

Ontario Lake Stewards

2023



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

CELEBRATING **60** YEARS

Land Acknowledgment: We recognize and thank the traditional stewards of the lands and waterways where we work and live. The waterfront lands of Ontario are the traditional territories of many diverse Indigenous peoples who recognize the sacredness of water, the interconnectedness of all life, and the importance of protecting land and water for the generations yet to come.

We are all on a journey towards truth and reconciliation and offer this recognition as an important step in that journey. We live in different locations, and so we encourage each of you to dedicate yourselves to move forward in the spirit of respect, reciprocity, learning and sharing that learning.

Celebrations & Congratulations

This year, we proudly celebrate 60 years since the creation of FOCA as a province-wide organization dedicated to thriving and sustainable lakes, lands and rivers across Ontario and the volunteer associations that work to protect them.

FOCA started with 125 people in 40 associations. Today FOCA represents 50,000 member families in 525 lake, road, and residents' associations across the province. Together, we are the voice of waterfront Ontario, and our united voice carries weight on the issues that matter to cottage country communities.

In the 1960s, the issues that brought folks together were property taxes, water quality, municipal representation, land use planning, and zoning concerns. Over the decades new issues have emerged including short-term rentals, invasive species, and climate impacts to name just a few. Throughout, the motivation remains the same: to protect the sustainability of Ontario waterfronts and freshwater resources for our kids, and their kids after them.

Over the years on the advocacy front, FOCA secured your right to vote at the cottage in Ontario municipal elections as second homeowners. FOCA is an ongoing intervenor at the Ontario Energy Board, where most recently we objected to the impacts that would result from the elimination of the seasonal rate class of Hydro One electricity customers. FOCA has gone to Parliament Hill and Queen's Park to speak out against federal and provincial omnibus bills that gutted protection for our fisheries and fish habitat. FOCA worked with partners to secure landowners' rights during claim-staking, involving years of behind-the-scenes work on the Ministers Mining Act Advisory Committee. In the 1980s, FOCA fought hard for government action on the issue of acid rain, and lobbied to stop the use of toxic Dombind as a road-dust suppressant. In recent years, FOCA has lobbied hard for reforms to water management planning, and continues to work to ensure that land use planning is responsible and accountable to community interests.

To support our member Associations, FOCA assembled the most comprehensive risk-management program for volunteers in rural environmental groups, through the FOCA Insurance Program. The program helps to keep our important community efforts safer, and insures 400 volunteer associations across Ontario, to protect their organizations with cost-effective liability insurance. Learn about this and all your other member benefits, here: <https://foca.on.ca/member-services/benefits/>.

Across the board, the efforts continue, and FOCA works year-round on behalf of thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario. Thank you to all our dedicated volunteers and staff who have helped to steer this organization, year after year, and decade after decade!

We hope you will join us in our 60th anniversary celebrations this year. Our work has never been needed more urgently. We welcome your individual support, as well as the ongoing support of our member Associations. **Please plan to join us on Saturday, September 23, 2023 at the Market Hall in Peterborough for a celebration of our connectedness as a waterfront community!** Details are posted here: <https://foca.on.ca/60-years/>.

Thanks for your support. We look forward to the next 60 years, and more generations of cottage country memories to come.



Terry Rees
FOCA Executive Director



Ian Crawford
FOCA Board President

And the Awards Went To...

Congratulations to the Wolfe Lake Association Westport (South Frontenac), recipients of the 2022 FOCA Achievement Award!

The Association was celebrated for their “Let’s Get the Lead Out” initiative and lead fishing tackle buy-back program.

The award was presented at the FOCA Annual General Meeting and Spring Seminar in March 2023. We also gave out four Honourable Mentions for additional lake association accomplishments by the **Kamanisseg Area Property Owners** (Renfrew County), **Menominee Lake Association** (District of Muskoka), **Kennisis Lake Cottage Owners Association** (Haliburton County), and **Talpines Property Owners Association** (Simcoe County).

Get inspired by each of their accomplishments, and learn how to apply for the 2023 Award on behalf of your own association, here: <https://foca.on.ca/award>.



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Hot Topics & Emerging Issues

by Terry Rees, FOCA Executive Director

FOCA works year-round on issues that affect waterfront Ontario. For regular updates, ensure you are subscribed to receive the monthly FOCA EAlert; sign up on the website: foca.on.ca. Here are a few highlights of ongoing files and recent developments.

Land Use Planning Impacts

FOCA has been sounding the alarm bell on changes to land use planning since they were introduced in the fall of 2022. Members who attended the FOCA Annual General Meeting and Spring Seminar in March 2023 heard our colleague from the Canadian Environmental Law Association speak about the impacts of the province's "Bill 23" released in October 2022 in support of getting 1.5 million homes built over the next 10 years. As part of the Plan, the government proposed a number of legislative and regulatory changes under the *Conservation Authorities Act* as well as policy proposals affecting numerous other statutes and regulations. Notably, this new legislation overrides some municipal powers related to planning of their own communities, lessens protection for natural heritage and wetlands, and may increase our exposure to flooding.

In April 2023, the province tabled "Bill 97" which did—thankfully—restore the ability for site plan control to be applied to waterfront development within 120 meters of a shoreline. However, we remain concerned that other proposed changes in Bill 97 encourage the development of secondary residences in rural areas, and will prohibit appeals in Official Plans or zoning bylaws to authorize these additional units. FOCA has grave concerns about back-lotting and overdevelopment of waterfront-adjacent lands. We will continue to press the provincial government to protect shorelands and waterfronts. Watch for updates here: <https://foca.on.ca/land-use-planning/#bill23>.

Short Term Rental

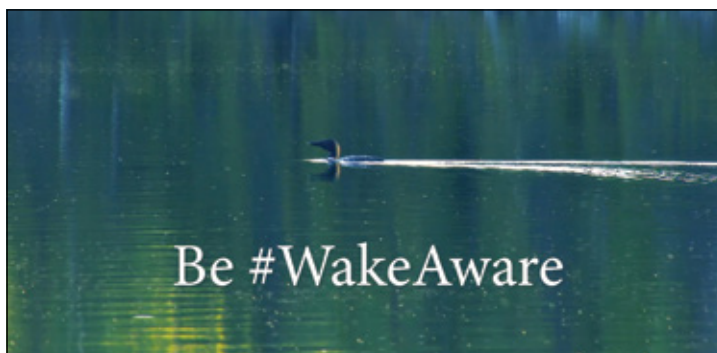
FOCA supports a philosophy of responsible use that encourages cottage owners who rent to educate and inform guests about cottage country living and etiquette, work with neighbours to promote harmonious relationships, and be environmental stewards by ensuring the sustainable use of properties (recognizing the limits of existing septic systems and road capacity, for example).

Many municipalities are taking steps to manage short-term rentals (STR) in Ontario cottage country. Responses range from educational campaigns to licencing, fees, and even prohibition. Members are invited to login to access FOCA's *2022 STR Report* which summarizes trends, concerns and municipal responses, and provides sample educational resources including "welcome sheets" for renters, and tips to get the subject on your Council's radar. Visit our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/rental/>.

Underused Housing Tax

If you owned some types of residential property in Canada on December 31, 2022 and are neither a Canadian citizen nor a permanent resident, according to the *Canadian Revenue Association (CRA)*, "even if your ownership of the property qualifies for an exemption and you do not owe any tax, you still must file a return" for the Underused Housing Tax (UHT) this year. Additionally, Canadian partnerships and corporations that are titleholders of residential property may need to file as well.

FOCA learned that penalties for late filing and interest will be waived in this transitional year, provided the return is filed and any UHT is paid by October 31, 2023. Non-Canadians who need to file the UHT form should apply to CRA for an Individual Tax Number (ITN) as soon as possible. More details and links are posted on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/property-taxation-assessment/#uht>.



Boating is a popular pastime in Ontario, providing a chance to enjoy the great outdoors and spend time with friends and family. Enjoying our lakes and rivers is a lot of fun but also requires every boater to be safe and responsible. For everyone's sake, Be #WakeAware. www.bewakeaware.com



Floating Accommodations

Since FOCA brought members' attention to this issue in February 2022, we've noted there were several approaches that could be considered, all of which have had recent developments.

From a municipal perspective, the Township of Georgian Bay outlined in a February 2022 staff report (<https://georgianbay.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TGB-staff-report-on-floating-cottages-Feb-2022.pdf>) that floating structures with a dwelling unit are prohibited through the application of their bylaws (**Section 4.6, 'Floating in-water Boathouses, Barges & Dwelling Units'**). However, bylaw enforcement has remained elusive as the status of the structures as "vessels" remains in some question.

The designation of these structures as "vessels" by Transport Canada (TC) complicates efforts to restrict their placement, as it potentially affords the structures the rights and privileges of pleasure craft (boats) under the Canada Shipping Act. To date, TC has not changed their designation, although this avenue is still being actively pursued by partner organizations, with an effort to get the term changed to "float home" as it has been in British Columbia, with related restrictions and regulations.

Lastly, FOCA has been vocal that the Province needs to address the issue of "camping on the water." After meeting with FOCA, our members and other stakeholders earlier this year, and a public comment period from February to April, on June 23, 2023 the Province did amend the Public Lands Act to prohibit floating accommodations—"such as rafts and barges" that contain buildings or structures, but are not primarily watercraft or designed for navigation—from docking overnight on provincial waterways, effective July 1, 2023. However, the province specifically noted their regulation will not address waterways under jurisdiction of other governments or ministries, such as "portions of Trent Severn Waterway" where the current floating structure sits, and it is as yet unclear how effectively the Province will be able to enforce these new prohibitions.

Watch for updates in the Elert and on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/floating-accommodations/>.



Waterfront structure under construction on Three Mile Lake.

Boathouse or Aerodrome?

There have been instances of waterfront development in Ontario that have sought to skirt planning rules and regulations by disingenuously proposing buildings that are actually boathouses as other federally-regulated aviation-related undertakings, such as aerodromes. FOCA believes this is a gratuitous and inappropriate application of the exemptions that are in place for genuine aviation infrastructure, and represents a threat to good planning and orderly waterfront development with appropriate oversight and planning input.

Our member group, the **Three Mile Lake Community Club** in Armour Township, is in the midst of countering such a threat. Transport Canada is reviewing the situation, and the association has created a petition to the Minister of Transport that will be read in the House of Commons by local Parry Sound-Muskoka MP Scott Aitchison, as the petition has now surpassed 500 signatures. We'll post updates here: <https://foca.on.ca/land-use-planning/#aerodrome>.

Boating Regulations

In January 2023, when FOCA participated in a meeting of the Ontario Recreational Boating Advisory Council, Transport Canada discussed draft regulations pertaining to wake surfing, and a proposal to make mandatory the wearing of personal floatation devices (PFDs). We were initially told this would go to public comment in the spring, but nothing has been released as we go to press in June.

TC has proposed changes to pleasure craft licenses (PCL). A PCL is a document that contains a unique license number used to identify a vessel. Currently, a PCL need only be obtained when a vessel is purchased. TC proposes to establish a 5-year term and a fee to purchase or renew a PCL, expanding them to include wind-powered craft over 6 metres in length. A public comment period ends July 12, and FOCA will report updates in the Elert and on our boating webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/boating/>.

It's Fire Season!

by our partners at AFFES

As we have seen through the early part of 2023, wildfire is a real risk to our forested communities in Ontario. Prevention and preparedness are our best defence. Know how to avoid the starting or spreading of wildfire in your community.

Ontario's Outdoor Burning Regulations are in Effect

If you're cleaning up around the yard, the Aviation, Forest Fire and Emergency Services (AFFES) Branch of Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry would like to remind the public to use caution when performing any outdoor burning.

When disposing of yard waste and woody debris, we encourage you to **compost or to use the local landfill**.

If you must burn, be sure to follow Ontario's outdoor burning regulations, including:

- fires are to be ignited no sooner than 2 hours before sunset, and extinguished no later than 2 hours after sunrise
- always have on-hand the proper tools and water supply adequate to contain the fire at the site
- know the rules for safe outdoor burning.

For the full set of outdoor burning regulations under Ontario's Forest Fire Prevention Act, visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-burn-grass-and-woody-debris-safely>.



Campfire Safety

Help us reduce the risk of wildland fires this season by keeping safe campfire practices in mind. Whether you're planning to roast marshmallows in the back yard, prepare a shore lunch, or simply stay warm on an overnight trip, follow these tips:

- Build the fire on **bare soil or rock in a location sheltered from the wind**
- Make sure the fire is a **safe distance from all flammable material**, including overhanging branches
- Keep the fire **small and never leave it unattended**
- **Put out the fire when you are done.** Soak it with water, stir the ashes and soak it again. Repeat until the ashes are cold to the touch.

How to Report Wildland Fires

If you do encounter smoke or flames in a wildland area, take note of how to report it:

- If the fire is located south of the Mattawa and French Rivers, **call 911** to report a wildland fire.
- If the fire is located north of these rivers, report it by calling **310-FIRE** (no area code is needed).

Know the fire hazard near you by consulting the interactive fire map at www.ontario.ca/forestfire.

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Protect Your Property: be FireSmart

There are many actions property owners can take to help keep their home safe from a wildland fire. It starts with a simple home assessment, which can be done by homeowners through the **FireSmart begins at home** application (available at the Apple App Store or Google Play) or the [FireSmart Home Assessment document](#) (available at [FireSmartCanada.ca](https://firesmartcanada.ca)).

Using knowledge gained through your home assessment, actions taken in the immediate area around your home and structures will have the biggest impact to safeguarding your home or cottage. Actions you can take include:

- creating a non-combustible zone up to 1.5 metres around your home and deck
- reducing shrubs, conifer trees and dead material within 10 metres of buildings
- growing fire-resistant plants and consider replacing highly flammable conifers such as cedar and spruce trees within 10 metres of buildings
- thinning and pruning conifer trees within 10-30 metres of your buildings
- ensuring power lines are clear of tree limbs.

If you are interested in adopting FireSmart principles on your property, a free one-hour course is available online. The course outlines the 7 principles of FireSmart and explains in detail the home ignition zone. Go to <https://firesmartcanada.ca/programs/firesmart-101/>.

Image courtesy AFFES



Drones and Fire Safety

Flying drones or UAV around forest fires is dangerous and illegal

When you fly a drone or unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) near a forest fire, you can put the lives of pilots, firefighters and other emergency service personnel at risk. **The “no drone zone” is any area within nine kilometres of any forest fire.** Before you fly your drone, make sure you understand the rules and regulations.

Drone pilots must follow the rules in the Canadian Aviation Regulations (CARs). Visit [Transport Canada’s drone safety website](#) to learn about:

- drone safety
- legal requirements
- regulations
- penalties.

Remember, you are the pilot of your drone. Be safe and stay clear of forest fires.

Watch for Waterbombers

When you are out enjoying Ontario’s waterways this season, remember that **waterbombers need room to scoop water from lakes.** Boaters who venture too close can obstruct fire-fighting efforts and create a dangerous situation for themselves and pilots.

Waterbombers will not scoop from a lake or river if encroaching watercraft pose a safety hazard. Help fight wildland fires by staying clear of waterbombers while out on the water.

As those who have a deep appreciation for our natural environment, let’s do all we can to keep it safe from wildland fires this fire season.

Please share these tips with your neighbours and families. For more information and resources, visit <https://foca.on.ca/fire-safety/> and explore the full set of fire prevention tips at www.Ontario.ca/fireprevention.



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ROGERS

Extend your Cottage Experience at the New Canadian Canoe Museum

by CCM staff



The world's largest collection of canoes, kayaks, and paddled watercraft will soon have a new home. The Canadian Canoe Museum (CCM), located in Peterborough, Ontario, is building a beautiful new museum and waterfront campus that aspires to be as innovative as the canoe itself! Cottage-goers will find it a must-visit destination and a vibrant community space for activities, programs, and events.

Surrounded by public parks, the Museum's new home is located on a five-acre site that provides stunning west-facing views of Little Lake and a connection to the Trans Canada Trail. A Gathering Circle and the building's breathtaking mass timber and steel façade will welcome visitors whether they are paddling, walking, biking, or driving in.

For the first time, the CCM will have 100% of their collection on display.

For a deeper dive into artifacts' stories, a brand new suite of exhibits will be available. The authentic Artisan Studio and Canoe-Building Studio will facilitate hands-on learning for youth and adults alike. And a new Silver Bean Café will keep visitors and the public refreshed as they enjoy all the Museum has to offer.



The visitor experience will continue outside as the Lakefront Campus offers immersive outdoor adventures. The waterfront redevelopment will include a Canoe House, an accessible, year-round boardwalk, two expansive seasonal canoe docks, a walk-in canoe launch, and an adaptive canoe and kayak launch station. These features will allow the CCM to host voyageur canoe tours, adult and youth paddling programs, certification courses, regattas, and canoe and kayak rentals for the public.

The new museum is anticipated to open in the fall of 2023. Construction is progressing steadily, and the new museum will soon welcome local, national, and international visitors to the region.

If you're heading to the Kawarthas, Haliburton, or eastern Ontario, the new CCM will make the perfect stopover on the way to or from the cottage, extending and enhancing your cottage experience through the vast array of offerings. It will be an engaging cultural destination that will inspire visitors to learn about Canada's collective history and reinforce our connections to land, water, and one another – all through the unique lens of the canoe. <https://canoemuseum.ca/new-museum/>

The new museum is supported by the CCM's lead donor and government partners, including the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), the Weston Family Foundation, the City of Peterborough, Peterborough County, and the Province of Ontario.

Ice On & Ice Off Data: Your Call-to-Action!

by FOCA with notes from the KLSA meeting

In May 2023, FOCA participated in the Spring meeting of our partner organization, the **Kawartha Lake Stewards Association (KLSA)**. Feature speaker Dr. Nolan Pearce of Trent University spoke on the impacts of climate change, including dissolved oxygen depletion in lakes.

One way lakes lose oxygen in connection with climate change is simply that warmer waters hold less oxygen. The second way that lakes lose oxygen is more severe, but this process occurs primarily in deep lakes where thermal stratification (formation of separate and distinct water layers due to differences in temperature) prevents surface and bottom waters from mixing and disconnects the lake from the atmosphere. Biological oxygen demand at the bottom of these lakes consumes oxygen from the deep waters until the Fall, when temperatures cool and the lake turns over (vertical mixing of surface and bottom waters).

As climate change alters lake temperatures, the onset and breakup of thermal stratification may also change, possibly worsening deep water oxygen depletion.

Lake organisms like zooplankton and fish all rely on available oxygen in the water. In summer, some organisms may be forced to find other suitable habitat as oxygen is depleted at the bottom of deep-water lakes. It is also expected that dissolved oxygen depletion and changes in thermal stratification can have cascading effects on a lake's biogeochemistry. For example, lakes with low dissolved oxygen may experience phosphorus releases from lake sediments, and this increased nutrient availability may stimulate phytoplankton and cause further changes to the water ecosystem.

Dr. Pearce and his Trent University team have been examining oxygen decline in Kawartha Lakes – that is, the onset of thermal stratification and the rate of dissolved oxygen depletion in lakes from Spring to Fall. Their preliminary studies suggest that weak stratification of lakes in the Kawarthas is happening earlier in the year than before, potentially limiting reoxygenation during Spring turnover and resulting in a longer period where oxygen can be consumed.

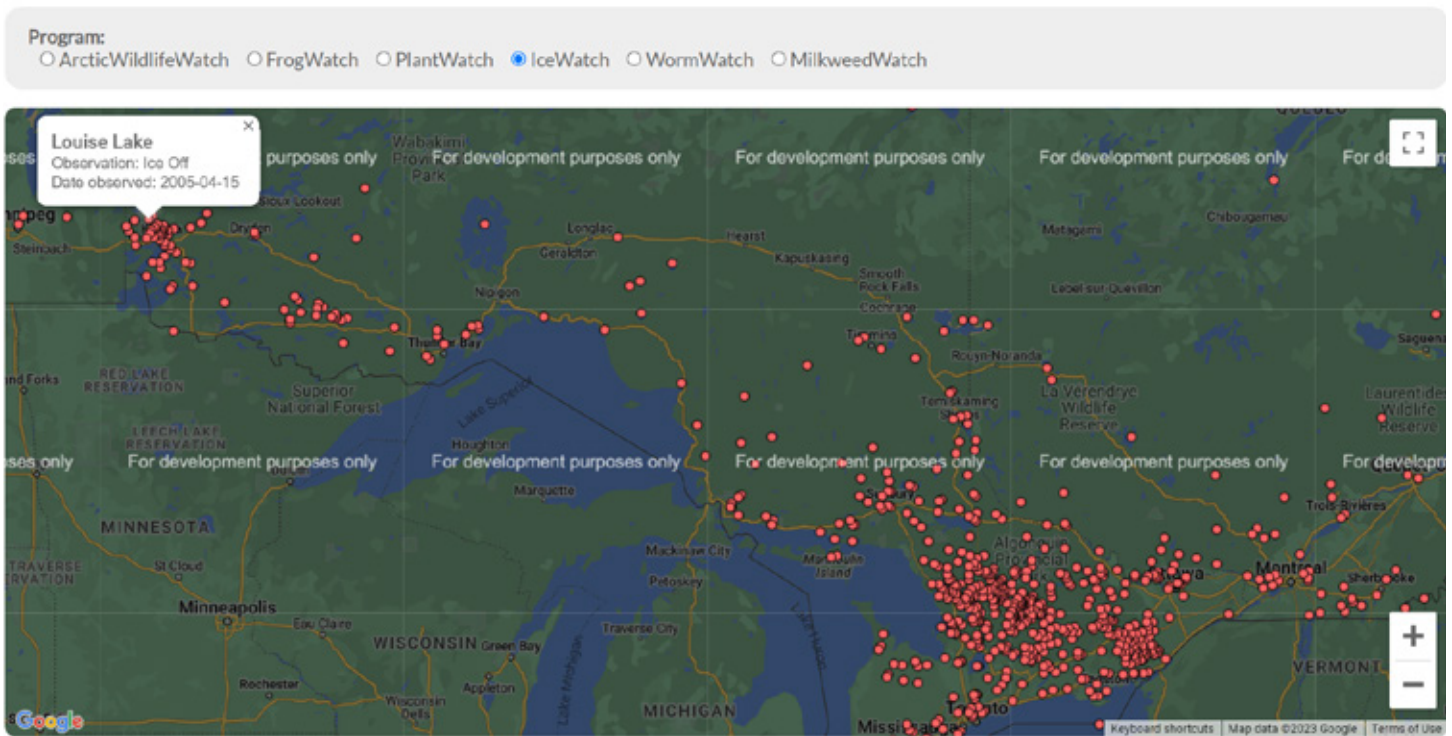


Image courtesy of NatureWatch.ca/icewatch

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What could be affecting this?

As the team works to gather more data, the theory is that warmer Springs and heat transfer through thin ice might lead to earlier periods of weak stratification, particularly on smaller lakes. However, there is not yet enough data to be certain.

Dissolved oxygen depletion in the winter is also a concern, as ice disconnects the lake from the atmosphere. The loss of oxygen in winter is not just important to lake organisms, it also dictates how much reoxygenation is needed in the Spring before the onset of stratification where the amount of oxygen in the deep waters becomes finite.

To calculate winter dissolved oxygen depletion, it is important for scientists to know the ice-on and ice-off dates for a lake.

This is where citizen scientists – you! – come in. We know many of our members already track ice-on and ice-off dates on their lakes. Why not you?

Here's a call-to-action for you, from Dr. Pearce of the Trent Aquatic Research Program:

"The best time to collect data on lake ice was 50 years ago; the next best time is now.

You can contribute to the scientific understanding of climate change by documenting ice conditions on your lake. Scientists can use your ground-truthed records to evaluate changes in ice thickness and composition (black and white ice) as well as the timing of when lakes freeze and thaw. You may also help your local scientist (e.g., me!) better understand winter lake processes occurring under the ice.

If you find yourself at the lake this coming fall, winter, and spring, consider becoming a citizen scientist and document your observations. In Canada, lake ice conditions made by citizen scientists are recorded and archived by NatureWatch (<https://www.naturewatch.ca/icewatch/>). Long-term citizen science records are used to assess the effects of climate change on Canadian ecosystems.

Please join us in learning more about our lakes!"

Generator Safety: Powering Your Cottage Safely

An overview from our partners at the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA)

In cottage country, power outages are not uncommon, and having a reliable backup power source is important.

Portable generators can be a lifesaver during these times, but it's crucial to use them safely to avoid electrical shock, fire hazards, and other potential dangers. Whether you're considering a portable standby generator or using a temporary one, understanding the safety requirements is of utmost importance.



If You Are Considering Buying a Portable Standby Generator

Before purchasing a portable standby generator, it's essential to assess your electricity requirements. This ensures that you select the correct size and voltage for your specific needs. Additionally, acquiring the appropriate accessories is crucial for safe operation, including an approved transfer device or switch and properly sized connector cord and plugs.

Temporary Use of Portable Generators

During power outages, temporary portable generators can provide much-needed electricity. However, it's critical to exercise caution to prevent electrical fires and shock hazards. The ESA has specific guidelines to ensure safe operation.

When connecting a temporary generator using a plug-cord set, it is important to follow these guidelines:

1. Ensure that no live parts are exposed when one end of the extension cord is connected to a power source while the other end is free.
2. The Ontario Electrical Safety Code allows appliances intended for connection by a wiring method to be cord-connected using an attachment plug and receptacle.
3. Consider the correct configuration of the plug and the cord set in terms of the number of conductors, ampacity, and voltage rating.
4. Treat the conductors as "LIVE" to avoid shock hazards if the main power returns. Make sure your panel directory is up to date, and if in doubt, shut off the main disconnect.

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Additional Tips for Using Portable Generators Safely:

- Always operate the generator outdoors in a dry area away from open doors, windows, and vents. Never use it indoors, as generators emit carbon monoxide, which can be fatal.
- Never connect portable generators to electrical appliances or wiring components that have been affected by floodwater.
- When using extension cords, ensure they are the grounded type with three prongs and rated for the intended use. Always uncoil cords and lay them flat to prevent overheating.
- Allow the generator engine to cool for at least two minutes before refueling, and always use fresh gasoline. Gasoline and its vapors are highly flammable.

When using a generator, you must prioritize safety to keep yourself, your family, and your property safe during power outages. Remember, as normal power is restored, temporary generators should be disconnected, and any temporary wiring should be removed. It's recommended to have the equipment and wiring checked and repaired by a professional to ensure a safe operating environment.

Portable generators are a valuable asset during power outages in cottage country. However, it's vital to use them safely to prevent accidents and hazards. Remember to follow all manufacturer's instructions, prioritize ventilation and outdoor usage, and never operate generators indoors.

Installing Standby Generators

For those considering installing a permanent standby generator, it's necessary to have a transfer device to protect your home and the utility system. This device prevents generator power from flowing back into the utility system, ensuring the safety of linemen and others working on downed power lines. To install a standby generator, you must file a notification of work with the ESA. Hiring a Licensed Electrical Contractor is strongly recommended to ensure proper installation and compliance with safety regulations. Find one near you, here: <https://findacontractor.esasafe.com/>.

By practicing generator safety, you can ensure a reliable and secure power source for your cottage when it's needed most. Learn more: <https://esasafe.com/safety/storm-safety/generator-safety/>.

Finding and Engaging Members & Volunteers

by Michelle Lewin, FOCA Manager of Communications & Development

What happens if no one steps up to lead your association?

FOCA has been asked this question over the years. It's not uncommon for a long-standing association to have a small group of core volunteers who seem to do all the heavy lifting, with no end in sight. As FOCA's Executive Director, Terry Rees has often said, "the title 'Past President' may just be the hardest one to get in a volunteer association!"

Picture this: Your association has been around for a while. You do good work on behalf of the local environment and community. The current board has worked hard and well for many years now. Several folks are now looking to step down from the board, but there's nobody stepping up to take their place and carry on the important work.

What's causing this trend?

The volunteer landscape has been shifting for some time now, but the pandemic has perhaps changed how people prioritize their leisure and family time, and may have made us all a little less willing to extend ourselves outward to engage with others. It has also resulted in a changeover of property ownership at a time when community gatherings were curtailed. Newer owners may not yet understand the value of the association, and may not realize the tremendous value and benefit that comes through supporting your local lake association to stay connected and informed in cottage country.

How are other associations handling these challenges? In a variety of ways.

Some groups have arranged door-to-door or dock-to-dock drops of information about the association's work, together with an invitation to an upcoming community event (where a membership table can be prominently displayed!). Contact the FOCA office if you could use copies of some of our publications (like the *Shoreline Owners' Guide to Healthy Waterfronts*), or fact sheets on topics from septic systems to night skies, to include in your drops!

Some groups have created welcome sheets or full welcome binders of information about the lake, the association and a variety of other helpful regional information, and then shared this with all newcomers. For more on these options, including templates you can use, login to access members-only resources on the FOCA website: <https://foca.on.ca/association-bmps/#welcome>.

Other groups (particularly those with more than 100 properties around the lake) have structured their annual fees to be able to hire a part-time administrator to do some of the essential work, to free up the volunteers for other activities. Perhaps you need to discuss with your membership if they would be willing to pay for this sort of model, or even if there could be a new system where members pay more unless they volunteer a certain number of hours each year.

Some groups have targeted younger volunteers by offering more flexibility in the positions, with shorter-term offerings and event-focused targets, rather than full board commitments.

Finding the Next Generation of Volunteers

Lake Associations have always relied on volunteers to carry out their important work. But FOCA surveys have told us that the overwhelming majority of lake association volunteers are retirees. Finding the next generation and involving them in the work is a necessary step to keep Associations strong. The challenge is to understand how to adapt recruiting and programming to attract new and younger volunteers, and those who may not volunteer in the same way their parents or grandparents did.





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Here are some tips:

- **First and foremost: make it known that you want volunteers, and you need their help.** Put an “ad” for new volunteers in your lake Association newsletter, on your website or social media channels, and at the local marina or boat launch. Having an event soon? Dedicate one volunteer to stand near a colourful sign during the event: “You can help! Ask me how.” (Even better: offer coffee and donuts while they chat.)
- **Be clear about the kinds of roles available, the rewards and expectations,** and that the Association wants to welcome younger volunteers into the mix. Fill in the blanks about the work your Association does, and what else is needed. Assign titles to each volunteer role, so individuals can begin to identify with each position. Consider creating a “Welcome New Volunteer” document that outlines the history of the Association, and the expectations of the volunteer roles. How much time is required? Are meetings held during the workday, or in the evenings or weekends? How long are they committing for? Make things clear and understandable.

- **Offer some shorter-term volunteering options.** Maybe your association has always had one Membership Director; could this role be shared, or the responsibilities split in parts, to accommodate more or younger volunteers? Could you accept more volunteers for one-off events, rather than requiring a lengthy board commitment? Would you consider offering positions to high school students in need of their Community Engagement hours? What roles could they play, and how could you market this opportunity to them? (Hint: they are soon to start job hunting and could use some good volunteer experiences on their resume, and maybe even a reference or two.)
- **Remember to reward and thank your volunteers!** They are the backbone of your association.

Continued on page 18 >

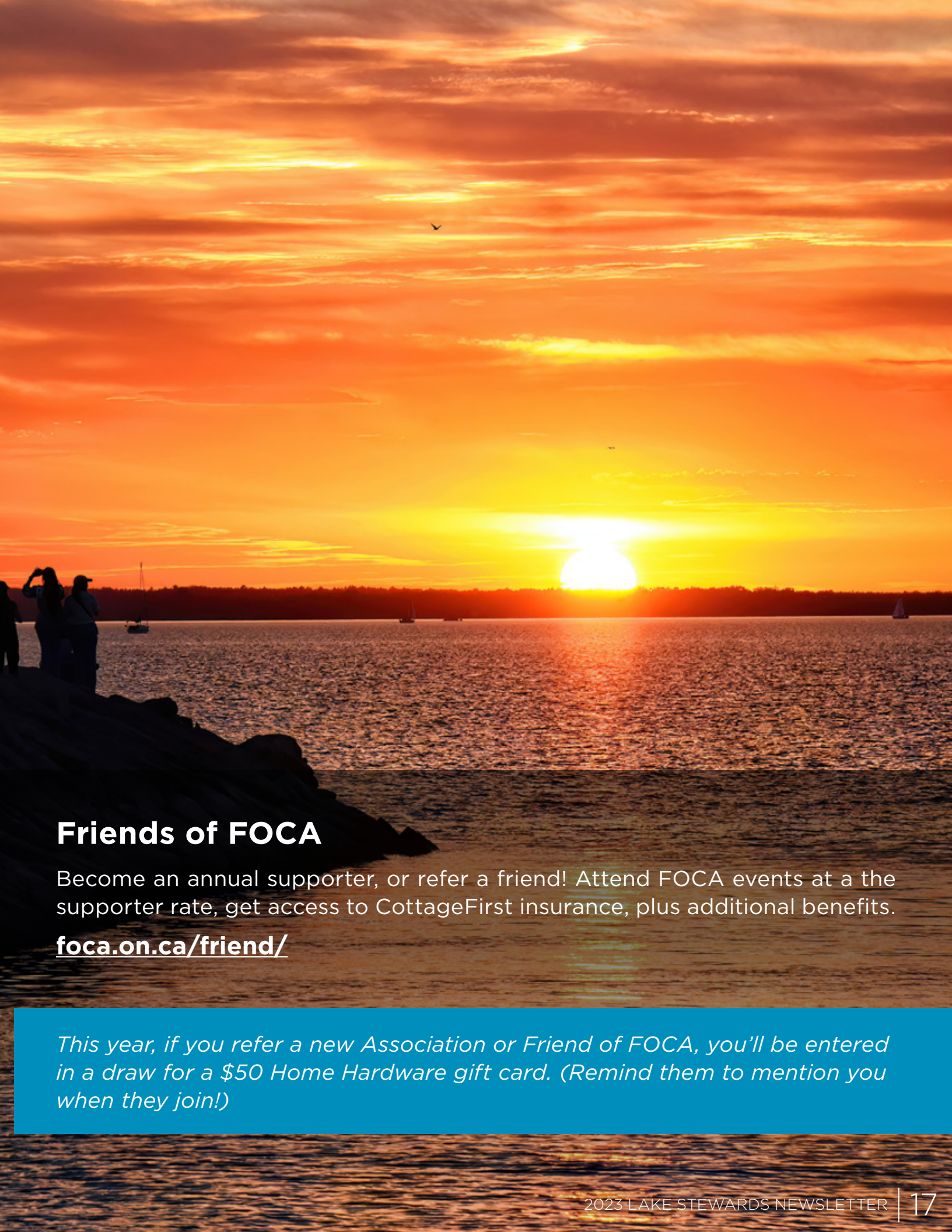
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Lake & Road Associations

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foca.on.ca/association-members/



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foca.on.ca/friend/

This year, if you refer a new Association or Friend of FOCA, you'll be entered in a draw for a \$50 Home Hardware gift card. (Remind them to mention you when they join!)

A “Menu” of Engagement Activities for Lake Associations

Looking to increase your association membership and engage new volunteers and supporters? Maybe it's time to try something new. All the following ideas have been “truth tested” by your fellow FOCA members!



Images above relate to FOCA's on-the-ground invasive species programs: Green Shovels, managing invasive Phragmites (foca.on.ca/phragmites) and IsampleON, the Invasive Species Awareness Monitoring Program & Lake Education in Ontario (foca.on.ca/isampleon). Thank you volunteers!

We recommend you discuss this shortlist with your fellow association executives, and commit to undertake one new activity from each category over the coming year.

Decide what activities (or parts of an activity) will be open to everyone in the community – in order to expand your reach – and what are the ‘bonuses’ for those who are already members of the association (A discount? Early, special, or exclusive access?). Finally, remember to speak with your insurance agent or broker before undertaking any new activities that might increase your liability exposure, and ensure you've prepared for it ahead of time.

Community Events & Gatherings

- photo contests, children's literary contest, games nights
- outdoor movie night or film fest; community picnic or BBQ or corn roast - TIP: add games & races for families
- regattas, fishing derbies (summer and/or winter); “Parade of Boats” light show; paddling or sailing lessons; live music on the dock gatherings
- bingo, card nights (bridge, poker run), dances (belly dancing, square dancing), sports & exercise (yoga, hiking, volleyball, golf...), scavenger hunts
- shoreline or road clean-ups; seedling and native plant sales
- Christmas party or Boxing Day “Parade”; winter carnival or lake ice curling bonspiel

Association Governance & Core Activities:

- hold an Annual General Meeting - TIP: connect it with another activity and/or food and drink!
- arrange a webinar option for off-season Association meetings
- host educational seminars with guest speakers
- hold a volunteer appreciation event: annual dinner at a local lodge, or a BBQ or potluck for executives and volunteers
- post an association road sign advertising upcoming events and news
- boat safety program: wake awareness, preventing the spread of invasive species, hazard marking with buoys
- start a Cottage Watch program for community safety and theft prevention
- educate about rural emergency preparedness, fire plan or fire pump instruction sessions, community cardiac safety training (CPR and AEDs)

Environmental Programs, Activities & Plans:

- encourage “critter watches” (loons, bats, frogs, turtles, butterflies...)
- participate in the Lake Partner Program of water quality monitoring
- arrange a septic pump-out day for a group of properties
- hold ice-in and ice-out watches or lotteries
- use FOCA DockTalk program resources
- sign up for the Love Your Lake shoreline classification program
- hold a “BioBlitz” or other animal/plant identification workshops or walks
- plan shoreline restoration or native planting projects
- develop a community Lake Plan – use the FOCA Lake Planning Handbook!
- undertake a benthics study
- arrange a group for invasive species removal
- create loon nests, turtle egg boxes, or do fish stocking or spawning ground rehabilitation

Communications - Staples & New Things to Try:

- email and/or mail out Association updates or Newsletters - TIP: reproduce FOCA website resources
- create a “Welcome Package” for all new owners
- deliver print materials door-to-door, or dock-to-dock neighbour visits
- post a sign about the association at marina or boat launch
- create group T-shirts, hats & other “wearables”
- create fridge magnets or window decals for members
- make a Lake Calendar from local photos, for sale and/or free to Association members
- put ads in the local newspaper or on local radio
- maintain an Association website, Facebook page or other social media

Other Advocacy & Outreach Efforts:

- have an association booth at local community festivals
- host all-candidates meetings before municipal, provincial, federal elections
- set up marina or public boat launch educational volunteers or boat cleaning demonstrations to prevent invasive species spread
- organize group purchase days with local businesses, or electronics pick-up weekends
- invite municipal contacts and local real estate agents to your lake meetings
- send Association updates to local media (newspapers, radio stations)
- participate in selected community projects or fundraisers (health services; food drives for the local food bank)
- attend municipal Council Meetings; learn how to “Raise your political voice” with your municipal partners by consulting FOCA’s Guide for Association Municipal Engagement

Finally, take lots of pictures, and don't forget to let FOCA know how it all turns out!

Road Association Liability Q&A

by Ross Fraser, Cade Associates Insurance Brokers Limited

Throughout the province, municipalities have begun to focus more attention on roads which are privately maintained but owned by the municipality or cross over municipal road allowances. While no two municipalities have the same approach, we understand that proof of insurance from groups who are maintaining these roads is now required in some cases.

The FOCA Association Insurance Program and the team at Cade Associates Insurance Brokers can work with you to prepare a road association insurance policy sufficient to satisfy this requirement of your municipality.



Please Remember:

FOCA is not an insurance agent, and membership in FOCA does not afford any automatic insurance coverage.

However, for over 30 years, FOCA has provided risk management and insurance programming support to our member associations. These insurance programs are an important part of the value FOCA delivers to Ontario's waterfront community.

We invite members to investigate these insurance coverages, which are administered exclusively by Cade Associates Insurance Brokers.

Learn more here: <https://foca.on.ca/risk-management-insurance/>

There are some common questions that arise when these new requests or requirements from municipalities arrive on the doorsteps of waterfront property owners:

Q: What type of insurance is the municipality requiring?

The most common request from municipalities is for evidence of a General Liability insurance policy for the road maintenance operations. A General Liability policy responds to claims brought against an Insured, alleging that negligence in the performance of their operations resulted in bodily injury or property damage to a third party.

Q: Do we need to form an Association?

The FOCA Association Insurance Program is designed to underwrite and issue policies for community-based not-for-profit Associations. Policies cannot be issued in the name of an individual or specific group of individuals.

If you are a new group in the early stages of forming a road association, we recommend contacting FOCA to discuss obtaining access to their valuable reference booklet: *Starting & Building an Effective Road Association*. FOCA also has additional road resources and association best management practices, samples, and templates that become available once the Association joins FOCA.

Q: Do we need to incorporate?

The FOCA Association Insurance Program does not require that your Association be incorporated to be eligible for an insurance policy. However, it is an underwriting requirement of the liability insurance program that the Association have some kind of guiding document (constitution/bylaws/charter). For unincorporated associations, there is no specific description for what the "Charter" must contain but it generally should define the purpose of the group, as well as address such items as: definition of a 'member', administration and operations, etc. There is an overview about this in the FOCA reference booklet mentioned above.

If you do incorporate, there are specific requirements for documentation, policies, and annual procedures. You will also be required to create Articles and Bylaws in accordance with the Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act (ONCA). Again, consult FOCA's road association booklet for an overview, as well as the members-only ONCA materials on the Association Best Practices webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/association-bmps/>.

Regardless of the Insurer's requirements, if the municipality requires that the Association itself enter into a legal agreement with them, then incorporation might be required.

Q: What coverage does a General Liability policy provide?

Further to the above, the policy responds to claims alleging that bodily injury or property damage to a third party was caused by the negligence of an Insured.

In the case of road associations, an example might be an individual, injured on the road, who alleges that their injuries were caused or contributed to by an Insured's negligence in their road maintenance work. In the FOCA Association Insurance Program, in addition to the Association itself, your policy automatically considers your "volunteer workers" as Insureds. Your members are also an Insured if they are sued because of the actions of the Association. When a claim is received, the Insurer responds to investigate the allegations and to provide legal defence on behalf of the Insured (the Association and "volunteer workers"). In the event the Insured is found to be legally liable for the injuries or damages, the Insurer then pays the compensatory damages up to the limit of insurance purchased. Please note, your best first step is to ensure you are responsible in your activities and demonstrate and practice due diligence with respect to your maintenance or other activities.

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As a member of FOCA, your cottage, lake, road or land group is eligible for the FOCA Association insurance program. This program gives you and your volunteers peace of mind as you carry out your important work, including regattas, water hazard marking, hosting education and social events, maintaining your community's road and more! Policies are available at exclusive FOCA Member pricing and are customized to meet your needs, able to provide General Liability, Directors & Officers Liability and Volunteer Accident Coverage.

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Q: My Municipality is requiring that they be shown as an “Additional Insured” on the insurance. Can your policy provide this?

Yes! The main purpose of granting additional insured status is to protect the additional insured from potential claims that may arise because of the activities of the policyholder. In this case, the Municipality is seeking confirmation that your policy will protect them in the event that they are sued because of the actions of the Association. This is available at no additional cost, within the FOCA Association Insurance Program.

Q: What requirements does the Insurer have regarding winter maintenance of the road?

From a risk management perspective, the best practice for the Association is to hire a snow removal contractor who maintains their own General Liability insurance for their operations, and provides you with a Certificate of Insurance listing the Association as an Additional Insured. This also allows you to access more attractive premium pricing for the Association’s own insurances.

However, the underwriters of the FOCA Association Insurance Program (Aviva Canada) are aware that not every region has access to licensed and insured contractors and that, in some circumstances, the Association may need to hire a contractor who does not have liability insurance for snow removal work. The underwriters can review on a case-by-case basis, and will require some additional information about the contractor, their experience, the equipment being used, and their risk management practices (e.g., confirm they maintain a logbook of work, etc.). The Insurer is unable to provide policies for Associations whose volunteers/members complete snow removal and winter maintenance work themselves.

Please note that some Municipalities have included in their requirements that any contractors hired by the Association need to meet the same insurance requirements as the Association, so please review their documentation carefully.

Q: What signage should our Association have on the road?

No two roads are exactly alike, meaning that each Association will need to take their unique circumstances into consideration. Typically, to reduce the liability exposure to the Association, “Private Road” or “Private Road – Use At Own Risk” signage is a requirement of the underwriters for an Association insurance policy. In those cases where the Association may not be permitted to add a “Private Road” sign, something comparable that lets users know that the road is not maintained by the government is typically acceptable (e.g., “Privately Maintained Road”).

Beyond this, we recommend that Associations try to view the road from the perspective of an individual who has never seen a cottage or rural road before, and consider what signage might be necessary for them to safely navigate from the entrance to the end, and back again. Examples might include hazard markers (e.g., reflectors on sticks at a sharp corner, “blind corner” signs, etc.), notifications of change in road conditions (e.g., “road narrows ahead – one lane only”), or signs advising “icy in winter - drive according to road conditions”.

Q: How do we get a quote for Road Association insurance?

The team at Cade Associates would be happy to help! Visit www.cadeinsurance.com/foca to download an application form or to request a call from one of our Brokers. We look forward to the conversation.



Simple, Cost-Effective Tips to Create Flood and Wildfire-Ready Properties

by Cheryl Evans, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation

By slowly cranking up Canada's "thermostat," climate change is helping to create shorter, milder winters and hotter, drier summers punctuated by frequent and intense thunderstorms. When drought-hardened soils are deluged by rainfall, flooding can occur. Lightning along with floating embers from campfires can ignite dry vegetation and cause wildfires. Fortunately, by taking a series of simple, cost-effective steps to become flood and wildfire-ready, we can safely enjoy our properties this summer and for many generations to come.

Practical Tips to be Flood and Wildfire-Ready

Step One: Easy, low-cost maintenance actions can be completed in a matter of hours, to reduce flood risk by directing water away from the home. They include cleaning out eavestroughs, removing debris from nearby storm drains, and testing basement sump pumps.

Simple yard maintenance reduces the likelihood that floating embers will ignite materials and contribute to the ignition of the home. Actions include regularly mowing lawns nearest to your home to 10cm or less, raking up needles, leaves and branches, and storing flammable items such as woodpiles at least 10m away from buildings. Working with neighbours to complete property maintenance activities reduces the likelihood that wildfires will spread from one property to the next.

Step Two: Simple, inexpensive home upgrades to reduce flood risk include installing window well covers, extending downspouts and sump pump discharge pipes at least 2m, and storing basement valuables in watertight containers.

Actions to protect homes from wildfires include adding a non-combustible 3 mm screen to all external vents (except dryer vents) to prevent floating embers from igniting materials inside the home, and replacing combustible materials within 1.5 m of the structure with non-combustible materials such as mineral soil, crushed bricks, or concrete.

Step Three: More expensive and complex upgrades can be integrated into longer-term property repairs and renovations projects. To reduce flood risk, correct grading around the property to ensure that water flows away from structures, install basement backwater valves to prevent sewage from backing up into homes, and install backup sump pumps and power sources.

To reduce wildfire risk, consider replacing aging shingles with Class A fire-resistant roof coverings (e.g., asphalt shingles, cement fibre or metal) and upgrading to non-combustible siding (e.g., stucco, metal, cement fibre board), installing multi-pane tempered glass windows, and exterior fire-rated doors.

Preparing for Emergencies

Taking preventative action can reduce but not eliminate risk. Registering to receive emergency notifications, paying close attention to weekly flood risk and fire danger rating reports, and carefully adhering to fire bans, reduces risk and helps families to safely evacuate during flood and wildfire emergencies. Working with insurance providers to match unique property risks with insurance coverages helps families to access the financial resources needed to "bounce back" quickly following an emergency event.

Get Started Today

Visit IntactCentre.ca, FireSmartCanada.ca and IBC.ca to get started today with a variety of practical tips, risk self-assessment tools, and checklists. Taking practical, cost-effective actions to create flood and wildfire-ready properties produces a priceless return on investment: peace of mind.

FOCA adds: while it is important to be FireSmart, especially in the zone directly around your building, FOCA still encourages you to maintain natural shorelines and leave room for biodiversity!

Learn how: <https://foca.on.ca/shorelines-stewardship/>

Lake Partner Program – The Volunteers Speak

by Gavin Vance, Assistant Lake Stewardship Coordinator, FOCA

Finding excuses to get outside can be a challenge for many of us. Whether it's an inbox that's piling up, or a list of chores that requires its own list to organize, we all have things that can keep us from enjoying the great outdoors.

Fortunately, FOCA has the perfect excuse for you this summer: get involved with the Lake Partner Program (LPP)!

The LPP data are publicly available and provide a valuable dataset describing regional patterns and changes over time that have been observed on Ontario's lakes. The LPP data have even been used by lake associations and others to publish peer-reviewed scientific reports. For example, the White Lake Association in Renfrew County contributed LPP data to Carleton University graduate research projects, one of which used LPP data to determine the lake's response to environmental stressors over time.

Aside from the value of collecting important water quality data, there are other benefits to volunteering with the LPP that can help nurture your social and mental wellbeing.

The Lake Partner Program is now in its 27th year of operation and provides an excellent prompt to get out on the lake and enjoy nature. The LPP is a longstanding collaboration between FOCA and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. It is a volunteer-driven, lake water quality monitoring program that collects data from hundreds of lakes across Ontario each year. Is yours one of them?



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Gavin collecting returned sampling kits for analysis, May 2023.

Time on the lake is time well spent

FOCA's Lake Stewards are the backbone of the LPP. They are volunteers who have worked collectively to generate thousands of water quality data points over the last three decades.

We reached out to some long-time LPP volunteers to gain insight into a handful of experiences of the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who act as lake stewards across Ontario. Many told us that sampling provides them with motivation, including one who said the LPP is *"a reason to regularly spend some quiet time on the lake while doing something meaningful at the same time."* What better excuse to get outside? (Don't worry, sampling only happens on sunny days!)

Volunteer Steve Grinius from French River credits the LPP for fostering a friendship, by motivating him and his longtime friend to get on the water early in the morning to catch up with each other and discuss what's on their minds, while collecting water samples for the LPP. What could be better than spending time on the lake with people you care about, while doing volunteer work that has long-term value?

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In Karen Abells' case, involving the grandkids has been an important part of her time as a LPP volunteer. Karen, a volunteer on Lake Muskoka for 9 years, shared that collecting water samples has been an amazing opportunity to get to know her grandchildren, and to teach them the value of volunteering and protecting their lake.

Volunteer Conrad Grégoire of White Lake has also shared his LPP experiences with his grandchildren, and even taught them how to use a microscope to – in his own words – *"reveal the marvels which can exist in a drop of water."* Teaching future generations the value of the environment and how to help preserve it is truly an invaluable service. Future lake stewards spring from the care of those who invest the time to guide younger generations to become water stewards.

Volunteer knowledge also benefits the community as a whole. Research shows that public engagement in science is a key means of fostering environmental stewardship and raising awareness of important issues. Long-time LPP volunteers come with a wealth of knowledge about their lakes, that only someone who spends a significant time on the water could have. *"I have owned waterfront property for over 40 years,"* noted Emily Doyle of Otter Lake, but *"until I became a Lake Steward and participated in the LPP, I had no idea what lake health really meant."*

LPP volunteers become a resource for others, supported by FOCA's print and digital materials about lake stewardship practices and healthy waterfronts. Having a community member lead the way in lake stewardship can motivate and inspire others on the lake to do the same. The most important value in participating in the LPP program, according to volunteer Mike Costigan of Lake Manitou, is *"to demonstrate to all lake residents that the health of your lake is critical for all."*

Get started as a LPP volunteer

To continue to promote lake health and stewardship across Ontario in light of all the changes on our landscapes, the LPP requires the ongoing support of volunteers old and new across the province. The time commitment is small, but the rewards are great. In the words of long-time volunteer Al Best: *"together we can restore our natural environment. We each have to do just a little to succeed."*

Thank you, LPP volunteers!

To find out more about the Lake Partner Program, visit: <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program/>, or email lakepartner@ontario.ca or call toll-free: 1-800-470-8322.

Understanding Blue-Green Algae Blooms

by FOCA staff

Blue-green algae, also known as cyanobacteria, are natural organisms found in most bodies of water. They can become a concern when they form dense concentrations or “blooms”.

Blooms can also happen when diffuse concentrations of algae cells from a large volume of water (e.g., a large deep lake) are aggregated into a much smaller area by winds or currents. Some types of blue-green algae produce toxins that can harm human or animal health.

In Ontario, comprehensive protocols are in place to protect public health from these toxins in municipal drinking water systems that use surface water. These include requirements for sampling and bloom reporting.

Blooms are increasingly appearing in low-nutrient, remote lakes, sometimes away from direct human activity. Understanding how and why this is occurring suggests the need for a more systematic and dedicated surveillance program in Ontario.

To report a suspected bloom, contact the MECP Spills Action Centre at 1-866-663-8477.

The role of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) is to gather and assess information about suspected blue-green algae blooms, and to test samples that are collected by environmental officers. Public health agencies take the lead on health-related matters and provide any necessary advisories, such as beach postings.

Preventing blooms involves managing excess phosphorus; however, recent research illustrates that blue-green algae can also occur in waterbodies with low nutrient levels.

A collaborative study published in early 2023 by Queen’s University and MECP (authored by [Liz Favot et al](#)) compared nutrients (total phosphorus) from Lake Partner Program data with reports of cyanobacteria blooms between 1994 and 2019. As shown in the figure at the side, hotspots for confirmed reports of blue-green algae blooms across Ontario tend to be clustered in rural settings where there is water-based recreation, or what we would call popular ‘cottage country’ destinations. Is this because there’s more algae here, or because there are more people in these areas reporting it?

The sampling protocol was triggered by complaints so is likely influenced by reporting patterns, but the dataset did include over a hundred waterbodies with blooms, and provides an interesting study.

Similar to a 2011 MECP authored study by [Jennifer Winter et al](#) (featured in the 2011 FOCA Fall Report to Membership), the recent [Queen’s/MECP study](#) found an increase in reports of blue-green algae blooms in Ontario since 1994. Surprisingly, many of these blooms occurred in waterbodies with low nutrient levels; in fact, nearly 45% had average spring total phosphorus less than 10 µg/L, which is considered nutrient-poor.

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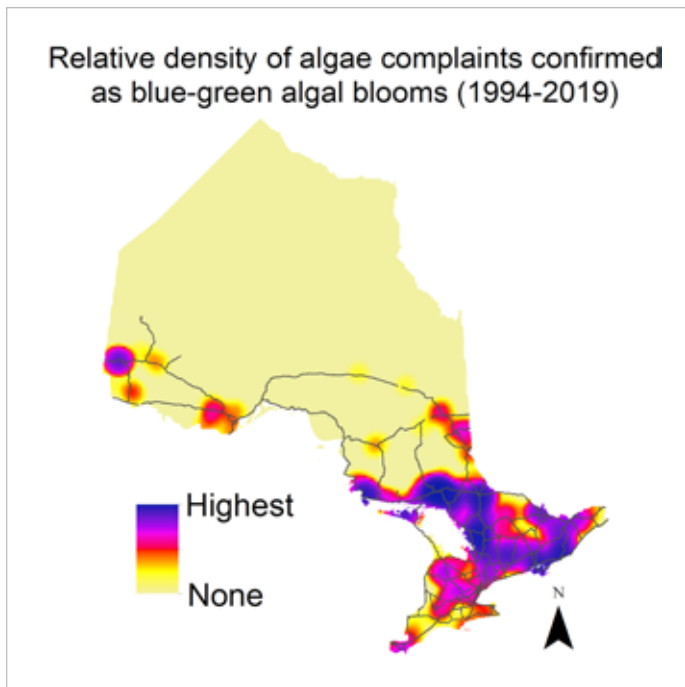
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However, locations with recurring blooms did have higher levels of total phosphorus than those with only one or two years of confirmed blooms between 1994 and 2019. This suggests that phosphorus enrichment may increase the chances that a cyanobacteria bloom will recur.

Apart from increased awareness of blooms and localized phosphorus enrichment, climate change is also likely contributing to the rise in blue-green algae blooms. Scientific studies link increasing numbers of blooms with climate-mediated changes such as a longer growing season, more days with higher temperatures and temperatures that are more extreme, and changes in the timing and amount of rainfall.



Highways shown are from Ontario Road Network (ORN), available on Ontario GeoHub Data as in Favot et al 2023. Image provided by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

To learn more about the causes and effects of blue-green algae, and for links to the studies mentioned above and other resources, visit: <https://foca.on.ca/algae/>.



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4 SIMPLE TIPS FOR SEPTIC SYSTEMS

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- 

1 SCRAPE YOUR DISHES
 Scraping your dishes into the garbage will make sure solids don't go into your septic system.
- 

2 KEEP THE PLANTS AWAY
 Don't plant trees or shrubs too close to the system or leaching bed.
- 

3 PUMP IT OUT
 Pump your tank out when solids reach 1/3 of your tank's capacity. Keep records of system maintenance or service calls. Keep an 'as built' system diagram for reference. Know the location of your tank and tile bed.
- 

4 CONSERVE WATER
 Reduce the amount of wastewater your system must treat. Replace old toilets with low-flush models.

A poor system can degrade water supplies and reduce property values **oowa.org**



Waterloo
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Stop Starry Stonewort Project: Minnesota's Containment Strategy

An overview from our partners at CD3 Systems

The Problem

Starry Stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa*) is an algal species non-native to North America, and an aggressive aquatic invasive species (AIS). In Minnesota – Ontario's US neighbour along Lake Superior's northwest coast – it is among the most concerning AIS species.

Starry Stonewort (SSW) spreads from one body of water to another by the transfer of bulbils and algal fragments. People spread SSW primarily through the movement of water-related equipment. Fragments can get tangled in trailers, motors, anchors, and inside watercraft. A single small fragment or bulbil can start a new population.

Minnesota's first SSW infestation was approximately a 260-acre patch in Lake Koronis. By the summer of 2016, SSW had covered thousands of acres along the shore. To date, over \$1M has been spent on SSW management on Lake Koronis alone.

Starry Stonewort was first documented in Ontario in the St. Lawrence River in 1978.

Starry Stonewort has since invaded the Great Lakes Basin, Lake Simcoe, and the Trent Severn Waterway and has been found in the Huron-Erie Corridor, Lake Ontario, Lake Simcoe, and other inland lakes in the Kawarthas.

By 2021, SSW had spread to 14 waterbodies in Minnesota via any of 29 public boat access points. Empowering the public to contain the rampant spread was dramatically needed.



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Image courtesy
Andrea Kirkwood



Actions Taken

Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates (MNLRA) developed the **“Stop Starry Stonewort”** program. The Stop Starry Stonewort Project will install CD3 Systems at every public access on SSW-infested lakes in the state. CD3 (Clean-Drain-Dry-Dispose) Systems are waterless, user-operated, free-to-the-public cleaning equipment designed to reduce the spread of AIS.

This public/private partnership AIS containment solution works as follows in Minnesota:

- provide CD3 Systems as self-service tools to clean, drain, and dry boats and trailers
- improve boat ramp design to increase the use/adoption of the equipment
- leverage targeted community education and social norms to increase the use of CD3 Systems
- partner with 5 counties, 2 First Nations, and 14 lake associations for program implementation.

Results

Stop Starry Stonewort is an innovative project created to empower boaters to stop the spread of AIS. The goal is to preserve non-infested lakes and save AIS management costs.

It will result in long-term educational infrastructure that positively changes boater behavior and reduces the spread of SSW. The statewide program, including 28 CD3 System installations, is a model to be followed for future infestations.

Each CD3 System has installed software that tracks the system’s use. Since the installation of CD3 Systems beginning in 2022, cloud-connected software has recorded 17,998 tool uses and 8,754 individual cleaning sessions. This was only the first year of phased implementation and all partners look forward to seeing how boater behavior will change in the coming boating seasons.

In June 2023, FOCA attended the official launch of a CD3 “Clean. Drain. Dry.” boat cleaning station at the public boat launch on Chandos Lake north of Apsley in North Kawartha, Ontario.

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Empower boaters with easy to use waterless cleaning infrastructure

Wood Ash & Sugar Maple Sap

An update with notes from FOTWM

Led by Dr. Norman Yan, the **Friends of the Muskoka Watershed (FOTMW)** has spent the past four years studying the impact of adding donated clean fireplace or woodstove ash to our forests.

The intent of the study has been to find solutions to counteract decades of acid rain (a result of sulfur and nitrogen emissions in the 20th century) which resulted in soil acidification. Acid rain depleted the calcium in the shallow nutrient-poor soil of the Canadian Shield area, leading to poor soil conditions for trees.

Sugar maples, known for their sensitivity to low soil calcium concentrations, have experienced decreased growth rates because of these acidic soil conditions. The team (a collaboration of FOTMW and Trent University's Shaun Watmough and his students) theorized that – over the long-term – adding wood ash to Muskoka sugar maple bushes could help sap production as trees become healthier. After all, healthy trees grow bigger and bigger trees produce more sap.

Wood ash was donated by Muskoka residents who supplied it during several local ash drives. The ash was sifted and applied in single doses to several Muskoka sugar maple bushes and stands at Camp Big Canoe east of Bracebridge. The study dosage was a variety of rates from 2 to 8 metric tonnes per hectare. The added ash was about 30% calcium – theoretically enough to replace all the calcium lost to acid rain. A non-treated area within the same sugar maple stand was also tracked, as a control plot.



One year following ash application, things looked promising.

The researchers observed significant improvements in soil pH and the availability of essential nutrients like calcium, potassium, and magnesium in the surface soil horizons. It was also noted that metal concentrations had increased only in the surface soil and not in deeper soil layers, and not beyond accepted standards. In addition, potassium – which is the most mobile nutrient that trees require – increased in sugar maple leaves.

The maple trees were tapped and the sap story was initially very exciting! One year after treatment with wood ash, the treatment plots yielded nearly twice as much sap as the non-treated control plots. Further, the sap was just as sweet, as sugar content remained stable. However, this turned out to be a transitory signal, as there were no significant differences in the quantity or sweetness of sap two years after ash additions between the control and ash-treated trees.

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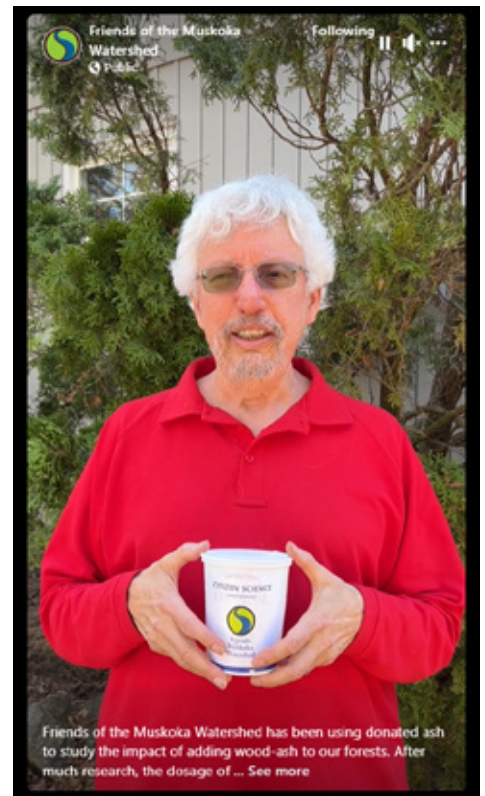
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The research sheds light on the potential benefits of non-industrial wood ash as a soil amendment for sugar maple trees. By mitigating the legacy effects of acid rain, wood ash can improve soil chemistry and may boost sap yield in the short term. While more studies are needed to fully understand the long-term effects, this offers promising potential for maple syrup producers and the health of our forests. FOTMW studies show that ash can improve the health of other tree species, not just sugar maples.

As we continue to explore innovative ways to preserve our natural ecosystems, the power of citizen science becomes increasingly evident. Through community-based efforts, like the wood ash recycling program in Muskoka, we can harness the potential of local resources to enhance our environment and support sustainable practices. Together, we can protect our forests, 'tap' into their full potential, and savor the sweet rewards they offer.

What can you do on your own property?

After much research FOTMW has determined a fireplace or woodstove ash dosage of 4 tonnes per hectare (or a 750 gram yogurt container per square metre) is the right dosage to treat your forest. See Dr. Yan explain this in his short Facebook video for FOTMW: https://www.facebook.com/reel/753310853139910/?s=single_unit.



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