

# NEWSLETTER — October, 2004

Please see the follow-up information on Manure spill in Grand Bend at the end of the newsletter

This Newsletter is produced and distributed by the Bluewater Shoreline Residents' Association (BSRA), an umbrella group of residents/beach/cottage/subdivision associations, as a service to the shoreline residents in Hay West and Stanley West Wards. It is funded by the Member Associations and its Affiliate Members. For information on membership, please contact the Membership Secretary, **Jim Chapman**, at (519) 235-1644 or (519) 565-5303, or by e-mail. BSRA's Postal address is **BSRA, GMB 411, RR 2, Zurich ON N0M 2T0**. BSRA's web site is [www.bsra.ca](http://www.bsra.ca), and its e-mail address is [Click here for contact email address](mailto:Click here for contact email address).

## BSRA Annual Meeting Elects Officers

At its Annual Meeting on Sept. 11, the BSRA Executive Committee was elected by the Board of Directors. Melodie Northey had resigned because of ill health, and her resignation had been accepted with regret, and with thanks for her excellent contributions to BSRA. Her successor is Paul Mennill. The other Officers were re-elected to office. For your reference purposes, here is a list of the **BSRA Executive Committee** Members who were elected for 2004-2005, with newly re-assigned responsibilities.

Office	Name	Subdivision	Home*	Lake*	e-mail**	Special Responsibility of
President:	<b>John Gillespie</b>	St. Joseph	236-		john_gill@hay.net	Political Action
Past Pres.:	<b>Don Brazier</b>	Shores	7285	565-	lbrownell@ca.ibm.com	
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice	<b>Glen May</b>	Lakewood	271-	5231	glennan@hay.net	Environment
Pres.:	<b>Paul Mennill</b>	Homestead	6203		pmennill@aol.com	Member Services
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice	<b>Bob Campbell</b>	Heights	236-		rscampbell@tcc.on.ca	
Pres.:	<b>Harlie</b>	Cedarbank	7119		hgjohnst@yahoo.ca	
Secretary:	<b>Johnston</b>	N. Houston	238-		jchapmanca@yahoo.com	Member Relations
Treasurer:	<b>Jim Chapman</b>	Heights	1240	565-	scotrite@pppoe.ca	Communications
Membership:	<b>Doug Banks</b>	Elmwood	565-	5303		
Newsletter:		Westdell	5202	565-		
		Houston Heights	238-	2560		
		S.	2843			
			235-			
			1644			
			471-			
			4378			

\* All area code 519. When there is no Lake number, this indicates a permanent resident. \*\*[Replace middle dot in email addresses with normal dot.](#)

## Municipal Council Information

As there have been no changes in the information provided in the May 2004 issue of the Newsletter, for your reference over the Winter check with that edition. Incidentally, Milt Dietrich is retiring, but a successor has not yet been appointed.

## BSRA Establishes Priorities for 2004-2005

At the Annual Meeting, President John Gillespie reviewed the priorities established for the current year, and noted the progress made. He also presented the list of priorities for 2004-2005, which were accepted by the meeting. They are:

1. To continue to act on behalf of our member associations and associate members to protect, and enhance, the interests of Bluewater shoreline residents.
2. To be pro-active in communicating with our shoreline residents, Bluewater Council, the media, and the general public through a variety of methods, including the BSRA Newsletter, the Association website, [www.bsra.ca](http://www.bsra.ca), and media releases.
3. To continue to provide ongoing liaison with the two ward Councillors elected to represent Hay West and Stanley West Wards and the Councillor-at-large to ensure that the concerns and views of shoreline residents are effectively communicated to the Bluewater Council.
4. To continue to contribute to, and participate in, the process of the development of the Bluewater Official Plan with a view to making recommendations that will ensure the resulting Plan reflects the realities of our community and provides a vision for the future development of our Municipality.
5. To continue to share information, make recommendations to, and co-operate with municipal, county, and provincial officials with respect to matters affecting the environment within the Municipality of Bluewater and the County of Huron. This would include co-operative strategies that may result from the BSRA Water Quality Initiative, including our program of testing ravine and beach water.
6. To provide input, and reaction, to the Municipality's annual review of its

road grant program required by a Bluewater Council resolution. 7. To produce a Shoreline Residents Directory from the updated computerized membership data base. 8. To continue to identify and investigate areas where BSRA can provide to shoreline residents, or their member associations, services that are either not readily available through other sources, or can be obtained at lower cost through group purchasing.

### **Constitutional Changes**

Because of enquiries from Shoreline Residents' Associations and individuals from beyond Bluewater re membership in BSRA, the Annual Meeting agreed to permit such associations and individuals to become non-voting Affiliate Members of BSRA. Where feasible, they will generally receive such services as Newsletters, access to BSRA's group insurance plan, etc. For details, see a copy of the BSRA Constitution as revised at that meeting. You will also note that several "housekeeping" changes were made.

The Annual Meeting also authorized the Executive Committee to make any changes to its Corporate By-law No. 1 to eliminate any anomalies with the BSRA Constitution. As well as Constitutional changes there has also been some slight shift in administrative responsibilities among the members of the Executive Committee, as has been noted in the first item above.

### **"It All Ends Up in the Lake"**

This was the appropriate name for a conference co-sponsored by BSRA, as part of the Huron Lakefront Alliance, on August 14 in Goderich. There were 8 informative presentations on the theme of water quality, and there were also several good displays. This worthwhile effort was partly an outgrowth of BSRA's interest in water quality testing and concerns.

### **Water Quality Testing Program**

By the time you read this, the water-testing program, developed by BSRA and funded this year by Bluewater, will have pretty well come to an end for this season. Plans are now being formulated for next year's studies, one facet of which will be the St. Joseph Watershed Water Quality Pilot Project. The Advisory Committee for this project has identified its mission as "to develop and implement initiatives with the purpose of improving water quality in the St. Joseph pilot study watershed and in Lake Huron."

It has also established these goals:

1. To Create a Community Based Advisory Steering Committee to Develop and Implement Action Plans on the following:
  - Upgrading of the Zurich Lagoons
  - Ensuring all septic systems are properly functioning and maintained
  - Reduce the negative water quality impact of applying manure to fields, manure storage, livestock access to watershed and other potentially adverse activities.
  - Develop a Watershed-Based Source Protection Plan for the Watershed
  - Make recommendations for action to BSRA, Bluewater and the County of Huron
2. Attract Funding From Senior Levels of Government to Finance Action Plans.
3. Conduct Water Quality Testing in the Watershed.
4. Liaison and Activities with Other Organizations Interested in Improving Lake Huron Water Quality.

### **A Brief Perusal of the Testing Results**

A careful examination of the results of the ravine water testing, (See [www.bsra.ca](http://www.bsra.ca)), indicates that there were, in general, significantly higher *E. coli* readings this year than in 2003. However, explaining these higher readings is more difficult than measuring them. The most obvious explanation is that the significantly higher rainfall in July flushed whatever pathogens, (disease-causing organisms), that were on the land into the streams and ravines, and thus into the Lake. The statistics also debunk the idea that wildlife is a significant source of pollution, as the wildlife population is fairly constant in number, and did not increase from 2003 to 2004 in proportion to the increase in *E. coli* levels. (Always remember, that *E. coli* readings are only representative of the many other pathogens also in the water.)

Even more significant are the two **very** high ravine readings found two weeks apart in two different ravines, readings of 22,700 and 29,800. To put this into perspective, remember that the safe level is up to **100** *E. coli* organisms per 100ml of water. (These readings are 227 and 298 **times** the accepted limit respectively!) Rainfall can be ruled out as a direct cause for the high readings because all ravines would then have high readings. Likewise, it couldn't have been human-sewage lagoon effluent this time, as the affected ravines are not downstream from any human-sewage lagoon. Similarly, the statistics debunk the notion that the major cause of pollution is faulty septic systems, as they could not be the cause of episodes of the magnitude discovered by the testing program, either individually or collectively.

Gary Palmateer, the microbiologist testing our samples, says that these two very high readings are considered to be **episodes** related to specific events. These could be such as the release of effluents from animal operations, rain carrying material from recently fertilized fields, or perhaps some other explanation.

As a result of BSRA's testing discovering such episodes and their magnitude, the "Ravine Signs" program was developed, and signs warning of the possible dangers of ravine water have already been posted, and are also available through BSRA. Call Paul Mennill, 238-1240, for further information. He also has information on the 911 sign program.

In any case, BSRA is attempting to come to grips with the water quality problem in Lake Huron and in Bluewater, and all BSRA members should appreciate that this year's testing was made possible by financing from Bluewater Council, so that some of our municipal taxes are being used directly to benefit all of Bluewater residents, especially shoreline residents.

### **Massive Manure Spill at Grand Bend**

This recent spill, reported as 5000 gallons into the stream running through the Oakwood Golf Course, clearly points up the kind of issues that concern BSRA. The greatest concern is that this spill was brought to the attention of the Ministry of the Environment on September 16 when the dead fish were noticed in the stream, along with "black water" and a horrendous odour. According to news reports, a hog farm operator admits that his operation was the source of the problem because of an "accidental" spill. Thoughtful people wonder why the operator did not bring the spill to the attention of the Ministry, instead of waiting for someone else, so that some action could have been taken to minimize the problem. They also wonder whether proper planning and management would permit "accidental" spills to occur. This incident points out that there are woefully inadequate safeguards in place to prevent such an episode, and that various levels of government, especially at the provincial level, should be taking a hard look at establishing clear-cut policies and enforceable regulations with teeth and stern penalties in order to minimize such "accidental" spills. There are several other concerns as well, but the above concern is sufficient to cause alarm. You may wish to communicate your own concerns to elected Provincial representatives. For a list of names and addresses, see the website <http://olaap.ontla.on.ca/mpp/contact.jsp>.

### **Waterfront Residents After Fair Taxation (WRAFT)**

Throughout Ontario, owners of waterfront properties have experienced sharp increases in assessments as the application of "current value assessment" principles increases waterfront assessments in the range of about 30% to over 100%, significantly greater than non-waterfront assessments. As a result, waterfront and shoreline properties are bearing significantly higher taxation levels than the services they receive.

Here in Bluewater, a study led by Bob Campbell verified two continuing trends: **1.** The portion of total tax revenues represented by the "Residential" tax class is increasing relative to all other categories, i.e., "Farmlands", "Commercial" and "Residential". **2.** Of greater significance is the fact that **46.5%** of all Bluewater Residential tax revenues now come from the two shoreline wards – Hay West and Stanley West. Simply put, lakefront property owners in Hay West and Stanley West are paying a disproportionate share of the total tax burden, especially in light of the services they receive.

This is not just a local problem, although there may be local solutions such as area rating, but the problem exists throughout Ontario. As a result, the organization WRAFT has come into being, and BSRA has become a member in order to keep in touch with the issue on behalf of its members. We'll try to keep you posted.

### **ATVs on the Beach**

BSRA's 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Glen May, attended an OPP seminar where the most recent and accurate information on ATVs and other off-road vehicles was presented. He reports that if the driver is at least 12 years of age and wearing a proper helmet, the ATV has reflectors and rear lights, and is licenced and insured, driving on the beach is permissible, although erratic and careless driving is not permitted. The OPP can press charges if any of these requirements are not being adhered to, or there is careless driving, and will respond to your complaint. They will even be prepared to watch for regular transgressors. However, such time is chargeable to the Municipality, and it is paid from municipal taxes.

### **Official Plan**

The Official Plan for Bluewater is undergoing the mandated regular review, and Glen May is taking the lead role for BSRA in the process. He reports that the primary issue of concern for BSRA is to have the entire shoreline re-zoned from Recreational and Seasonal to Lakeshore Residential. He states that it is discriminatory to continue the present zoning as the day of the six-times-a-year cottager is long gone. To-day, the building permits issued along the shoreline are often for either permanent or secondary homes. He notes that there is an excellent road policy in place, as well as year-round garbage pickup, a municipal water line, and a natural gas line. He notes that residential density and septic systems are not problems, and the property owner of to-day has both the incentive and means to ensure that his/her septic system is operating at maximum efficiency. As well, from a tax perspective, the shoreline is the economic engine driving Bluewater, as there are more total properties in Hay West and Stanley West than in the wards of Bayfield, Hensall and Zurich combined, and there are permanent residents in all shoreline subdivisions. BSRA will continue to address this issue

## Massive Manure Spill at Grand Bend [FOLLOW-UP](#)

### FOLLOW-UP

After the distribution of this issue of the Newsletter, a Member of the Executive Committee was called by telephone by an anonymous caller who wished to complain that our article above entitled **Massive Manure Spill at Grand Bend** indicated that the hog farm operator involved had not called the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) to alert it about the spill, and she claimed that he had actually done so. As the Newsletter values its credibility, it does not rely on anonymous tips, hearsay, rumour or unsubstantiated claims for its information. On the other hand, the Newsletter does not undertake investigative reporting, but relies on credible sources.

For its information about who notified the Ministry, the Newsletter relied on the reports published in the London Free Press and the Lakeshore Advance. Page B5 of The London Free Press of September 18 states in its article entitled **Hog manure spill hits Grand Bend golf resort**, "The spill was discovered when an Oakwood employee noticed dead fish and a dark substance in the creek at the resort." In the Lakeshore Advance of September 22, under its main headline, **Manure spill seeps into golf course**, the statement is made that, "Greater Grand Bend Association president Stephanie Donaldson was the one to call the MOE after being alerted by Oakwood staff." Dave Scatcherd, co-owner of the golf course, is quoted as saying, "Even if this was an accident," he says, "they should have been responsible and called the Ministry." (You can check the context of these last two statements on the website, [www.lakeshoreadvance.com](http://www.lakeshoreadvance.com) under *Archives*.)

Further research by BSRA from the Ministry of the Environment showed that the operator did, in fact, call the Ministry, and called before anyone else. It certainly is good news to hear that he had followed this proper procedure reasonably promptly, and to learn that it was a brand-new pipeline that failed. Both of these aspects of the story had been omitted from the newspaper sources BSRA used. However, It is also well known that most animal operations are managed responsibly, and MOE receives few calls about spills. MOE staff is still considering whether charges will be laid, but because of the efforts made by the operator to contain the spill, charges are unlikely.

Because such a failure can happen, it would be hoped that all hog farm and cattle farm operators would have the emergency telephone number of MOE prominently displayed at the telephone nearest the barn, even if, and perhaps especially if, they have never had a problem before. Similarly, shoreline residents should be ready to report spills or unusual "blobs" if they perceive them. By the way, the telephone number is 1-800-268-6060.

Nonetheless, concerns still exist about accidental or deliberate "spills" as well as the "episodes" discovered by this year's BSRA ravine studies of *e-coli*, but not reported to the Ministry as far as is known. (See the previous Newsletter article above.) In the Lakeshore Advance article, Tom Prout, General Manager of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, and himself a farmer, is quoted as saying he, "couldn't believe with all the promotion, education and meetings in the last 20 years, why there would be a manure spill." Others would like answers as to what safeguards are in place on the individual operations, what safeguards are in place or mandated by the appropriate Ministries, and what is the enforcement process.

It is generally agreed that great efforts at public education, and great care in handling and processing manure, sewage, lagoon effluents, septage, and other potential pollutants should be of prime importance in society, especially along the lake shores. As can be seen, the concern of the Newsletter article above is to enlighten the BSRA membership about this kind of problem, and to encourage action to guard against "spills" on the part of the individual operators, and action to develop enforceable safeguards on the part of governments at various levels. Lake Huron is a very special resource, and we are all most concerned about the state of its water quality, or should be!