

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2009

UPCOMING EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 01 – Bluewater Large Item Garbage Pickup (during this week)

June 06 – BSRA Spring General Meeting **9:30 a.m. Coffee** **10:00 a.m. Meeting**
St. Peter's Church Hall, north of St. Joseph, east side of highway 21
We hope to see a large turnout of members to focus on important lakeshore issues.

Aug. 29 – BSRA Annual General Meeting **9:30 a.m. Coffee** **10:00 a.m. Meeting**

Water Quality Continues as High Priority for BSRA

For more than ten years, BSRA has worked vigorously toward our primary goal of improving the quality of the lake water on our beaches. Recently, Board member John Gillespie prepared a summary of the current situation for Bluewater Council. He reported that in 2008 testing three of the four beaches monitored by the Ausable-Bayfield Conservation Authority met Blue Flag Beach standards (equal to the Ontario standard for recreational water at least 80% of the time). The beach at Ridgeway fell below this standard. John pointed out that rainfalls caused the pollution levels in the lake to spike upward. He also explained that the test results in four of the ravines never meet the Ontario standards, pointing to our belief that the ravines continue to be a major source of lake contamination. BSRA supports enhancement projects on individual properties in the Zurich drain. Now BSRA is proposing that a new project be established in the Ridgeway watershed. We appreciate the support of Bluewater Council and the Grand Bend Rotary Club.

Our general conclusions include the following. (1) Ravines are a major source of lake water contamination. (2) Agricultural practices and faulty septs seem to be the major sources of ravine contamination. (3) There is a human health risk with exposure to ravine water and occasionally lake water. (4) Senior levels of government have sometimes appeared indifferent to the issue.

Ontario Ministers Express Similar Concerns About the State of the Great Lakes

In their 2009 discussion paper on the state of the Great Lakes, three Ontario Ministries have stated that "The Great Lakes continue to be threatened by pollutants, aquatic invasive species, loss and degradation of natural habitat, and climate change..." The 24 page paper, which is sponsored by the Ministers of the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture, also states "Some scientists are warning us that the lakes are at a "tipping point" of ill health." Further, the paper claims that "Stormwater runoff carrying construction sediment or products like fertilizers, frequently gets washed into the lakes and degrades water quality on an ongoing basis." The paper also laments the "loss of coastal wetlands, floodplains and riparian buffers that provide fish and wildlife habitat, as well as flood control and water quality functions."

In almost all of these areas of concern, BSRA is active in helping make local improvements and in pressing local and provincial authorities to make more improvements.

What To Do About All Terrain Vehicles in Bluewater?

Many shoreline residents have expressed concerns about the use of ATV's on the beach. They focus on personal safety, damage to vegetation and sand dunes, and excessive noise. Currently, the Municipality of Bluewater has not enacted a By-Law to regulate the use of ATV's within its boundaries. This effectively means that ATV's may not travel on the municipality's roads. (There is one exception to this: members of the farming community may use ATV's to move from one part of their farm to another.)

ATV's on the beach come under the jurisdiction of The Off Road Vehicles Act. The following information from the OPP applies to their use on the beach:

- ATV's must be driven with due care and consideration so as to cause no safety hazards for the public and no damage to the sand or vegetation. Generally, speeds up to 20 km/h are considered acceptable.
- The driver of an ATV must wear a proper helmet and have a valid driver's license. The ATV must have the proper registration and be insured.
- ATV's may not carry passengers.
- The laws regarding drinking and driving are in full effect for ATV use.
- The operation of an ATV must not disrupt or destroy the natural environment, including fish habitat, property and the flora and fauna.

If you are concerned about an ATV being driven in an unsafe manner on the beach, contact the OPP at 519-524-8314. Be ready to provide information about the ATV's registration number to the police.

Wind Turbines in Bluewater: Ontario Plans to Take Away Local Control

After many months of discussion and debate, in January Bluewater Council passed a compromise motion approving a by-law concerning the location of commercial-scale wind energy facilities. The new Bluewater by-law would control the permissible location of these giant turbines by setting the following setback distances: 1,000 meters east of highway 21; 1,000 meters from Bluewater villages; 600 meters from other urban zones; 400 meters from landfills and cemeteries; 1500 meters from the ends of airstrips; no commercial scale turbines west of highway 21.

The Board of BSRA took an active role in the lengthy discussions over Bluewater's setback by-law. As directed at the June 2008 General Meeting, our goal has been to support the development of wind energy while ensuring that the turbines are not located too close to urban areas or to individual homes. The Board has placed its emphasis on published worldwide concerns about the impact of giant turbines on the health of nearby residents, on the comfort of people living nearby, on property values, and on scenic impairment. The compromise decision of the Bluewater Council allowed for the construction of wind farms on very large stretches of farmland across the municipality and gave substantial protection to Bluewater's residents as well as to the aircraft operators. However, some of those land owners whose properties fell in the restricted areas expressed strong dissatisfaction because they would not have the opportunity to collect the lease money if the turbines are not allowed on their property. In addition, two energy companies expressed dissatisfaction that the by-law is too restrictive as the wind is strongest at the lakeshore.

Unfortunately, after the passing of this local by-law, the provincial government has introduced the Green Energy Act into the Ontario legislature. This Act will take away the municipality's authority to determine the locations of wind farms as the province will determine the setback distances for all municipalities. Meanwhile a vigorous discussion about the impact of wind turbines on human health has swept the provincial media.

Grand Bend (Tri-Municipal) Sewer Project Approved!

After years of planning, three municipalities have agreed to expand the Grand Bend sewage system to service Grand Bend, Pinery Park, Bluewater's Lakeshore Subdivisions north to St. Joseph, and Dashwood. This newsletter will publish details of the project in our summer newsletter. Meanwhile, you can read about the project on our website at www.bsra.ca/sewers_and_water.

Jan Purvis
President

Paul Mennill
Communications Director