

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY

Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed



## Spring Newsletter, May 2018

### President's Message



The Conservancy Committees have been active over the winter on environmental research and policy, land conservation, Conservancy governance and outreach to our members. Updates on issues they are working on are included in this newsletter. I hope you will become engaged in a Committee if you see items of interest that you would want to be involved with – all are welcome to join a Committee.

It is now time to **Renew Your Membership** in the Conservancy. Current members should have received an email with a link to the membership page on our website – [www.rainylakeconservancy.org](http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org) if you just want to go on and renew. We also know that many of our members who have been with the Conservancy since its early days are getting older – we need you to get your children, grandchildren and neighbors to join! The annual dues have not gone up since the Conservancy started! We need all of you to be engaged and help to support our efforts.

**The Annual General Meeting will be held this year on August 12, 2-3:30pm at La Place Rendezvous in Fort Frances.** We are working on presentations on the status and findings of Wolf and Beaver Research in Voyageurs National Park and an update from someone on the IJC Water Level Committee on how the water levels of Rainy Lake are managed and monitored. Both presentations should be very informative. I hope to see all of you there, along with your family, neighbors and friends.

*Carolyn Wallis*

### Highlights from RLC Committees

Although committee members leave the lake in the fall to spend their winters in various parts of the U.S. and Canada, they continue to work for the Conservancy over the winter months to make it a stronger organization...one that is devoted to preserving and protecting the ecological integrity and historic values of the watershed.

**The Environmental Research and Policy Committee** has been busy finding out what's going on in the watershed that could affect the ecological integrity of Rainy Lake. They have been engaged with several projects.

**IJC Rule Curve:**

The International Joint Commission (IJC) announced in March that it has signed a supplementary order for Rainy and Namakan lakes that will result in broad ecological benefits while assisting in reducing flood peaks. It includes an alternative rule curve for Rainy Lake for high flood risk years that will help to reduce flood peaks, further operational guidance for the Water Levels Committee (WLC), continued and improved engagement with Métis, Tribes and First Nations, and exploration of adaptive management.

Formally known as *the 2018 Supplementary Order of Approval in the Matter of Emergency Regulation of the Level of Rainy Lake and of other Boundary Waters*, the supplementary order includes new rule curves (2018 rule curves) for regulating the levels of Rainy and Namakan lakes and other changes to the order issued by the IJC in 2000. The final report to the IJC can be found at <http://www.participateijc.org/896/documents/666>. The IJC used the report to formulate the new supplementary order and other changes, and held four public hearings in the basin in August 2017 before finalizing the supplementary order. Public comment and the IJC's responses were summarized in a letter report to governments.

The IJC has instructed the International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Board (Board) and the WLC to take actions needed to implement the new rule curves in August of 2018. It is also working with the board to finalize documents, including a new supplementary directive to the Water Levels Committee, operations guidelines and recommendations for adaptive management, and to identify resource and data source needs to support inflow forecasting.

**Hammond Reef Gold Mining Project:**

The Hammond Reef gold mine project is located in the Thunder Bay mining district in northwestern Ontario, approximately 23 km northeast of Atikokan. This location is on the Seine River, which flows directly into Rainy Lake and is just upstream of a large portion of Voyageurs National Park. The project includes:

- an open pit gold mine that will require draining of a small lake (Mitta Lake)
- a processing facility
- a tailings management facility
- a waste rock management facility and supporting infrastructure, including a worker accommodation camp

The ore processing plant will include crushing, grinding, gold recovery, cyanide destruction and tailings thickening. As mining proceeds, pit dewatering will be needed to access the ore, which is below the water table. Ramps will be used to move personnel and equipment into and out of the mine, and to move ore and waste rock to the surface.

A revised Environmental Impact Statement has been released and comments were submitted by RLC March 15, 2018. RLC hired CSP2 (Center for Science in Public Participation), Bozeman, Montana, to help develop expert comments on the EIS. CSP2 is a nationally recognized expert providing technical advice to people impacted by mining. Concerns for RLC include water quality degradation due to mercury and sulfate loading, sediment transport to Rainy and cumulative effects with the Steep Rock Rehab project.

### **Wolf and Beaver Research:**

RLC continues to provide modest financial support to the efforts of PhD candidate Thomas Gable in an important Voyageurs National Park Study of the interaction



among wolves, beaver and moose. Moose and caribou populations have declined dramatically in areas of North America in part due to wolves. But what role do beavers, a key summer food source of wolves, play? Is it possible that beavers can reduce wolf predation on prey like moose, deer, and caribou?

Read the following for more background and details:

[http://fnd.us/wolfbeaver?ref=sh\\_b7Dvv9](http://fnd.us/wolfbeaver?ref=sh_b7Dvv9)

### **Cattail Invasive Species on Rainy Lake:**

Voyageurs National Park has undertaken a study of invasive cattails. A hybrid species of cattail is pushing out native plants, creating monocultures in park wetlands, and sometimes taking to open water. “It’s not just a navigational issue and taking over wetlands,” said park biologist Bryce Olson. “They disrupt nutrient cycles in the lakes and reduce biodiversity in general. It’s a giant monoculture that doesn’t benefit fish or wildlife.” Olson is spearheading efforts to remove the invasive plant within Voyageurs National Park. He hopes that large-scale efforts now will not only stem the tide but also re-establish native ecosystems. Read more about this important issue for Rainy Lake here: <http://queticosuperior.org/blog/voyageurs-national-park-undertakes-study-invasive-cattails>

**Committee Members:** Paul Anderson, Mary Graves, Stephen Challis, Barry Sampson, Pam Cain, Gordon Martin, Dale Callaghan

**The Land Conservation Committee** continues to celebrate the recent land donations made by Helen Heller (Olson Island –3.8 acres) and Elizabeth Hyatt (American Narrows Island, aka Curtis Island - 2.8 acres) at the end of 2017. And, we want to reach out to other property owners who might have questions about: what donating an easement is all about, what properties will the Conservancy accept, what does it cost, what is the process, what are the tax implications and incentives? The Conservancy, with the help of generous support from the Ontario Land Trust Alliance has developed a packet of materials, including a map of all current easements and donations, which we can send to you upon request. Please contact Carolyn Wallis, [wallis.carolyn@gmail.com](mailto:wallis.carolyn@gmail.com) if you would like to be sent this material.



*Olson Island*



*American Narrows Island*

**Committee Members:** Carolyn Wallis, Joe Gauss, Barry Sampson, Dave Siebert, Dale Callaghan

**Governance Committee** members refined and updated RLC's governance document for Board members. The new document is designed to provide ready access to RLC's policies, the roles played by committees, the duties of Board members, RLC's revised By-Laws, orientation information for new Board members, RLC's Mission Statement and a draft of RLC's record keeping policy. The committee will focus next on updating RLC's record keeping guidelines, which are especially important since RLC is now keeping track of Conservation Easements and Land Donations that are managed by the Conservancy.

**Committee Members:** Dale Callaghan, Dave Siebert, Phyllis Callaghan

**The Education and Outreach Committee** has kept up to date with the activities of our many partners over the winter months. In particular, Committee members have noted the progress of the Rainy River District Stewardship Council's tree identification project, which RLC has supported over the past three years. We congratulate the group for producing **The Fort Frances Tree Map: A Guided Tour**, which now makes it easy and fun to learn about Fort Frances trees.



The map is a fun visual representation of some of Fort Frances and its Town-owned native trees. The map will take participants on a leisurely four kilometre walk through the town where they can stop and observe mapped and labelled native trees.

While supplies last, budding tree enthusiasts and tree experts alike can pick up physical copies of the map for free at the Fort Frances Tourist Information Centre, the Fort Frances Public Library and

Technology Centre or the Fort Frances Museum.

The Fort Frances Tree Map is also available in an exciting interactive format online at [www.rrds.ca/trees](http://www.rrds.ca/trees). With the online map, participants can view all trees that Rainy River District Stewardship has inventoried, leave comments, and add their own trees to the map. The software also lists each tree's environmental and economic benefits.

**Committee Members:** Joe Gauss, Joanna Loney, Ruth Miller, Phyllis Callaghan, Ginny Sweatt

## Remembering Jim Martineau

Jim Martineau, a long time member of the Rainy Lake Conservancy and summer resident on Wilderness Island, died peacefully on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018, in Minneapolis. Jim was an avid reader of history and many other subjects that interested him, and it is reported that he even learned wilderness camping and fly-fishing through books. Jim and his wife Sally (Newhart) enjoyed many challenging canoe trips during their lives, but, like many of us, Jim especially cherished the time he spent with family and friends at the Newhart family cabin on Rainy Lake. Along with Sally's sister, Anne Newhart, Jim and Sally



recently preserved the natural values of their islands through a Conservation Easement, a lasting gift to the many generations that will follow them. We will miss Jim's keen intellect, his kindness and his sense of humor.

### **Membership in the Rainy Lake Conservancy**

It's that time of year to renew your membership in the Conservancy or to join again if yours has lapsed. Go to our website: [www.rainylakeconservancy.org](http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org). Click on Join/Donate and go from there. Go to the video library for instructions on how to navigate and sign up! Annual membership is \$40 for a family and \$30 for a single membership.

Your dues and donations support our mission to preserve the ecology, culture and historic features of our watershed. Donations to RLC are tax deductible for Canadians and can be made on our website. If you are a U.S. member and would like to make a tax-deductible donation, please mail a check to the Minnesota Land Trust @ 2356 University Ave. N., Suite 240 St. Paul, MN 55114 with a notation that it should be directed to the "Rainy Lake Fund". In memoriam donations are also welcome.

*The Mission of the Rainy Lake Conservancy is to work with property owners, governments, and the local communities to preserve and protect the natural beauty, historic features, ecological and recreational values for present and future generations within but not restricted to Rainy Lake.*

A pdf of this Newsletter can be viewed and downloaded at the RLC website, click on "Newsletters", Spring 2018.