

2021 Dock Drop Lake Plan Section

Individual lake management plans are supported and encouraged by both the District of Muskoka and the Town of Gravenhurst (TOG). Among the policies that apply to the Muldrew Lakes, the District of Muskoka encourages individual lake plans and lake stewardship programs as a method “to identify important values, features and individual lake character”. Additionally, these programs “can be used to monitor water quality, social carrying capacity and lake plans may be incorporated into Area Municipal Official Plans”. A MLCA Lake Plan was previously completed in 2010 and resulted in several policies being implemented in the GOP and GZBL. The plan was meant to be reviewed and updated every five years.

To help determine the scope and costs associated with this potential update, EcoVue Consulting Services was retained by the MLCA to undertake a study to determine a recommended scope and outline of costs associated with completing an update of lake specific policies in the Gravenhurst Official Plan (GOP) and Gravenhurst Zoning Bylaw (GZBL). The results of Phase 1 are based on the feedback received from the community. The MLCA Board will be seeking a mandate at the Annual General Meeting to proceed with Phase 2 of the Lake Plan development.

Phase 1 Summary.

EcoVue completed a community survey and Town Hall event during the summer and fall of 2020, respectively. Phase 1 presents the results of these community engagements, a summary of the research, and a set of recommendations to proceed with updating the Muldrew-specific policies in the GOP and GZBL. If the membership decides to proceed to Phase 2, **the recommendations will be open for discussion, additions, subtractions and change in Phase 2 of the Lake Plan Process.**

Phase 1 Methodology

In early summer 2020, a Community Survey was distributed to the lake community (members and nonmembers). 188 responses to the survey were collected. The survey focused on understanding the key issues and concerns with regards to land use on the Muldrew Lakes. A detailed summary of the survey has been uploaded to the MLCA Lake Plan webpage. 97% of respondents believe that residents and stakeholders should take an active role in protecting and identifying future directions for the lakes in the form of a lake management plan.

Survey respondents were asked to contribute ideas regarding their values related to spending time on the lakes in an open-ended question.

- Most participants discussed valuing the beauty of the natural environment, the modest nature of development on the lake, as well as its privacy, peacefulness and tranquility.
- Common themes in the open-ended questions on the survey were concerns that certain areas of the lake are becoming “over developed”, and that the lake has reached its capacity.
- Survey respondents were primarily concerned with lot development (variances to required setbacks as well as new builds which are often very large, visible, and “out of character”, as well as the existing number of cottages on the lake.
- Following these two issues is a shared concern for increasing boat traffic, the speed boats travel, and the resulting safety concerns and damage to the natural shorelines and private property from boat wash/wake.

Town Hall Zoom Meetings

MLCA held 2 Zoom sessions with 53 participants. A presentation was delivered using PowerPoint to provide a high-level summary of the Community Survey to attendants and allow opportunities for suggestions and discussion. The presentation went into detail regarding possible policy solutions for the main issues which arose on the survey which can be addressed through land use policy in the GOP and GZBL. Participants were also polled as to whether they felt in support of the suggested policy solutions. Overall, the values and vision (clean water, the natural environment, peacefulness) of lake residents do not appear to have changed significantly since 2010 was published. However, there does seem to be a greater emphasis of concern from the community regarding development pressures on the lake, and in particular impacts of development on the natural environment, a change in the visual character of the lake, and the negative impacts of increasing recreational boat traffic.

LAKE-SPECIFIC POLICY OPTIONS

The results of the Community Survey and Town Hall clearly indicate that a majority wish to limit the size of shoreline dwellings, to preserve the visual character of the lakes, and to limit the environmental impact of buildings on shoreline habitat and water quality.

- 73% of survey respondents were in support of limiting the size of all new builds.
- 54% of participants felt that they were in support of implementing a maximum dwelling size of 3,000 square feet,
- 33% were in support of a maximum dwelling size of 4,000 square feet (after hearing about the Kahshe Lake example),
- 10% of participants felt they needed more time to consider, and
- 3% were not in support of implementing a maximum dwelling size.

A Muldrew-specific policy could be introduced to the GOP and GZBL to limit the gross floor area of the principal dwelling to 4,000 square feet (375 square metres) and 2 ½ stories in height.

Section D15.3 of the GOP encourages lake communities to complete lake plans to address the density of development on a lake with respect to lake surface area and shoreline (I.e., the recreational or social carrying capacity). **Recreational Carrying Capacity** (RCC) is a measurement of residential unit to surface area criterion that estimates the number of users that can be accommodated on the surface area of a lake while maintaining the recreational amenity of the waterbody. If imposed as a hard cap, once the recreational capacity of a lake is reached, no new lots (severances) would be permitted. RCC has been implemented in various townships in the District of Parry Sound as well as the Township of Seguin. The current accepted model of RCC in Central Ontario is a ratio of 1.6 hectares of lake surface area per dwelling. Lake surface area is calculated by removing a 30-metre shoreline area (since Federal law restricts boat speeds to 9 km/hr in this zone). Muldrew currently has 395 dwellings and a Surface Area of 420 hectares less 30 metre shoreline area = 258.9 hectares for an RCC ratio for Muldrew of 0.65, well below minimum of 1.6 hectares/dwelling. This indicates that development on the lake exceeds the capacity provided in the model by 146%¹. Thus, an opportunity exists to introduce a Muldrew-specific policy in the GOP to prevent anyone from subdividing their land to create more lots. The result of

implementing a RCC would indirectly reduce any further increases in boat traffic from additional cottages or residences.

Another way to strengthen the lake-specific policy affecting water quality, natural beauty and preservation of shoreline habitat would be to require the incorporation of lake-specific Site Design Guidelines in the Town of Gravenhurst development review process as well as requiring a Site Evaluation Report for all development applications. One of the limitations of the development application process is that it typically assesses applications on a site-by-site basis, and only in terms of the proposed development’s impact on significant natural heritage features on, or adjacent to the site. The lake itself is not recognized as a significant natural feature, and additionally, the cumulative impacts of development on a waterbody are not considered. Requiring a lake-specific version for all development applications and building permits would serve to better protect water quality, natural beauty and the ecological health of shorelines by requiring an analysis of the potential impact of the development on the site as well as the lake, instead of focusing only on potential impacts to nearby wetlands or other significant natural heritage features.

The following table presents a summary of the community’s concerns as expressed through the survey and town hall events, and the recommended actions or policy options. It should be emphasized that these are only suggestions, and that the lake community could choose to proceed with any number of these policies or variations thereof. The details of these policies will be determined during Phase 2 of the project.

Table 2. Summary of Community Concerns and Recommended Policy Options	
Community Concern	Recommended Action/Policy Options
Update Gravenhurst Zoning By-law	As identified in the 2010 MLCA Lake Plan, GZBL does not reflect Muldrew Lakes-specific policies in GOP (e.g., lake specific regulations for boathouses). Applications for updates should include a thorough review of all lake-specific policy and complete housekeeping tasks such as cleaning up language pertaining to shoreline structures.
Vision & Values	Updated and detailed statement regarding vision and values of community with description of lake character as well as community concerns regarding shoreline development and lake capacity.
Lot Development (setback)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific policies regarding conditions for considering amendments or variances to the required setback for new builds. 2. Policies and provisions to restrict the replacement of legal non-complying structures to original location.

<p>Lot Development (scale & massing of new buildings)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set a maximum gross floor area. 2. Set maximum height of 2 ½ stories or below height of surrounding trees. 3. Sliding scale to determine maximum gross floor area and lot coverage based on lot frontage. 4. Site Design Guidelines
<p>Lot Development (scale & massing of redevelopment within 30 metre setback)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximum Width Formula 2. Maximum Gross Floor Area 3. Restrict replacement of existing non-complying structures to original location/footprint/size/height of original building. 4. Restrict additions to or enlargements of existing non-complying structures to height of original building.
<p>Development Density</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recreational Carrying Capacity 2. Policy prohibiting the creation of new lots (severances)
<p>Recreational Boating</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recreational Carrying Capacity 2. Policy prohibiting the creation of new lots (severances)
<p>Environmental Stewardship Priorities</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Required Site Evaluation Report 2. Site Design Guidelines 3. Develop detailed mapping/database and accompanying lake-specific policy for GOP
<p>Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>Designation of heritage properties.</p>
<p>Permanent Land Protection</p>	<p>Conservation easements and/or land donation to Muskoka Conservancy of high-quality habitat areas (e.g., wetlands or nesting areas)</p>

Protection of Crown Lands

1. Recreational Carrying Capacity
2. Policy prohibiting the creation of new lots (severances)

Summary

Overall, the main vision and values of the Muldrew Lake community do not appear to have changed significantly since the lake planning effort in the early 2000s. However, there does appear to be greater concern regarding the impacts of shoreline development to the visual character and ecological health of the shoreline environment. The community's priority land use concerns include the setback, scale and massing of lot development, the density of development on the lakes, and increasing recreational boat traffic. In terms of environmental stewardship, the priority concerns are water quality, shoreline health and the natural beauty of the area. The MLCA will be following the Blue Lakes Program (<https://www.bluelakes.ca>) for the health of our lake. Though the GOP and MDOP generally support the vision and values of the Muldrew Lakes community, specific and enforceable policies to protect the visual and ecological character of the Muldrew Lakes appear to be deficient. The GOP and MDOP both support and encourage the development of individual lake plans to address issues such as those outlined in the MLCA Lake Plan Update. Particularly, specific policies to address the preservation of shoreline character and the density of development with respect to lake surface area. Judging from the response to the survey and attendance at the Town Hall event, the majority of the 188 survey respondents are in favour of introducing lake specific policies to preserve the visual and ecological character and health of the shoreline and overall lake environment.

Next Steps

The lake community has the opportunity to review and consider the recommendations made in the EcoVue Phase 1 report before the 2021 MLCA Annual General Meeting. At the 2021 AGM we will be voting on whether we take the next step to Phase 2, which is to prepare formal applications to the Town of Gravenhurst for amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw to include an updated set of Muldrew-specific policies. The cost of this would be approximately \$13,000, which would be offset by the Annual Silent Auction. Phase 2 will include sufficient consultation to iron out the details of the policy options presented in EcoVue's feasibility report and ensure that the majority are in favour of the lake-specific policies submitted to the Town for inclusion in the Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw