out more about your important role as a waterfront enthusiast: <https://foca.on.ca/your-role/>.



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