

We won't offer any more clichés to describe this "summer like no other", except to say that we hope you are managing all right. It's so ironic that it was such a lovely summer in the 1000 Islands, when those who were here missed seeing those who were not.

As we send this newsletter out, Covid cases are surging in many places all over North America. It's hard to know what the holidays will look like. And even with encouraging news about vaccines in the future, we will probably have many very difficult months ahead of us before the border opens and we can gather here again. Until then, stay safe and look after each other. We can do this with patience and courage.

Water levels – Mercifully, no flooding in 2020

Last fall, we were looking back at a disastrous summer of flooding, and anxious about a repeat in 2020. However, in early May 2020, levels were 20" (.5 metre) lower than 2019's peak, and were already starting their seasonal decline.

In July 2020, the International Joint Commission (IJC) held a webinar about water level regulation across the Great Lakes. (You can read about it at www.ijc.org: a press release about it can be found under News and Events.) Repeatedly, the IJC warned that there was only so much it could do in the face of extreme weather. Here are two quotes from the webinar:

"The IJC's Boards have regulated Lake Superior and Lake Ontario outflows to reduce the impacts of the extreme-high inflows that have been experienced in recent years, but our capacity to control water levels is relatively small compared to the natural factors that influence water levels... such as precipitation, temperature and evaporation, none of which can be accurately predicted or controlled."

"Unfortunately, there is no getting around the fact that extremely high water levels will occur again - whether in two years or two hundred - though nobody is able to predict when this will happen since it depends on the weather."

Plan 2014: The GLAM Committee gathers data.

It was always intended that Plan 2014 would be a work in progress, with an ongoing review mechanism, Great Lakes Adaptive Management (GLAM). The GLAM Committee is constantly studying the contributing factors and effects of water levels to provide data for the IJC to consider. Originally, its first comprehensive report was to be due within fifteen years of Plan 2014's implementation in 2017, but because of the 2017 and 2019 floods, the IJC wanted a more "expedited review" of Plan 2014.

So, in October, the GLAM Committee delivered its "Short- and Long-Term Strategy for Evaluating and Improving the Rules for Managing Releases from Lakes Ontario and Superior". Based on this, and "with public input and government concurrence" the IJC will decide whether and how to modify Plan 2014. We will be watching for the opportunity for "public input".

Resilient shorelines

Since we cannot rule out flooding in the future, TIARA is encouraging waterfront landowners to prepare their shorelines to be resilient in times of flooding – or of drought, which could also easily happen.

To help with that, TIARA has been working with Watersheds Canada. Based in Perth, Ontario, this national organization offers (among other resources) their Natural Edge shoreline naturalization program. It starts with a free site visit, and goes on to recommend native trees, shrubs, ground covers, wildflowers and grasses which, once established, will stabilize and beautify the shoreline. Help and advice is available every step of the way. Find out more from their website: <https://watersheds.ca/our-work/the-natural-edge/> Encouraged by TIARA, Watersheds Canada is currently working on a Shoreline Restoration booklet which will contain valuable resource material.

In March, just before the Covid19 crisis erupted, TIARA held a meeting of many local organizations to plan a summer Information Meeting about making our shorelines resilient even with extremely fluctuating water levels. Needless to say, that is now on hold, but we want to assure you that as the pandemic situation resolves, we'll be making plans again.

Loud boat noise: TIARA joins The Decibel Coalition

In June, TIARA was approached by The Decibel Coalition. The goal of this growing national group is to enhance existing boat muffler legislation to specify decibel limits. This would make boat noise rules consistent with the USA and the EU and easier to enforce.

We emailed you, our members, asking for your views, and the response was amazing - about 10 times our usual number of responses, all very much in favour of such legislation. Here's a typical remark: "We strongly support the limiting of loud boat noise, to preserve the peace and quiet of this beautiful area." With this encouragement, TIARA has agreed to join The Decibel Coalition.

The Decibel Coalition, an initiative of Safe Quiet Lakes of Muskoka, is continuing to recruit support all across Canada. For more information, see <https://safequiet.ca/decibel-coalition/>

And speaking of noise...

A group of landowners on the head of Hill Island is urging the Township not to permit private helipads in the 1000 Islands. They feel that helicopters taking off and landing near cottages and homes would be dangerous, noisy and more than annoying.

The issue is whether the Township and the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority have the jurisdiction to prevent helipads in the 1000 Islands Special Policy Area (islands and mainland south of the 401), or whether they could be over-ruled by Transport Canada.

TIARA wrote the Township pointing out that many sections of the Official Plan would be violated by helicopter traffic and (in the case on Hill Island) by construction and shoreline modification within the 30 metre setback on waterfront property.

The Rockport Strategic Plan

Since March, the Township and Dillon Consulting have held well-attended public meetings to receive comments on a draft "Rockport Strategic Plan and Community Transportation Strategy Traffic Study".

Residents are concerned that over the years, the charming and intimate character of this historic village has been eroded with growing traffic. They point to the congestion of buses (usually idling illegally) bringing thousands of tourists to the boat line.

During similar public consultation back in 2005, residents' pleas for mandatory off-site bus parking were shelved. Now, fifteen years later, the same urgent request is again being kicked down the road, with a vague plan to revisit it in another 5 years. Meanwhile, the boat line's increasing capacity means more buses and more congestion. Residents feel that the boat line's interests have been given more consideration than the community's vision for Rockport (see Sec. 5.8.1.3 of the Township's Official Plan).

After comments on this "final draft" have been received, it will be presented to Council on December 7, hopefully for further consideration.

The Gananoque Town Docks – where to park?

Parking has always been a problem for island owners who keep their boats at the Gananoque Municipal Marina. Recently, it has become even worse since a large parking lot has been taken over for residential development.

The Town of Gananoque has commissioned Jp2G Consultants Inc. of Ottawa to come up with a Master Plan for the marina. TIARA urged the consultants to address the present lack of parking and consider the whole surrounding area when drawing up their Master Plan.

The Covid19 pandemic has slowed things down, but Kim McQuaid, Gananoque's Marina Recreation Coordinator, anticipates that the Master Plan will be presented to Council "by year end". We'll watch to see what it proposes about parking.

Please renew your membership!

A renewal slip with this newsletter is a gentle reminder that you still haven't renewed your 2020/21 membership. (Our membership year runs from May 1 to April 30.) It's still \$40 for individuals, \$50 for a family. Please renew (or join) through our website www.tiaraweb.org or by cheque to TIARA, 481 Thousand Islands Parkway, Lansdowne ON K0E 1L0.

We very much appreciate your support and the extra donations that many have made, especially in this difficult year.

Witch Hazel

Just when you thought that flowers were over for the season, along comes the Witch Hazel shrub with its quirky spindly yellow blooms. And to add to its fall activity, it's now that the plant sends out its seeds – in a dramatic fashion. The seed capsules, which have matured from the year before, explode and send seeds shooting as far as 30 feet (9.1 m) away.



The name has an eerily supernatural ring to it, especially since some water diviners still use Witch Hazel branches for "dowsing" to find the location of ground water, and this suggests something vaguely magical. But the derivation is actually pretty boring. "Witch" in this case is derived from an Old English word meaning "bendable".

But this eccentric shrub, out of synch with other flowering plants, has a more comforting side. The Witch Hazel has long been valued by Indigenous peoples for its medicinal properties, and today many use preparations from its leaves and bark for soothing irritated skin.

TIARA

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