

WILLIAMS LAKE

May, 2015

CONSERVATION COMPANY

www.williamslakecc.org

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10 AT 7:30 P.M.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM SPRY CENTRE
10 KIDSTON ROAD

EVERYONE WELCOME

The WLCC is a non-profit volunteer organization. We welcome everyone who shares the WLCC's mandate to preserve the health of Williams Lake to come to our Annual General Meeting.

The AGM is an opportunity for everyone to learn more about Williams Lake and its watershed, including Colpitt Lake. The AGM is also a time to hear about the year's activities of the WLCC and for you to bring forward your concerns and observations.

COME JOIN THE WLCC

The Board needs your input and also new members. Is your area represented on the Board? The WLCC depends on its volunteers. Please contact any of the Board listed at the end of this newsletter to volunteer or suggest a name. We encourage you to attend the AGM and look forward to seeing you on Wednesday, June 10th.



Williams Lake, winter 2015 - Photo courtesy of Kay Singleton

A NEW RECORD

This year the main body of Williams Lake was not completely free of ice until April 30, thus breaking a 75-year old record for "ice out". Cunard Pond, the back bay, and coves at the west end were open several days earlier. While the lake surface was still partially frozen over, an impatient loon was observed sitting on the ice and then diving into the water and resurfacing some distance away.

The previous record for ice-out was April 28, 1972; the earliest was February 26, 1951. The records were started in 1940 by Charles Rowlings who lived nearby on the shore of the Northwest Arm. He would have made many trips up across the muddy unpaved Purcell's Cove Road to observe the condition of the lake. In 1954 he passed his records on to Dr. Ken Hall with the comment that he doubted anyone else would be interested in them. Fortunately he was wrong: Dr. Hall maintained the records for many years and now his daughter Kathleen continues them.

A rough calculation shows that between 1940 to 1990 ice-out occurred 71% of the time in April; since then however 62% of the ice-out dates have been in March.



High water, Williams Lake dam, Dec 2015 - Photo courtesy of Kathleen Hall



Google Earth Map of Williams Lake Watershed and Purcell's Cove Backlands (Hill and Patriquin, 2014)

FUTURE OF THE BACKLANDS

At this time last year the community was poised to learn the decision of Halifax Regional Council in its consideration of the Backlands as it fit into the RP+5 or mandatory 5-year regional plan review. The Backlands Coalition circulated a petition and lobbied vigorously in an effort to convince Councillors to keep the Urban Reserve designation rather than change it to Rural Commuter which would allow for immediate 'on site' development. Much to the surprise and delight of the residents, Clayton Developments and Bess Developments announced that they were "prepared to defer the request for the Rural Commuter designation should Council feel inclined to direct staff to discuss the acquisition of all or a portion of the Backlands adjacent to Williams and Colpitts Lake" (extract- letter from Clayton Developments to Council dated May 16).

With this change Council was left to decide the issue of the Rural Commuter designation only as it pertained to the Battery Hill Developments property. Fortunately, the tie vote resulted in the motion being defeated. The motion regarding the public engagement process to bring the Backlands into public ownership was passed (see Council minutes at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/cw> http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/cw_140520.pdf).

The public engagement process has not started as Council voted for a deferral as recommended by planning staff. The intent is to complete Phase 1 of the Greenbelting and Open Space Priorities Plan (now called The Green Network plan) prior to the initiation of discussions. The community supported this decision because it will enable the public to participate in the consultation process. As well, O₂, the company hired by the planning staff as consultants will, no doubt, provide valuable information on the land.

Councillors Adams and Mosher voted against the deferral. However, both expressed the view, on the record, that the land should come under public ownership. This is a major step forward and although more work remains, the path is much clearer. Other councillors prior to the vote, expressed their support for public ownership. As the next step unfolds we encourage all our members to engage in the upcoming public consultations for Halifax's Green Network Plan.

WEBSITE

To find out more about the WLCC and our activities, check us out on Facebook:

Williams-Lake-Conservation-Company

or on our website: www.williamslakecc.org

ROAD SALT ISSUE

In early January, the Halifax Department of Energy and Environment reversed its long standing policy of using sand and grit instead of salt on roads around Williams Lake. The sudden change came as a surprise to long-time residents because this issue had been dealt with back in the mid-nineties when, as a result of lake water testing results and much lobbying by the WLCC, it was agreed that in the future the side roads closest to the lake, Wenlock Grove, Litchfield, McNabs, Wyndrock, Birchview, and Willowdale, would be sanded, not salted. The change in policy leaves sanding in effect only beyond the service boundary at the far end of Wenlock Grove.

Many residents contacted the WLCC and also complained to their local councillors and Halifax staff. In a letter from city staff to the WLCC, Richard MacLellan, Manager, Energy and Environment, explained that the policy change was due to improvements in training, measurement and the new procedure of "completing pre-wetting/salting of roads to reduce the need for excessive de-icing after an event". It was further explained that "the former practice of applying salt in some limited areas had a negligible impact on the receiving waters considering all of the watershed feeding the lakes, cost more and presented public safety risks".

In response the WLCC requested a meeting with Halifax staff. On January 3 representatives of the WLCC met with Richard MacLellan, Cameron Deacoff, Environment Performance Officer, and Darrin Natolino, Head of Operations. A healthy discussion occurred. The WLCC advocated for a return to sanding on streets near the lake as all, including staff, agreed that salt is damaging to fresh water lakes. The WLCC agreed to provide further historic and scientific information. A second meeting to review the additional material was held in early March. At this point, a further assessment was to be done. Then winter happened! To date no further word has been received on the issue. The WLCC will continue its efforts to have the former policy reinstated in order to protect the health of Williams Lake and its watershed. The WLCC will be monitoring lake water quality, chemical and microbiological (see below), to assess the impact of last winter's road salting.

WE REMEMBER

The WLCC recently lost two faithful long-time members, Marni Vincent and Ralph Logan. Marni had been a member of the WLCC since its earliest days, and Ralph became a loyal supporter as soon as he and his family moved to this area. We thank them and send our sympathy to their families.

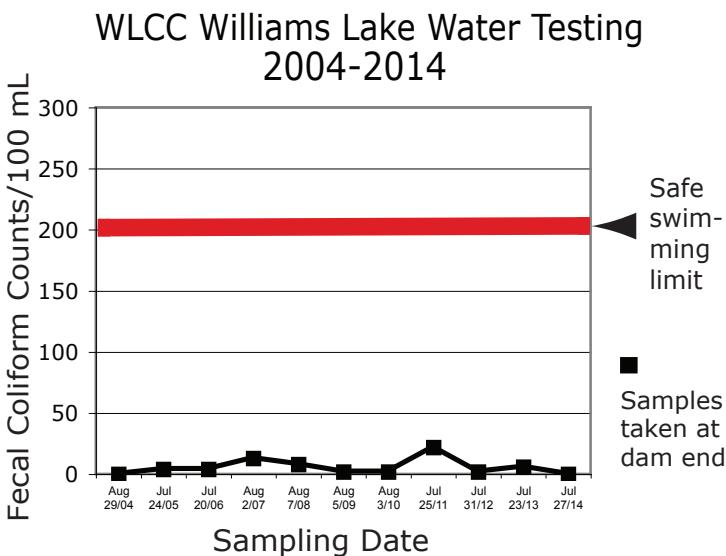
FRED GREIG

The late Fred Greig was a special friend to Williams Lake. He lived in Jollimore, where he grew up, and was a familiar figure as he bicycled around this area. A secluded area in the woods at the east end of the lake became his favourite spot; here he observed and befriended the birds, chipmunks and other wildlife. His feeders were always filled and the small birds would even eat out of his hand. Fred loved being in the woods around the lake and was a wonderful advocate for everything that lived there.

We were honoured by Fred's family and thank them for including the Williams Lake Conservation Company in their thoughts. We are grateful for the individual donations made in his memory to the WLCC. We also thank the Parkhill United Church in Jollimore which dedicated a lovely Sunday afternoon concert to Fred and donated the collection to the WLCC. We extend much sympathy to his mother and brothers; Fred is missed by all who knew him.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2014-2015

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WLCC MEMBERSHIP

WLCC membership is \$20 per household and can be paid at the AGM or by returning the attached form. (The form is also available through our website at www.williamslakecc.org)

Heather Watts's history of the Williams Lake area is \$5 when renewing or joining, additional copies are \$10 each. The mandate of the WLCC is to protect the health of Williams Lake. **Everyone who shares this goal is welcome as a member!**

MEMBERSHIP FORM \$20. (\$80. FOR 4 YEARS)

To: WILLIAMS LAKE CONSERVATION COMPANY, % Melanie Dobson
 11 Wyndrock Drive, Halifax, NS B3P 1R8



NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____