

# A Casebook

The harms caused by

# Low Water Levels in Georgian Bay

# 2012-2013

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(Forward additions or corrections to Gord McKay at [gmckay@midland.ca](mailto:gmckay@midland.ca) before February 28, 2013)

## **Preface**

The impact of declining water levels on the Great Lakes has been studied by many groups over the past decade. These studies have assembled significant amounts of scientific fact, proposed a number of underlying causes and considered possible solutions. This assessment process continues and it is hoped will eventually develop a course of action to better manage the water in the Great Lakes.

Notwithstanding, businesses, municipalities and residents around Georgian Bay are today facing clear and significant harm from the steadily decreasing water levels. Even with resolution of the broader issue sometime in the future, the impact upon the businesses and people of Georgian Bay constitutes a slow moving disaster that is affecting their way of life.

The Casebook puts a face on the harm as seen in almost every community around the Bay. While these reports are not a complete picture, they provide evidence of the impact and insight into solutions that will help alleviate the problems facing communities. These reports are intended to shape public debate and assist the mayors for Georgian Bay in successfully obtaining assistance in the near term from both Federal and Provincial levels of government.

At a minimum, the specific impacts presented in the following pages are:

**Marinas Affected - 19**  
**Government Facilities Affected - 15**  
**Private Businesses Affected - 7**  
**Monetary Impact - \$2,510,000**

In addition to the specific harms, many communities have also identified:

- Reduction in shoreline property values with consequential reduction of tax base
- Private property owners having to extend water lines and/or deepen wells
- Legal costs associated with negotiating changing shoreline ownership rights
- Secondary impact upon the tourism economy around the Bay

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TBA

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TBA

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**North Zone including Manitoulin**

TBA

**East Zone**

TBA

## **South Zone**

### Beausoleil First Nation

1. Low water is affecting our ability of get on and off the islands. We need to dredge. We need to rebuild the docks for low water. Some seniors cannot leave the island due to the difficulty in boarding a boat.
2. The Beausoleil First Nation (BFN) vehicular ferry ran aground. The ferry is a critical transportation link operating 7 days a week. It must be available 24/7 for emergencies. It is now being fixed at a cost of \$400,000
3. The BFN have had to rent a replacement barge at a cost of \$300,000. It is difficult to get some companies to provide the needed services because of the awkward financial arrangements with Aboriginal Affairs Canada
4. It is estimated to cost \$600,000 to dredge the harbour and fix the ferry dock on Beausoleil Island
5. Have had to increase the chemical treatment of water because it is becoming more turbid

Because of the special relationship between First Nation peoples and the waters of the Great Lakes, the following comments are noteworthy.

1. Arrangements with Great Lake waters must involve the First Nations. The Great Lakes are a vital part of the life of BFN. The Anishinabe First Nation must be consulted about any water taking from the Great Lakes
2. Water must be treated with greater respect and conservation. Shoreline communities should seek the "Blue Water" status
3. Protecting our water is not just about dollars. There are greater issues.
4. Water taking and waste water inflows around the Bay should be mapped and we should be able to include that in our "casebook"
5. Beckwith and Hope Islands are being negatively affected by many visitors by boat who are not welcome and do not respect the land and the BFN rights
6. The economic health of the Huronia depends in part on the BFN with an annual budget of \$30 million, much of it spent in neighbouring communities.

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 0**

**Government Facilities Affected - 2**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$1,300,000**

## **South Zone**

### Town of Collingwood

1. The Collingwood Yacht Club is having difficulty moving its boats to/from moorings. The entire club is to be relocated at a cost of \$XXX. (Reference Letter – Collingwood 1 - TBP)
2. Shops in the downtown are concerned about decreasing business from visitors (Reference Letter – Collingwood 2 - BIA TBP)
3. Issues have been raised about reducing waterfront property tax assessments
4. A number of shoreline neighbourhoods with local marinas are concerned about continuing water access (Reference Letter – Collingwood 3 – TBP)
5. A commercial fishing operation, Whites Fisheries, is concerned about access to the dock area (Reference Letter – Collingwood 4 – TBP)
6. Cranberry Resort Marina is concerned about the decline in water levels (Reference Letter – Collingwood 5 – TBP)
7. A summer event that has been running for 3 years, Wakestock, is a major tourism draw. It has had to be relocated due to low water levels.

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 3**

**Government Facilities Affected - 0**

**Private Businesses Affected - 1**

**Monetary Impact - \$0**

## South Zone

### Town of Midland

1. Town of Midland, Parks and Recreation – **(Refer Letter – Midland 1)**
  - Recreational boating will be adversely affected through the access to Georgian Bay from the Trent Severn system, etc
  - If boaters are afraid of low water levels, the local Marinas (and our own Harbour) will see a loss of business
  - Although I think the depth for larger ships (ie. Our Tall Ships event) at the Harbour remains okay, this may not be the case if levels decrease much more
  - Low water levels will adversely affect the cottagers on the islands in our area which could decrease property values, fewer trips to the cottage, etc.
  - The dredging at the boat launch is expected to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000.
2. Town of Midland, Public Works
  - We will likely have to make some changes to the floating docks systems due to the low water levels affecting access from the piers (ie stairs, the system used to anchor the floating docks, etc) , likely around \$5000. Hopefully we don't have to dredge at the harbour
3. Parkbridge Marinas – **(Refer Letter – Midland 2)**
  - General concern about impact to recreational boating in Georgian Bay. A lot of concern in the boating community.
  - The exit channel from the Severn Waterway into Georgian Bay (at Hwy 400 underpass) now has only 5 feet of draft. Boats will not be able to exit, closing the waterway.
  - Parkbridge Marinas will require to dredge this year or next :
    - o Wye Heritage
    - o Bayport
    - o Beacon BayTypical price \$200,000 per marina
4. ADM Milling – (Refer Letter – Midland 3 – TBP)
  - The grain ship Frontenac ran aground this fall. Smaller loads will affect business.
5. Georgian Bay Tours (Miss Midland) – (Refer Letter – Midland 4 – TBP)
  - Cannot get the Serendipity Princess out of Georgian Bay into Barrie. Limited access to Severn River system
  - Miss Midland traffic down to 30,000 versus normal run rate of 40,000. Suspect that part of this comes from concern of lack of water.
6. Midland Bay Sailing Club – (Refer Letter – Midland 5 - TBP)
  - Midland Bay Sailing Club is very concerned about the water levels the bay. The sailing club has dredged the club harbour three times since 2000. The costs include \$160,000 in 2000, \$185,000 in 2008, and \$200,000 now in 2013. Our concern is that these costs continue to put pressure on the club resources and the current water levels put the future viability of club in question.

**Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 3**

**Government Facilities Affected - 1**

**Private Businesses Affected - 1**

**Monetary Impact - \$500,000**

## **South Zone**

### Town of Penetanguishene

1. Town has three large marinas and two smaller one. They have to dredge annually.
2. Declining waters will have a major loss of tourism impact
3. Discovery Harbour HHP is a major tourism draw. The historical ships are now having trouble getting into and out of the harbour. Access to the dockside Kings Wharf theatre has been reduced.
4. Municipal beaches are less desirable
5. Private waterfront properties have not been significantly affected
6. A possible problem exist with the municipal outflow pipe due to low water

#### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 5**

**Government Facilities Affected - 2**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$0**

## South Zone

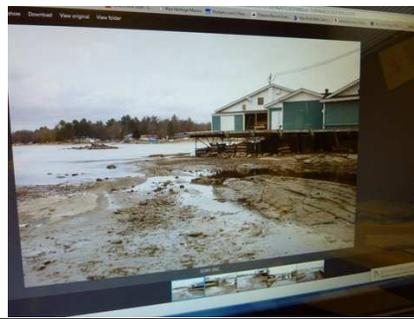
### Township of Severn

1. Although Severn has some 120 km of shoreline there are not many impacts
2. Matchedash Bay is low which is affecting the value of property and hence the taxes payable on shoreline property
3. Some individual property owners have done their own dredging

Picnic Island - 2011



Picnic Island - 2012



### Impacts Identified

**Marinas Affected - 0**

**Government Facilities Affected - 0**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$0**

## **South Zone**

### Township of Tay

1. Marinas in Waubaushene, Victoria Harbour and along the shore are affected. Some marina operators have expressed a concern about the future viability of their businesses.
  - a. Marshes Marina - \$100,000 required for dredging
  - b. Twin Bridges Marina - \$50,000 spent on dredging five years ago. Has to be done again
2. Shoreline residents are not able to land their boats on their docks. One resident in Robins Bay has a 100 foot dock and recently put on a 75 foot extension. The water is now 65 feet beyond the dock.
3. The Townships water supply is affected.
  - a. Because of increased turbidity, use of chemicals to treat the water has recently increased by 25%
  - b. Have a general concern about the water intake and outfall. If significant changes were required it would have a devastating financial impact on the community.
4. Dropping water levels will affect the value of waterfront cottages
5. There will be a general impact on area tourism
6. There will be a general impact on the well being of area businesses

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 2**

**Government Facilities Affected - 2**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$150,000**

## **South Zone**

### Township of Tiny

1. Tiny has limited shoreline businesses
2. The conflict over of riparian rights is being exacerbated which has lead to legal action. Tiny has spent about \$100,000 contesting these matters
3. Tourism is limited but it has had a noticeable effect on the five parks in Tiny. Beaches in particular are affected.
4. The municipality has had the emerging shoreline assessed for management purposes at a cost of \$120,000

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 0**

**Government Facilities Affected - 1**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$220,000**

## **West Zone**

### Town of Blue Mountain

1. Water intake for the municipality is affected by high turbidity and contamination. Additional purification is required. May have to relocate the intake at a cost of \$6-10 million
2. Expect a general impact upon area tourism – no cost estimate
3. Beaches closed due to e-coli – no cost estimate
4. Invasive species are destroying area beaches – expect related to low water levels
5. The immediate impact for 2013 if nothing is done will affect 43 of our current users amounting to more than \$76,000 in revenue at our 2012 rates. That is 25% of our mooring revenue.
6. It will also affect our Land Storage, more than \$13,500 in revenue. That is 47% of our Land Storage revenue at our 2012 rate.
7. There are also implied impacts to fuel sales, transient moorings, merchandise sales, etc. that I cannot put an accurate number to
8. The dredging is estimated to cost \$265,000 for us to be able to continue our typical operations.

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 0**

**Government Facilities Affected - 2**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$344,000**

## **West Zone**

### Township of Georgian Bluffs

1. Have three marinas in the township. Will obtain comment from them
2. Have hundreds of private water lines into the Bay. They may be cut off from water without extending the lines
3. Water intake and outflow are fine for now. Concern for the future
4. Have had difficulty arranging dredging permits because of the divergence between the provincial government and the First Nations
5. (Not sure if BIA has identified this issue)
6. (Not sure if cottage association(s) have identified this issue)

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 3**

**Government Facilities Affected - 0**

**Private Businesses Affected - 0**

**Monetary Impact - \$0**

## **West Zone**

### Municipality of Meaford

1. Have seen 5 recent applications for shoreline wells. Some are on-hold because of provincial regulations
2. Need emergency dredging to get boats into the harbour. Cost will be \$10-40,000. The declining water levels have negated the earlier dredging done by the municipality
3. Richardson Boats Limited employs 12 people in the selling, provisioning and repair of boats. They are concerned about the future of their business. (Ref: Letter Jan 29, 2013)
4. Municipal marinas are affected
5. Water intake and outflow are fine for now. Concern for the future
6. Federal Coast Guard station is having difficulty getting on/off their dock at certain times
7. Bay River Restaurant is concerned that their patrons will not be able to arrive by boat
8. (Not sure if BIA has identified this issue)
9. (Not sure if cottage association(s) have identified this issue)

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 1**

**Government Facilities Affected - 2**

**Private Businesses Affected - 2**

**Monetary Impact - \$25,000**

## **West Zone**

### City of Owen Sound

1. Harbour dredging is urgently needed to protect the harbour (which is owned by Transport Canada):
  - a. Existing water intake and outfall (Low lake levels could have an impact on cost of municipal water supply treatment. Low lake levels are being factored in to the new water treatment system project)
  - b. Two public boat launches
  - c. Major tourism event – Salmon Spectacular
2. Private marina and sailing clubs will be affected
3. Cargill Salt, a shoreline industry, has to reduce ship loadings.
4. P&H Elevators, a shoreline industry, has had to reduce ship loadings
5. Miller Paving, a shoreline aggregate operator, is concerned about low water levels
6. Ontario Northland, operator of the Chi Cheemaun ferry, is concerned about having enough water to dock the ferry in Owen Sound
7. (BIA to be asked if this is an issue)

### **Impacts Identified**

**Marinas Affected - 2**

**Government Facilities Affected - 3**

**Private Businesses Affected - 3**

**Monetary Impact - \$0**