

Alliance of Pigeon Lake Municipalities & Pigeon Lake Watershed Association's Joint Spring Newsletter



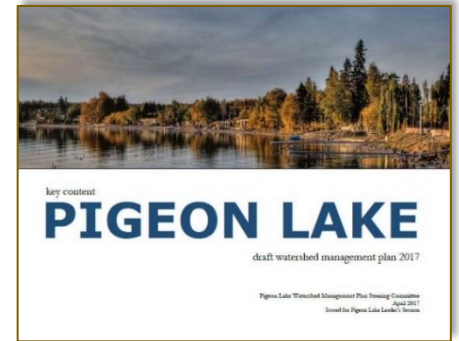
Lake Time!

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The PLAN

A **DRAFT Pigeon Lake Watershed Management Plan (PLAN)** has been created which meets the Governments' Water-for-Life policy requisites. To move the Plan forward, community members from across the watershed, must support and want to implement the Plan for the lake.



The purpose of the Plan is to coordinate our collective actions, based on the advice from our science and planning advisors. The blue-green algae blooms experienced in the last ten years means the lake requires urgent, decisive and collective action across all sectors. The DRAFT plan provides a snapshot of the Pigeon Lake challenges we face, presents much of the work-to-date and provides a road map of goals, objectives and actions for the protection and improvement of Pigeon Lake. The DRAFT Plan focuses on key topics for “The Land” around lake; “The Shoreline” and “The Water” enabling the coordination of the work.

To obtain public input on the DRAFT Plan, please plan to attend one of two **open houses** to review and discuss the DRAFT Plan and provide your views:

- **Saturday June 3rd - Lakedell Small Hall** (south shore off Highway 13 west of The Village about 3Km)
- **Saturday June 10th - Sundance Centre** (north shore, off 616x, middle access road to Sundance Beach – look for the sign).

Doors open at 9 am for drop-in. At 10 am the committee will provide a walk through the plan, followed by further open house for drop in, to ask questions and to provide the committee with your thoughts.

Down load the plan from www.plwmp.ca/plan/ along with a **public survey** for your input. The committee will review the community's input and determine next steps and provide updates.



2017 Leaders Session

The commitment to the lake was high with 48 participants at this year's Leaders Session to review the DRAFT Plan. Included were elected leaders and staff from municipal and provincial governments, First Nation members, and several Healthy Lake Partners. A presentation was made by Dr. Tom Habib from the Alberta Biomonitoring Institute on PL's Watershed & Phosphorus: Past, Present & Future.

Find the DRAFT Plan updated as of the leader's session, along with **Plan Survey** at www.plwmp.ca/plan/



The Lake Update

Lake Investigation

As already stated under “The Plan”, the blue-green algae blooms experienced in the last ten years means the lake requires urgent, decisive and collective action across all sectors. We know phosphorus is a major contributor to the blooms and we know, under the right conditions a large amount of the available phosphorous is released from the lake sediments. Part of the Plan, based on the results of scientific investigations, is to establish a goal for achievable reductions in phosphorous and bloom intensities. The Plan is also undertaking an assessment of options available for in-lake engineering approaches including project costs and financing, effectiveness in reducing phosphorous and algal blooms, reapplication times and requirements, environmental, social, and economic risks, and regulatory concerns. All of this further information is needed for an approval application. It is also important to ensure that such studies are peer reviewed and that uncertainties are identified. To sum up, at this point, based on scientific investigations, the steps are to select specific actions, obtain requisite funding and regulatory approval, and establish required organizational structure for implementation.

Working with Dr. Neil Hutchison of Hutchison Environmental Sciences Ltd., one of the objectives of the Inlake Technical committee is to investigate the feasibility and safety of in-lake options to reduce bloom formation and/or mitigate the effects of blooms. This work has started and the report is expected in the New Year.

University of Alberta Research Project for Pigeon Lake

Why are blooms occurring more in some years? What are the key factors that cause bloom formation? These are some questions that are being addressed in a study at the University of Alberta.

Through the collaborative support of the municipalities around Pigeon Lake, a research project is being planned to develop an empirical model to predict the occurrence of cyanobacteria blooms. This work will be done by Dr. Vinebrooke of the University of Alberta, a renowned expert in cyanobacteria.

Over the past two years, Dr. Vinebrooke has conducted related research at Pigeon Lake into the importance of a balanced food web in the lake for maintaining algae blooms within historical levels. His work found an abundance of minnows in the lake and an absence of beneficial zooplankton, which preys on algae. The report on this work will be posted when it is finalized.

The Alliance of Pigeon Lake Municipalities is committed to watershed stewardship as a critical step in addressing the health of Pigeon Lake. We also need to know what further actions could help. Smaller lakes have responded to in lake treatment; however there is no evidence of successful treatments for lakes as large as Pigeon Lake. Dr. Vinebrooke's project will better help us understand the drivers of algae blooms. This work is an important step forward to productive actions on and around Pigeon Lake that will make a difference in improving the water quality of the lake.

Fishery Update

In 2016, in an effort to recover the Northern Pike populations the regulations were changed to a zero catch limit. Also, effective April 2017 the fishery will be closed from April 1-May 14 each year.

Walleye are doing very well. The recreational harvest is managed with Special Harvest Licenses (tags) to ensure the recreational fishery remains sustainable. Since the previous survey the number of Yellow Perch has declined considerably (for unknown reasons), while Lake Whitefish remain abundant. All fishing is closed in the northwest corner of Pigeon Lake and Tide Creek to protect fish spawning and rearing areas. Pigeon Lake residents play an important role as stewards of the environment by protecting fish habitat along the shoreline, such as cattail and reed beds. All shoreline changes on Pigeon Lake require government review and authorization. Also abiding by Alberta's Sport fishing Regulations ensures sustainable fish populations.

Further information on the status of the yellow perch and lake whitefish can be found in a more extensive Fish Update. It has links to Alberta Environment and Parks latest fish management reports www.plwa.ca/emails/672768

Recent media has been reporting on the white fish whirling disease in southern Alberta. This disease affects the mountain whitefish but not the lake whitefish.

The Lake Update

Clean Runoff Project, Progress & Ongoing Program

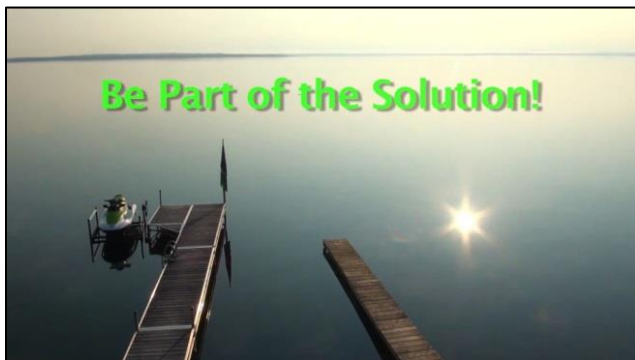
Work-To-Date

2014 Goal: Develop a Clean Runoff Project (with survey input) and start to build a base of information and resources re: the importance of clean runoff to the lake.

2015 Goal: Continue to build the Clean Runoff toolbox for action

2016 Goal: Establish the demonstration sites & and make it easy for people to make changes. See targets and Results.

2017 Goal: Keep Clean Runoff ball rolling and pick up steam! Take stock and do a Clean Runoff follow-up survey to learn about changes made and to capture your ideas to continue to build the program inspiring more people to make more changes.



See the new video!

Hear what lake residents are saying

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVYu7GImI_s&feature=youtu.be

The Clean Runoff Events & Opportunities (please put in your schedule)

Want to know what you can do for the lake? See the Alberta Clean Runoff Guide www.plwmp.ca/clean-runoff-guide-2/. Learn about the different approaches for catching and cleaning water before it goes into the lake.

Attend the June 17th, 10 to Noon – Clean Runoff “How To” Workshop Buy native plants, grass seed and bushes. Read the Guide, consider your lot and bring your questions to the experts.

Want a Rain Garden? SEE the Rain Water section of the Clean Runoff Guide, Updated May 2017!

Want a Rain Barrel? See the Rain Water Harvesting section of the Clean Runoff Guide and buy a Rain Barrel from the PLWA Summer Staff, \$80 while supplies last, cash or credit card, then pick up at Sherwood’s Forest.

Inspire others! **Send PLWA your pictures** of what CR approaches you’ve done to plwainfo@gmail.com for a gallery.

Start a Clean Runoff neighbourhood group. The PLWA will support you to help inform, engage and inspire your neighbours to “Be Part of the Solution”! Email plwainfo@gmail.com with your name, beach and phone number.

Attend the PLWA Open House, July 29th 9 am at the Lakedell Hall. Guest speaker TBA. Buy native pollinator plugs, grass seed + bushes!

Attend your AIM – Most Summer Villages invite the PLWA.

Tansy Control Project

The shoreline of Pigeon Lake is becoming infested with these noxious weeds, the **Common Tansy** and the **Tansy Ragwort** which are displacing the native plant species. Municipalities are cooperating in this unified project.



The **Common Tansy** is easily identified by the many bud like yellow flowers



Tansy Ragwort has distinctive flowers with yellow ray disks.

The Tansy Ragwort is not seen as frequently as the Common Tansy but it is also becoming established on the shoreline. Controlling noxious weeds is an important factor in maintaining a healthy watershed and the shorelines.

It is recommended that the small plants be pulled out of the sand on the shoreline. Some larger plants may be pried out with a crowbar but care must be taken; remnants of roots left behind will sprout to form new plants. If the plant is too large, then cut close to the ground repeatedly over the summer. Covering the cut plant is also recommended. Native plants should be allowed to re-establish themselves.

Under no circumstances should chemicals be used on the shoreline. Fact sheets on these two invasive weeds can be found at the following links:

- <https://www.abinvasives.ca/fact-sheets>
- https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/pests/common-tansy.aspx
- https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/pests/tansy-ragwort.aspx

OTIS AWARD

The Battle River Watershed Alliance gave their OutsTanding In Stewardship Award to Susan Ellis for her leadership in stewardship at the Leaders Session.

“Susan has worked tirelessly for years as President (now part-time Executive Director) of the PLWA and member of the “The Plan” Steering Committee. As a summer time lake resident for 50 years, Susan’s love for the lake, its watershed, and its people is evident in her care and dedication in spreading the message of lake stewardship in the Pigeon Lake watershed. Susan believes that everyone has a part to play. Her efforts have been instrumental in connecting with lake residents and stakeholders, asking for their input and giving them the tools they need to take action in their own backyards. She has played a key role in ensuring that lake stewardship actions are based on the best science and social science available, and that this information is shared with lake residents and stakeholders so that everyone is on the same page. Through Susan’s work, collective stewardship action in the Pigeon Lake watershed is encouraged on an ongoing basis.”



Hotline Numbers & Further Support

- AEP Information Centre (general inquiries and non-emergency): AEP.Info-Centre@gov.ab.ca and Toll free AB 310-3773
- Environmental Hotline (Lake, Lake Bed & Shore emergencies and report violations): 1-800-222-6514
- Private land Environmental Issues: Local Municipal Office
- Forest Fires: 310-FIRE (3473)
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Hotline (reports and inquiries 24/7): 1-855-336-BOAT (2628)
- Report a Poacher (for reporting fishing, hunting and public land abuses also can be used to report emergencies involving wildlife): 1-800-642-3800
- Email PLWA at plwainfo@gmail.com we have a number of “Healthy Lake Partners” and often if we do not know we can find out or put you onto someone.

