

Environmental Report for 2011 Yearbook:

Ed (Ted) Garner

This will be my last report in the annual yearbook as director for the environmental portfolio. I don't have words to express how much I have enjoyed working with this wonderful group of people. PaBIA is very lucky to have such knowledgeable and hardworking individuals working in the environmental area. Both Shelagh and Sandy have worked tirelessly for many years on this effort and I am sure that they will continue to do so in the future. Gord has brought great enthusiasm and new ideas during this past year and is an excellent addition to the team. I will miss working directly with them very much. I am not going any place. I will just have different responsibilities with PaBIA next year.

The Great Lakes Basin Issues

With the exception of the bear problems the major environmental issues PaBIA faces at this time are largely Michigan/Huron Basin wide problems and are being addressed by GBA and GBF as well as many other organizations. It is important that we all support GBA and GBF's efforts with these problems both financially and through active participation in their efforts. The invasive species problem, particularly the Asian Carp issue, is but one example of the ongoing threats to the Michigan/Huron Basin. (Please see Sandy's report for more information on this issue.) Among the other issues that involve the whole basin are water levels and fish farms.

It is only through cooperative efforts with organizations around our basin, even those who do not have the same goals that we do will be able to solve these problems. I am convinced that neither the US nor the Canadian Governments will take action unless we can find a way to present a united front on these issues. Fortunately both GBA and GBF are working to broaden their contacts and communication with other organizations around the basin. For them to be successful they will need our continued and increased support. (See the short article on GBF elsewhere in this yearbook.)

Local Issues

There are still some local issues that need our continuing attention. While the concern about new cell towers in our area has faded during the last year or two there was until very recently an increased risk of a wind farm and the resulting large towers. PaBIA joined GBA in responding to the Ministry of the Environments posting of proposed requirements for offshore wind facilities last fall. The Ministry was requesting comments on a five mile from shore exclusion zone for wind farms. As we all know the shoreline is not easily identified on Georgian Bay because of our islands and fluctuating water levels. We have followed GBA's lead and requested that the shore line on the northeast side of Georgian Bay be defined by a line drawn from Christen Island in the South to the outer edge of the Western Islands then up to the outer edge of the Limestone Islands and from their north to the outer edge of the Bustard Islands.

Within the last week (February 2011) there has been an announcement that the Province **has put a hold on all off shore wind farms** until further research is completed on the impacts of such installations. This is very good news and at least for the next few years will mean no towers to look through at sunset.

Water Levels And Water Quality

As of this writing in early February 2011 the water levels situation appears very grim. We are currently 12 to 14 inches below last year at this time. The USACE has predicted that water levels will come up to about 6 to 8 inches below last year by spring but that will only happen if we have a normal spring. If the current dry conditions continue we will remain well below last year. The last 12 months have been very dry and evaporation, particularly during the winter months, has been high. Hopefully we will have a very wet spring and then a wonderful dry summer. We support GBA's efforts to get a control board in place for our basin and some form of moderate control in the St Clair/ Detroit river system to manage extremes in our water levels. It is our continued belief that water level changes are important for the health of our wetlands areas. We also believe that it would be a benefit to all concerned if we could manage the levels such that the extreme high and low levels were avoided. Study of the impact this would have on our wetlands needs to be conducted both before and during any level control to insure we are not damaging a very sensitive and important part of our environment.

We now have a number of years of data on water quality. We have on the PaBIA website data listed for 2001 through 2010 both numerically and graphically. You can see that data under the environmental portfolio in the water testing area. . (see http://pabia.ca/Water_Testing_Data_2001-2010.pdf) Please note that we have been checking E coli only rather than nutrients or chemicals in our water. The results clearly indicate that we are maintaining good water quality in Pointe au Baril even during a time when the season has been extended and the number of people in the islands as increased considerably. The credit for this good news goes to all of you because of your efforts to upgrade and maintain your septic systems. The township should get a good pat on the back also for their efforts to see that our systems are maintained properly; and let's not forget GBF who have been involved in many ways with this testing over the years. The money spent on that effort has certainly paid big dividends. I also believe we are maintaining these good conditions because of the water exchange that occurs in our area during the season and because all our septic systems and the environment are allowed to "rest" for six months of each year.

Bears

Unfortunately we did have some cottages broken into last summer and fall. This year it was in the same area and, in many cases, the same cottages as last year. I suspect we still have at least one bear that probably is living on Champlain Monument Island who continues to attempt to get his food from cottages. Hopefully this problem will subside as we move farther away from the extreme low wild berry and nut production we had two years ago. I can report that in at least one case, 'bear boards' or 'unwelcome mats' seem to have prevented a new break-in. Blood was found on the boards and it was clear that the bear had attempted a break-in but was discouraged from that activity by the bear boards.

A word of caution, though, if you do use bear boards post clear signs so that someone walking up to your cottage, like our patrol officer, does not step on them after they are covered by a light snow fall.

Tele-Communications

Cell service repeaters are now available from some stores in Parry Sound. As in the past I am requesting that if you need better cell service, please install a high quality repeater with an directional antenna as high as possible on your roof or flag pole rather than contact one of our cell phone service providers and request that they improve service. We do not need more cell towers in the area. The repeaters are working just fine and are much less intrusive on our environment. Either David Anderson or I will help you determine the direction your antenna should be pointed so that it is aimed directly at the local tower.

Forests and Fisheries

Please read the excellent articles in this yearbook written by Shelagh and Sandy on these two topics. Both of these fine ladies have been hard at work this winter and last summer on these two topics.

The UN has designated this **The International Year of the Forest** in an effort to emphasize how important our forests are to all of us and how much they protect and improve our environment. As a result of this, our July Naturalist talk will be on Forest Health and we will have a speaker who has extensive knowledge in this area on the Georgian Bay shoreline. You will find an ad at the beginning of the green page Naturalist section in the yearbook on this talk and I am sure Shelagh who is now our PaBIA Naturalist, will mention it in her report. I look forward to seeing all of you at that event.

Our second Naturalist talk this summer will be directed at the kids in our community and will be done in cooperation with the Ojibway Club's recreation program. This is a new endeavor and at this writing is still in the planning stage.

I would like to thank all those who have helped me with this portfolio over the last few years especially Sandy and Shelagh but also those individuals both in the Township of the Archipelago, the Ministry of the Environment, GBLT, GBA, GBF and the many members of the Pointe au Baril community.