

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

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



Because Waterfronts Matter

Words from the Executive Director & President of the Board

The call of a loon across a misty lake - is there any more poignant symbol of Ontario cottage country?

You could say there's even something quintessentially Canadian about the experience of hearing a loon in nature. Our natural landscape can make us feel so small, and yet at the same time part of something so big and interconnected - the land, the water, the animals, plants, and birds - that it compels us to act to protect them.

Everyone has their own reasons why they love the out of doors, but we know you're reading this now because waterfront Ontario matters to you.

Each year, you invest in FOCA with your membership dollars and your individual support, on top of your own efforts as volunteers and members of local lake associations.

We take your investment seriously, and amplify it through our work to ensure the Ontario waterfront environments we love today will be in good shape for the next generations, so our kids and grandkids can enjoy the call of the loon long into the future.

Thank you for your support of FOCA's programs, communications and education, advocacy, and lake and road association services - because the thousands of volunteers in our member associations are the people who make things happen in waterfront communities across the province each year, to everyone's benefit.

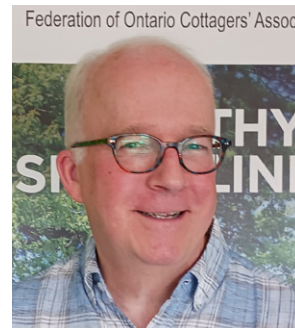
You can read more about FOCA's priority work on the following pages.

FOCA will continue to engage our members, our partners, sponsors, and others to support these important efforts. Building on six decades of leadership as a trusted influencer and partner, FOCA embarks this year on the next chapter of our ongoing journey as the voice of the Ontario waterfront. It is our goal to unite all waterfront enthusiasts in support of a bright future for Ontario shorelands, lakes, rivers, and watersheds. Thank you for being on this important journey with us.

There's a loon call ahead.



Terry Rees
Executive Director



Ian Crawford
Board President



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: FOCA recognizes and thanks 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 we offer this recognition as an important step in that journey. No matter where you are located, FOCA encourages you to move forward in the spirit of respect, reciprocity, learning, and sharing that learning.

About FOCA

The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) is a not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to the environmental and financial sustainability of the rural waterfront communities that inspire and sustain us.

FOCA's members are 525 associations across the province, with 50,000 member families. Since 1963, our united voice has carried weight on the issues that matter to waterfront residents, from environmental topics like water quality and responsible land use planning, to "pocketbook" concerns such as fair taxation, availability of rural services, and cottage succession planning.

About FOCA's enduring legacy

On January 7th, 1963, 125 people representing 40 cottage associations met and decided the time was right to form a provincial association. By the spring of 1963, the organization was called The Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. Among the earliest issues discussed were: water quality and water safety, taxation, municipal election voter rights, land use planning and (the lack of) bylaw enforcement.

The landscape continues to evolve, and there is no shortage of topics and files that FOCA engages with, on behalf of our members.

This past year, we worked on important issues like the Underused Housing Tax, floating accommodations, groundbreaking eDNA sampling for invasive species, and the final roll-out of the Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act which affects all our Ontario-incorporated associations. **See more about FOCA's 2023 priority work on the following pages.**

FOCA's Vision:

FOCA envisions thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario, now and for future generations.

FOCA's Mission:

FOCA effectively serves and represents Ontario's lake, road, and waterfront associations, waterfront residents, and their rural communities through education, communication, and government advocacy.

FOCA's Mandate:

FOCA promotes and advocates for healthy lakes, rivers, and watersheds, and is the voice for Ontario's 250,000+ waterfront property owners.



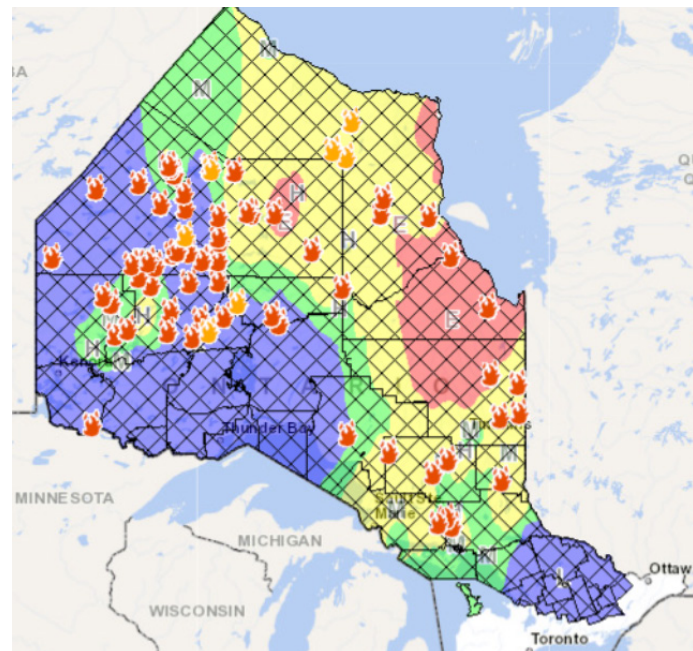
Covers of FOCA publications from the past 60 years

2023: the year that was...

It was a year of weather extremes in Ontario, starting with hot dry conditions and fires across the country in April, and ending as a record-breaker with 741 fires and 441,000 hectares of forests burned by October – almost three times the 10-year average!

Properties, forests, animals, and birds were threatened by the fires, and the smoke from fires in and around Ontario blanketed whole swaths of cottage country for months on end, and was carried by the wind far beyond international borders. A powerful Spring storm brought freezing rain, ice, and hail and knocked out power to over a million customers in Ontario and Quebec in early April, while flood watches and tornadoes accompanied extreme summer storms in several parts of the province. The year ended with unseasonably warm temperatures and very little snow; ice-on this winter (2023-2024) took longer than usual.

Overall, 2023 was the warmest summer on record across Canada in the 76 years of national record-keeping.



Forest fire danger zones, active fires, June 2023 (source: Ontario Forest Fire Information Map)



High water dock impacts

Because Ontario's waterfront residents and cottage and camp owners are located in rural and often remote locations, self-reliance and preparation for extreme weather conditions and emergencies are essential.

Woodland property owners must be proactive and prepared for fire, learn about property risks, and take steps to make their families safer. Get video tips and links to important safety resources from our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/fire-safety/>.

FOCA also encourages property owners to be proactive about water level extremes and learn how to prepare for the effects of quick snow or ice melts, heavy rainfalls, or high water flows on lakes or rivers. Cottage country buildings, docks, and bathhouses located in or near the floodplain are at particular risk. Preventative action can minimize loss, although extreme events are on the rise and will still have impacts. FOCA reminds members that seasonal properties are not covered by the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program, a financial assistance tool for permanent homeowners. Learn more here: <https://foca.on.ca/water-levels/>.

Finally, FOCA continues to advocate for expanded rural and northern access to reliable broadband and cell services for residents as well as emergency responders, and we encourage everyone to learn how to be prepared for personal or regional emergencies in cottage country. Get important tips and links to have a safe family season at the waterfront this year: <https://foca.on.ca/emergency-preparedness/>.

FOCA's Financial Picture

FOCA practices prudent fiscal management, maintains appropriate finances to meet our obligations, and is ably overseen by the Board Finance Committee.

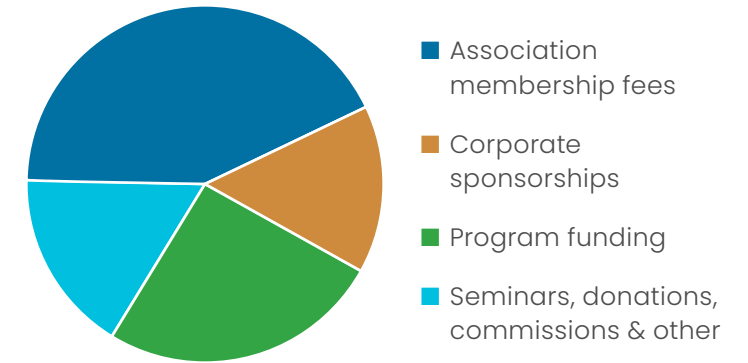
Our financial picture is strong, as we prepare to meet the needs of a growing waterfront community during these inflationary economic times.

As the cost of doing business continues to rise, so too we rise to the challenge of securing the necessary additional revenues to effectively serve an expanded constituency while protecting waterfront Ontario in the face of multiple stressors.

Membership is our core responsibility and source of revenue with annual dues representing nearly half of all our income. FOCA works year-round to deliver consistent member value and benefits (<https://foca.on.ca/benefits/>), as well as programs, advocacy and communications that support our membership (<https://foca.on.ca/about/#our-work>).

We also appreciate the additional annual support of hundreds of "Friends of FOCA" and donors. The remainder of FOCA's revenues are derived from a combination of corporate sponsorship, program funding, and other revenues like event registrations.

2023 FOCA Revenues



This increasingly diversified revenue approach provides FOCA with stability and opportunity. The Board of Directors has set budget and revenue targets that consider all options to invest wisely in our mission, and to increase FOCA's annual funding to meet anticipated needs in the coming years.

"A very big thank you to FOCA for providing us with valuable resources for our lake association. We promote our FOCA membership as an excellent benefit to members, and a well-spent part of the annual membership fee."

~ Kate O. • Association Member

Celebrating 60 Years of FOCA

Thank you to everyone who helped us to celebrate six decades of FOCA in 2023!



Image: Jordan Lyall

We enjoyed reminiscing about all the great work done by the volunteers of this organization over the decades on issues including acid rain, taxation, land use planning, invasive species prevention, and other important programming and public policy work.

We gathered at the historic Market Hall in Peterborough for a celebration with the FOCA Board of Directors, members, staff and special guests including Michelle Kelly, editor of Cottage Life Magazine, to share FOCA stories and to support the next stage of FOCA's work for waterfront Ontario.

We left inspired for the next phase of FOCA's work on behalf of waterfront Ontario. Recap the highlights – including the thousands of dollars of donated silent auction items, and photos from the event, here: <https://foca.on.ca/60-years/#event>.

Hot Topics, Ongoing Files & Advocacy



Jennifer Court of Asset Management Ontario, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Graydon Smith, and Terry Rees of FOCA at Queen's Park

Throughout 2023, FOCA engaged with partners and government policymakers on priority issues to ensure that the interests of waterfront communities are represented in relevant decisions related to water management, land use planning, boating safety, fiscal sustainability, emergency preparedness, and rural infrastructure including connectivity issues, among many other topics.

From FOCA's 2022 economic impact study, (<https://foca.on.ca/economic-wpo/>) we know that the quarter-million waterfront property households across Ontario spend an estimated \$11.44B annually. Further, for every 100 waterfront properties in this province, 63 jobs are created, with 54 of those jobs in the local community! Through FOCA, the 250,000 waterfront property owners across this province have a voice, and Ontario's waterfronts have a champion whose input counts with government, industry, and private sector colleagues.

Here are just a few quick highlights of topics and files that were moved forward by FOCA in 2023. For a deeper dive, visit: <https://foca.on.ca/issues-programs/>.

Underused Housing Tax (UHT)

Associations: have you informed your American members about the UHT?

FOCA advocates for fair property taxation on behalf of waterfront residential property taxpayers in Ontario. An Underused Housing Tax (UHT) was implemented by the federal Finance Department in 2022, that was to be payable at tax time in 2023. FOCA requested that seasonal owners be excluded from this tax, and the government brought forward an exemption for Canadian owners of vacation or recreational properties, with certain conditions.

Later in the year, two additional amendments were announced: a push-back of the 2022 filing deadline (to April 2023), and a decision to exclude most Canadian corporations, partnerships, and trusts from the tax. Nevertheless, cottage owners who are neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents are still required to file a return – and apply to the Canada Revenue Agency for an Individual Tax Number to do so – even if their property ultimately qualifies for a tax exemption. Important links are posted here: <https://foca.on.ca/property-taxation-assessment/#uht>.



Short-Term Rental Regulation

Short-Term Rental (STR) remained a 'hot topic' for FOCA's members throughout 2023, as municipal Councils implemented a variety of local bylaws, licencing, annual fees, and/or fines intended to address pinch-points created by absentee owners, overuse of properties and surrounding services, and difficulties with bylaw enforcement.

Also in 2023, the federal government announced that property owners in jurisdictions that already prohibit STR will no longer be able to claim rental expenses against the income they make.

Lastly, a precedent was set late in the year when the Township of Minden Hills ruled that a STR property owner was financially responsible for a recreational fire ban fine issued to one of their renters. FOCA members can login to access FOCA's 2022 overview report about STR, and catch up on all the updates, here: <https://foca.on.ca/rental/>.

Rural Connectivity

From FOCA member surveys we know that reliable cellular and internet access remain key concerns across much of Ontario cottage country.

FOCA works with government and partners to advance service access for rural and waterfront Ontario. In 2023, the Province committed additional funds to expand access to high-speed internet, and launched a searchable map to inform property owners about existing and planned projects, with target completion dates. We continue to work with telecommunications and regional partners on this important file. Access the Province's searchable service map, plus related news and resources, here: <https://foca.on.ca/rural-internet/>.

Salt Impacts

FOCA supports efforts to reduce the impacts of salt on our precious freshwaters, in part through our volunteers' monitoring and tracking of chloride levels via the Lake Partner Program. We will continue to work with our partners in academia, industry, and environmental non-governmental organizations to make the case for action.

This year, FOCA participated in a "Salt Forum" convened by Landscape Ontario with over 100 partners, to discuss ecological implications of salt, related infrastructure decline, and safety and liability concerns. Learn more about negative salt impacts on both ecosystems and human health, here: <https://foca.on.ca/salt-impacts/>.



Salt impacts in Dr. John Smol's presentation at the 2023 FOCA Fall Seminar (slide by Troy Martin; image: Lisa Cicchetti)



Image: Gloucester Pool Cottagers' Association

Recreational Boating Updates

On behalf of our members who own hundreds of thousands of boats, FOCA sits on the Ontario Recreational Boating Advisory Committee of Transport Canada (TC).

2023 saw several TC developments, including new Pleasure Craft Licensing Fees, and steps toward modernizing the Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations (VORR) that municipalities can use to limit or restrict certain boat traffic or speeds.

After advocacy by FOCA and partners in 2022 on behalf of our member associations affected by shipping containers being used as long-term floating accommodations on Georgian Bay (image above), the Province issued a statement clarifying restrictions on these structures and prohibiting their docking overnight on provincial waterways, effective July 1, 2023. However, any such structures located along the Trent Severn Waterway are under Parks Canada's jurisdiction, so the advocacy continues.

Further, TC designation of these structures as "vessels" continues to pose a challenge to ongoing management efforts. Late in the year, TC opened an initial public consultation period on the issue which they call "long-term anchoring". Stay tuned to the FOCA EAlert in 2024 for updates! Read more: <https://foca.on.ca/floating-accommodations/>.



Ontario Salt Forum, October 2023

Hot Topics, Ongoing Files & Advocacy

Insurance Coverage: Your “Hidden” Member Benefit?

*We are always amazed to hear that members don't know about the **FOCA Association Insurance Program**, or the **CottageFirst program** for member families!*

They are your biggest dollar-value member benefits, perhaps “hidden” in plain sight if our member associations don't relay the information to all their members. Cottage (and home, auto, boat) insurance is one of your largest household expenses, and it is critical to get it right, for when you need it!

While FOCA does not sell insurance, we have aligned with the people who do: our exclusive insurance partners at Cade Associates Insurance Brokers. For over 30 years, FOCA has provided risk management and insurance programming support to our members.



Cade Associates administer the **FOCA Association Liability Insurance Program** underwritten by Aviva Canada, to help lake and road associations mitigate their risks and acquire essential liability insurance coverage.

Even better: FOCA member associations get a discount on insurance from our brokers at Cade!

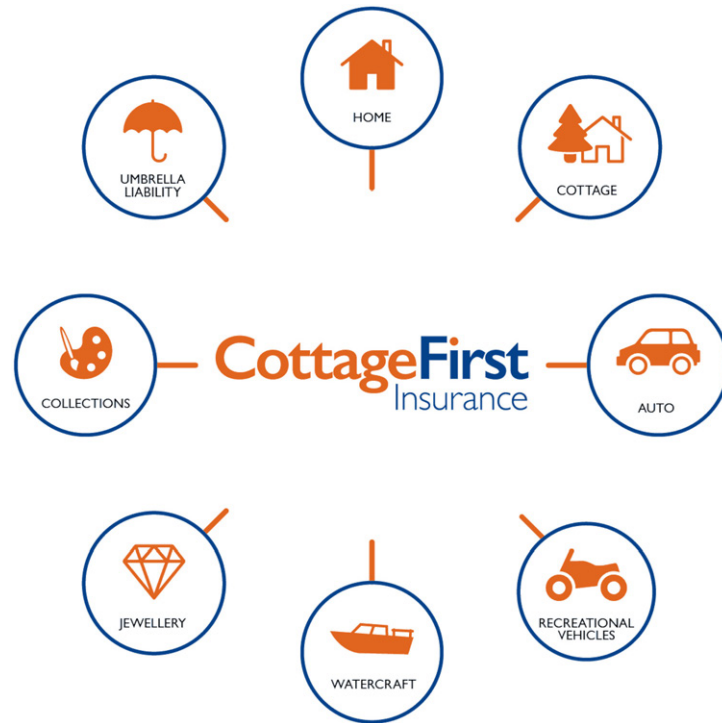
Best of all? This insurance coverage now includes access to a free Legal Helpline, provided by DAS Legal Protection Inc., for your association's general legal questions. Contact the FOCA office for details on how to access this service.

What fellow members are saying:

“Thank you for your suggestion of using the legal helpline. The lawyer I spoke with was very thorough, clearly indicated our options, and helped with determining a path forward for the association.”

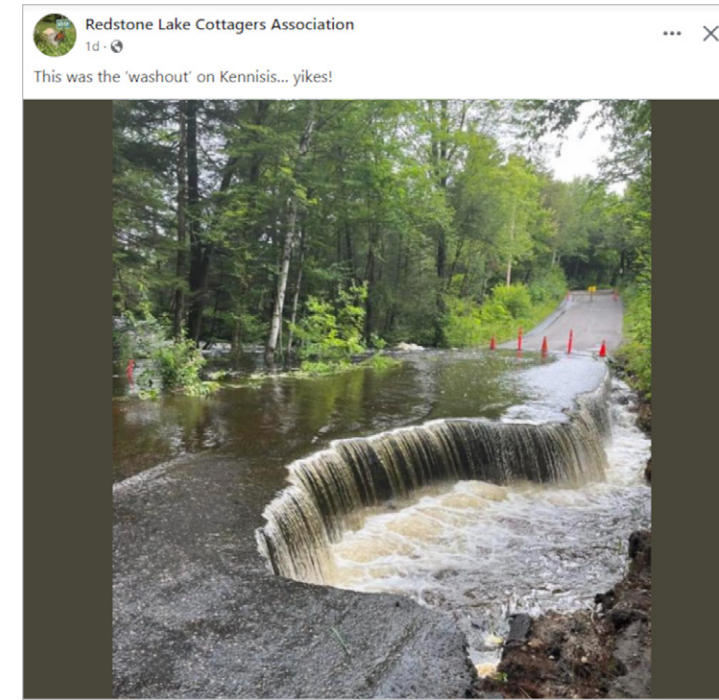
~ David P. • Association Member

Meanwhile, all FOCA member families plus our Friends of FOCA (recurring annual supporters), have exclusive access to the first group insurance program created by cottagers, for cottagers: **CottageFirst**. Bundle insurance for your cottage, car, home, boat, recreational vehicles, special collections, and other products, to save while getting best-in-class coverage. This program has been underwritten by Travelers Canada since 2014. Join hundreds of fellow members who get peace-of-mind coverage and knowledgeable, responsive service from Cade Associates.



Learn more about liability considerations and these insurance offerings, here: <https://foca.on.ca/risk-management-insurance/>. Get a quote from Cade before your next insurance renewal date: email clientservices@cadeinsurance.com or call 1-844-223-3178.

These insurance offerings alone more than cover the cost of your annual contribution to FOCA – take advantage of them!



Road washout posted to member Facebook page

Rural Road Issues

While some of your drive may be on provincial highways or municipally-owned roads, most trips to a cottage, camp, or cabin end along a private road. The quality of your private road can affect both your access to, and enjoyment of, the property as well as its overall value. Local committees, associations, or road groups are an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to private roads.

Some road groups begin as a handshake agreement between neighbours, but evolve over time into more formal organizations, or incorporated entities. Your group might be starting at the very beginning, or you may be fairly well established. Whatever the case, FOCA has a document titled “*Starting and Building an Effective Road Association*” plus peer case studies on related topics like work plans, benchmark statistics, and getting everyone to pay their fair share. Contact FOCA (info@foca.on.ca) for access to these road resources, and review members-only material on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/road-issues/>.

“Thank you so much for the road resources you sent. What would I do without FOCA for advice? Nice to be able to fast adapt winning ideas!”

~ Jane C. • Association Member

Municipalities & Liability

Throughout 2023, FOCA heard anecdotes from members about municipalities beginning to require rural road residents or associations to carry liability insurance and/or sign a “licence of occupation” for a wide range of uses and activities related to access across unassumed roads, shoreline allowances, or other easements (e.g., for boat launches).

At least one municipality has cut off issuing new building permits until such agreements are signed by property owners. FOCA continues to liaise with rural municipal partners and colleagues at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and Good Roads (a municipal service organization).

We will keep members updated on developments in 2024 as they become available.

If you have a related road story to share, let us know. Email: info@foca.on.ca.

Premier Ford at the 2023 ROMA conference



Building Capacity to Serve our Members

FOCA Website Refresh

As a service organization dedicated to our membership, FOCA further professionalized our digital offerings by investing in a major web redevelopment that we were proud to launch in 2023.

On the content end of things, over 400 previous blog posts were reordered into 100 topic-driven webpages. Recurring banners will now help you understand at a glance “What FOCA sees” (why this topic matters to waterfront residents), the main “Issue” at hand, the “Latest News” that deserves your attention, “Your Role” (what you can do to help FOCA move the needle forward on this file), and “Background” including FOCA’s long-term work on each topic.

On the functionality end, a new member web login system – **MemberPress** – now enables our members to create a unique Username and Password to access members-only materials. These offerings include past event recordings, FOCA reports and guides (on Citizen Science, Septic System Reinspection, and more) and access codes for benefits and discounts from our sponsors and partners.

Check out the new website design and functionality at <https://foca.on.ca>. Each of our Associations’ member families, and our Friends of FOCA (recurring annual supporters) are encouraged to set up their own user account now, if they haven’t already done so.

Spread the word! Need technical assistance? Contact us: communications@foca.on.ca or 705-749-3622.

Get access to members-only material!

You're missing members-only content!

The full Septic Re-inspection report is only available to members of our Member Associations & current Friends of FOCA (our annual supporters). Municipal partners may contact us for a copy.

If you are already registered on the FOCA website, please login below with your Username and Password.

Need help with your login? Contact us for assistance during business hours. Not yet a Member Association? Find out why you should be!

Username

Password

Remember Me

[LOG IN](#)

Association Best Practices & Templates

For over a decade, FOCA has been helping our incorporated member associations to prepare for the transition to the *Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act (ONCA)*.

This is the year you must come into compliance – by October 18, 2024.

If you haven’t already, your association should review its Articles of Incorporation (previously called Objects) and Bylaws (sometimes referred to as a Constitution), and ensure that they are updated to address necessary provisions under ONCA. To assist, FOCA has posted tools and links under the member login on our Association Best Practices webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/association-bmps/#onca>.

While you’re on the Best Practices webpage, download other resources like:

- an association “Welcome Binder” or visitor info sheet
- tips for board and volunteer recruitment and retention
- details about FOCA’s offer to help member associations by hosting a basic webpage (as a sub-page of the FOCA site) to give you a digital searchable presence if you don’t have the technical skills or funds to manage a website yourself.



FOCA attended many member Association meetings in 2023, including this one for the Birchcliff Property Owners Association

Communication & Education

FOCA nurtures our community of informed and engaged waterfront enthusiasts – and reached out to new-to-cottage-country audiences throughout 2023 – by providing timely updates on priority issues, sharing success stories to support our members, and strengthening our reach and public engagement through regional events, print publications, and digital platforms.

In 2023, we continued to host valuable networking opportunities and learning workshops for members, and provided best-practices and “help line” support to empower our member associations with tools and knowledge to effectively address local challenges and opportunities.



FOCA Board Member Michael Peterson at the 2023 Friends of the Tay Watershed “Discovery Day”

FOCA’s Manager of Communications & Development, Michelle Lewin, at the 2023 AGM of the Greater Bob’s and Crow Lakes Association



FOCA – a trusted voice

Throughout the year, FOCA spoke at dozens of member events across cottage country, either virtually or in-person.

It was great to be back on the road, and visit with our members again! We also answered questions posed by the thousands of cottage country enthusiasts who attended the Spring and Fall Cottage Life Shows and we spoke at regional and national events including the 2023 Water Canada Summit, “Water Connects.”

Even if we can’t make it to your next association meeting (yes, they do all seem to take place on the same 3 summer weekends!), we can send you a few slides and a 5-minute FOCA update to share with your fellow members. Inform them about FOCA’s year-round work, and all their member benefits because of your association’s annual membership.

Contact us to get your update: communications@foca.on.ca or 705-749-3622

The Elert: our success story

By year end, FOCA’s flagship digital publication, the monthly Elert (our e-newsletter), surpassed 20,000 subscribers!

Elerts are filled with important updates on policy changes, cottage country environmental issues, rural safety tips, and regional notices. Ensure you are subscribed and help us achieve our next goal of reaching 25,000 subscribers! Please share this link with others: <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/wEII9od/FOCA25000>.

“Your Elerts always help to give me ideas about what we might consider posting for the association. I appreciate all your work.”

~ Joan H. • Association Member

Program Successes

One of FOCA's primary goals is to champion the protection and conservation of Ontario's shorelands, lakes, rivers, and watersheds.

By supporting community initiatives across Ontario, FOCA encourages sustainable practices among waterfront residents and visitors, to ensure the long-term health and unique character of Ontario's waterfronts, water quality, and resilience in the face of invasive species and impacts of a changing climate. **Here are some quick 2023 program highlights.**



"We appreciate all that this organization does and the efforts of all the volunteers who help protect our lakes, including members of our own family at Geneva Lake."

~ Linda & Jim C. • FOCA Donors & Association Members

Lake Partner Program

FOCA's signature water monitoring program on Ontario's inland lakes – the Lake Partner Program (LPP) – had its 27th year of operation in 2023.

This renowned undertaking is a longstanding collaboration between FOCA, our volunteer Lake Stewards, and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks who conduct the sample analysis and publish the annual datasets. Collectively, thousands of water quality data points have been generated over the last three decades. In 2023 alone, more than 620 volunteers sampled over 900 sites on more than 540 lakes, producing data that adds to our understanding of long-term trends in Total phosphorus, Calcium, Chloride, and water clarity in our precious lakes.

In the words of sampler Emily Doyle of Otter Lake who has been a waterfront property owner for 40 years, *"Until I became a Lake Steward and participated in the LPP, I had no idea what lake health really meant."* Read stories about what inspires the LPP volunteers, in the 2023 Ontario Lake Stewards Magazine posted here: <https://foca.on.ca/publications-videos/>.

Thank you to all our Lake Stewards, and especially those of you who are growing a spark of enthusiasm in future generations of stewards by taking along younger helpers on your sampling excursions! If your lake has 5 or more years of data, you can now request a detailed Lake Report, including annual trend graphs, and an interactive map displaying sampling site locations. Email lakepartner@ontario.ca for more information.

Learn more, and find out if we need a volunteer on your lake or waterbody, from our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/lake-partner-program/>.

Sampling equipment (image: Noah Stegman, Lake St. John) and engaging the next generation of samplers on Lake Seseikinika (image: Luce Moore)



Green Shovels – Invasive Phragmites

In recent years, \$60,000 has been distributed through Green Shovels program funding by FOCA, to help member associations in preventing the spread of invasive Phragmites in aquatic environments. Phragmites is an aggressively spreading grass that has become one of the most significant threats to wetland habitats in Ontario, where it drastically reduces plant and wildlife diversity and threatens species at risk. Learn more about Phragmites, and the work of the Green Shovels Collaborative, here: <https://foca.on.ca/phragmites>.



Volunteers from Carson, Trout, Lepine, Grennan Association (left) and Trout Lake, Sudbury (above)

IsampleON

Dozens of member volunteers across south central Ontario lakes participated in the 2023 Invasive Species Awareness and Monitoring Program for Lakes Education Ontario (IsampleON). This program was launched in 2021 by FOCA and our colleagues at the Invasive Species Centre, and in 2023 was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

We know early detection is essential to protect our lakes and rivers from the negative impacts of aquatic invaders on these key ecosystems.

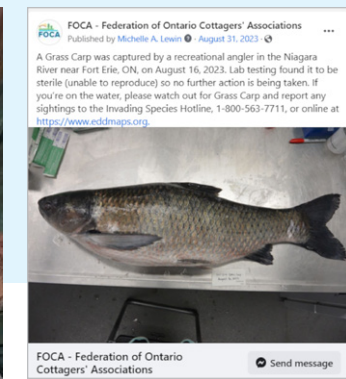
This year, samplers participated in field work to support cutting-edge eDNA testing – analyzing water samples for traces of genetic material that act like a biological fingerprint unique to each species. This testing has the potential to revolutionize how we monitor the presence and movement of various species in our environment. Thank you for your part in the detective-work, samplers! Learn more about the program and eDNA: <https://foca.on.ca/isampleon/>.

Boater Pathways for Invasive Species

Over the past 10 years, FOCA has distributed hundreds of free *"Clean, Drain, Dry"* signs to our member groups, to post at local boat launches and marinas across the province. It is up to every boater to prevent the spread of invasive species when moving boats between waterbodies.

Be part of the solution!

Learn how and then spread the word: <https://foca.on.ca/invasive-species/>.



Eyes on the Potential Invasion: Grass Carp

FOCA worked with partners at Fisheries and Oceans Canada to continue to educate our members along and near the Great Lakes about the threat of Grass Carp becoming established in Canadian waters.

These large, voracious invaders – and their fellow invasive species of Silver Carp, Black Carp, and Bighead Carp – could decimate the commercial, recreational, and sport fishing industries in Canada.

We were jarred to have 4 captures of individual Grass Carp at different locations on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario during 2023. We need members living along the Great Lakes shorelines to learn how to identify these fish, and how to report potential sightings. Access tips and resources on our webpage: <https://foca.on.ca/carps/>.

FOCA Events

Members attend FOCA events at a special reduced price (or free, in the case of the Cottage Succession seminars).

Associations: Do your members know about this, and all their other member benefits? Login and download a copy here: <https://foca.on.ca/benefits/> or contact the office for a digital copy by email.

How many of these FOCA events did you take advantage of last year?



"Excellent job with the FOCA Fall Seminar. The updates and presentations were very timely and gave meeting participants much to take away and consider. For many lake communities the knowledge that others have been managing challenges similar to their own is reinforcing and offered support - and inspiration! Waterfront communities across Ontario are very fortunate to have FOCA working on their behalf."

~ Karen H. • Past Event Attendee & Friend of FOCA

60th Annual General Meeting and Spring Seminar

"Coming out of our Shells" was a hybrid event with over 200 digital and in-person participants, plus expert speakers on land use planning, biodiversity, Lyme disease, and property resilience in the face of climate change and fire threats. Plus, the 2022 FOCA Achievement Award was presented to the Wolfe Lake Association of Westport for their "Let's Get the Lead Out" initiative and lead fishing tackle buy-back program, in support of loon health.

FOCA Fall Seminar for Associations

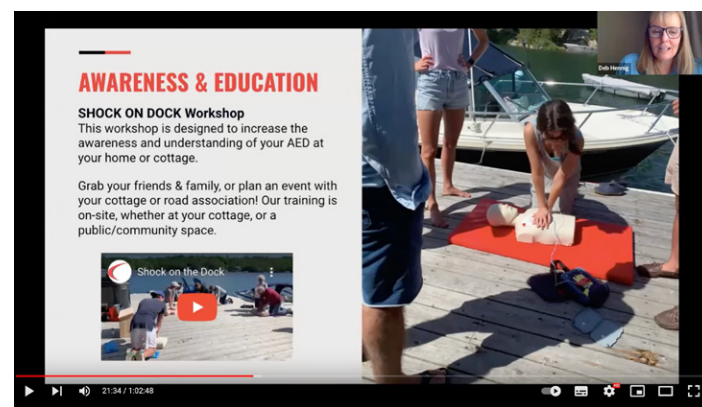
"Understanding the Changing State of our Lakes" brought together a series of environmental updates, including feature speaker Dr. John Smol's talk, "Below the waterline: gradual lake changes with potentially major ecosystem impacts". FOCA Members can login on our website to download the extensive event summary which includes links to all the presentations shown: <https://foca.on.ca/news/events/#2023fallSeminar>.

FOCA Cottage Succession Seminars

In 2023 we held 9 events with close to 1000 families in attendance. Estate lawyer Peter Lillico and FOCA have been hosting these sessions for 15 years, helping families plan for the intergenerational transfer of the cottage. Register for 2024 sessions, or purchase digital recordings of past seminars here: <https://foca.on.ca/cottage-succession/>.

Cardiac Safe Communities

This webinar, sponsored by Action First Aid, included a demonstration of how to use an automated external defibrillator. Review the recording here: <https://foca.on.ca/emergency-preparedness/>.



FOCA's Rebranding

We are very pleased to roll out FOCA's new branding with a refreshed logo and colour scheme.

As revealed by our Board President at the launch during the 2023 FOCA Fall Seminar for Associations, this modernized branding incorporates key elements at the core of our organization: we are the people who live on the shorelines of the waters in Ontario; FOCA works to protect naturalized shorelines and healthy waters within a safe and thriving environment.

If you are a Member Association that posts a link to FOCA on your digital platforms, or includes "proud member of FOCA" wording in your print newsletters or e-news, please email communications@foca.on.ca for a copy of the updated logo for your use.



Ontario Lake Stewards Magazine

In 2023 FOCA's longstanding Lake Stewards Newsletter received a rebrand of its own, and has been renamed the Ontario Lake Stewards Magazine.

Did you read the articles on generator safety, engagement ideas for lake associations, algae blooms, boat cleaning stations to prevent the spread of invasive species, wood ash being used to help sugar maple trees (and the resulting impact on syrup production!), and more?

Download your free digital copy from our website: <https://foca.on.ca/publications-videos/>.



Thank you, to FOCA's Executive Director

After 20 years at the helm of FOCA, Terry Rees is stepping down at the end of March 2024 to pursue other interests.

As the leader of one of the largest membership associations in the Province, Terry has been committed to building a strong community, and to working collaboratively with a broad range of partners to address the many complex challenges facing Ontario's rural communities and our freshwater environments.

Please join us in sincerely thanking Terry for all his dedication and work on behalf of waterfront Ontario, and wishing him well in whatever adventure his boat steers him toward next!

Did you know?

You can make a donation to FOCA in honour of Terry!

Please include your message to him when you make your gift here:
https://bit.ly/donate_FOCA



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