



McGregor Lake Association (MLA)

Response to Val-des-Monts' Citizen Consultation Report on Water Bodies (Nov 2022)

A. Introduction:

This document is presented by the McGregor Lake Association (MLA) in response to the Citizen Consultation Report on Water Bodies made public on November 8, 2022. The MLA takes the opportunity to comment on the recommendations and to propose next steps to continue its collaboration with the municipality of Val-des-Monts (VDM) in the protection of its bodies of water, which collectively represent one of the region's greatest assets.

In general, the MLA supports the report's recommendations which are consistent with its own observations and recommendations, presented in our Aug. 1st, 2022 memoir. More specifically, we agree that better cohabitation on bodies of water, increased protection of the environment and more efficient management of access ramps are sound strategies to ensure the balance between user access and environmental sustainability of VDM's bodies of water.

The comments below follow the order of the recommendations as presented in the report. However, the order does not reflect the degree of importance that the ALM places on each of the recommendations. The ALM board will be happy to work with the municipality in the development and implementation of its action plan.

B. MLA Comments on the Major Findings (Section 4 of the report)

Theme 1: Cohabitation on water bodies

The McGregor Lake Association (MLA) agrees with the findings and general course of action suggested by the participants regarding cohabitation on water bodies listed in this point.

Theme 2: Environmental Protection

MLA agrees wholeheartedly on the recommendations suggested and views them as priority measures.

Theme 3: Boat ramps and boat rentals

- Current fees for *non-resident* use of the ramps should be higher and revenues be reinvested in environmental protection programs
- We do not believe improvements at Plage Pelissier (specifically), such as adding parking spaces and small businesses, are required nor warranted
- We do agree with the majority of participants that washing stations should be installed at both boat ramps to limit the spread of invasive alien species (IAS) as much as possible.
- We support the municipality offering boat rentals but for *non-motorized boats* only. We do believe however that action is first needed to ensure the safety of users of this type of boat, especially on very busy lakes where motorized boats are permitted. Safety measures should be put in place prior to the 2023 boating season.
- The following is MLA's position on the courses of action suggested by participants surrounding boat ramps and boat rentals:
 - **Regulate the purchase of lakefront land by developers of non-waterfront residential developments:** MLA agrees with this.
 - **Further regulate the use of boat ramps, as well as other water access infrastructure (e.g., McFee Lake landing).** Not applicable to lac McGregor
 - **Provide sanitary facilities at boat ramps.** As it relates to MLA, Plage Pelissier would continue to see benefits of a seasonal-use portable toilet facility.
 - **Provide water safety training for lake users as well as boat ramp employees.** MLA agrees wholeheartedly and measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season. See additional comments under Recommendation # 4 below.
 - **Provide a lifeboat at other lakes with high traffic (i.e., at Lake McGregor).** MLA agrees wholeheartedly with this recommendation at Plage Pélissier and measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season.

C. MLA's Comments on the 16 Recommendations (Section 5 of the Report)

Theme 1: Cohabitation on water bodies

- **Recommendation #1 - Improve cohabitation on water bodies:** We do agree with this.
- **Recommendation #2 - Maximum "carrying" capacity of several lakes:** We do agree with this. The process to get this study underway should proceed immediately.
 - The MLA would like to volunteer to participate in a pilot or initial study.

Furthermore, as we indicated in our 2022-08-01 brief submitted during the survey: *“The Association recommends that no further expansion of lake access or development of lac McGregor occur until the Municipality of Val-des-Monts (VDM) completes a formal study to establish the actual boat load capacity of the lake. The results would form an empirical and evidence-based method to inform decision making for any future development.”*

- **Recommendation #3 - Better reflect the expectations of non-riparians:** We believe the consultation provided a fair and equal opportunity for riparian and non-riparian participants to engage in it and that the issues and potential solutions were clearly defined. Additional consultations are neither necessary nor desirable. In the event that VDM deems that a committee bringing together residents and non-resident citizens (in equal parts) is necessary to take action, then the MLA wishes to be part of it.
 - MLA would be pleased to volunteer along with other lake associations.
- **Recommendation #4 - Increased Awareness:** We do agree with VDM to create (or update) a charter for the use of water bodies (ex. guide of good conduct). This charter should then be widely distributed to all residents and users of water bodies through various means of communication in order to reach all types of audiences. We would add that enforcement and program evaluation by VDM must also be included (The safe boating pamphlet distributed at Plage Pélissier lacks effectiveness as there is no follow-up to ensure compliance.)
 - The creation of a Charter should proceed immediately and be available for the 2023 boating season.

Furthermore, as we indicated in our 2022-08-01 brief submitted during the survey: *“VDM should partner with the MLA in the development and distribution of boat safety documentation through multiple venues including online and printed material:*

- *VDM should subscribe to the SUIVEZ LA VAGUE promotional campaign from Nautisme Quebec as a tangible means to enhance safe boating on the lake and leverage the Association to extend the reach of the campaign beyond the Pélissier ramp and formal VDM generated communications channels.*

NOTE: On boating safety, in 2021 the Association published revised boat safety guidelines on its website <https://lacmcgregorlake.ca/useful-information/>

- *The Association has had some success with the cooperative development and implementation of surf boat guidelines. However, many canoers hang out in the middle of the largest part of the lake where Surf Boaters have agreed to practice the sport. We request that starting immediately, Plage Pélissier staff be required to*

inform users to avoid this zone as Surf Boaters now need to drive closer to shore which essentially makes the collaborative agreement void."

- **Recommendation #5 - Increased oversight and federal involvement: (i.e., all lakes are federal jurisdiction):** We agree that VDM should ask the federal authorities responsible to organize awareness and prevention activities at various locations in the municipality, or participation of an "agent" to assist.
 - This should be a priority with VDM.

Furthermore, as we indicated in our 2022-08-01 brief submitted during the survey: *"these safety, property and environmental concerns are not unique to lac McGregor. In fact, Canadian press is replete with articles expressing similar concerns; concerns sufficiently widespread and serious that the Federal government has recently expressed a need to review these issues: <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/environnement/2022-07-24/protection-des-lacs/ottawa-reflechit-a-l-idee-d-etre-plus-proactif.php>"*

- **Recommendation #6 - Create safe zones: (25% of participants said they felt unsafe on the water.):** We would agree somewhat with this recommendation – MLA has a "Safe Boating" committee which has established boating guidelines and best practices. We have been working with this group to ensure the larger boat traffic is kept to certain designated areas of the lake. We would posit that VDM must improve its management of rental boats offered at Plage Pelissier as this group is largely unaware of the dangers they create when they navigate out to open water.

Furthermore, as we indicated in our 2022-08-01 brief submitted during the survey: *"Until VDM and the Association have properly assessed the actual boat load capacity of the lake, that an interim measure be implemented immediately to reduce the high traffic on weekends. The Association can work rapidly and collaboratively with VDM to establish a reasonable maximum number of boats allowed on the lake each weekend during peak of summer Mid May to End August."*

- **Recommendation #7 - Consult (lake residents) "upstream" of development projects:** We agree that residents who live on or have access to the affected water bodies should be consulted before a decision is made on whether or not to authorize these developments.
 - Open consultations with the VDM Planning Committee as suggested would be a good first step.

Theme 2: Environmental Protection

- **Recommendation #8 – (Environmental Protection) Continue the fight against invasive alien species (IAS):** We agree that the lake associations of Val-des-Monts all seem to be, to varying degrees, quite active on this subject. It would also be very useful to join forces with the various actors in the field.
 - MLA believes it is time for VDM to become a leader in this fight – it should not be the FLVDM to lead.

Furthermore, as we indicated in our 2022-08-01 brief submitted during the survey:

“Another threat to the health of our lake is the proliferation of Invasive species. At our expense and effort, the Association has identified these Eurasian Milfoil (invasive-species) weed beds, has distributed printed and electronic material regarding Eurasian Milfoil, and has installed signage and buoys in order to discourage boating activity in these areas in order to try to slow or halt the spread of this invasive weed. The Association commends VDM for the installation of a boat-washing station and supports additional stations and a mandatory washing requirement for ramp use at Plage Pélissier. As noted in the 2021 VDM water quality report; « la première recommandation des rapports de suivis sur la qualité de l’eau (dans le cadre du PDE de la municipalité) est de réduire les risques de contamination aux espèces aquatiques envahissantes en lavant les embarcations nautiques. ”

We also agree that VDM should reach out to the new Quebec Federation for the Defense of Lakes and Watercourses in order to benefit from the strength of this network.

- Measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season.
- **Recommendation #9 - Install more boat washing stations:** We do agree with this however VDM must assure that it has an effluent management plan to avoid contamination through watersheds. Signs should be erected on Highways 366 and 307 advising that boat washing is mandatory at all municipal boat launches. VDM must also seek to manage private boat launch areas throughout the Municipality’s many lakes, not just lac Saint-Pierre & lac McGregor.
 - These measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season.

Theme 3: Boat ramps and rentals

- **Recommendation #10 – (Boat ramps and rentals) New accesses on certain lakes, and public and non-public lands:** As a majority of respondents (63%) were in disagreement with

this expansion possibility, VDM will not pursue this now. MLA cautions VDM that it does not want to be at the other end of the spectrum where all boat access (new & existing) remains concentrated at lac St. Pierre & lac McGregor's boat launches and create additional environmental threats and overcrowding concerns.

- VDM must ensure controls are put in place to prevent the overdevelopment to the two existing boat launches at lac St-Pierre and lac McGregor.
- **Recommendation #11 - Status quo on non-resident fees:** Despite 50% of respondents suggested non-resident fees need not be increased, they do not respectfully represent the majority of riverain or land owners in the specific vicinity of lac Saint-Pierre and lac McGregor where the only two publicly accessible boat launches exist. MLA would recommend raising the fees for Non-Residents to provide better access and controls to locals.
 - Measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season. Additional revenues for VDM could be reinvested in environmental protection programs.
- **Recommendation #12 - Analyze the impact of private lake access ramps being "potentially illegal":** MLA believes it would be useful to fully research the legality of private boat ramps used by others than the property owners as well as determining which level of government has jurisdiction to regulate. Recognizing this is a lengthy process, we believe VDM should prioritize controlling the boats that bi-pass the washing stations and bring in invasive species into the lake.

See attached link referencing the discovery of zebra mussels in lac Temiscouata, off the St Lawrence Seaway, QC. There, the municipality is considering restricting or controlling private boat ramps in an effort to control the spread of this invasive species.

https://plus.lapresse.ca/screens/60f0cd26-4913-4a7e-a31b-9788d2e87469_7C_0.html

 - Measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season
- **Recommendation #13 - Properly develop the access ramp to lac Saint-Pierre:** As this directly affects that particular lake, we agree it would probably be appropriate to validate the expectations of the actual users of this access ramp in order to help finalize this development.
- **Recommendation #14 - Improve services near public access to water bodies:** This appears to be more relatable to lac Saint-Pierre beach area and we would recommend VDM validate their priorities with those directly affected. As it relates to MLA, Plage Pelissier would continue to see benefits of a seasonal-use portable toilet facility, but other general recommendations listed in the report would prove problematic and increase park congestion. Vehicles should be turned away when Plage Pelissier's parking lot reaches capacity.

- MLA does not endorse these listed recommendations.
- **Recommendation #15 - Increase and diversify the rental supply of non-motorized boats:**
In general, MLA would not want to see additional rental equipment added to Plage Pelissier until VDM can better manage the care and risk of the current casual boat renters as well as all residents. A life-safety boat, additional trained CPR and water safety personnel must be on staff when the boat rentals are open to the public to ensure compliance to water safety regulations.
 - These measures should be put in place for the 2023 boating season.
- **Recommendation #16 - Provide winter activities on water bodies:** MLA is not a large supporter of these winter activities as they would largely go unsupervised and likely unmanaged; garbage fires on the lake and damage/destruction of private property while many residents are absent is not supported. Furthermore, the Nakkertok site is currently available for some of these activities now and is only minutes away from Plage Pélissier.
 - More communication by VDM on Nakkertok programs would be useful.

D. Closing Remarks

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation process. MLA looks forward to continued collaboration with the municipality to ensure the responsible use and ongoing protection of its water bodies that must be safeguarded for generations to come.

Prepared & presented by the Association du lac McGregor Lake Association (ALM//MLA)
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