

2014 MUSKOKA WATERSHED

REPORT CARD

DEE RIVER SUBWATERSHED

GRADES	
Land	Stressed
Water	Vulnerable
Wetlands	Vulnerable
Biodiversity	Stressed

The Dee River Subwatershed is 14,869 hectares in size and is located in the central portion of The District Municipality of Muskoka. Lakes in the subwatershed include:

- Three Mile Lake
- Clark Pond
- Bogart Lake
- Long's Lake
- Camel Lake
- Mainhood Lake
- Burnt Lake

Three Mile Lake is the largest lake with approximately 8.70 km² in surface area and is comprised of Hammel's Bay, which is 2.3 km², and the main basin, which is 6.4 km².

Almost 16% of the subwatershed is developed with 3% of the subwatershed being Crown land. There is no major urban development although there is significant agricultural lands and shoreline residential development. No land in the subwatershed is protected through provincial parks, crown nature reserves, or local land trusts.



This report card describes the health of the land, water, wetlands and biodiversity of the Dee River Subwatershed and is part of the **2014 Muskoka Watershed Report Card** available at www.muskokawatershed.org.

Stewardship Works!



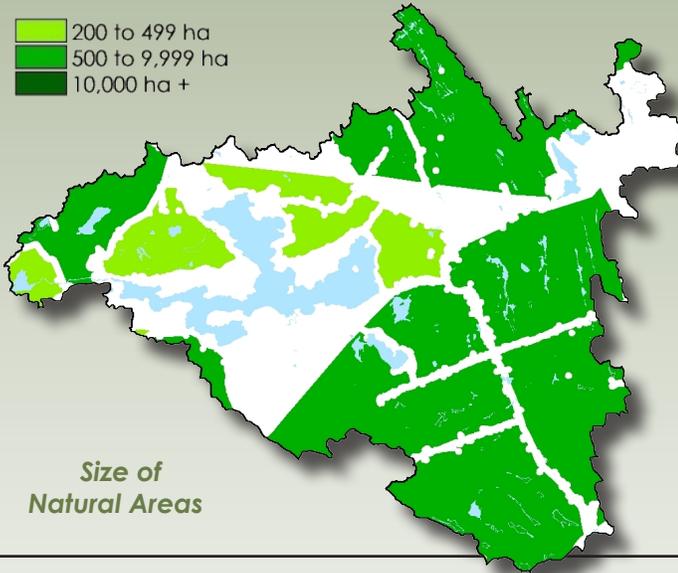
Muskoka
WATERSHED COUNCIL

Land:

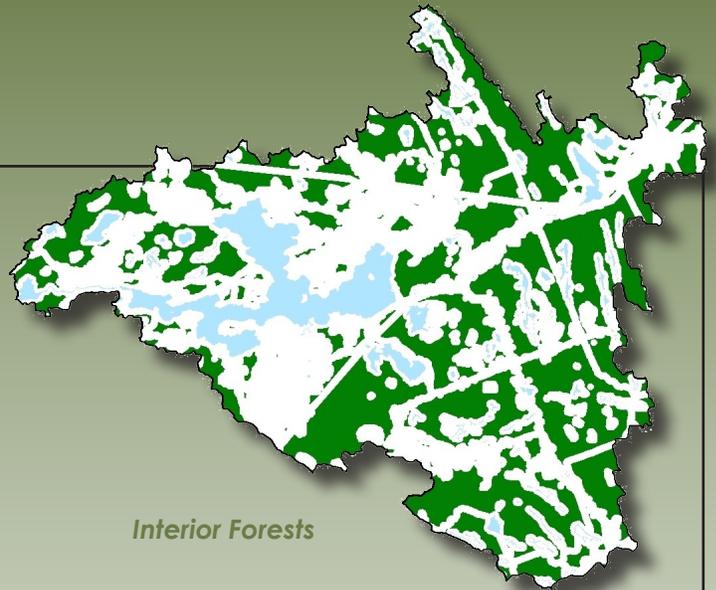
- Not Stressed
- Vulnerable
- ✓ Stressed

65% of the Dee River Subwatershed is in natural habitat with additional lands in open field or pasture. The subwatershed is comprised of relatively good agricultural land with both active operations and old pasture lands. Many of these old pastures provide habitat for species at risk like Bobolinks. Mixed forest and large wetland areas make up the remaining natural areas. This mix of natural areas is important to help support local biodiversity.

- 200 to 499 ha
- 500 to 9,999 ha
- 10,000 ha +



Size of Natural Areas



Interior Forests

97% of the subwatershed is privately owned and it will be important to maintain a strong private land stewardship program to ensure that the long-term health of the subwatershed is maintained as development occurs. Although only 11% of the land is currently under active private land stewardship, there has been an increase in participation in MFTIP and CLTIP.

Both healthy riparian areas and interior forests are important to support local wildlife and maintain good water quality. Planting native species and renaturalizing shorelines are important stewardship activities in the subwatershed.

Indicator	Dee River Subwatershed		Muskoka Watershed		Description
	Value	Grade	Value	Grade	
Size of Natural Areas	65%	Vulnerable	79%	Vulnerable	Areas of natural cover that are 200 ha or greater. Natural cover includes forest, lakes, rock barrens and wetlands.
200 - 499 ha	10%		7%		
500 - 9,999 ha	55%		52%		
10,000 ha +	0%		20%		
Interior Forest	40%	Vulnerable	58%	Not Stressed	Interior forest is a forested area with a 100-metre forested buffer surrounding it.
Road Density	1.0 km/km ²	Stressed	0.51 km/km ²	Vulnerable	Road density is a measure of the degree of fragmentation of the landscape. Roads are a primary cause of death of many species, especially turtles and snakes.
Level of Development	16%	Stressed	5.4%	Vulnerable	Level of development is the percent of the watershed in urban or rural development. When more than 10% of a watershed is developed, lake and stream health may be impacted.
Shoreline Density	>16 lots/km	Stressed	N/A	N/A	Shoreline density is an indicator of the human stress on a water body. This stress includes nutrient loading, crowding, aesthetic appeal, and habitat impacts.
Shoreline Buffer	75-85%	Vulnerable	75%	Vulnerable	Shoreline buffer is the percent of unaltered lot area from the water's edge 20 metres inland. The shoreline buffer is the last line of defense against the forces that may otherwise damage a healthy lake.

Water:

- Not Stressed
- Vulnerable
- Stressed

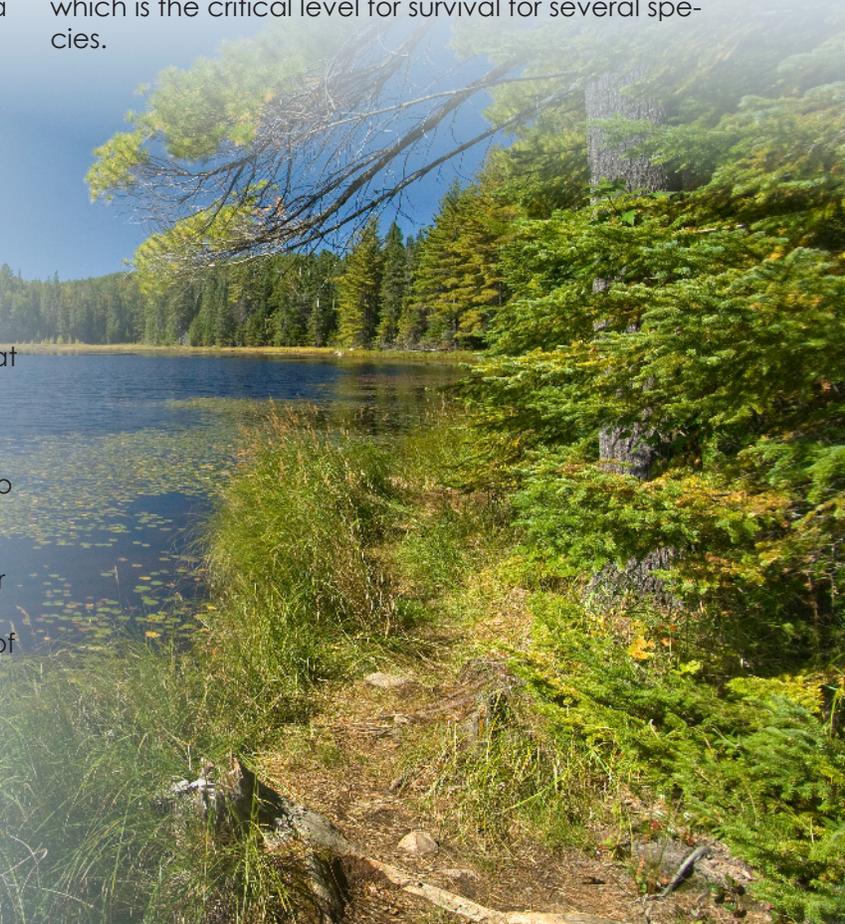
Indicator	Dee River Subwatershed		Muskoka Watershed		Description
	# Lakes	Grade	# Lakes	Grade	
Total Phosphorus Concentration	5	Vulnerable	129	Vulnerable	The amount of total phosphorus in a lake is a measure of recreational water quality as phosphorus is generally the limiting nutrient in algae production.
< BG + 30%	3		73		
BG + 30% to BG + 50%	0		27		
> BG + 50%	2		29		
Algae		Stressed		Not Stressed	The propensity for algal blooms is the percentage of lakes with TP greater than 15 µg/L and are over threshold.
Fish Habitat (% Unaltered)	90%	Not Stressed	91	Not Stressed	This is a measure of fish habitat. Many fish species require the overhanging vegetation, rock shoals, and aquatic vegetation generally found in undisturbed sites.
Calcium Levels	7	Not Stressed	377	Vulnerable	Calcium is an important nutrient for the development of bones and exoskeletons. As a result of acid precipitation, calcium has been leached out of the forest soils and is now also in decline in many of the lakes in the watershed threatening the continued presence of important lake species.
< 1.5 mg/L	0		161		
1.5 - 2.0 mg/L	3		138		
> 2.0 mg/L	4		78		

The Dee River Subwatershed is located within the more fertile agricultural lands in central Muskoka. Three Mile Lake is the primary lake within the subwatershed and is a shallow, warm water lake with a good bass fishery. There are six small lakes that flow into Three Mile Lake before the lake flows into Lake Rosseau through the Dee River.

Total phosphorus concentration is an indicator of the amount of nutrient in a water body. A background or undeveloped level of total phosphorus has been determined for each lake. Where the phosphorus level has increased by more than 50% above the background level the lake may show signs of stress. The only lake in the subwatershed that is Over Threshold is Long's Lake.

Shoreline vegetation protects water bodies from nutrients and toxic chemicals that can contribute to water quality issues. It also protects the lake edge from erosion caused by waves and ice. The shoreline buffer provides critical habitat for fish and other animals, helping to maintain a natural balance in sensitive aquatic ecosystems. 86% of the shoreline of Three Mile Lake has been left in a natural state.

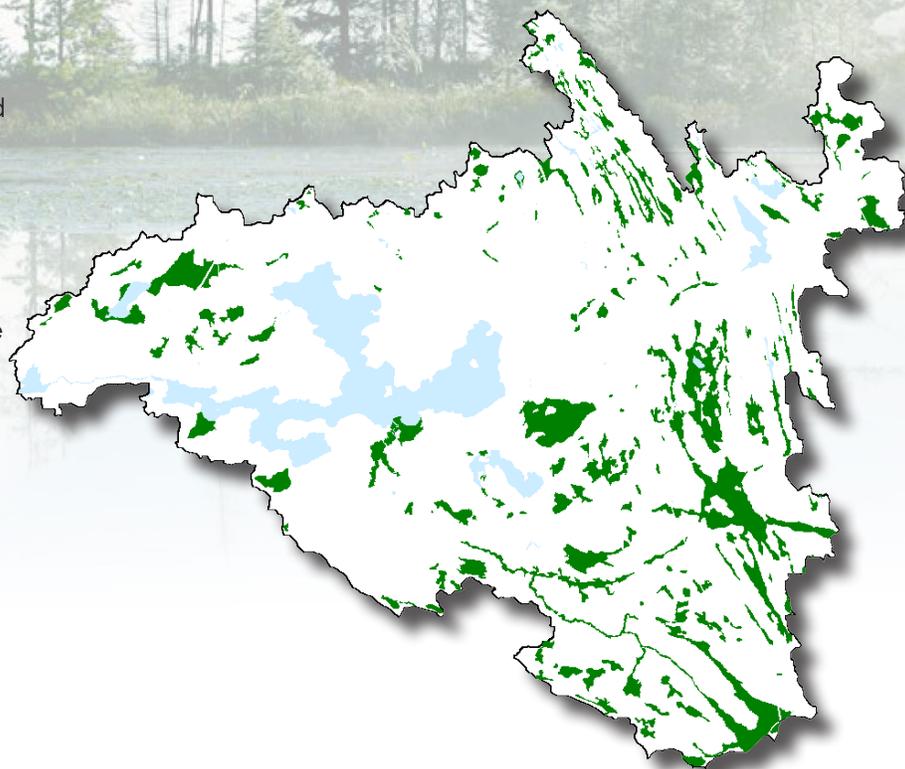
As a result of acid deposition, calcium has leached out of many lakes across Muskoka. In the Dee River Subwatershed, no lakes have less than 1.5 mg/L, which is the critical level for survival for several species.



Wetlands:

- Not Stressed
- Vulnerable
- Stressed

The Dee River Subwatershed is comprised of just over 10% wetland area. Wetlands are recognized by all levels of government as important components of a healthy environment. Wetlands and the area that surrounds them provide continuous, sustainable environmental, economic and social benefits that contribute to the high quality of life in Muskoka. Most species at risk native to Muskoka rely on wetlands for all or a portion of their life cycles.



Wetland Values

- Control and storage of surface water and recharge groundwater;
- Maintain and improve water quality, aid in flood control, and protect shorelines from erosion;
- Trap sediments which would otherwise fill watercourses;
- Support and initiate complex food chains;
- Provide important habitat;
- Support species at risk;
- Provide fish populations; and
- Provide active and passive recreational opportunities, including canoeing, bird watching, hunting and fishing

Subwatershed Name	% Wetlands	Comment	Grade
Dee River	10.52	<p>The Dee River Subwatershed is approximately 3% Crown and protected lands with approximately 16% development. Development is predominantly on the shore of the lakes. Near-shore marshes are prone to destruction as property owners 'tidy' their shoreline. This near-shore habitat is important fish habitat.</p> <p>Three Mile Lake is the principal water body in this subwatershed, and while significant development is not planned for the area, steady shoreline development can be expected.</p> <p>Wetlands in this subwatershed are in fair condition.</p>	Vulnerable

Biodiversity:

- Not Stressed
- Vulnerable
- Stressed



Biodiversity refers to the richness of life in the environment – the number of different species, their genetic variability, and the extent to which different groups of species occur from one place to another within the region.

Muskoka is blessed with a rich biodiversity primarily because of the extensiveness of its natural ecosystems. This biodiversity provides the resilience necessary to withstand environmental change and to continue to function

normally and provide the environmental goods and services on which we and other species depend.

Indicator	Dee River Subwatershed		Muskoka Watershed		Description
	# Species	Grade	# Species	Grade	
Species at Risk Habitat	21	<i>Stressed</i>	22	<i>Vulnerable</i>	The number of different types of species at risk habitat in the subwatershed. Subwatersheds with habitat for more types of species at risk are more vulnerable to development or other stressors.
<i>Endangered</i>	4		5		
<i>Threatened</i>	7		7		
<i>Species Concern</i>	10		10		
Alien Invasive Species*	1	<i>Stressed</i>	10	<i>Stressed</i>	Maintaining the diversity of native species is important to a healthy watershed. Invasive species often out-compete native species and significantly reduce the biodiversity of an area.

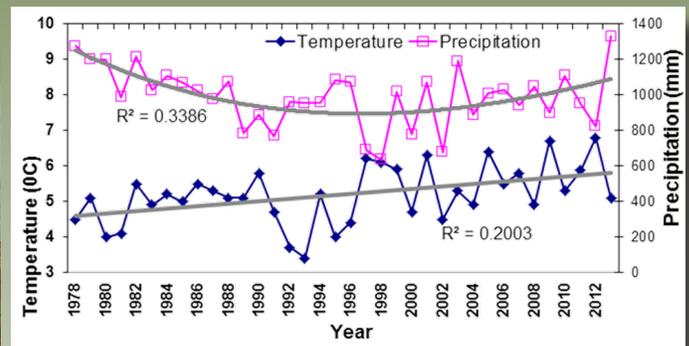
* Includes the Spiny Water Flea in the large recreational lakes. Spiny Water Flea will collapse the biodiversity of a lake.



Changing climate: temperatures continue to rise

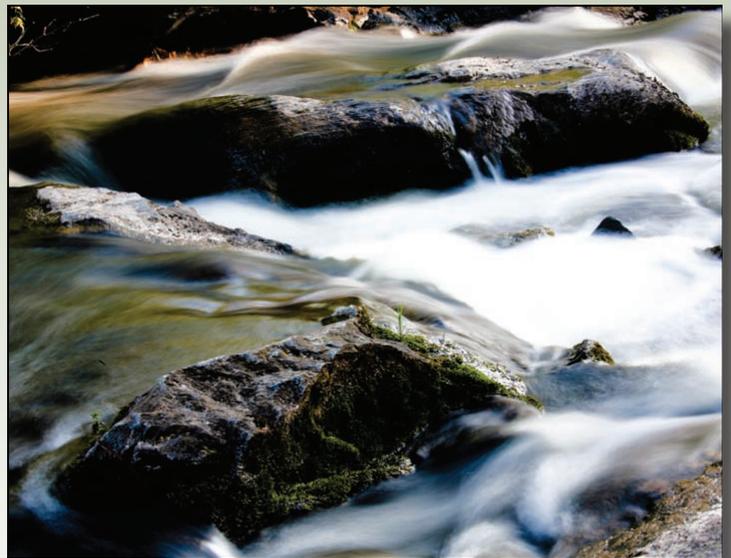
The mean temperature showed a clear and moderate increase or warming over 1978 to 2013, about 0.35 degree increase per 10 years, or a warming of 1 degree within 30 years. The annual precipitation had a significant decrease during 1978-1998 and then a weak increase during 1999-2013.

(Dorset Environmental Science Centre)



Stewardship Works: help protect the watershed

When all is said and done, the fate of sustainable management of Muskoka's watersheds lies in large part in the hands of local residents as they go about their day-to-day lives. It is the citizens of Muskoka who must generate the interest and enthusiasm to create, continue and expand local projects which lead to positive actions and results.



Stop the spread of invasive species

- Purchase non-invasive or native plants from a reputable dealer.
- Never dispose of domestic plants or animals into the wild.
- Inspect and wash your boat, ATV and other equipment and let dry for at least 6 hours before moving to a new lake or area.
- Do not move species from one area to another.

Retain buffers and leave shorelines in a natural state

- Maintain a wide buffer of native plants and trees around shorelines of lakes and rivers.
- Minimize boat speed (eliminate wake) in all near-shore areas and particularly in areas with known loon nests.
- Avoid grassed lawns in the waterfront area and minimize use of fertilizers.

Protect wetlands

- Leave wetlands alone.
- Keep recreational vehicles out of wetlands. Explore by kayak or canoe instead.

Maintain natural areas

- Limit cleared areas in the rural and waterfront area.
- Do not create new roads.

Reduce your personal impact

- Reduce your use of electricity and fossil fuels.
- Maintain your septic system.
- Improve the energy efficiency of your home and vehicle. Treat electricity as a luxury.
- Reduce waste by reusing, reducing, composting and refusing to buy items with excess packaging.