

Farlain Lake: From Dry to Drowning

by DOUG KIRK, WITH SUPPORT FROM BILL SWEENIE AND ELIZABETH DI CHIARA, FARLAIN LAKE



Photo by Peter Andrews



Photo by Peter Andrews

Over the past six years, the Tiny Township/Georgian Bay region of Ontario has experienced a dramatic cyclical shift in water levels from almost record lows to record highs. Farlain Lake, Tiny's largest inland lake, has experienced similar climatic conditions over the same period. A 3-foot rise in the lake level has taken it to its highest level in over 100 years. Most of our beach has disappeared and the 100- to 150-year-old trees surrounding the lake are dying due to waterlogged root systems. Clearly, the lake levels exceed anything experienced over the life of these trees.

Farlain Lake is located northwest of Penetang Harbour and southeast of Awenda Provincial Park. The owners of the approximately 200 lake front properties are worried on many fronts, including the death of old growth trees and shoreline vegetation, beach erosion, and the destruction of outbuildings and perhaps even cottages in low lying areas. Water has permeated structures and destroyed retaining walls built on or close to the original beach. Septic tanks, leaching beds and wells are also being compromised. Any increase in water levels will only exacerbate this situation, and could lead to a long-term decline in property value.

Unlike many other cottage country lakes, Farlain is a kettle lake, likely formed in the last post-glacial period. Kettle lakes are water-filled depressions left behind after partially buried ice blocks melt. These lakes are typically fed by groundwater. Farlain may have originally had an overland outflow to Second Lake and Georgian Bay, but in present times the lake levels have been maintained by evaporation, and possibly below-ground seepage primarily into Awenda Park.

The Farlain Lake Community Association is working with the township and the Severn Sound Environmental Association (SSEA) on both short and long-term solutions.

The association believes a long-term plan must focus on reducing the current amount of water and managing the levels going forward. We cannot rely on the hope that levels are cyclical. One option being considered involves constructing a gravity fed, self-regulating culvert drain at the north end of the lake. Excess water, after flowing through a short excavated channel, would flow into a kilometre-long natural watercourse into Awenda's Second Lake and perhaps ultimately into Georgian Bay. Controlled

flow rates would prevent the flooding of Second Lake.

At this point the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is unwilling to provide authorization out of concern for the possible environmental impact on the park's existing ecosystem. A hydrogeology study has been proposed by the township, the SSEA and the Farlain Lake Community Association to help understand what's feasible. Any progress will require the continued support of the Council and staff at Tiny Township and the SSEA, and take both time and money.

In the short term, the FLCA is working with the township on an emergency water removal plan in the event that 2020 spring water levels exceed those of spring 2019. This may include obtaining a permit in advance that would allow water to be pumped from the lake.

The good news is that the hot summer's evaporation and possible below-ground seepage have dropped the lake levels to last fall's high point, and the FLCA will continue working diligently on both short- and long-term strategies to alleviate Farlain Lake's high water-level problems.

UPDATE on the Fight to Protect the World's Purest Water

by JUDITH GRANT, ADDISON BEACH



Photo by Judith Grant

In January 2018, CRH Canada Group Inc., owner of the Teedon Pit in Concession 1, sought a 10-year renewal of its Permit to Take Water from the provincial government. The permit allows the company to draw 1.6 million litres of water per day from a well, plus 5.2 million litres per day from a washing pond for up to 210 days a year. This January, the company also sought permission from the government to extend its pit north and it applied for a renewal of its license to excavate up to 600,000 tonnes of aggregate per year.

Right now, all aspects of the fight to protect the headwaters of the Alliston Aquifer complex, scientifically assessed to be possibly the cleanest water in the world, are inching forward very slowly.

To date, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MOECP) has made no decision regarding CRH Canada Group's application for a 10-year renewal of its Permit to Take Water. The ministry was deluged with comments. Meantime, pure water continues to be used for washing gravel.

CRH's application to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) for permission to expand the Teedon Pit northward into French's Hill is stalled, pending the hearing before the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT). There have been two Prehearing Telephone Conferences since the one last December where individuals and groups indicated their interest in becoming parties (able to hire a lawyer, cross examine witnesses, present issues), participants (able to submit a statement for consideration by the Tribunal), or observers (able to attend the hearing but not take part). These teleconferences involved only the three parties (CRH, the Township of Tiny, and FoTTSA), as will the fourth telephone conference scheduled for November 21, 2019.

The April and July teleconferences have been necessary because CRH re-applied for a license to take gravel under the *Aggregate Resources Act* (ARA) in January in the hope that its two applications could be considered at the same hearing. The notice required under the ARA was

sent to interested agencies and members of the public, a number of whom raised concerns and objections before the end of the 45-day comment period in March. In July, CRH's representative revealed that the township had requested more information on traffic and that MNRF had asked for an additional survey on species and minor revisions to the site plan. CRH had undertaken to supply both kinds of information and was working to address other comments received. The fourth teleconference on November 21 is to deal with progress, and to schedule an in-person Prehearing Conference in the winter.

Meantime, the Friends of the Waverley Uplands, Aware Simcoe, women from the Beausoleil First Nation, and FoTTSA are mounting public awareness campaigns — preparing for a sign campaign, distributing petitions to be signed and presented by MPPs at the Ontario Legislature, supplying information to those who stop at the water kiosk on County Road 27 just north of Elmvalle to fill their bottles with what may well be the world's purest water. They are marching in the Elmvalle Fall Fair's parade and distributing information during the fair. The Beausoleil

women have been mounting a peaceful protest at midday on Fridays at the gates to the Teedon Pit on Darby Road, most recently on Friday, September 27 when they also participated in a water ceremony and when members of the Teedon Pit Community Liaison Committee were given a tour of the pit.

The three parties are preparing for the hearing (in 2020 or 2021) — putting together their cases, defining issues, hiring witnesses, acquiring the necessary documents, and, in the instance of FoTTSA, raising the very large amount of money needed to finance its efforts to protect the cleanest water in the world. This is where you can help. Please make a donation and note that it is for the Teedon Pit fight. Unless requested otherwise, all donors will be recognized on FoTTSA's website.

For an account of events until May of this year, see "FoTTSA Special Report: The Site 41 Aquifer Is at Risk Again" in the Spring/Summer 2019 Tiny Cottager www.tinycottager.org

Save our Water
Stop the Pit
www.tinycottager.org
Friends of the Waverley Uplands



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