

Water levels:

So far, they're slightly below average for this time of year. For up to date water levels: <https://ijc.org/en/loslrb/watershed/water-levels> shows daily mean levels of Lake Ontario, plus highest, lowest and both 2019 and 2020 levels.

Save The River's Annual Winter Conference

TIARA board members "attended" Save The River's 32nd Winter Environmental Conference—virtually—on three dates in January and February this year. Three speakers' topics were especially relevant.

Lawrence Gunter, an expert on fishing and Canada's aquatic ecosystems, is well known to many on the River for his radio show Blue Fish Radio. (Google it!) **Rachel Schultz's** presentation on Lake Ontario coastal wetlands was pertinent to many of us, after our high water issues in 2019. **Jessica Jock** is an environmental scientist for the Saint Regis Mohawk tribe at Akwesasne. Her talk drew on her vast knowledge of the restoration and remediation of the river systems affecting the St. Lawrence.

Time to renew your membership:

We appreciate your support as we navigate through these pandemic times. Our 2021-2022 membership year started May 1, and we hope you will renew. Still \$40 for an individual and \$50 for a family: spouse and children. We are delighted that many of you have enrolled your grown children with memberships of their own.. A cheque to TIARA works well, or you can renew using PayPal on our website www.tiaraweb.org. Please remember to print your email address for occasional updates. Many thanks!

Hovering helicopters?

TIARA supports the growing group of residents objecting to the building of a private helipad on Hill Island – or anywhere else in the 1000 Islands, for that matter. The Township passed a motion on December 4, 2020, saying it, too, is opposed. The group is continuing to bring the matter before the Minister of Transport, raising the question of safety at this risky site close to so many cottages and homes. We would appreciate hearing your views on this. Let us know at tiara@tiaraweb.org.

Dredging Kingston's Inner Harbour?

Alarm bells sounded when Parks Canada and Transport Canada told Kingston City Council about their plan to dredge old deposits of toxic sediments from sections of the river bed in the Inner Harbour.

Experts in chemical engineering warned that dredging would produce an environmental catastrophe. According to Dr. Jeffrey Giacomini of Queen's, the chemicals are relatively harmless where they are now, sitting in a paste-like substance at the bottom of the harbour where they cannot affect the water. Dredging would release these dangerous toxins into the Cataraqui river, he explained, and they would then **flow into Lake Ontario and down the St. Lawrence River**, contaminating the water downstream for miles and years.

A public consultation process will be launched later this year. The issue is whether the toxic material has to be dredged at all.

Nature Notes: Lichen

A lichen is not a single organism. It's a stable symbiotic association between a fungus and an alga...a good partnership. Like our communities along the river, they need each other to thrive. The fungi provide shelter, shade and water-absorbent tissues for the algae. The algae photosynthesize and provide food for the fungi, so they can grow and spread.

Like many environmentally-conscious organizations, lichens can provide valuable information about the state of our natural surroundings. Lichens are widely used as environmental indicators, since they absorb pollutants that scientists can use to measure air quality. Many of us are familiar with crustose lichens that grow along the waterline and leave black tracings that mark high water levels. Lichens are resilient, able to withstand extremes of both wet and dry conditions – an inspiration for waterfront owners planning and planting their shorelines.



Lichens cover between 6% - 8% of the earth's surface! There are 700 - 800 species in Ontario, many of them described by Tiner and Bennet in their wonderful book *Up North*. "Rock tripe [shown], which grows in black or dark brown clusters on granite, is one of our most common," they write. "Crispy when dry, it becomes rubbery in the rain, with its underside like velvet." Native peoples resorted to eating rock tripe when food was scarce. Moose, deer, flying squirrels, slugs and termites are a few of the lichen eaters, and many birds use lichen for their nests.

So, a close collaboration that provides information and sustenance to others. An example here for organizational partnerships!

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