



Newsletter Volume 45, No 1, Winter 2026

President's Message

Happy New Year! This year winter has arrived in full force with a variety of rain, freezing rain and snow. The temperatures have been variable, with one day a high of 5 degrees and then the next being -20 C. We have been unable to go to the cottage yet due to the conditions above. Hopefully Mother Nature will be kind and allow us a trip in soon.

With the recent rollercoaster temperatures, you can't trust ice everywhere. If you're going out, please exercise caution ([safety reminders here](#)).

We have decided that our AGM will be held at the Clar Mill Hall in Plevna on a regular basis. The date is **Saturday, July 25th at 10:00 am**. There will be more information in our Spring Newsletter as to who will be our guest speaker(s).

With this being an election year, it is important that as seasonal residents, we stay up to date with who is running in our area, what the issues are, how they impact us and most importantly, the positions taken by the candidates. We will try to provide you with as much information as we can.

FOCA's annual meeting will be held at the Bayview Golf and Country in the Toronto area on March 7th. This will also be a hybrid meeting so attendance can also be virtual. The latest alert from FOCA was sent out to you and all the information needed is available there. You can also visit the FOCA website (see below).

FOCA has created their website so that each of our members can set up their own login and password. As a member of BGLEECA it gives you full access to all the FOCA resources, as well as access to their staff if more information is needed. If you need help with invasive species, generator safety, building and renovating a cottage, woodstove safety, cottage succession to name a few, please head to the website for help.

Here is how you access this great resource:

Please use the link below to create your own Username and Password as part of BGLEECA:

<https://foca.on.ca/register/member-association/?ca=b905039dada9fa1f46519d24116349ad>

Once you have created your own login, you will be able to access all the member materials on the website, including the benefits information. You will also be able to register for FOCA events at the member price. For example, you will have free access to the [Cottage Succession webinars](#). Having personally attended these webinars, I know that they are highly informative.

FOCA also has partnerships with various companies, such as Cade Insurance and our newest partner, Kokomo Botanical Resort and Spa located in Turks and Caicos, which offer you discounts as a FOCA member.

2026 Upcoming Municipal Election

Because 2026 is an election year, it is important that as seasonal residents we stay up to date with who is running in our area, what the issues are, how they impact us and most importantly the positions taken by the candidates. We will try to provide you with as much information as we can.

The 2026 Municipal Election will be held Monday, October 26, 2026. It's important that all North Frontenac residents check to see if they are on the Voters' List.

You must now register or update your voter information through Elections Ontario by visiting www.registertovoteon.ca.

You can now use Elections Ontario's Voter Registration portal to:

- > Confirm your voter information
- > Update your name or address
- > Add yourself if you're missing
- > Remove outdated information
- > Register property-based eligibility

(important in cottage country municipalities)

Former Mayor Ron Higgins has set up the **North Frontenac 2026 Municipal Election Information Hub** on facebook to provide residents with reliable, non-partisan information leading up to the 2026 Municipal Election.

There have been no updates regarding the progress of the Hungry Lake Conservation Area. I did reach out to Doug Carr, the provincial negotiator, but have not received any news at the time of publication of this newsletter. I will continue to keep you updated.

As you know, Ken Grant passed away last year. He is sorely missed and our thoughts go out to Virginia and the rest of his family.

A special thank you to Lynda Bernst for taking on the role of Lake Steward. Lynda is continuing Ken's work, and with her scientific knowledge and passion will ensure that Big Gull Lake remains healthy and free of invasive species.

Enjoy the rest of the winter and we look forward to seeing you in the Spring. Keep taking those amazing photos of the lake and don't forget to send them to Karen Saer at ksaer@aol.com. The deadline for **calendar photo submissions is February 8**.

Donna Commerford
President
BGLEECA

Lake Steward Report

Invasive Species Management: A Look at Big Gull Lake
By: Lynda Bernst

As we settle into this winter of 2026, I suspect many are dreaming of a return to warm days out on the waters of Big Gull Lake (BGL). Whether out on a SUP or paddling a kayak or sipping a cool one in a floatie, I hope we all take a moment to appreciate our clean and healthy lake and the native shoreline that sustains its many habitats and water quality.

Because I enjoy the lake and all the plants and wildlife in and around it as much as all of you do, I thought I would deepen my lake education and network last fall with Lake Stewards and Conservation Authorities in our region. There are many shared concerns, but the loudest in the din of threats is invasive species.

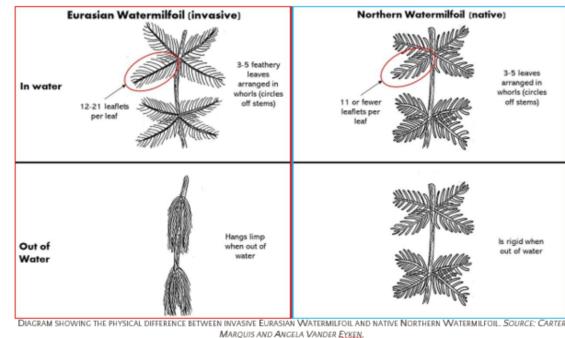
The Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA) relies heavily on volunteers to steward the wetlands and waterways of the watershed heading east from Big Gull and points further west, all the way to the Ottawa River shoreline. Volunteerism is also critical for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. All are in the business of stopping the spread of invasive species, and any plan to do so calls for data. The best data source for mapping and tracking is EDDMapS (<https://www.eddmaps.org>).

Citizen Scientists - anyone with a set of working eyeballs, a camera, a measurement device (in the app), and an internet connection - can report observations or sightings in the tracking app wherein experts verify images and information. When we observe plants, insects, birds, animals, fish, fungi & diseases and submit these observations to EDDMaps, we can effectively identify areas of concern for management, especially management of invasive species. In addition, you and your cottage guests are asked to stick to a simple plan:

- Use local wood for fire, avoid transporting wood
- Clean your gear (fishing, watercraft, hiking, bicycles, ATVs, boot bottoms) to keep them free of plant material, seeds and mud that may contain seeds
- Groom your pets
- Never release pets (*goldfish are invasive!)
- Garden responsibly by choosing native plants, avoid relocating plants from home (and vice versa) and avoid smothering natural vegetation (avoid dumping yard waste in nearby natural areas)

Last fall I observed *Eurasian water-milfoil* (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), an invasive species with a long history in the area, in our small bay on BGL. Several of the Lake Stewards on nearby lakes are leading plans for control (eradication is likely impossible) but this aquatic plant is a tough one to confine. It is an excellent propagator, spreading through fragmentation (it can regenerate from any particle of the plant) along pathways that are present on BGL

including watercraft and equipment, connected waterbodies (fragments flow in lake currents), fishing gear, and improper disposal of aquatic contents. Then Karen at the west end of BGL gave me a call to share similar observations, and concern. Eurasian water-milfoil beds mat quickly, and inhibit swimming, boating, fish habitat; and disrupt the ecosystem of native species. BGL has over 150km of shoreline, and shallow waters are prime spots for invasion.



[Difference between invasive & native watermilfoil](#)

BGLEECA cottagers are credited with taking up many initiatives to keep our lake clean and healthy - like pumping and inspecting septic systems, disposing of lead-based fishing tackle and following **clean, drain and dry** practices (these are now law in Ontario).

If you are curious, concerned or just content to hang out in a boat and make observations, I am seeking Citizen Scientist volunteers to work with me this summer. Along with the west end BGL associations, I hope to leverage EDDMapS to map any and all Eurasian water-milfoil beds on the lake.

If we find European water chestnut—Ontario's newest invasive aquatic plant, known for its sharp submerged nuts that can injure people—we can also remove this threat.

To join this working group please email me at lbernst123@icloud.com. I am happy to record and confirm volunteer community hours for OCDSB students as well. We'll get more of a plan going in spring, based on responses.

The Shore Road Allowance Question:

That 66-Foot Strip of Land: Making Sense of North Frontenac's Shore Road Allowances

By: Richard McIlveen

We all know how it goes on Big Gull Lake: the water is what brings us here, whether you're a year-rounder or a summer cottager. But sometimes, when you dig into the paperwork for your lakeside slice of paradise, you bump into a quirky piece of history: the Shore Road Allowance.

It is a strip of land, typically 66 feet wide. When surveyors originally laid out Ontario's townships, they used a "Gunter's Chain" (exactly 66 feet long) as their standard unit of measurement. They left a 66-foot gap between your property line and the water's edge.

A Relic of the Past

This is a holdover from the first land surveys in the 1800s. Back then, surveyors laid out these allowances to ensure the Crown, and therefore the public, always had a way to access the water. Despite the name, this wasn't about driving cars; it was primarily about the logging industry, moving materials, and ensuring that navigable waterways remained public. It was a lifeline for a resource-based economy.

As the decades passed and the lumber camps vanished, those allowances stayed on the books. As a result, a member of the public can still legally walk across that 66-foot strip because it is technically a "road," even if no physical road was ever built. In fact, many beloved old cottages could be sitting partially, or entirely on public municipal land.

Why Buy It Now?

Many folks on our lake have already decided to buy their allowance and officially merge it with their property deed. However, there are still several properties in the east end of Big Gull where the SRA has not yet been purchased. The issue was raised at this past summer's BGLECA AGM in Plevna, with the question: **to buy or not to buy?**

To get the official word and weigh the pros and cons, we checked in with Brooke Drechsler, the Township's Deputy Clerk/Assistant to the Planning Manager.

"People often come to us after they've discovered that a portion of the property they hope to renovate is sitting on the road allowance," says Drechsler. "We can't issue a building permit until the issue is resolved."

Where to Start

So that's the biggest issue but Drechsler says a lot of families doing Estate planning simply want 'peace of mind' and cottagers looking to sell often want clarity. It's unlikely but there can also be privacy issues. It can be a confusing topic.

Your first official step is to submit an application with the non-refundable administrative fee. But before you do that, Drechsler notes, "It's wise to touch base with a surveyor. Knowing the exact size of the allowance dictates the land price and gives you a clear picture of the costs."

To find the forms visit the North Frontenac website, click on *Township Services*, and look for *Shore Road Allowances*.

While there are administrative, surveying and legal fees involved, Drechsler notes the good news: "It should have a minimal impact on your taxes." Her advice? Do your homework and be ready to wait for the paperwork to cycle through.

A Cottage Owner's Perspective

Robert McIlveen (the author's cousin) who recently tackled this process, knows it's not a quick weekend project. Despite his family owning their property since 1965, his process only began in 2021 when questions arose about the property being adjacent to the proposed Whiteduck Provincial Park.

"I started looking at maps about land ownership on the lake, what is owned by the Crown, the Conservation Authority, or private owners," McIlveen says. "Because of the uncertainty of the provincial park issue, we decided to acquire the road allowance for peace of mind."

McIlveen discovered a lucky break during his research: "You will need a survey, which is the applicant's responsibility. But before you engage a surveyor, check if there is an existing survey online. In my case, there was, and I was able to avoid the full cost of a new one."

The Bottom Line

Drechsler agrees with McIlveen that patience is key. "It's relatively simple to get Council approval once all the ducks are in a row, but it can be a lengthy process, typically 8 to 12 months from start to finish." In the final step, once the by-law is passed, the applicant will be presented with a Transfer and Consolidation Agreement which has to be registered with the land registry office. Both Drechsler and McIlveen say a lawyer can be helpful through this part of the process.

For a standard 100-foot wide lot, the total "all-in" cost to close and buy your shore road allowance in North Frontenac typically ranges from \$5,000 to \$8,500.

McIlveen's Money-Saving Tips

- **Check for an Existing Survey:** Search the *Ontario Land Survey Records* or if you have purchased the property ask the previous owner. An old survey can sometimes be updated by a surveyor for less than the cost of a brand-new one.
- **Clear the Lines:** If you know roughly where the boundaries and existing markers are, clearing a path through light brush can save the field crew hours of labor.
- **Coordinate with Neighbors:** If your neighbor also needs a survey, hiring the same firm for both can reduce travel and research fees.

Note: In Ontario, only a licensed Ontario Land Surveyor (OLS) can legally define property boundaries. Ensure any quote you receive is from an OLS-certified firm.

Recommendation: Call the Township Office at (613) 479-2231 and ask for the Planning Manager before you hire a surveyor.

The Question of 'Garbage Island'

Big Gull Lake: Uncovering Official Names & Making New Ones!

By: Richard McIlveen

Every lake community has its own lore, and much of that lore is tied up in the names we use every day. We don't just sail past an island we navigate around **Three Sister Islands**. We don't just anchor near a large outcrop, we head for **Bear Island**. And on Big Gull Lake, we all know the infamous, **Garbage Island**. The less-than-flattering name led this author on a trail of investigation about the names of lake landmarks.

Our locally used names are a big part of our lake's history, but here's something that may surprise you: *we have a mix of official and non-official names*. While many of our commonly used names are official, others are not. As Internet maps now proliferate, it seems like a great time to ensure everyone has the opportunity to:

1. Discover the existing official names on Big Gull Lake
2. Help formalize remaining unofficial ones

3. And in some cases, name other landmarks that are worthy of an official name.

The Legacy of Local Names: A Big Gull Lake Tradition

History tells us our community is no stranger to the fight for the right name. Before 1936 our lake was simply known as **Big Gull Lake**, a name rooted in its natural features. Then in 1936, the Ontario government formally renamed it **Clarendon Lake**, but the locals refused to comply. For 26 years (from 1936–1962), while official maps said "Clarendon Lake," cottagers and resort owners on the lake persisted with "**Big Gull Lake**." This long-standing community preference paid off: **on November 30, 1962**, the name was officially changed back to Big Gull Lake!

Most major islands on Big Gull Lake, including **Long Island**, and **Green Island**, were finalized

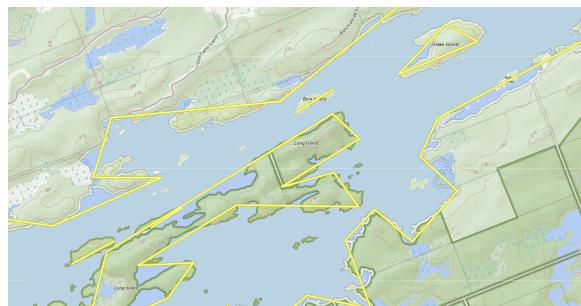
in the official records between **1962 and 1968** to align with the return to the "Big Gull Lake" moniker.

In contrast, names like **Beacon Island**, **Redlac Island** and **Pogue's Island** are newer official additions, often driven by property owners or the municipality to ensure accurate navigation and safety.

If our favourite spots are not officially recognized, they won't appear on government maps, which can cause confusion for surveyors, land titles, and most importantly, **emergency services**. A local name becoming official is a matter of both preserving our local history and ensuring safety.

Check it Out

To check existing official names like **Whelan Island**, **Sooner Island**, and **Beacon Island**, you can use the **Ontario Waterway Information Table (OWIT)**: [OWIT Map Application](#).



Familial Idiosyncrasies

As for our unofficial landmarks, there is also the matter of familial idiosyncrasies. For example, an island located near the Hindson's on Coleman Lane in Area 12 is known by those extended family members as Fire Ant Island, while in my family circle it was always Blueberry Island. The compressed timelines of a summer and overlapping vacations often mean families can't always talk to each other, let alone talk about names for local landmarks. In the age of the Internet and social media perhaps there is no better time than the present to share and build a consensus about local naming conventions.

The Problem with "Garbage Island"

The 'Garbage' name likely comes from historical dumping by campers or even loggers.

While it's a name almost everyone knows, it is **not official**. It's not necessarily one we'd want enshrined on a permanent nautical chart, or is it? Some people on the lake also refer to Bowman Island. Does anyone know the origin of that name? Long time cottagers, the Commerford's, think an appropriate name could be **Treasure Island**, referencing the oft quoted; "*One man's garbage is another man's treasure*". Not a bad idea!

The Authority: Your Path to Official Naming

In Ontario, the power to recognize and approve official geographic names, from lakes and rivers to islands and bays rests with the **Ontario Geographic Names Board (OGNB)**, which is part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

The OGNB is specifically looking for names that:

1. **Have a history of local use.**
2. **Are descriptive** (e.g., describing shape, colour, or feature).
3. **Are commemorative** (honouring a person who made a significant contribution to the area).
4. **Are historically or culturally significant**, particularly those with Indigenous origins.

They prioritize names that are *already* used by the local community. That's where you come in!

The somewhat recent official designation of **Beacon Island** (circa 2014) proves two things:

1. **The process works!**
2. **Awareness is critical!** Many official names, like **Whelan Island** (the island at the entrance to the Coxvale River-like part of the lake is tied to the original cottage owner) and **Sooner Island**, (a name tied to the Oklahoma origins of the original cottage owner in area 12) are not widely known, leading to unnecessary confusion for cottagers and emergency services alike.

Our Big Gull Lake East End Naming Initiative: 4 Key Goals

We are asking cottagers to celebrate the geography of Big Gull Lake: we want to clarify our existing unofficial place names and propose inspiring new ones for the landmarks we love. To get the ball rolling, we are looking at a few specific spots that need a "name makeover."

For instance, we are looking to find an official, respectable name for Garbage Island or Bowman Island. We are seeking the true origin of the "Bowman" name to see if it could be appropriate; if not, we'd like to explore the possibility of a positive, brand-new name entirely. We are also looking for feedback on a proposal to rename Blueberry or Fire Ant Island. Given its location near the official Three Sisters the author thought of Brother Island but then found there is already a Brothers Island in the west end of the Lake. All suggestions are welcome.

Our naming project doesn't stop there. There is a small unnamed island south of Big Green Island that serves as a designated North Frontenac camping spot, and we believe it deserves a beautiful, descriptive, and official name that reflects its role in our lake life. Similarly, the large bay area just east of the South Narrows remains nameless on official maps. It's worth noting that even well-known bays like Alf's Bay and Tamarac Bay are known to many but are not yet official, so there is plenty of room to leave a lasting mark on the lake's history.

An Invitation to Participate!

Do you have a story about a specific island, an historical account of a local settler, or a "perfect" name idea for an unnamed spot? Please send your stories, name votes, **Precise Coordinates** and historical insights to the Cottage Association Board via bleeca@icloud.com and copy the author at rmcilveen@gmail.com by April 1, 2026.

We can't wait to hear your suggestions for the places that make Big Gull Lake the special place it is. We will have a follow-up story outlining the various suggestions later this year.

Making the Name Official: The Government Process

At some point, the current plan is to compile all submissions and put forward the strongest names to the **Ontario Geographic Names Board (OGNB)**, part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF).

If you are a dedicated member who wants to dive into the process for a specific island, here are the direct steps:

1. **Request a Submission Form:** Email the OGNB Secretary to request the necessary application package at geographicnames@ontario.ca
2. **Document Everything—The Smartphone Hack!** You must provide clear evidence, including:

Precise Coordinates: To get the location, simply **drop a pin** on the spot using Google Maps or Apple Maps, or **take a photo** of the feature. Most mobile phone pictures (iPhones and Androids) automatically save the exact geographical coordinates in the photo's data!

Written Testimony: Statements from long-time residents confirming the consistent local use of a proposed name.

The naming process can take up to a year, but the reward is a consistent, official map that protects our history and ensures safety for all residents of Big Gull Lake's East End. Let's build consensus and make our local landmarks official!

Interim Financial Report – April 1 to December 31, 2025

	General Fund	Environment Fund	Total Funds	
Beginning Balance	20,893	12,866	33,759	
Total Revenues	4,050	-	4,050	Total Net
Total Expenses	8,186	-	8,186	Gain
Current Balance	16,758	12,866	29,623	(4,135)

General Fund Income Summary

Dues	1,565
Bank Interest	420
Calendar Ads	1,740
Misc	-
Rd. Fees paid in error	325
Total	4,050

Calendar Report for Last Printing (2025)

Total Ad Revenue	3,940
Total Printing Costs	4,286
Total Cost to Members	(346)

General Fund Expenses Summary

Activities	-
Bank Fees	54
FOCA	893
Insurance	1,365
Shoal Light Repair	50
Printing, Website, Zoom, Signs	598
Picnic & AGM	440
Directors' Expenses	60
FLA Membership	115
Donations	-
Calendar Printing and Mailing	4,286
Return Rd. Fees Paid in Error	325
Total	8,186