

CHA stresses importance of environmental actions

By Angelica Blenich – Haliburton County Echo
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Ministry of Natural Resources climate change project coordinator Gary Nielsen describes the impacts changing weather patterns is having on our lakes at the Coalition of Haliburton Property Owners Association meeting on Sept. 21, 2013 at the Haliburton Fish Hatchery. ANGELICA BLENICH/HALIBURTON COUNTY ECHO/QMI AGENCY

The Coalition of Haliburton Property Owners continues to advocate for the environment. On Sept. 21 the CHA held their annual general meeting at the Fish Hatchery in Haliburton. More than 50 representatives from throughout the county participated in discussions about mandatory septic inspections, fish populations, lake levels, natural shorelines and other issues facing local lakes.

CHA chairman Paul MacInnes updated those in attendance on the many projects the organization is currently undertaking, which is now up at 13.

"We are at our max," he said.

Two of the most significant initiatives the group has spearheaded are advocating for healthy septic systems and renaturalizing shorelines.

"There has been a lot of discussion all summer long about this," said MacInnes.

There is not yet support from the public for mandatory septic inspections and some lake associations are fighting against them, said MacInnes.

However the CHA is looking into training professionals such as contractors and landscapers on septic systems.

Climate change project coordinator for the Ministry of Natural Resources Gary Nielsen spoke about how the province is addressing climate change issues.

A forester by profession, Nielsen admitted he wasn't an expert on climate change.

"People are still unsure about what to say to skeptics," said Nielsen, adding there were fewer of them now. "Hopefully I can give you some ammunition."

Although Canada had come a long way in addressing climate change, Nielsen believed more needed to be done.

"The bottom line is we're not making the progress we need to make," he said.

Action needs to come from the top down, he said, pointing to examples like the Kyoto Protocol.

Looking at the state of biodiversity in Canada and the ecological footprint left by Canadians, Nielsen questioned whether we were living within nature's capacity.

"It confounds me that there is such a vested interest in the status quo."

Warm lake temperatures are just one of the issues affecting local property owners as a result of climate change.

Fearful the ecosystem's integrity will be challenged, the MNR has conducted "world class research" to help create adaptation planning for environmental values, said Nielsen.

"There's no plan B, no other planet to go to," he said. "We already know what we have to do."