

Shoreline program gets cash infusion

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By Angelica Blenich – staff reporter

The Coalition of Haliburton Property Owners' Association is receiving more than \$100,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to help keep area lakes and shorelines healthy.

The funds are going towards the Love Your Lake program, which conducts shoreline evaluations and restoration, said CHA chairman Paul MacInnes.

The five-year-old organization received a total of \$111,800 from OTF, to be rolled out over a four-year period.

The funds will be used to pay a percentage of the costs of the shoreline evaluators the CHA will hire each spring and summer, as well as create a shoreline naturalization demonstration site in each of the four municipalities. The purpose of the project is to provide waterfront property owners with simple tips on how to improve the health of their lake, said MacInnes.

“There are some pretty simple things people can do on their shoreline that will really affect the health of their lake in a positive way,” he said.

Waterfront property owners can also receive a private evaluation on their shoreline.

This past summer the organization started the project with 2,500 properties on 10 lakes.

“Incredibly successful,” said MacInnes on the first stage of the project. To assist with the project, the CHA hired two university students to conduct shoreline evaluations.

“It was unbelievable,” said MacInnes. “They were really able to make the connection between lake health and shoreline health ... the No. 1 question people would ask them is ‘when do I get my report?’ So it was a very positive experience.”

The property owners who had their evaluations done this past summer will be getting their reports this spring.

“Now with this Trillium grant we'll be able to continue it [the program] for the next four years,” said MacInnes. “We've got 47 lakes that are on a waiting list to get done so we hope to get all of those lakes done over the next four years.”

The CHA chairman confident the project will not only get done but will be a success, due to the growing concern and appreciation for healthy lakes from area residents.

“For Haliburton County, if we don't have healthy lakes we're in serious trouble,” said MacInnes. “It would affect our restaurants, our lodges, our marinas, our gas stations, accommodation places. It's just absolutely critical to the social and economic well-being of this area.”

Part of the CHA's efforts has been to bring in lake experts from the Ministry of Environment and Trent University to provide further knowledge to local politicians, residents and others. Two key areas of interest for the organization in terms of lake health are shoreline health and septic health.

"Those two things are the biggest contributors that you can have towards protecting your lakes," said MacInnes.

One of their most successful recent endeavours was the release of an educational video called Poop Talk, which is about septic health.

The video has gone viral, with more than 100,000 views worldwide, a far cry for the 500 views the CHA was initially aiming for.

"It's been so successful, Fleming College is now turning Poop Talk into a college course," said the chairman.

In addition to the Trillium grant, the organization also received funding from the Haliburton County Development Corporation.

Both contributors were crucial to moving the project forward. Even though summer is months away, the CHA is already working on the project.

MacInnes emphasizes that the time to act is when your lake is healthy, otherwise it's too late.

"When we talk to people about it they really want to act," said MacInnes. "They want to protect the lakes."