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*The Muskoka Watershed*  
**REPORT CARD**

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***Background Report #8***

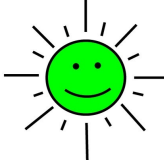









**Our Community**



***Muskoka***  
**WATERSHED COUNCIL**

July 2004

## OUR COMMUNITY

Indicator	Are We Happy?	Are Things Improving?
<b>Attitude</b>		
All farms have an Environmental Farm Plan		
All owners of 100+ acres of forested land participate in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP).		
All Marinas participating in the 'Clean Marine' program		
Strong environmental ethic and responsible civic attitude among all residents of Muskoka.		
60% of waste recycled by 2008		

### Agricultural Sector

#### ***Why is it important that the agricultural sector operate in an environmentally sensitive manner?***

Agriculture can have significant effects on the local natural environment, both in enhancing habitat and landscape diversity, as well as potential impacts on surface and ground water. Although agriculture is not considered a primary sector, occupying just 4% of Muskoka's area, it does generate an estimate \$10 million in economic activity in the district<sup>1</sup>. Inappropriate farming practices can damage soils, increase erosion, and where farms are located near or adjacent to water sources, pose a threat to water quality. Across Ontario, the agricultural sector has recognized its role in ensuring environmental health by developing a series of programs to educate its members, and to develop sound agricultural practices.

The Environmental Farm Plan is a tool available to farmers to enable them to evaluate the impact of their farming operations on the local environment, and undertake remedial action where needed, to improve farming practices and minimize negative environmental impacts. Ontario is leading the way in Canada, and in the world, with this type of program. A new phase of these plans is being developed to focus specifically on nutrient management.

<sup>1</sup> Estimated using 2001 Census of Agriculture figures.

### ***What is the current state of farm involvement in the Environmental Farm Plan process in Muskoka?***

Based on the 2001 Census, there are 152 farms in Muskoka, of which 72 farms are registered at the municipal level, which means they declared an annual income in excess of \$7000. Of the farms in Muskoka, 83 farmers have attended an Environmental Farm Plan working session, 73, have started the workbook to prepare their own plan, and 63 plans have been completed and submitted for peer review.<sup>2</sup> Once these plans were approved, farmers were eligible for various grants for partial reimbursement of expenses in implementing the plan. Funding for these grants has now been completed. Through this program, Muskoka farms have achieved one of the highest rates of environmental stewardship in Ontario.

### **Forestry Sector**

#### ***Why is it important that the Forestry Sector operate in an environmentally sensitive manner?***

Forestry is a major economic activity in the rural areas of the watersheds in Muskoka, directly employing over 500 people and indirectly another 700. This represents four times the provincial average in logging and primary wood manufacturing jobs.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons it is important to maintain our forests not only for the economic base they provide but also for the environmental and social values they contribute to the quality of life that is important to people that have chosen to live in Muskoka. The challenge will be to maintain the forests in order to have a stable and healthy economic base and to provide the social and environmental values inherent in the forest.

A growing number of people around the world want to be assured that the products they buy are not harming the environment. This is particularly true for forest products. Forest certification is one way that forest companies can prove to people that the way they harvest does not damage the health of the forest, or the stability and livelihoods of local communities.

Forest certification is voluntary and it is done by an independent organization. In much of Ontario, the Forest Stewardship Council of Canada (FSC) provides forest certification. A forest company is certified once it can show that its practices meet a high standard for environmental protection, recognition of Indigenous Peoples and treaty rights, and social responsibility.

Forest certification involves the independent, third-party assessment of a forest area against established criteria and standards of sustainable forest management. A growing number of companies in North America, such as publishers and building supply outlets, are adopting forest product procurement policies that give preference to those operators that meet rigorous forest certification standards

#### ***What is the current state of involvement in forest management programs in Muskoka?***

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<sup>2</sup> Katya Riley, Muskoka Soil and Crop Improvement Association. Pers.Comm.

<sup>3</sup> *Central and Eastern Ontario Healthy Forests, Healthy Business*

Currently in Muskoka, all Crown land has been certified for forestry and Tembec, the local major forestry based company, provides a private land stewardship program that includes 3,294 hectares of privately owned land that has been certified for forestry purposes.<sup>4</sup>

Forty (40) percent of Muskoka is Crown Land and is managed by Westwind Forest Stewardship Inc., under a Sustainable Forestry License issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources. It is their responsibility to develop long-term forest management plans that maintain the forest certification and provide direction with respect to appropriate silvicultural practices which includes prescriptions for wildlife habitat management.

Sixty (60) percent of the land in Muskoka is owned by private landowners who will make individual development decisions based on their particular circumstances. Many of the large landowners have voluntarily entered into programs that recognize their interest in maintaining the naturally forested environment of the area.

In addition to the private land that has been certified, the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) provides property tax reductions to landowners that prepare a Managed Forest Plan. Landowners participating in this program learn about new management options and become more committed to forest sustainability. There are currently 896 properties or 35,238 hectares, in Muskoka under the MFTIP program. Of the 3,711 parcels of land over 100 acres in size, 398 owners have developed MFTIP plans. This represents 11% of the large property owners.<sup>5</sup> In order to ensure a high standard of forest management in the future, a larger percent of large property owners should be encouraged to participate in this program.

## **Marinas**

### ***Why is it important that marinas provide strong environmental leadership?***

Whether you take to the water by power, sail or paddle, the pleasure we all derive from boating is based on our enjoyment of the pristine waters and scenic shorelines. To ensure that we have a clean and healthy environment for our enjoyment today and for future generations, it is important for Ontario's marina operators to show leadership and encourage responsible boating behaviour near and on the water. Many local marinas have voluntarily joined the Clean Marine Program and are following the operational practices mandated by this environmental program.

The Ontario Marine Operators Association (OMOA) along with over twenty marine industry professionals and Ontario's boaters' and anglers' associations formed the Clean Marine Partnership to develop a voluntary program of "Environmental Best Practices" for the marine industry that is recognized as the leader in North America. OMOA member marinas have been enrolling in the Clean Marine Program to ensure that their marinas are following these environmentally sound practices and protecting our waterways for all to enjoy.

### ***What is the current state of Marina involvement in the Clean Marine program in Muskoka?***

On the inland lakes in Muskoka, 12 of 36 marinas are eco-rated by the Clean Marine Program. Of the 16 marinas on the Georgian Bay Coast 8 are eco-rated.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter McElwain, Forestry Manager, Tembec Inc. Huntville. Pers. Comm.

<sup>5</sup> District of Muskoka, Geographic Information System.

## **Community Environmental Ethic**

### ***Why is it important to have a strong community based environmental ethic?***

Each one of us make daily decisions that impact the environment, from how we drive our cars to how we landscape our properties, it is the cumulative effect of all these individual decisions that has a significant impact on our environment. Currently there is not a measure of 'community ethic'. Over the next three to five years it is anticipated that indicators will be developed and a measure of 'community ethic' will be provided in the next edition of the report card.

## **Waste Recycling**

### ***Why is it important to recycle?***

Recycling is an important component of waste management. Recycling in Muskoka goes back to the beginning of recycling in Ontario. In the mid 1980s the Town of Bracebridge started a blue box program and it was expanded to other municipalities within a few years. The program was taken over by the Muskoka Recycling Association in 1988. Statistics from 1989 reported a 5% diversion rate from the landfill as a result of recycling.<sup>6</sup>

### ***What is the current state of Waste Recycling in Muskoka?***

In 1996 The District of Muskoka became responsible for waste management and took over the recycling program. Currently most municipalities in Muskoka enjoy curbside waste and recycle collection. The program includes recycling of a wide range of materials including fiber, rigid and soft plastics, and aluminum.

As is evidenced by the 40% diversion rate, Muskoka has come a long way with respect to diversion and the new 2008 target of 60% diversion is achievable given our previous growth in recycling.

## **References**

1. *Central and Eastern Ontario Healthy Forests, Healthy Business*
2. District of Muskoka, Geographic Information System
3. District of Muskoka, Manager of Solid Waste, Jamie DeLaney, Pers. Comm.
4. Ontario Soil and Crop, Muskoka Branch.
5. Peter McElwain, Forestry Manager, Tembec Inc. Huntville. Pers. Comm.

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<sup>6</sup> District of Muskoka, Manager of Waste disposal, Jamie DeLaney, pers. comm.