



*Eels Lake*

**COTTAGES & MARINA**

**Box 368 Apsley, ON K0L 1A0 1-705- 656-1103 www.eelslake.com**

TSW Review Panel Presentation  
Marshlands Centre  
Lakefield, ON

September 14, 2007

My husband Jeff and I would like to thank the panel for the opportunity to make a public presentation regarding our issues and concerns and to provide some suggestions regarding the role and management of the Trent–Severn Waterway.

We would like to start with presenting the submission that we made to Ecoplans this past winter. While we were not specifically invited to provide comments to the consultants, we felt that it was important to voice our concerns. At the time we were not aware that we would have an opportunity like this through which we could provide input.

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*March 2, 2007*

*My husband and I operate a Marina and Cottage Resort on Eels Lake, which is one of the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW) reservoir lakes. Our lake supports over 400 cottages along with a 150 site trailer park and a variety of recreational water activities. As we understand it Eels Lake also has one of the biggest draw downs of all of the TSW reservoirs. For a number of years now, our store facilities have housed the gauges and meters for the 2 TSW dams located in the bays directly to the east of our property. As business operators relying on the lake we have a number of issues with the fluctuating water levels on Eels Lake.*

*The biggest issue for us is communication. For years now we have repeatedly asked the TSW and the employees that come to inspect and/or maintain the dam sites to let us know when they are removing or adding logs and how many. Having a substantial amount of money invested in our boats, docks, water lines and submersible pumps etc. we would like to be able to respond quickly to the dropping water levels. At the same time we would like to be able to inform our cottagers to adjust their lines, docks, and boats as well. Being on-site the majority of the summer, means that we are frequently able to see the lake level declining and we can move our 200+ feet of docks and lines accordingly. However this is not always the case and is a major problem for our weekend cottagers who arrive to find their docks and boats caught up and their foot valves exposed.*



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*This lack of communication regarding dropping water levels also increases the potential for boating accidents and costly repairs. Many Eels Lakers are familiar with the rocky and shallow areas during different times of the year and adjust their boating habits accordingly to follow safe passages. When a major draw down happens earlier in the summer than expected or when 2 to 3 logs are removed at once, many boaters suffer damage to their vessels and props when traveling historically safe lake routes.*

*Another issue is late fall drawn downs that can have negative impacts on fish spawning beds. While this does not often happen, there have been times when logs have been removed in late September and into October which can negatively impact fish species spawning in the shallow areas during that time of year.*

*As business operators making a living from cottagers and boat traffic on Eels Lake, shallows water levels in the late summer and fall means that we lose income because people remove their boats earlier and basically stop traveling Eels Lake after Labour Day weekend. This also has negative economic impacts for other local businesses in our community. This economic loss is even more frustrating when we hear media reports every year that TSW staff and operations are being cut and fees must be raised because of the declining boat traffic and associated revenues on the canal system.*

*It is our understanding that Eels Lake levels are managed by the addition and removal of 12, 1 foot square logs (and 1 half foot square metal beam). The current practice has been that a total of 8 logs are removed throughout the summer season beginning some time in June and ending with the last log being removed in September. The lake is left to freeze at this lower level and the logs start to be replaced some time in March bringing Eels Lake back to its high level by the following June. This eight foot drop in water level translates into shoreline exposures of approximately forty feet or more at October levels. The bay next to our property is navigable by boat in the spring and early summer and can be walked across by Thanksgiving.*

*The erratic weather patterns of recent years (especially the 2006-2007 seasons) raise another issue for us regarding the TSW's current water level management practice. With more rain in the fall, warmer winters, later freeze up and less snowfall, we are concerned that there won't be enough precipitation and spring runoff to replenish these reservoir lakes. Developing management models that*



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*can respond effectively and efficiently to these climate changes will be very important.*

*Another issue that we hope is explored is the potential for small scale, hydro electric generation to be developed alongside the TSW dams. While we are not experts in this field, we still think that tremendous power generation capabilities are not being fully realized.*

*We are pleased that we have been given the opportunity to provide input with respect to this study and would be interested in participating in future discussions and decision-making regarding the TSW with the hope that timely and appropriate solutions to these and other water management issues are implemented. We would be happy to make a verbal submission at the Peterborough meetings if necessary. Please add us to the stakeholders list and you may contact us via email [elcm@eelslake.com](mailto:elcm@eelslake.com) or the above contact information.*

*Sincerely,*

*Carolyn Amyotte & Jeff Ball*

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Since we wrote that letter last March we would like to offer some further comments and suggestions from our observations based on the draw down practices of this past summer on Eels Lake.

Eels Lake has 2 TSW dams. The first dam was scheduled for repair in the fall of 2006. We had record amounts of rainfall during the months of October and November and even with the logs removed from the second dam the lake level still fluctuated significantly right into the beginning of the winter. The lake also froze nearly a month later than normal (January 13<sup>th</sup>), we had less ice of a much poorer quality and we continued to have warmer weather and more rain than snow throughout the winter. Needless to say this hampered the dam repair efforts. The snow that we did receive during the end of February and beginning of March had mostly melted by the time the TSW replaced the dam logs. Eels Lake never reached its high water mark for this year. We were almost 3 feet lower when the ice broke up at the end of April.

It is our understanding that all the logs were kept in the dam until late June, at which time 3 were removed. The lake was maintained at the same level throughout July until the middle of August (during the week of August 13<sup>th</sup>) when 5 were removed all at once. Since we did not receive any notification of this, the



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result was that people's docks, boats and water lines were negatively impacted. An example of the impact: A cottager arrived at her property the following weekend to find 16ft of walkway and 8ft of dock, her jet ski and pontoon boat on ground. She had to incur costs and time to get everything back into the lake. Then the following week after the logs were removed, the TSW returned and replaced 3 logs. However the damage was already done.

It is important for us to point out that we don't necessarily have a problem with what the TSW does to our lake, but how they go about doing it. The following are our suggestions to address to activities of the TSW as they relate to the management and operation of reservoir lakes.

- As a commercial operator on a reservoir lake, we would like to have the same consideration as other commercial operators on the TSW system. We are just as important to the tourism and economic interests of the region.
- All property owners on reservoir lakes are entitled to timely and effective communication from the TSW as to when and how much water is to be taken from the lakes.
- A detailed public relations plan needs to be developed with respect to this. Websites, emails, media bulletins and periodic mailings would be a simple, effective and respectful way to inform reservoir lake stakeholders of what is taking place on their lakes and why. If Conservation Authorities can put out monthly newsletters to their stakeholders why can't the TSW?
- Given the fluctuation in winter precipitation throughout the watershed and throughout the year, we recommend that the TSW operators either physically visit the reservoir lakes during February and March or contact someone in the field (like local marinas, municipal staff, or year round residents) to assess any potential spring run-off issues.
- Consider setting up a review board consisting of all stakeholder representatives to address issues on an annual basis.
- We would like to see timelines developed and funding provided for the repair and maintenance of the reservoir dams as soon as possible. It is obvious that the infrastructure has been neglected for a number of years. The second dam on Eels Lake has some serious cracks and leakage issues. It was originally



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- scheduled for repair this Fall, but lack of funding has meant the cancellation of this necessary maintenance.
- Consideration needs to be given to the potential threats of failing dam infrastructure on reservoir lakes. Eels Lake is the head waters for the Eels Creek watershed. The creek flows under several provincial, county and municipal highways as it makes its way to Stoney Lake. It also flows through the village of Apsley, and a number of residential areas. The potential for serious destruction and devastation as the result of a burst dam is very serious.
- Safety standards need to be met with respect to the public access of the control dams. People use these areas to launch boats, to fish and to camp. In the past several boats and persons have gone over the dam on our lake. Thankfully there was no loss of life. Proper and effective barriers (e.g. chain link fence) need to be in place.

With all that we have expressed here we would like to make the panel aware that we do recognize the positive aspects of living and working on a reservoir lake. We appreciate the changing landscapes, the beautiful beaches in late Fall and the flushing out and renewal of our waters on an annual basis. We understand that fluctuating levels on Eels Lake and elsewhere are an historical fact. We also understand that many of these reservoir lakes were designated prior to most of the residential development that exists today.

However the situation today is that there are thousands of property owners, businesses, tourists and recreational users utilizing these reservoir lakes and making substantial economic and social contributions to many communities throughout the TSW watershed region. To develop a successful and effective water management regime of the Trent-Severn Waterway, reservoir lake stakeholders must be involved throughout.

We would like to thank the panel again for inviting us to the table and we hope that our input will help you in your task.

Sincerely,

Jeff Ball & Carolyn Amyotte  
Eels Lake Cottages & Marina