

# **Bob Lake Association Survey Results**

## **March 6, 2018**

### **Introduction**

Adopted at the charter meeting, the mission of the Bob Lake Association (BLA) is “To act, advocate and inform on behalf of Members of the Association to protect and improve Bob Lake and its environment.” For a fledgling organization, the results have provided confirmation of a number of ideas as well as valuable information regarding people’s views and their priorities for the Association in the short and medium terms.

Lake residents’ interest in the BLA is high. Of the one hundred and seventy-nine (179) email addresses to which we sent invitations to respond to the survey, one hundred and forty (140) responded. Respondents came from all road associations large and small as well as from BLA members and prospective members.

The Bob Lake Association Survey results can be viewed on the Association website. A number of open-ended questions required a more detailed examination in order to extract any conclusions. The following provides the major conclusions, which can be drawn following an analysis of the closed-ended and the eleven (11) open-ended questions.

The survey tool (Survey Monkey) reported all responses by frequency and by percentage with a corresponding graph. For open-ended questions, every response was examined and a category attributed to each response. If a response could be placed in more than one category, it was given two category labels, and so on. The reporting function of the survey tool also executed text analysis and provided some insight to the recurrence of some words and expressions within the response to each question.

### **What have we learned from the Bob Lake Association Survey?**

#### **Membership**

The BLA in its first year has attracted over a hundred members, and five (5) respondents have indicated their firm intention to join the BLA in 2018, while others identified a number of factors as potentially influencing positively their decision to join. These are: communication, fees, governance, and mission. This underlines the importance for the BLA to create a solid foundation evinced by a draft constitution and by-laws, an active board of directors and clearly communicated priorities. In preparation for the on-going efforts to grow the membership, we have obtained complete contact information for nearly the entire lake population, which will enhance greatly our ability to communicate with everyone on the lake.

### **What we value about life at the lake**

The top five valued characteristics of life at the lake described as very important and important are peace and tranquility (95%), swimming (93%), boating/sailing/canoeing (84%), night skies ((80%) and wildlife/bird viewing (74%).

### **Permanent Residents**

The permanent resident population on Bob Lake seems to be slowly growing from a present twenty-two (22), eight (8) planning and 22 considering it.

### **Water Quality**

Ninety-five percent (95%) of respondents hold the view that the water quality of Bob Lake is excellent or good. Fifteen (15) respondents had no concerns about the water quality. Nonetheless, residents expressed a number of current concerns regarding maintaining water quality. The top three are pollution in its various forms (phosphates, number of watercraft, run off, overuse of laundry and dishwashing machines, nitrates, salt from hot tubs), increased vegetation and septic systems. These offer the BLA a number of paths to pursue for the benefit of Bob Lake residents (educational programs on important topics/development of a lake stewardship program). The advent of compulsory septic inspections will also increase people's interest in good septic maintenance. In this regard, the Coalition of Haliburton Property Owners Association (COHPOA) has excellent information it disseminates via its website. This is a coalition the BLA should consider joining, not only to benefit from its expertise but also to participate in the discussions and solutions.

### **Fluctuating water levels**

In order, the problems experienced by residents with fluctuating water levels are: shortened boating season, dock damage, navigation problems/waterline damage, and ice damage to shoreline. The BLA has initiated contact with Parks Canada in an effort to understand better the factors affecting varying water levels and ways to mitigate their effects.

### **Public Boat Ramp**

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the restoration of public access to Bob Lake is of utmost importance to lake residents. Ninety-seven percent (97%) are in favour of a public boat ramp. When asked about an eventual refusal by the municipality to restore access, residents offered a number of measures to consider. Over fifty percent (50%) suggested various ways to build or finance our own public/private ramp (make financial contributions, cost share via taxes and explore other options after the refusal). Others suggested legal action, political action, ongoing lobbying, holdback of taxes and tax appeal. The Board of directors and its boat ramp subcommittee are keeping a laser focus on this objective and it is the subject of regular updates to lake residents.

### **Boat Ownership**

There are two hundred and thirty properties on Bob Lake, and about half responded to the survey questions regarding boat ownership. Of these eighty-four percent (84%) own a boat, sixty-eight percent (68%) require a boat launch and fifty-nine percent (59%) require a public boat ramp. If the numbers are similar for the remaining residents who have not responded to the BLA survey, this could mean there are close to 140 boats requiring a public boat launch.

### **Cottage Rental**

A large number of respondents (90) skipped the question related to cottage rental, but of those answering, fifty percent (50%) indicated that they did not rent their cottage. Those who do rent, do so predominantly to family and friends then a minority, to people with references. Owners and their family and friends could easily deal with any concerns identified by other lake residents in this regard.

### **Residents' Current Concerns**

When asked about their current concerns as lake residents, four significant categories of concerns emerged. The top concern is overwhelmingly the **boat launch** (61). Concern with the **environment** (46) is the second most prominent, expressed in a variety of ways (water quality, preservation of lake environment, environmental stewardship, septic inspections and maintenance, fish health, multiplying ramps, pollution, preserve solitude, redirection of ground water). The third most prominent concern is **boating practices (31)** (speed, proximity to shore, traffic and speed in narrows, wake damage to docks and shorelines. The next most prominent concern is **land use** (19) and is exemplified by comments regarding large cottage development, growing noise levels, construction approvals, clear cut lots, rentals, light pollution, manicured lots even B&B's. Finally there is a variety of **less frequent concerns**: tax rate to service, fireworks, respectful neighbours, municipal road maintenance, BLA governance, hydro, no social events, road fees, security, landfill site, beavers, fire and emergency access.

### **Residents' Growing Concerns**

Our collective growing concerns closely resemble our current concerns. The boat launch, water quality and maintaining the eco-system are the top three followed closely by land use, property values/taxes/hydro, boating practices, quality of life and water level management. The similarity of current and growing concerns shows the unanimity among respondents about the top concerns. In examining how to address these concerns, the Association should focus on what will have the immediate impact in the short and medium term. At the same time as we must dream big we must think of strategies that will have visible results.

A number of the concerns require more elaborate planning and discussion and lend themselves to getting more members involved. Since the strength of a volunteer organization is its volunteers and their commitment to its goals, the BLA should target strategies that get more people involved in planning and doing. The number of people raising these matters may also be indicative of potential volunteer activity.

According to the Bob Lake Association Survey, thirty-seven (37) respondents indicated a willingness to volunteer without mentioning a priority.

The COHPOA and the Haliburton Highlands Stewardship Council (HHSC) can be instrumental in getting Bob Lake residents involved in developing a lake stewardship program to address their environmental concerns. For example, at the AGM, we could have sign up sheets for work groups on two top priorities (not boat ramp), or discussion groups on a major concern with a view to identify ways to address the concern in a manner consistent with our mission.

### **BLA Projects and Activities**

To determine top ranking activities and projects, the inverse point number to its ranking was attributed to each item (i.e. 5 points to first ranked and 1 point to fifth ranked) and multiplied by the number of times it was identified in that ranking. This produced the following:

Boat ramp	159 pts.
Advocacy/communication/coalition	154 pts.
Social/recreational	118 pts.
Lake stewardship	70 pts.
Education/information	46 pts.
Various: water quality/water mgmt.	(23) & (10) pts.

#### **Public boat ramp**

Twenty-eight (28) respondents selected restoring public access to a public boat ramp as the top project.

#### **Advocacy, communication, and coalitions**

These elements are grouped because they are vital to the furtherance of the BLA vision and mission. Clearly, respondents want the Association to have regular and on-going communication with members not only from an informative but also from a consultative perspective. They also evoked the necessity to form coalitions with like-minded organizations (Ra's, CHA and the Coalition for Equitable Water Flow (CEWF) etc.).

#### **Social/recreational**

Generally speaking, lake residents want to get to know each other better. The creation of a sense of community is the main objective. Social and recreational activities bind people together and encourage the community of interests related to life at the lake. One respondent suggested creating a lake directory, holding meet and greet socials to foster greater contact among residents and municipally elected officials. The most popular suggestion is the holding of a regatta. Other suggestions are: local sports activities fostering inter-association cooperation such as a golf tournament, corn roast,

BBQ, kids' game day, swimming races, canoe races, common campfire, fish derby, boat and BBQ levee, an annual activity. N.B. Participation in any of these activities need not be extensive to be successful in building community.

### **Lake Stewardship**

This can be viewed as a project or as several activities. A lake stewardship program (project) requires the involvement of a critical mass of dedicated individuals. It is also part of environmental stewardship, which combines a number of other initiatives. The BLA should take an incremental approach to this topic beginning with a number of manageable recurrent initiatives to build awareness and participation. Although the Board has overall responsibility for all its initiatives, this broad topic could be piloted by a small number of members reporting to the Board. We must be mindful as we grow that we do not "burn out" any volunteers.

### **Education/information**

This category lends itself to projects or a multi-faceted project based on education and information. Several respondents evoked the growing number of boats, the speed of boats in sensitive areas (narrows and shallows), the disregard for shore proximity. The subject of boating **practices, boating safety, and navigation markers** touches on the high importance attributed to swimming, peace and tranquility as well as boating, sailing and canoeing reflected in responses to Question #11. The BLA should put its mind to "acting, advocating, and informing" on these matters. This does not preclude additional informational and educational efforts being developed simultaneously.

### **Water quality/water level management**

Water quality measurement can be part of a lake stewardship program.

## **The top five priorities for the Bob Lake Association**

To determine the top five priorities, the inverse point number to its ranking was attributed to each item (i.e. 5 points to first ranked and 1 point to fifth ranked) and multiplied by the number of times it was identified in that ranking. This produced the following:

Boat ramp	388 pts.
Water quality	159 pts.
Boating Practices	73 pts.
Lake Stewardship	51 pts.
Water mgmt.	47 pts.

Advocacy and Communication are ranked sixth and seventh respectively. It is evident that advocacy and communication are integral parts of all BLA activities. The order of business for the BLA is to put its mind to developing winning strategies to deal with these pressing and on-going priorities.

### **Volunteering**

Thirty-one (31) respondents indicated a willingness to volunteer and sixty-three (63), indicated a possible [maybe] willingness to volunteer for priority actions arising from the survey. Further, seventy-six (76) indicated a willingness to contribute financially to priority actions with an additional thirty-six (36) indicating a conditional willingness. This is an extraordinary circumstance. It would be very beneficial for the Board to identify these individuals either before or at the AGM.