

Trent Severn Waterway Panel  
185 King Street, Suite 100  
Peterborough  
Ontario K9J 2R8

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Reference: TSW Public Consultation

### A Users Perspective

Travelling the full length of the Trent Severn Waterway four times in the last two years have exposed many operational, navigation, and viability concerns. Many of the recent submissions to the TSW Panel have touched on relevant issues, but may not address the actual maintenance of the waterway. The waterway is now marginally navigable and the water quality, except in the larger lakes, is toxic even for swimming. Some mechanical improvements were evident at many locks, but serious renovation of washrooms with the addition of showers, to attract overnight mooring is needed. Free daytime mooring currently has preference to those who have seasonal mooring passes! The following paragraphs are summaries of real events happening to real users of the waterway.

On June 14<sup>th</sup> we entered Lock#1 Trenton. We were troubled by the arrays of weed beds as we eased through the next 5 locks. The onset of steam from the exhaust and an elevated engine temperature warning left us drifting. Only 14 miles into the transit our water intake was stuffed like a cork in a bottle, so tight, we had to remove the ball shut-off valve for clean out. At Thorah we removed half a cubic yard of weed from the propeller, shaft, and rudder. Since many channels to and from lock stations are man-made, why have these channels not been cleaned out? They are under Parks Canada jurisdiction and not part of the river. If the TSW is to remain navigable, weed growth in man made channels through the system must be addressed through dredging.

On August 18<sup>th</sup> we reported to coastguard the disappearance of buoy expected near a shoal in Lake Simcoe-it was found over a mile away! Arriving at Gamebridge we were informed a tree was blocking the canal. A work barge later cleared the tree to allow boats with draught up to 4ft to pass without grounding. We piloted on to Kirkfield in shallow water and weed. Several reversals to remove weed were required to pass through Canal Lake. The channels in this area need to be cleared if the waterway is to remain open.

The swing bridges, which are normally closed to waterway traffic, do not have adequate wall space or cleats for tying up. In high wind or currents this can lead to hazardous situations for boaters.

On August 20<sup>th</sup> 2007 the descent southbound to Peterborough was in cool weather under overcast skies. A serious grounding occurred within the channel markers in Lake Katchewanooka. Whilst steering starboard from mid channel to allow a large power cruiser to pass through going in the opposite direction the boat stuck an underwater obstacle. The obstacle is located approximately midway between green markers C151 and C149 where the chart indicates 10ft of water depth. The damage to the sailboat keel was extraordinary, tearing lead away from the portside leading edge of the substantial keel, approximately 3 feet below the waterline. Also the keel to hull joint was dislocated.

The boat heaved and rolled and substantial movement of items within the boat occurred, including a secured water tank. The helmsman was flung against the wheel and the remaining crew was secure fortunately. Note that if the vessel had not been steered to starboard prior to impact the damage could have been catastrophic. The vessel was lifted at Trenton September 29<sup>th</sup> allowing inspection below the waterline. Navigation channels need to be checked with a sonar system prior to each season.

Some locks below Lakefield were pre-drained for non-existent mystery boats, so we had to wait for a wasteful refilling. At some locks (e.g. #24) the blue line was without cleats or poor bollards for mooring. At one lock the staff had gone fishing. The Peterborough Lift Lock was found to be out of service! We were fortunate that a welding crew worked to 0400hr. The bathtub had to be refilled, and the ram seals were adjusted. When it was suggested at 1100hr that we were the test run, I congratulated and thanked them for their dedication to the cause. Obviously this lock has to undergo a refit to reliably continue operation, as do the washrooms. In view of the sightseeing traffic, a separate washroom with a shower for boaters/workers staying overnight would attract mooring customers.

Lock doors could not be fully opened at several locks due to weed accumulation behind the doors, making entry or egress more hazardous and difficult especially in windy conditions. Boats bumping into the edge of the door increases maintenance costs.

Due to the effective loss of depth in the waterway the TSW cannot guarantee transit, and as a result for every one sailboat being lifted to Lake Huron there is one being shipped by road instead. The commercial benefits expressed by towns on the system are limited. Many boaters provision for a week or more, because the convenience of shopping is very limited on the TSW. Only towns such as Campbellford, Bobcaygeon, and Orillia provide convenient access.

Water management and quality are the other main issues that are beyond the user experience. However inspection of foreign vessels to ensure appropriate waste systems are in use, and two-way valves are sealed for inspection at each end of the waterway is suggested. The amount of energy available from emptying a lock is very limited, and does not justify the expense on equipment to recover this.

The current permit costs are acceptable, but not under the prevailing operational conditions and facilities.

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