

The Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg was officially formed on Sept 14, 2019 at a meeting held in Selkirk. Representatives from several municipalities, cottage associations, local governments and organizations attended this meeting at which the group was established. This was a follow up to meetings held in 2018 on the west side of the lake and of meetings in July (Grand Marais) and August 2019, (Lester Beach) at which representatives from many east side cottage associations were invited. As a result of the Lester Beach meeting two letters were composed which were distributed on line to each of the cottage associations. We hoped that these letters to provincial and city politicians would be distributed to all members to inform them and in turn encourage politicians to be informed and accountable for their decisions affecting the environment and Lake Winnipeg.

At the inaugural meeting of the Coalition, two main goals were identified: : to inform each of our constituent organizations of issues regarding the health of Lake Winnipeg and to advocate for improved environmental practices by all levels of government.

Several motions were passed at the meeting, summarized below.

We are asking each organization and cottage association to share this message with their network to keep people informed of the issues and of the Coalition's efforts on the part of everyone who has a stake in the health of the lake.

We are hoping to having a meeting later in the year for everyone who is interested. We welcome your feedback.

Summary of the meeting:

1. Jack Brisco, Reeve of the RM of Alexander shared their recent resolutions to the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) to encourage the City of Winnipeg to deal with the North End Treatment plant and pursue compliance with regulated levels of phosphorus discharge.

The need for increased enforcement of existing regulations including the legislated maximum levels of pollutants was discussed. The need for clarification of what agency is responsible for auditing and acting on violations as well as what individual citizens can do to report violations emerged.

A Motion was put forward for CSLW to endorse the resolution from RM Alexander and Victoria beach to the AMM.

A Motion was put forward to task the Steering Committee to: Explore ways and means for enhancing compliance and enforcement and return to the CSLW Committee with recommendations.

2. Updates to The Environment Act

Following a brief discussion, it was identified more effort was required toward clarifying the specific needs for potential amendment.

A motion was put forward for the Steering Committee to review The Environment Act and make recommendations to the CSLW.

3. Wetland Preservation

The Ducks Unlimited representative, Pascal Badiou gave a presentation regarding the importance of wetlands. He identified concerning trends over the past half century of massive destruction of minor watersheds and wetlands and emphasized the need for landscape conservation and wetlands protection and restoration.

Round table discussion demonstrated significant concern within the forum regarding the loss of wetland habitat as an essential component of the natural ecosystem sustaining the health of Lake Winnipeg and other freshwater systems.

A Motion was put forward for CSLW participants to call on their riding candidates to support immediate increase in funding for the conservation of the Lake Winnipeg Watershed.

4. Zebra Mussel Clean up on Beaches

The agenda item was set aside pending further discussions at the local level. To be re-introduced pending further local developments.

5. Steering Committee Mandate & Governance

The Steering Committee is intended to provide a focus group that would explore issues where the larger body of CSLW identifies the need for additional information.

A Motion was put forward to pursue additional representation by additional indigenous communities and other key stakeholders to participate in the CSLW.

The steering committee will meet to follow up on motions passed and determine the most effective ways to share this information with decision makers at all levels of government and with all constituents from our regions. A general group meeting will be planned.

