



2024 FOCA Fall Seminar – Event Summary

We had over 140 registrants for the FOCA Fall Seminar held by Zoom webinar on Saturday, November 9, 2024. The theme of the day was **“Healthy Shorelines”**, and attendees heard important presentations from FOCA and guest speakers on a variety of related topics.

All registrants were sent a **link to the event recording**, alongside this event summary. Because this was a paid event, we ask you *not* to share the event recording with others. Remember: event registrations are a part of FOCA's diversified revenue plan, which helps us keep your association membership fees as low as possible!

You can help us to spread the word about the important topics covered during the event, by sharing this event summary with all your fellow FOCA members.

Download copies of each of the day's slide presentations:

- [FOCA Updates by CEO Lesley Lavender, and Strategic Plan Progress Update by Board Chair Deborah Martin-Downs](#) including event wrap-up slides (PDF, 9 MB)
- [Source Water Protection Pilot Project Update by Terry Rees, project consultant](#) (PDF, 3 MB)
- [Aquatic Plants in Ontario: ID Resources & Management Options by Kaleigh Mooney, project consultant](#) (PDF, 10.5 MB)
- [Lake Partner Program Updates by Gavin Vance, FOCA Assistant Lake Stewardship Coordinator](#) (PDF, 1.2 MB) > including links to FOCA's 2 new YouTube videos about the Lake Partner Program!
- [Reflections on Sewage System Maintenance Inspection Programs by Paisley McDowell of Envision Consultants](#) (PDF, 9.5 MB)
- [Wild Waterfronts: Creating Greener Shores by Robert Pye, Executive Director of Watersheds Canada](#) (PDF, 4 MB)

Thank you to our Session Sponsors:



Highlights from FOCA's presentations at the 2024 Fall Seminar:

FOCA Updates by Lesley Lavender, CEO

Lesley began by welcoming attendees, introducing the FOCA staff, and thanking her predecessor, Terry Rees, whose ongoing support during this transition is appreciated.

In the face of increasing challenges, FOCA's purpose is to empower dedicated stewardship of our lands, lakes and rivers, while protecting Ontario's cottage experience, heritage and way of life, for generations. We do this through advocacy, programs and resources.

This year, FOCA is launching exciting new committee opportunities, giving you even more ways to get involved. Keep an eye out for our Advocacy and Governmental Affairs, Roads Group, and Environmental Advisory Committees—each of which will offer a meaningful way to help drive our initiatives forward and will be another way for members to directly engage with the work of FOCA.

Lesley shared some early highlights from FOCA's Association Benchmarks Survey which closed on November 18th. From early returns, Lesley reported that a quarter of respondents identified as part of a road group, 8 out of 10 respondents' associations have written bylaws, and 90% carry liability insurance. Thank you to all the representatives who participated in the survey to ensure your association's data is included in the results! We are diving into the findings and look forward to preparing a summarized report for our members.

Lesley reminded members to read the 2024 Ontario Lake Stewards Magazine, which FOCA published this summer. The current edition includes articles about land use planning, lake management, wildland fire safety, and updates on FOCA's environmental programs. [Download your copy here](#) (PDF, 7 MB).



FOCA's Lake Partner Program (LPP) now provides individualized reports upon request, for lakes that have at least 5 years of sampling data on file. For more, see the LPP slides from this event, including links to our two new quick videos about the program – please like and share them!

This year, FOCA has actively championed critical issues for waterfront property owners. We lobbied against the capital gains tax change, sharing valuable letter templates with our members to raise our collective voices. We also addressed these tax changes in updated cottage succession planning resources, including 4 webinars FOCA hosted for members this year with estate lawyer Peter Lillico. FOCA has circulated information about Transport Canada's public comment period on mandatory PFD regulations, and we led productive discussions at Queen's Park about invasive species prevention and management.

Additionally, FOCA has been busy on the road this year, engaging directly with our members across the province to better understand the needs and challenges at your lakes and local roads. Please follow our social media channels for photos and stories about all our adventures:



FOCA: Inform. Protect. Unite.

FOCA Strategic Plan Progress Update by Deborah Martin-Downs, FOCA Board Chair

Deborah explained that FOCA reviews our guiding or strategic principles every few years, to ensure we continue to accomplish our goals. She thanked the volunteer FOCA Board Directors who serve our organization while representing their own associations all across Ontario. This year, the Board has met to review and update our strategic priorities, culminating in a weekend planning session in early November with the Board, lead staff, and an outside facilitator.

In addition to the Association Benchmarks Survey mentioned by Lesley, Deborah noted FOCA released a Strategic Planning Survey to all 21,000+ Elert (e-newsletter) subscribers in August, and we received nearly 1,000 responses! Slightly less than half of those respondents reported that they use their property seasonally, which is lower than we've seen in previous surveys and confirms the trend toward more year-round use of properties in Ontario cottage country.

The Board also conducted several one-on-one interviews with members as part of the planning process. We spoke with large and small associations, groups devoted to lake conservation, groups devoted to road maintenance, longstanding members, and new members. Thank you to



everyone who shared their time with us. We received your thoughts and ideas about what you value in FOCA and what your associations need to succeed.

We heard that you value FOCA as a unique organization in Ontario. FOCA is a lake issues expert, and the “go-to” resource for information and association support. FOCA is well-

connected and serves as the hub of a huge network. You value FOCA's communications, and our advocacy and united voice on topical issues. FOCA can leverage the power of this large community of 250,000 waterfront residents. We are an economic force in rural Ontario and a powerful group of constituents, as we head toward a new round of elections soon.

We hope you will join us on **Saturday, March 1st, 2025**, for the **FOCA Annual General Meeting and Spring Seminar** which will be held as a hybrid event: in-person at the Bayview Golf and Country Club, and by webinar. We will present our completed strategic plan to membership then. If you have feedback to add in the meantime, email: president@foca.on.ca

FOCA **PANEL / Q&A**



Paisley
McDowell



Terry Rees



Gavin Vance



Kaleigh
Mooney



Robert Pye

After our panel discussion and open Q&A session, the event wrapped up with the presentation of **Virtual Door Prizes** to 3 lucky registrants: Rachel P. of Ril Lake Association, Jeffrey H. who is annual supporter as a Friend of FOCA, and Steve B. of Livingston Lake Association. Each of them has been offered access to one of FOCA's digital [Cottage Succession Planning Seminar recordings](#) with estate lawyer Peter Lillico to help them in their own family succession planning.

Thank you, everyone, for being with us at the event! See you next time.