

Submission to the Panel on the Future of the TSW

The Trent Severn Waterway is a precious asset that must be protected. There is undoubtedly room for improvement, and this should be pursued where ever and when ever possible. But as for any suggestion that the reservoir lakes in Haliburton and elsewhere should be operated differently today must be considered carefully.

As a Director of the Kawartha Lake Stewards Association, I can attest to the fact that the Waterway needs a constant flow of water throughout the year for water quality reasons as well as power generation and navigation, and other reasons. The reservoir lakes can really only claim adverse local navigation effects with the resulting drawdowns – or can they?

The reservoir lakes enjoy many advantages to their situation that they likely have not given thought to. As a long time cottager on these reservoir lakes, and more recently on the Kawarthas as well, I can attest to them.

Firstly, without those reservoir dams, navigation between connected lakes as currently available would be non-existent in most cases. This is a benefit at no cost to the property owner.

Flooding along the reservoir lakes and rivers is a rare occurrence, and this would be very different without the drawdowns that allow for spring flood storage. To suggest that this could still be provided with a later, post-season drawdown, begs the question as to why the TSW should bother.

Besides, that summer time draw down provides many benefits that few think about:

Many rivers such as the Gull or Kennisis, that see a steady summer flow enjoyed by the property owners there along, would be bone dry, as was the natural case prior to reservoir construction. Can you imagine the outcry if the streamflows were to return to more natural conditions? Even an attempt to reduce the outflow from the reservoir lakes would have a negative effect on water levels in these rivers.

Much of the Kawartha lakes have constant water levels, that the reservoir lakers think unfair. Unfortunately, on smaller waterbodies or protected bays, this leads to an accumulation of silt and decaying weed that sinks in the shallows and produces the weedy mucky bottoms so common on these lakes. This is because wave action, rarely if ever, gets the chance to act on this accumulated debris. The reservoir lakes, on the other hand, see wave action from wind and boat wakes acting on ever lower sections of the shorelines, producing hard-packed, clean and weed free beaches.

The dropping water even gives shoreline residents the opportunity to remove bothersome logs and stumps, or rake other detritus off the shore in order to improve their beachfront. This clearly occurs regardless of the legality, but then again, no one can argue that such

action interferes with natural shorelines. They are flooded-land shorelines, and such action only accelerates their conversion to more natural conditions.

The drawdown during summer weather also allows property owners to easily improve docks and water lines. The suggestion that drawdowns negatively affect water lines is simply ludicrous. One only needs to extend such lines out to deeper water, easy to do except in rare circumstances.

Reservoir lake property owners cannot claim unfair treatment, as this situation has existed for a century or so, and they willingly entered into purchase of their properties – or inherited them, in the full knowledge of the situation on these lakes.

These people cannot claim that their property values are diminished either, as the property values on many of these lakes are often higher than that on the Kawartha Lakes, in spite of the much longer distance from the GTA, their smaller size, and the relative lack of boating opportunities. This strongly suggests that the TSW is providing these owners benefits greater than that granted to the Kawartha Lakes residents, and these benefits are likely those as described above.

So, to the reservoir lake property owner, remember the old saying, 'be careful for what you wish for'. Just maybe, it is the TSW Kawartha lake property owners that should be crying foul.

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