



Spring 2026 Newsletter

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President's Message

The winter of 2025/26 is finally behind us, warmer weather is arriving, and the May long weekend brought spectacular conditions for opening the cottage. We hope everyone had a smooth start to the season and is looking forward to another wonderful summer on the lake with family and friends.

While the winter seemed especially long and spring has been cooler than usual, we're optimistic that warmer days are ahead. We wanted to provide members with an update on important developments since our last newsletter and help prepare for the 2026 cottage season.

Our mission remains unchanged: advocating on behalf of our members and lake residents on issues that affect our enjoyment of the lakes and surrounding environment. This includes monitoring proposed developments, environmental concerns, and matters affecting water quality, while continuing to liaise and lobby with all levels of government as needed.

Over the winter and early spring, we continued our efforts to raise awareness about the harmful effects of salt pollution on our lakes. Public awareness and media attention continue to grow significantly. The District Municipality of Muskoka and six area municipalities, including Gravenhurst, have now passed resolutions recognizing the environmental damage caused by salt runoff and are calling on the Ontario government to take action.

We were also pleased to see member participation in the free Earth Week webinar for shoreline property owners held on April 23. The Natural Edge - a pilot project launching this summer will demonstrate how natural shoreline restoration can both enhance property beauty and benefit the environment.

We are looking for suggestions and volunteers to help organize a summer social gathering this summer, providing an opportunity for members and residents to connect. Please email us if you would like to help or have ideas to share.

If you have not already done so, please renew your membership for the 2026 cottage season. An email attachment you received along with this newsletter is an easy-to use, fillable pdf membership form.

Our 2026 AGM will be held on July 18 at 9:00 a.m. at St. Paul's Parish Church on John Street in Gravenhurst. We hope you will join us to meet fellow residents and discuss the issues that matter to our community.

This fall, Ontario voters will elect new municipal councils. Details regarding the voting procedures for Gravenhurst Council are covered in this newsletter. Be sure to vote.

Wishing everyone a safe, relaxing, and memorable summer at the cottage. Here's to a great 2026 cottage season!

Randy Levine - President



Membership 2026

Cathy Temple, Membership Chair

Soon we will be enjoying warm sunny days on our beautiful Gull and Silver Lakes. And the new year leads to new memories to be made along with family and friends.

This also means it is time to renew/join our Gull and Silver Lakes Residents' Association!

As a not-for-profit organization our Association can only be as effective as the membership supporting it.

Membership keeps you informed and gives you a voice on critical issues such as shoreline environment, land development, lake water quality, safe boating and recreational water activities.

For example, the GSLRA recently hosted a webinar entitled "From Lawn to Life". This webinar, customized for residents and cottagers on Gull and Silver Lakes, informed us on how natural shorelines can support lake health. Your membership helps us provide this and other initiatives.

The cost of membership is only \$40.00 per household per calendar year.

Please open and complete the fillable PDF Membership Form that came as an attachment with the email you received. We think you will find it an easy and quick way to renew your membership.





2026 Gravenhurst Election

Jim Davis - Director

It's Election Year – Vote ☒

This fall, new Ontario Municipal Councils will be elected.

The vote to elect members of Gravenhurst Council will be by internet or telephone only. Online or telephone voting will begin on October 14, 2026. All votes received by 8:00 pm on October 26, 2026, will be counted.

Each voter will be able to vote for the offices of:

- Mayor - One (1) to be elected
- District Council - Three (3) to be elected
- Ward Councillor - One (1) to be elected by the voters in each of the five wards.

Candidates for School Board Trustees will also be on the ballot.

Please Note - you are eligible to vote in the Gravenhurst election if:

- **You are a Canadian Citizen**
- **You are at least 18 years old**
- **Reside in Gravenhurst, or**
- **You own property in Gravenhurst even if your primary residence is in another municipality. In Ontario you are eligible to vote in all municipal elections where you own property.**

Spouses of eligible voters can also vote.

You must be on the voters list to vote.

Click [here](#) to check to see if you are on the voters list.

The Town of Gravenhurst will be mailing you a Voter Information Letter, which provides the dates and hours of the voting period and instructions for how to vote via telephone or internet. Anticipate delivery on, or around, September 30, 2026.

New Ward Boundaries

The ward you vote in may have changed. In December of 2025 Gravenhurst Council changed the geographic boundaries of Wards within the municipality.

Previously our members were in Wards 1, 4, or 5. For the 2026 election our members are in Ward 4 or 5.

The new Ward boundaries are:

- If your property is on Gull Lake south of the Hwy 11 bridge or on Silver Lake, you are in Ward 4
- If your property is on Gull Lake north of the Hwy 11 bridge, you are in Ward 5.

Click [here](#) for a Ward boundary map.

It's Important to Vote

Now more than ever, your vote matters.

Preserving our water quality, preventing high-density waterfront developments and ensuring good municipal governance are the principles the Gull & Silver Lake Residents' Association has long stood for.

Electing candidates who are aligned with these principles is critical to protecting the Muskoka we know and love.

The G&SLRA and the Muskoka Lakes Association, together with other Gravenhurst lake associations will be hosting an All Candidates Meeting on Saturday August 29th at the Opera House. The meeting will start at 7:00pm and run for two hours. Please make a point to attend if possible.

An informed vote is a good vote.



Environmental Matters

Joanne Smith - Environmental Chair

Our Eco-Group meets monthly to focus on important topics that relate to the health of our lakes and ecosystems - Zoom in winter, coffee gatherings in summer.

These are the activities of the Eco-Group during the past year:

The Natural Edge Project

During the summer of 2024, all properties on Gull and Silver lakes were surveyed as part of the Love Your Lake program. Love Your Lake is a shoreline evaluation program designed to encourage lakefront property owners to take proactive steps toward improving lake health.

A confidential evaluation report was available to all property owners and included suggestions regarding how they might improve their shoreline. We hope every property owner ordered their free report.

As a follow up to the Love Your Lake program, our Association is partnering with the District of Muskoka in a successful program called The Natural Edge.

Eco-Group member, Jody McKenna explains The Natural Edge Program:

For many Gull and Silver Lakes property owners, the shoreline is the heart of the property — where families gather, views are enjoyed, boats are launched, and memories are made.

The Natural Edge program, delivered locally by the District of Muskoka, helps landowners shape that space in a way that reflects how they use and value their shoreline. Whether the goal is maintaining access, enhancing privacy, improving the look of the property, or creating a more natural shoreline, the program works with each landowner's interests and vision.

Examples of The Natural Edge Project



Participants receive a **free site visit and customized planting plan** based on their shoreline conditions and personal preferences. This is not a one-size-fits-all program. Program staff consider the landowner's goals, existing vegetation, shoreline use, views, access needs, and site conditions to recommend native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, grasses, and groundcovers that fit the property. The result is a practical plan that supports both the landowner's values and the health of the lake ecosystem.

For Gull and Silver Lakes, small shoreline improvements across many properties can add up to meaningful benefits. Naturalized shorelines can help reduce erosion, filter runoff, improve water quality, discourage nuisance geese, enhance privacy, and provide habitat for birds, pollinators, fish, and other wildlife. Participating in The Natural Edge is a way to invest in the enjoyment, beauty, and long-term resilience of your own property while contributing to the shared health of the lakes we all value.



Environmental Matters

Joanne Smith - Environmental Chair

The Natural Edge (continued)

This summer, interested landowners have an opportunity to take part in the program. After receiving their planting plan, participants can choose to purchase a customized shoreline planting package for only \$300, which includes 50 native plants, mulch, and tree protectors. To learn more, request the webinar recording, or express interest in participating, please email stewardship@muskoka.on.ca or visit www.muskoka.on.ca/en/environment/natural-edge-program.aspx.

Additional information and links to valuable resources are available on our website – click [here](#).

Water Quality Testing 2025 & 2026

For over 20 years we have been participating in the Water Quality Testing Program coordinated by the Muskoka Lakes Associations. Samples are taken over the Summer from near-shore and mid-lake locations. Many thanks go out to our volunteer testing team: Jim Davis and Dr. David Williams, who completed and submitted all testing results in 2025, and will do so again in 2026. Our 2025 summary report has not yet been released. However, it will be available for our July 18th AGM, so do come to see it and hear the details!

Key Points from 2024 Testing Results

Safe for Swimming: Both lakes remain within safe limits for E. coli and Total Coliform, though consistent monitoring is still recommended.

Water Clarity: The clarity in both lakes continues to be rated as excellent.

Phosphorus: Levels for both lakes are well within the provincial objectives for aesthetic protection and preventing nuisance algae.

Road Salt (Chloride): Gull Lake remains an area of concern with an average of ~18 mg/L, which is close to the target threshold of concern: 20 mg/L. Silver Lake remains significantly lower at 2.5 mg/L.





Environmental Matters

Joanne Smith - Environmental Chair

Salt Pollution

In 2001 Environment Canada declared road salt toxic as it increases harmful chloride levels in fresh water eco-systems.

Our Association has been working with the Friends of The Muskoka Watershed to identify and monitor “hot spots” where water runoff from salted roads and parking lots is entering our lakes.

Many thanks, to Brian Ochab for ongoing collection of data from the 2 culverts under Bethune that flow directly to Moody Bay. These readings continue to be alarmingly high, and therefore a “Red Flag” area of concern. Joanne and Clarke Smith are now monitoring the storm drain on Phillip St E that flows into the lake. Those readings are high, but not alarmingly so. We will also continue to monitor the McDonald’s ditch that flows under Hwy 11 into the marshland beyond, destination Jevins Lake. This is to assist Dr. Neil Hutchinson, aquatic scientist with the Friends of The Muskoka Watershed, with long-term Muskoka data, and Gravenhurst in particular.

At the April 21, 2026 meeting of the Town of Gravenhurst Council, a deputation regarding Salt Pollution was presented by Joanne Smith and Dr. Hutchinson. The presentation urged the Town to commit to their reduction of road salt as much as possible and to call on the Province to act regarding this environmental hazard. The resulting resolution was passed unanimously.

Our efforts received good news coverage on Muskoka Region.com. Click [here](#) to read the story.

Our Association was one of the founding members of the [Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition](#). The Coalition has been working hard to press the Provincial government to develop policies to reduce road salt use.

Across the province the Coalition has been asking municipalities to pass resolutions like the one passed by Gravenhurst Council. To date, 35 municipalities and 3 Conservation Authorities have now passed this Resolution.

Joanne and Clarke Smith also participated in an Advocacy Day sponsored by the Ontario Salt Pollution Coalition at Queen’s Park on February 24. The day generated some good media coverage including a segment on CITY TV news.

Halt the Salt





Environmental Matters

Joanne Smith - Environmental Chair

White Pine Decline

Many shoreline Eastern White Pine are showing needle yellowing, thinning, and, in many cases, death, especially on rocky sites with very shallow soils. Three years ago, a Forest Health specialist from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry found no evidence of insects or disease in the White Pine trees around our lakes. The likely causes are drought stress, poor soil depth, and low calcium levels common in Muskoka soils. This pattern is also being seen in parts of Georgian Bay and Algonquin Park.

What can you do?

- Water vulnerable trees during prolonged dry spells,
- Consider adding wood ash (a natural calcium source) from your wood burning stove or fire pit to soil around your pine trees. For more on calcium deficiency and the use of wood ash, visit the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed website: <https://fotmw.org/ashmuskoka/>
- Remove hazardous dead trees near buildings or play areas (while recognizing they provide wildlife habitat if safely located).

The Eco Group is working to have the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to conduct a Forest Health Survey this year to better understand the extent of the issue.

Science Sunday – “Did You Know That”

Every Sunday, without fail, I post a science article our Lake Association FaceBook page...quick reads that connect what's happening on our lakes to the science behind lake health, wildlife, shorelines, and water quality.

We are part of the Gull & Silver Lakes Community FaceBook group that has grown to 240 members, and is a friendly, positive place to stay informed and connected with what's happening around the lakes.

If you're not part of it yet, you're missing a simple way to stay in the loop and be part of the conversation!

Join us here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gullsilverlakes/>

Joanne Smith – Director / Environmental Chair





Annual General Meeting

Saturday July 18, 2026 - 9:00am
St Paul's Parish Hall
235 John St, S, Gravenhurst

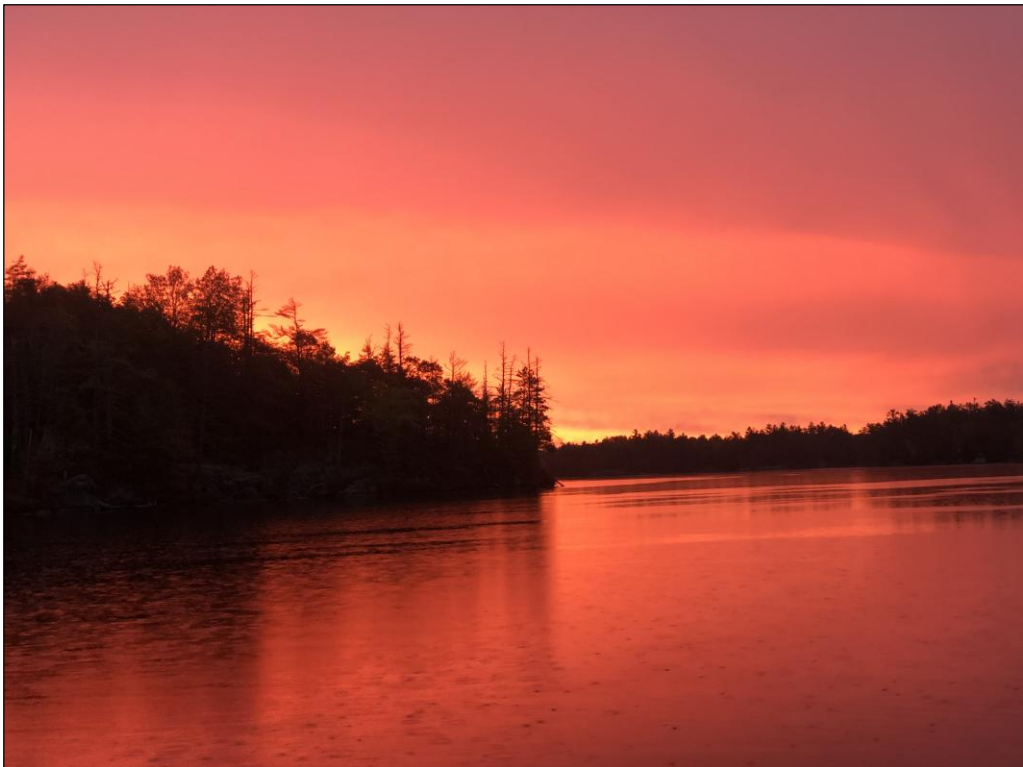
Doors open at 8:45am and the meeting will start promptly at 9am.

Join us to hear about and discuss:

- Municipal Election 2026 – Gravenhurst Votes
- Road Salt Pollution of the Muskoka Watershed
- 2025 Water Quality Test Results
- The Natural Edge Project
- High-density Waterfront Developments
- Election/Re-election of the Board of Directors and President

Coffee and snacks will be provided. Click [here](#) for a map

Everyone welcome. We look forward to seeing you!





About Us

The Gull & Silver Lakes Residents' Association represents the interests of the cottagers and permanent residents of Gull Lake and Silver Lake, located near the Town of Gravenhurst, in Muskoka, Ontario, Canada.

Incorporated by letters patent on September 13, 1989, the association is served by an elected Board of Directors, elected annually, usually in July of each year. The Board is comprised of a President, Vice-President, Past President, Secretary, Treasurer, and such other Directors as required.

Board of Directors

President Randy Levine Silver Lake (647) 544-5191 (cell) president@gullsilverlakes.ca	Past-President Donna McLean 1250 Gull Lake (416) 417-8349 (cell) donna.mclean@rogers.com
Membership Chair Cathy Temple 1441 Silver Lake (416) 399-3113 (cell) membership@gullsilverlakes.ca	Treasurer Paul Temple 1441 Silver Lake (416) 520-5164 (cell) treasurer@gullsilverlakes.ca
Environment Chair Joanne Smith 610 Philips St. – Gull Lake (647) 688-3341 (cell) ryleigh@bell.net	Development Chair Jim Davis 880 Silver Lake (705) 220-3430 (cell) jgdavis880@hotmail.com