

Planning Justification Report for the Fox Lake Plan

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared for the Town of Huntsville to provide historical and current background information about Fox Lake. It describes the rapid pace of development in recent years and sets out in the attached Annex the policy positions proposed by the Fox Lake Association on behalf of its members. It therefore highlights the unique characteristics of Fox Lake, describes the major land use policy issues facing the Fox Lake community and the Town of Huntsville in the coming years and sets out the land use policy provisions that the residents of Fox Lake would like to have incorporated into the Town of Huntsville's Official Plan. It is submitted to the Town of Huntsville by the Fox Lake Association on behalf of the residents of the lake community as input into the Town's current Official Plan review process. The report is based on a reading of the Provincial Policy Statement, the District of Muskoka's Draft new Official Plan, the Town of Huntsville's existing Official Plan and the background papers prepared as part of the OP review process as well as consultation with officials from the Town and with residents of the Fox Lake community.

2. Vision Statement

The Fox Lake Plan of 2009 (*page 13*) observes that "the community and its stakeholders want the area to reflect the rural and waterfront characteristics for which people have come to the area. They are concerned about the natural environment and want the lake, the shoreline and the surrounding landscape to remain a relatively natural and healthy environment not just for wildlife and fish, but also for the use and enjoyment of the Fox Lake community. . . . A life style is envisioned . . . that includes traditional cottage or water-related activities, accommodates a variety of recreation and life style interests and is concerned about safety, [and] the intrusion of urban features such as traffic, excessive clearing, noise and light pollution." This vision is consistent with, and contributes to, the draft revised vision statement for the Town of Huntsville provided in the Preliminary Policy Directions Report.

3. The Planning Context

3.1 Background

Fox Lake is part of the western arm of the North Muskoka River Watershed which originates at Axe Lake and Round Lake. Thus, the quality of the water and recreational life of residents are intimately linked to the health of the watershed and its vast wetlands, near and far, as well as all development activity in the neighbourhood.

The Lake has historically been a key connector for the economic life of the region. Aboriginal peoples used Fox Lake and its two portages to travel through the region for hunting, fishing and trading purposes. The area was settled by farmers and used for logging from the late 1800's until the 1930's when the first cottagers appeared, many of them descendants of early homesteaders. Further waves of development, including the establishment of two summer camps, have resulted in the lake being fully developed, with almost no undeveloped shore lots remaining.

The Fox Lake Association (founded in 1946 as the Fox Lake Cottagers' Association) is a forum for discussing matters of mutual interest to lake community members, monitors and comments on development issues, plays a lake stewardship role and organizes events to foster community spirit and cooperation. From 2002 to 2009 the association facilitated a consultative process to develop the first Lake Plan for Fox Lake. It is this lake plan and the planning provisions related to this plan that the FLA would like incorporated into the Town of Huntsville's Official Plan.

Residents today place a high value on the Lake's water quality, wildlife and natural assets: the natural shoreline, the pristine wetlands associated with the Buck River, the Fox Tail and the northwest corner of the Lake, the forested hills, the rock pile in the north bay, the three islands and the views of Mount Ararat to the south. There is a desire to maintain the peaceful aesthetic of the area, manage boat traffic to improve water safety and limit shoreline erosion, restore a safe portage around the Hoodstown Rapids leading to Lake Vernon and maintain the portage on the Buck River to Buck Lake.

3.2 Planning Principles

The Planning Principles established by the Province, the District of Muskoka and the Town of Huntsville attempt to manage the inevitable tensions between development, the protection of the environment and the Muskoka way of life. The Lake Plan for Fox Lake is informed by these principles.

- o Section V.1.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement (2014) states that "efficient land use and development patterns support sustainability by promoting strong, livable, healthy and resilient communities, protecting the environment and public health and safety, and facilitating economic growth".
- o The draft District of Muskoka Official Plan (October 5, 2017 version) Policy Direction B states that the Muskoka Official Plan "shall establish as a first principle that development activity be undertaken in a manner that conserves and enhances the features, functions and interconnections of the natural environment that sustains what is Muskoka for future generations".

- o In the General Policies for Waterfront Areas in the draft District of Muskoka Official Plan, Section 14.4.1 (g) states that “Individual lake plans and lake stewardship programs will be encouraged as a method to identify important values, features and individual lake character. In addition, these programs can be used to monitor water quality, social carrying capacity and general lake management and may be incorporated into the Area Municipal Official Plans”.
- o Section 2.1.1 of the Town of Huntsville’s Official Plan establishes “the overall direction for managing growth and development in Huntsville while providing a strong thrust toward protection, conservation and preservation of significant features of the natural environment.”
- o In addition, the Muskoka Watershed Council encourages actions that seek to sustain and enhance the air, water and terrestrial ecosystems of the watersheds of Muskoka for the environmental, health, economic, spiritual and intrinsic values they provide.

4. Key Characteristics of Fox Lake

4.1 Size and Shape

Fox Lake is a small lake with an area of 140 hectares (350 acres), approximately 10.7 kilometres of shoreline and a mean depth of 5.7 metres. Part of the western arm of the North Muskoka River Watershed, Fox Lake’s source water comes primarily from the Buck River to the north fed by Buck, Fawn, Round and Axe Lakes and controlled by the Buck River (Campbell) Dam. Fox Lake drains south through the Fox Tail, controlled by the Fox Lake (Hoodstown) Dam, to Lake Vernon and on to Huntsville. The source water, rich in organic compounds, gives Fox Lake its dark “tea-like” appearance.

The Lake has an unusual hourglass shape with a large northern basin with deeper water, a larger southern basin and an outlet channel known as the Foxtail, which is riverine and quite shallow. There are three small islands, all of which are Crown land, two in the south and one in the north end of the lake. There are several channels (the Buck River, the Fox Tail and the passage between the south west island and the shore) which qualify as “narrow waterbodies,” where the distance from shoreline to shoreline is less than 150 metres or 500 feet.

4.2 Water Quality

Water quality in Fox Lake is monitored by a volunteer Lake Steward and other residents. They report regularly on the FLA website and at the FLA’s Annual Meeting. The quality of the lake water is relatively good. Phosphorus levels are close to the established background level; dissolved oxygen is in the range required to support aquatic life; secchi readings of water clarity are regarded as normal for a lake with dissolved organic compounds; water temperatures are not cold enough to support cold water fish species like lake or brook

trout; and the water is acidic. There is a high level of mercury in Fox Lake and scientists have been unable to explain its origin. The amount of fish from Fox Lake recommended for human consumption is severely limited due to the high mercury concentrations found in the fish. In recent years there has been an increasing number of algae blooms and algae is constantly visible near the shoreline in summer months. Annual benthic monitoring was introduced in 2012 and so far indicators are close to the District of Muskoka average.

4.3 Water Levels

Almost all the water inflow to Fox Lake comes through the Campbell Dam on the Buck River and the outflow is through the Hoodstown Dam on the Fox Tail. Until the mid-1980s the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry actively managed the dams to stabilize water levels in Fox Lake. When the dams were rebuilt in 1985, MNR&F established a target water level for Fox Lake that was higher than the historical averages according to long-term residents. The lake is subjected to wide variations in water levels in the spring and fall and whenever there is a heavy rainfall. The high water levels and wide fluctuations have had consequences for wildlife (especially for nesting loons), the size of the beaches, and shoreline erosion.

4.4 Water Species

In the 1960s the predominant fish species in Fox Lake were large numbers of yellow perch, catfish and sunfish and some small-mouth bass. Early in the 1980s northern pike were accidentally released into the Buck/Fox system and their population exploded at the expense of smallmouth bass and most of the other species of prey fish, as well as leopard frogs, bull frogs and breeding ducks and loons. Shortly after the pike, walleye were also introduced and later crappie. Ducks and loons became less successful in rearing their young and local fishermen report that no perch or catfish are to be caught today. The pike have since largely died off (starvation, old age), but the fishery has not recovered and the loons no longer nest on the lake. Leopard frogs have made a comeback, but bull frogs are still rare. These changes highlight the interdependence of the lakes within the watershed system and the impact of the introduction of non-native species.

5 Development of Fox Lake

5.1 History of Development

Although there is no current evidence of permanent aboriginal settlements around Fox Lake, the area was used for centuries by First Nations as part of their travel, hunting and trading networks. The area was opened for settlement in 1869 following the passage of the Free Grant Land Act and most of the land around Fox Lake was homesteaded. Early settlers were served by the village of Hoodstown but the village declined when the railway was located through Huntsville. With the land not very suitable for farming, many of the

homesteads were abandoned. The area around the lake was logged extensively in the early 1900's and the lake and rivers used for log driving.

The development of cottages and permanent residences on the lake shows three waves of settlement. Development along the east shore started in the 1930s when descendants of homesteaders built small cabins on 50 and 100 foot cottage lots. The west side was opened up by several families who worked in the Huntsville area in the 1950s and many cottages were built on the west side in the 1960s and '70s. Northern development began in the 1990s when an abandoned farm became the subject of a subdivision proposal. The delay in development in the north was likely caused by its extra distance from town (road access is through Ilfracombe) and the steep rock and swampy terrain. Development of lots on the Fox Tail also happened during this time. The shoreline of the Buck River is yet to be developed with the exception of one property near the dam.

There are two long-established summer camps on the lake: Camp Winnebago and Camp Romuva. Camp Winnebago (formerly Camp Ogama established in 1947), in the south end, operates during the summer season with an extensive outdoor and watersport program that includes waterskiing, wakeboarding, sailing and other activities. Four ski boats and a pontoon boat operate daily for 4 to 6 hours during the camp season. Camp Romuva, started in the 1960s in the northwest bay, is a scout camp in August and rents to like-minded groups in July (e.g. Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters). Boating from this camp includes fishing boats, sail boats, canoes and kayaks. Both camps have expanded over the years adding more buildings and increasing the number of campers in residence at any time. Camp Winnebago has over 400 campers plus staff on site at peak periods in July and August.

The recent development trend in the area is suburbanization as new dwellings are built along Ravenscliffe Road and on Fox Lake back lots and growing numbers of small cottages are being replaced by larger four-season dwellings along the Fox Lake shoreline. There are now 15 year-round residents on West Fox Lake Road, ten on East Fox Lake Road and four off North Fox Lake Road.

In 2009, MPAC data showed there were 29 vacant lots on Fox Lake. In 2014, The FLA reviewed MPAC records and identified 11 vacant building lots and four more small lots that might qualify for a building permit under Section 3.3 of the zoning by-law depending on the specific characteristics of the lot and the proposed development. Given the intensity of development on small lots during the early years of cottage construction on the lake, and the increasing number of small dwellings being replaced by larger homes, the FLA believes that the lake has already been developed to near capacity and would like to see building lot size minimum requirements increased along the lakeshore, and particularly along the river shores, for any new development.

5.2 The Changing Shoreline

In the 1960s, there was a dense band of pickerelweed along all of the shoreline except where there was a rocky bottom. Beyond the pickerelweed there was a thick covering of lily pads with white water lilies mixed with large quantities of spatterdock. Today the water lilies and pickerel weed appear only in scattered places while spatterdock has almost disappeared from the lake, although it is still present in the Buck River. The loss of aquatic vegetation is attributed to a) higher summer water levels; b) a substantial increase in wave action due to power boats; c) changes in nutrient load and competing vegetation such as algae; d) clearing of vegetation by residents; and e) more recently, consumption by deer and geese.

In general, residents at Fox Lake have changed their behaviour with respect to clearing vegetation. In the 1950s and 1960s, it was common practice to remove shrubs and grasses from the beach, to cut the aquatic plants in the near shore and to rake the beach to make a place for swimming. Today, vegetation is prevalent along most of the shoreline and residents are more likely to use a floating dock to reach open water for swimming and boating. As a result, the water's edge in 2013 was 97% natural, according to the Muskoka Watershed Council.¹

However, the backshore trends (20 to 30 metres back from the water's edge) are less encouraging. The Watershed Council reported that the backshore was 72% natural in 2013, down from 75% in 2003. The Council has set 75% as the threshold marker for the health of a lake. This decline is attributable to the removal of trees and undergrowth between the dwelling and the lake on many properties. These losses have been replaced by a significant increase in unbuffered lawns and thinned forest. In addition, an unauthorized site alteration near the mouth of the Buck River eliminated a large area of wetland. Overall, there has been a 12% loss in wetland and a 27% increase in unbuffered lawn since 2003.²

This is a warning signal with respect to the future health of the Lake. The FLA has taken education measures to encourage naturalized shoreline and backlot rehabilitation efforts. The Association has been pleased to note efforts to restore trees and shrubs on several properties. However, such efforts must be backed up by the Town's enforcement of site plans, especially clearing of shoreline setbacks and unauthorized landfill on remaining wetlands.

1 Muskoka Watershed Council, Fox Lake Land Use Survey, June 2003 and 2013.

2 Muskoka Watershed Council, Fox Lake Land Use Survey, June 2003 and 2013.

Between 2003 and 2013, 32 new docks were built on Fox Lake - a 65% increase - and more have been added since. The majority of these docks are floating or pole designs which have less impact on flora and fauna than crib designs. The increase in the number of docks is a clear sign of increasing boat ownership, especially power boats used for skiing, tubing and wakeboarding, and personal watercraft (see Section 7.3). As the number of power boats has increased, the impact of wave action on the shoreline has increased.

The higher average water levels in Fox Lake since the MNR established its current target in the mid-1980s are higher than historical levels. Residents believe that higher water levels, combined with boat wakes, have contributed to shoreline erosion. The vulnerability of the Fox Lake shoreline must therefore be a predominant consideration in land use policy and development decisions in future.

5.3 Public Access and Trails

Fox Lake has two portage routes of historical and cultural significance, the southern portage around the Hoodstown Rapids and Fox Lake Dam and the northern portage around the Buck River rapids and Campbell Dam. Traditionally used by First Nations and then by settlers, these portages have been used in recent decades by residents and by youth camps including the two camps on Fox Lake, Camp Tawingo and Camp Wabanaki from Lake Vernon, Camp Mini-Yo-We from Mary Lake and others. Access to the Hoodstown portage has been blocked since 1995 when the Hoodstown Shores subdivision absorbed the traditional route along the rapids. The few remaining canoe day trippers and campers currently use a busy stretch of Muskoka Road 45 to make the trek from lake to lake. The portages were valued by the camps because they gave intermediate campers practice in handling portages before they went off on more extensive trips further north. The Buck River portage is still used by campers and local canoeists. The Town's Official Plan – Section 8.10.4: states that “currently used portages will be preserved or new trails made to provide another suitable route.” The FLA would like to see a safe portage route restored between Lake Vernon and Fox Lake in order to prevent accidents on the road and encourage more canoe trip activity.

The lake has three small islands, all of which are Crown land so accessible to the public. The island in the north is so tiny that people do not use it. The island in the south west is rarely used. The island in the south east bay is very heavily used in the summer for camping, swimming and picnics.

The lake has two road allowances with shoreline access, one on the east side and one on the west. Neither has been developed, there are no trails on the land and they are not used by the public to access the lake.

5.4 Local Economic Development

Fox Lake contributes to the local economy in several ways. The community generates jobs through its two camps and through the steady pace of investment in cottage upgrades. The two youth camps provide employment and source goods and services from local businesses. While there are few vacant shoreline lots of sufficient size for construction, backlots are now being developed on both East Fox Lake Road and West Fox Lake Road and shoreline property owners are renovating or replacing old cottages to upgrade their accommodation and make year-round use possible. This brings benefits to the Town through development fees and increased tax revenue. The construction activity also brings business to local contractors and suppliers. Consumer spending is contributing to the local economy as residents spend more time in Muskoka and do more of the shopping locally. There is very limited potential for increased commercial activity around the lake and the FLA does not support any additional commercial development.

6. The Fox Lake Association

The Fox Lake Association (FLA) is incorporated as a non-profit organization. About half of the 110 landowners in the area are paid up members of the association (the annual membership fee is \$40). Founded in 1946 as the Fox Lake Cottagers' Association, the association changed its name to the Fox Lake Association in 2000 to better reflect the increasing number of year-round residents and in 2006 became incorporated. The purpose of the association is threefold: to be a forum for discussion among community members with regard to matters of mutual interest; to be a vehicle for property owners to present a common position before government bodies; and to promote the development of community spirit through social events.

The FLA holds an annual general meeting each July and members of the Board of Directors are elected by the membership. As protection of the environment is a constant common concern of the membership, the FLA plays an important role in lake stewardship and environmental education in the area. The FLA conducts regular monitoring of water quality, an annual boat count and education campaigns. On the social side it hosts a Regatta and a Corn Roast each summer and occasional auctions and raffles to raise funds to cover FLA expenses. These social activities, along with the general meeting, provide an opportunity for residents from the north, east and west lake communities to get to know each other and to work together on issues of lake-wide significance. In 2002 the FLA began the process of developing a Lake Plan for Fox Lake in consultation with community residents and other stakeholders and the plan was completed and adopted by the membership in 2009.

The FLA maintains a website www.foxlakeassociation.org which has increased transparency and improved communication with members. It posts the Lake Plan, the minutes of the AGM and Board meetings, FLA spring and fall newsletters, updates on social

events and important environmental developments and a wide range of educational bulletins on water quality, shoreline protection, etc. The FLA plans to continue to enhance its outreach and educational activities.

A major concern of FLA and community members is development on the lake and its impact on the natural environment, wildlife habitat, water quality, dark skies and the aesthetic of the area. The FLA serves as the liaison with the Town with regard to development issues and plays a role in monitoring and commenting on development proposals on Fox Lake. In 1970 the association successfully opposed the development of 120 lots in the northwest corner of the lake and again in 1981 successfully opposed the development of 250 acres of the same property. In 1992 the association opposed a proposal to develop 33 lots on these lands and helped to facilitate a subdivision agreement between the developer and the Town limiting development to 19 lots with site specific requirements regarding setbacks and preservation of the natural shoreline. The net effect is that development in the northwest part of the lake is low density, however on several properties the site-plan agreements with regard to clearing vegetation in the buffer zone and preserving the shoreline were disregarded.

The FLA is prepared to continue to be involved in lake stewardship and managing development around Fox Lake in a way that protects the natural environment and maintains the unique character of the lake. It will continue to monitor water quality, health of the shoreline, patterns of boat use and development proposals. The Muskoka Watershed Council conducted land use surveys at Fox Lake in 2003 and 2013 but no further surveys are planned due to resource restrictions. This could undermine the FLA's capacity to be an effective monitor. The FLA would like to work with the District of Muskoka, the Town of Huntsville and other relevant agencies to develop a monitoring system and set of relevant indicators by which trends and changes in development and the health of the lake environment can be identified and assessed. The FLA would like to cooperate with, and learn from, other lake associations in the area that are proactive in monitoring water quality and environmental indicators. The FLA needs the support of the Town of Huntsville to engage in monitoring activities that will provide reliable data about the health of the lake, the shoreline and the buffer zone that will inform dialogue with the Town about the future pattern and pace of development around Fox Lake and the effective enforcement of the Town's development policies, by-laws and agreements.

7. Current Issues and Concerns

7.1 Loss of Wildlife Habitat and Unique Natural Environments

The section of the Buck River from the Buck Lake Dam to Fox Lake is one of the few remaining examples of pristine wilderness in Muskoka. It is home to a large number of

water mammals, turtles and birds and supports a variety of fragile flora such as cardinal flowers. It is narrow and meandering (4.6 kilometers long although the distance as the crow flies is 2 kilometers). Frequent deadheads left behind by the log runs of earlier times and fallen trees limit navigation. There are extensive flood plains and wetlands along its entire length and the whole river, including its flood plains, is designated as a Natural Resource Zone and forms part of a natural heritage system.

There is no shoreline development on this part of the river with the exception of one long-existing residence. Landholdings along the route have frontages between 200 metres and 1 kilometre. Many of the parcels are not accessible by either public or private roads, resulting in a very low development potential. In short, this part of the Buck River is not a traditional waterfront area. The river and the portage around the dam to Buck Lake have been identified by the lake community as having cultural, historical and environmental significance. In 2017, a developer was given Ontario Municipal Board permission to subdivide a large lot along the river after several applications and appeals. Four lots are to be created and may be developed under the terms of a site-specific zoning by-law. The Fox Lake community is concerned that any development along the river be controlled and monitored to protect this unique natural asset and ensure that the surrounding floodplains and wetlands remain naturalized.

The southeast island (Rock Island or Robinson's Island) has been used for camping, swimming and picnicking for decades. It is now showing significant signs of overuse. Clearing space for tents and foot traffic from large groups, as well as two camp fires that got out of control, have eliminated most of the undergrowth and small trees. Despite the three replanting parties organized by the FLA to help the Island recover, degradation continues and the community is concerned that the island will soon be past the point of recovery.

The tiny island in the north end of the lake was a nesting spot for loons for many years but recently loons have not nested on the island. This is likely due to a variety of reasons: diminished food supply, fluctuating water levels during the nesting season, more boat traffic and higher boat wakes, and the period when pike and walleye were dominating the food chain. A resident installed a loon nesting platform in 2013 but it did not attract any tenants. Residents are concerned about the loss of habitat for nesting loons as well as other native flora and fauna.

7.2 Degradation of Shoreline and Buffer Zone

Development pressures on Fox Lake have been increasing over the past decade, and the land use planning system has not protected the Lake from some serious losses. Some are due to failures in enforcement – land fill at the mouth of the Buck River, clear cut of the trees on two lots in the northern subdivision; another is a failure in due diligence when land was conveyed -- the loss of the Hoodstown portage, for example. Still others are

attributable to the tendency to turn cottage living into suburban living, with groomed lawns rather than natural grasses and shrubs. The impact on Fox Lake's natural assets is considerable. Unbuffered lawns expose the lake to increased runoff, including runoff of chemicals if residents are using fertilizer, and attract geese which are staying over the summer and eating the pickerel weed in the near shore. The clearing of the backshore setback (from shoreline to buildings) has increased and tree coverage has fallen below the minimum threshold for good lake health. The Muskoka Watershed Council identified the impact of a reduction in shoreline buffers as a concern, potentially resulting in higher total phosphorus concentrations, degradation of aquatic habitat and reduced biodiversity.

The FLA supports efforts to formulate and enforce site plan agreements designed to minimize disturbance of lots and to maintain and/or restore natural vegetation within the buffer zone during construction and renovation. It also supports efforts to promote the rehabilitation of buffer zones with native plants on existing properties.

7.3 Boat Congestion

Because of its irregular shape, the surface area available for boating on Fox Lake, after allowing for a 100 foot (30 metre) zone to separate boat traffic from swimming and small craft, is estimated to be 286 acres. This is about the same as Lake Menominee, but a fraction of the area on Lake Vernon (3566 acres) and Fairy Lake (1757 acres). Apart from the narrow water bodies mentioned above, the surface area of the lake is interrupted by a peninsula, three islands, and the unusual contours of the shoreline. It is only 300 metres wide in the middle with wider bays at each end. The result is that there is virtually no wide open water where fast boats can partake in recreational activities without affecting shorelines, other boaters and residents.

To track the trends in boating, the FLA initiated an annual survey of boats visible on or near the shore on the major holiday weekends in July and August. The 2017 boat count reveals that the total number of boats on the lake increased from 222 in 2014 to 364 in 2017, an increase of 64%. Non-motorized craft make up 72% of the total number and motorized craft account for 28%. The number of high-power boats has increased by 28% since 2014 and personal watercraft by 600% (from 2 in 2014 to 14 in 2017). Feedback from residents includes concerns about congestion and safety and some mentioned that they were forced to postpone their own boating activities (whether skiing, tubing, sailing, kayaking, canoeing or paddle-boarding) as big powerboats were occupying the limited space available. As boat traffic in the south end of the lake gets more crowded, boats are moving to the north bay, which is the last refuge of wildlife on Fox Lake. Residents also expressed concerns about the impact of wakes on shoreline erosion and of power boats using the Buck River and the Fox Tail. "No Wake" signs are posted at the river entrances, and the FLA has consulted with residents and Camp Winnebago about ways to reduce boat congestion and wake impact in the narrow channel between the southwest island and the west shoreline.

Because the Lake is impounded between the two dams, the portages are an important means of access by small craft such as canoes and kayaks. Larger boats require a trailer and a launching ramp. While there is no public launch site, one resident on the Fox Tail offers a launch to renters and guests on the lake and Camp Winnebago permits launches outside its operating season. While public launches make sense on the big lakes, a public boat launch on Fox Lake would a) aggravate the crowding and safety issues on peak days in the summer, b) contribute to greater shoreline erosion, and c) increase the risk of invasive species entering the lake. A study of four lakes in Michigan that summarizes much of the literature on carrying capacity and the impacts of public launch sites concludes that boaters using public launches use the lake much more intensively than cottagers, spending the whole day on the lake.³ Development of the existing road allowance sites would also be a risk to pedestrians, cyclists and local traffic on the narrow, winding dead-end roads on which the undeveloped municipal properties are located. Therefore the FLA does not support the establishment of a private or public launch site or of a commercial marina or boat rental facility of any kind on Fox Lake. The association feels strongly that public access should continue to be through the historical portage routes that limits visitor boat traffic to canoes and kayaks.

7.4 Concern about Future Development

The FLA believes that they and the Town must be ready for the possibility that the larger landholdings on the lake may become the subject of proposals for subdivision. As in the past, the FLA does not oppose new lot creation when land becomes available, but it recommends a measured approach compatible with the vision for quality of life and environmental health set out in the Fox Lake Plan and this report. As a small lake, Fox Lake is very vulnerable to over-development. The current trend to build larger dwellings and to replace traditional summer cottages with larger year-round homes means increased use of septic systems and dishwashers etc. putting increased pressure on the environment. Residents believe that the pressures of development have begun to have a negative impact on the health of the lake, the natural landscape, water quality, and the health and safety of boaters.

The lake has reached its recreational carrying capacity and has limited ability to withstand the impact of any significant additional development along the waterfront. There is no room on Fox Lake for a major resort or any other large-scale property or commercial development. Ideally the two large properties that are now used for summer camps will continue being used for this purpose. Any proposed residential development must conform to the policies, plans and by-laws of the Town of Huntsville and the tenets of the Fox Lake Plan as well as other relevant regulatory bodies and must minimize or preferably eliminate

³ Source: Progressive AE, Four Township Study: Recreational Carrying Capacity, 2001, p13 to 18.

any negative impact on the health of the lake and surrounding area and protect the lake's natural environment and unique characteristics. With this goal in mind, the FLA requests that minimum lot sizes be increased for all new shoreline development.

The FLA and residents want to be involved, as appropriate, in development decisions that affect the lake. Although the Town usually notifies the FLA regarding development proposals affecting the lake, there have been some exceptions. In 2014, several new subdivisions along Muskoka Road 2, above the Campbell Dam along the Buck River, were approved without any early notification to the FLA, yet the river is the source of almost all the water flowing into Fox Lake. The FLA requests that it be given an opportunity to comment on all development proposals that could affect the quality and quantity of water flowing into Fox Lake over the long term.

The FLA is also concerned about monitoring and enforcement of the policy decisions, by-laws and agreements that arise from implementation of the Town's Official Plan and the Fox Lake policy provisions in future. The FLA has witnessed several occasions in recent years where developers did not adhere to site plan agreements with the Town, for example bulldozing and clear cutting in the buffer zone. There seems to be little recourse after such infringements and limited penalties for the offenders.

8. Recommended Policy Provisions

The FLA requests the Town of Huntsville to include the annexed "*Land Use Planning Provisions for Fox Lake based on the Lake Plan for Fox Lake*" in the Town's revised Official Plan. A copy of the Lake Plan for Fox Lake is also provided.