



Severn River Stewardship Plan – Swift Rapids to Big Chute Resident Survey Results

March 2009

The purpose of this Survey was to gather ideas and views from community members on the issues and actions for the conservation of the Severn River and to obtain suggestions on how to best involve all community members in the process. The survey was distributed in late September 2008 to all property owners on the Severn River between Swift Rapids and Big Chute. 515 surveys were distributed and a total of 128 surveys were returned, which is a 25% return rate. The results of the survey combined with the results of the public meeting held in August 2008 present a collection of thoughts ideas and issues that are common to many property owners on the Severn. Please note that since a few of the surveys were not totally completed the summaries provided are based on the total number of people who answered a specific question.

We would like to thank all those who took part in this Survey. You have helped us to focus our efforts on the issues that are important to you.

The winners of the draw for early completion of the Survey are:

- First Prize – a one year SRAPO membership– Lori Petrie
- Second Prize – a \$ 25.00 gas certificate – Vanda Henderson
- Third Prize – a SRAPO tee shirt – David Smith

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Part ONE – Location and Use of Property

1. The person completing this survey is:

	#	%
a property owner	120	95.2
Children, friends etc. of owner	6	4.8
Total # of responses	126	

2. Where is your property located?

	Survey response		Actual property data totals	
	#	%	#	%
Severn Township	54	42.5	200	38.5
Georgian Bay Township	37	29.1	112	21.5
Muskoka Lakes Township	36	28.4	208	42.5
Don't Know	0	0.0		
Total # of responses	127		520 total properties on Severn	

The numbers on the right side of the above table represent the total # of properties in each township as compared to the total # of respondents to this survey. For example while there are 200 total property owners in Severn Township making up 38.5% of the properties on this section of the Severn, 42.5% of the respondents to our Survey are properties owners in Severn Township. We may conclude that from a geographical perspective in this survey, property owners in Muskoka Lakes were under represented, Georgian Bay was over represented and Severn was about average.

3. a How do you access your property? By:

	#	%	
Year Round Road	20	15.6	if Yes please skip to Question # 4.
Seasonal Road	29	22.6	if Yes please skip to Question # 4.
Water	79	61.8	
Total # of responses	128		

We cannot be sure of the exact percentage of properties that are reached by water, however generally we can say that all properties in Georgian Bay and Muskoka Lakes Township are water access only. These two townships together represent approximately 320 of the 520 or 61.5% of the properties on the river. Respondents to the survey were 61.8% water access, very close to the overall percent, so our data appears to be a representative sample..

b. If you access by only water, where is your boat slip and car parking located?

	#	%
a marina? e.g. Big Chute, Severn Falls, Tamarack Park	60	75.9
a commercial water front landing? e.g. Riverside Pines,	7	8.8
a private water front landing?	7	8.8
friends or relatives who have road access	3	3.25
other	3	3.25
Total responses from those who access by water	79	

“Other” answers were Lost Channel Landing.

3. c. If you access by water and you were no longer able to access your property from where you do now, in your opinion how hard would it be for you to find another docking slip:

	#	%	
Very difficult	51	64.6	
Difficult	24	30.4	
Easy	2	2.5	if Yes please skip to Question # 4.
Very easy	2	2.5	if Yes please skip to Question # 4.

d. If you answered very difficult or difficult, what do you think would be your biggest problem?
Select all that apply:

	#	%
Cost would be much higher	31	41.3
None located close enough, would have to travel too far	39	52.0
Alternatives not suitable, eg. slips too shallow or crowded, walkways too long and difficult	26	34.6
No slips available	43	57.3
Other please specify – eg. Advancing age	5	6.7

Note: 75 respondents answered very difficult or difficult to question 3 c.
Percentages on 3 d. total more than 100% as respondents were asked to select all that apply.

4. How long have you been the property owner or resident on the Severn River?

	#	%
1 to 5 years	27	21.3
6 to 20 years	27	21.3
21 to 40 years	31	24.4
40 + years	42	33.0
Total # of responses	127	

A remarkable number of the respondents have spent more than 40 years on the Severn. One has been on the Severn for 87 years!

5. Are you a member of the Severn River of Association of Property Owners for 2008?

	Survey response #	%	Overall #	Survey share % of total owners
Yes	95	74.8	198 SRAPO members	48.0 (95 of 198)
No (not SRAPO)	32	25.2	317 non SRAPO	10.0 (32 of 317)
Total # of responses	127		515 total	24.7 (127 of 515)

SRAPO members represent a significant share of those surveyed: 74.8 %. In fact 48 % of all SRAPO members responded to the survey. Conversely, only 10 % (32) of the larger non-SRAPO member group completed the survey, significantly under-representing this group.

6. Did you attend the Stewardship Plan meeting held in Severn Falls on Aug.9, 2008?

	#	%
Yes	14	11.1
No	112	88.9
Total # of responses	126	

7. Are you a permanent or seasonal resident?

	#	%
Permanent Resident	11	8.7
Seasonal	116	91.3
Vacant Land only	0	0.0
Total # of responses	127	

You are a permanent resident if your Severn River property is your principal mailing address.

8. If you are a seasonal resident, or own vacant land, do you plan on making this your permanent residence?

	#	%
Yes	7	6.1
No	91	79.1
Don't know	17	14.8
Total # or responses	115	

9. Which statement below best describes how you used your property this year:

	#	%	
I rented my property and did not use it.	2	1.5	
I used my property during the year.	124	97	
Property is vacant land and I did not use it	2	1.5	If yes please complete question # 10.
Total # of responses	128		

10. Earlier you indicated that your property is vacant. Which of the following statements best describes your future plans for the land:

	%
no changes planned	0.0
plan to build in the next year	2 respondents plan to build in the next year
plan to build in 2 to 5 years	0.0
plan to build but no timeframe decided	0.0
plan to sell land without building	0.0
plan to subdivide land into lots and sell	0.0
other plans please specify	0.0

11. Please enter the number of days per season you use your residence and how many people usually stay there during each of the seasons indicated the table below

2008	# of days (max 91 days) cottage was used	Average # of people staying at one time
Spring	20.3 days	2.85
Summer	46.1	4.10
Fall	19.5	3.02
Winter	6.7	0.96

12. What kind of recreational activity do you and your family participate in at the Severn River?

Recreational Activity	#	%
Boating	120	94
Swimming	109	85
Reading	108	84
Socializing	98	77
Canoeing	83	65
Canada Day Fireworks Show	76	60
Nature Appreciation	75	59
Fishing	70	55
Hiking	57	45
Water Skiing	55	43
Kayaking	43	34
Regatta	28	22
Other	25	20
Snow Shoeing	24	19
Snowmobiling	23	18
Jet skiing	22	17
Poker Run	15	12
Sailing	11	9
Scuba Diving	9	7
Hunting	8	6
Winter Skiing	6	5
Ice Skating	4	3
Ice Fishing	0	0

Common “other” responses were “puttering” and “working around the cottage.”

Percentages on the above question total more than 100% as respondents were asked to select all that apply. The figures represent the per cent of respondents who said that they participated in that activity.

Part TWO – Buildings and Structures

13. Please indicate which of the following are currently on or part of your property:

	#	%
fully winterized residence	45	35.1
seasonal residence, not winterized	87	68.0
sleeping cabin	47	36.7
storage shed	92	71.9
camper/trailer	2	1.6
vacant land (no structures)	9	7.0
dock - no boat lift	96	75.0
dock - with boat lift	22	17.2
boat trailer launching ramp	6	4.7
marine railway launching ramp	10	7.8
boat house – no lift	18	14.0
boat house – with lift	26	20.3
out house	41	32.0
imported sand beach	7	5.5
other please specify eg. garages	8	6.3

Total # of respondents was 128.

14. How many non-motorized boats do you have?

	# reported	% who own a	% of non-powered boats
Paddle boat	52	40.6	21.0
Canoe	111	86.7	44.7
Windsurfer	5	3.9	2.0
Sailboat	9	7.0	3.6
Kayak	64	50.0	25.8
Other eg. rowboat	7	5.4	2.8
Total # reported	248		

14b. Motorized boats	# 2 Stroke	# 4 Stroke	% of power category
Motorboats under 10 hp	39	10	17.1
Motorboats between 11-100 hp	75	35	38.6
Motorboats between 101-199 hp	12	42	19.0
Motorboats over 200 hp	9	27	12.6
Personal Watercraft (Jet-ski)	15	1	5.6
Pontoon Boats	12	7	6.7
Other	1	0	0.4
Total # reported	163	122	

15. Sewage Disposal

a. How do you dispose of household black water (sewage from toilets)?

	#	% using this method
Septic System	112	85.4
Holding Tank	7	5.3
Composting toilet	11	8.4
Other	1	0.7
Total # of responses	131	

The number of systems reported at 131 exceeds the number of total respondents at 128 as there are a few people who have composting toilets who also have septic systems or holding tanks.

b. How do you dispose of household grey water (sewage from sinks)?

	#	% using this method
Septic System	109	85.8
Holding Tank	9	7.1
Other	9	7.1
Total # of responses	127	

If you have a septic tank and tile bed, please answer 15. c, d, and e.

c. How old is your septic system?

	#	% in this age range
< 5 years	44	42.7
6 to 15 years	28	27.2
16 to 30 years	27	26.2
> 30 years	3	2.9
Don't know	1	1.0
Total # of responses	103	

d. When was the last time the septic tank was pumped out

	#	% in this age range
< 5 years	68	74.7
6-10 years	10	11.0
11-20 years	10	11.0
Don't know	3	1.0
Total # of responses	91	

e. Have you added any kind of enhancement to your septic system?

Effluent Filters	3	reported
Aerobic Units	0	
Other	2	reported

Under the "other" category was one macerator and one extra large septic bed

16. Household Appliances – Do you have any of the following appliances?

Clothes Washer	69
Dishwasher	39
Hot Tub	16
Flush Toilets	112 respondents have a total of 160 flush toilets
How many flush toilets?	160
Bath Tubs/showers	111 respondents have a total of 131 tubs/showers.
How many separate tubs and showers?	131

17a. Water Supply - How do you obtain your household water?

	#	% using this method
Well	6	5.0
River water	111	93.3
Other	2	1.7
Total # of responses	119	

b. How do you obtain your drinking water?

	#	% using this method
Well	3	2.2
River water	36	26.9
Bottled	93	69.4
Other	2	1.5
Total # of responses	134	

c. Do you test your water?

	#	% testing
Yes	29	25.2
No	86	74.8
Total # of responses	115	

d. If Yes, how often do you test your water?

Once per year	14
Twice per year	4
Three times/year	9
Once per month	5
Total # who test	32

There were 29 people who answered yes that they test their water, but 32 people who told us the frequency with which they test their water.

e. If Yes, what did you test your water for - choose all that apply:

bacteria	24
viruses	8
mercury, lead, other toxins	8
Other	2

f. If you use river water or well water for drinking, do you treat it?

	#	% who treat drinking water
Yes	39	90.7
No	4	9.3
Total # of responses	43	

If yes, how do you treat your water?

	#	% of people using this method
Chlorination	5	9.6
Filter(s) and Ultra-violet	43	82.7
Reverse osmosis	3	5.8
Other eg. boil	1	1.9
Total # of responses	52	

18. Thinking about the cleaning and lawn care products that you currently use at the Severn River, how certain are you that they are biodegradable and contain no phosphorus. Please indicate your answers below:

<u>Product</u>	<u>Certainty that products are biodegradable and contain no Phosphorus</u>			
	Absolutely Certain	Pretty Certain	Not Certain	Do not use product
dish soap	48	24	46	1
laundry soap	38	20	29	23
bath room hand / shower soap	29	33	55	2
hair shampoo and conditioner	30	30	57	2
boat cleaners and polishes	14	19	31	44
lawn fertilizer	4	1	12	85
Other identify _____	0	0	0	0

19. Waste Disposal

a. How do dispose of solid waste (garbage)?

	#	% using this method
End of road pick up	25	20.5
Municipal Dump Site	97	79.5
Total # of responses	122	

b. If dump site which one?

	#	% using this dump site
Big Chute bins	45	42.5
Baxter transfer station	20	18.9
Matchedash landfill site	41	38.6
Total # of responses	106	

c. Do you recycle glass, metal, paper, plastic, etc.?

	#	% who recycle
Yes	118	99.2
No	1	0.8
Total # of responses	119	

Part THREE - Personal Observations – comments in quote marks taken verbatim from a survey response.

20. In the space below briefly summarize the one thing you value the most about the Severn River?

It was decided to group the answers into common categories and then we chose one answer that we felt best represented that category. Note: 32 of 128 people did not answer this question

Peace and Tranquility - 30 responses

“It is difficult to identify one element that is of highest value. It really is the cottage feel, closeness to water, tranquility, nature, friendly neighbours that combine to make the Severn River a great place to be in both summer and winter”.

Beauty and the Environment - 17 responses

“The environment and wildlife are the most valuable. One will not flourish without the other. They must be put ahead of any consideration for development in the area”.

Family and the Community - 15 responses

“We enjoy being able to spend time together with both immediate and extended family. We value being able to swim, waterski and relax in the outdoors. We want to be able to pass this experience on to our grandchildren”.

Water Quality -14 responses

“As Trent Severn Waterway says – it’s all about the water. The ability to sustain life for vegetation and wildlife and recreational activities. We need to preserve these features and qualities in the face of development activities”.

Others - 20 widely varied responses

21. Please rate how the following personal value elements add to your personal enjoyment of the Severn River. Feel free to add any value elements not on the list. *(Please check one box for each element)*

Personal Value Element	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Don't Know
Water Quality	108	14	2	0	0
Peace and Tranquility	90	26	7	2	0
Swimming	84	28	8	3	0
Natural Shorelines	67	46	10	2	0
Water Level	64	49	12	0	0
Night skies/View Stars	63	39	14	3	0
Landscapes	61	45	8	7	1
Wildlife Viewing	59	44	18	3	0
Non-motorized Boating	54	44	18	8	1
Motorized Boating	51	38	24	7	1
Fishing	26	28	31	38	1
Other	8	0	0	0	0
Hunting	4	4	5	100	2

22. What would you say are the most important issues affecting your enjoyment of the Severn River?
Please check off the issues affecting you from the list below and rank your top three. If an issue that is important to you is not on the list please add it.

Check the Issues
that are important to you

Rank your Top Three
only rank your top three

Type of Issue	# of respondents saying this issue is important	# 1 Rank	# 2 Rank	# 3 Rank
Poor Water Quality/Pollution	98	40	16	15
Boat Wakes, Boat Traffic, PWC's	96	23	22	23
Garbage Disposal	77	15	19	20
Unregulated Camping	71	9	17	8
Access to marinas and parking	70	29	11	8
Water levels and flooding	67	3	16	10
Nighttime noise	53	1	6	6
All Terrain Vehicles	36	1	1	6
Vegetation Removal	29	0	1	6
Not enough political representation/influence	26	1	0	3

Ongoing water testing by SRAPO has shown that the Severn has acceptable water quality, however this survey shows that respondents are highly concerned about maintaining high water quality.

It is interesting to note that while many of the issues that are ranked as most important involve significant amounts of government/political action, the issue of "not enough political representation/influence" was not ranked as being highly important. At the public meeting last August this was verbally reported as a very important issue.

So many of the issues noted as being of highest importance involve the behavior of people. Lasting solutions to these problems will have to involve politicians, laws, governments and every one of us.

23. Reflecting now on the three issues from the question above that affect you the most, what actions do you feel should be taken to address them to improve the quality of life on the Severn River? Please provide details of the two or three most critical actions that you really want to see happen.

There were a total of 107 responses to this question with 21 people not answering at all. An analysis of Question # 22 indicates that the top 5 most important issues are as follows:

1. Poor Water Quality/ Pollution – suggestions and solutions

11 responses - Update septic tanks through regular government site inspections and enforcement

4 responses – Better education/information on how to keep the water clean

3 responses - Continued water testing and reporting

3 responses - Policing and enforcement of all of the above

Outlaw 2 stroke engines

Limit # of cottages – larger minimum lot size, establish safe carrying capacity of the river for development.

Restrict any large condo development.

Ban the use of fertilizers and pesticides

Ensure that boats are not dumping sewage

Sharing of safe product information re cleaning and washing – how do we know what products are safe?

Education on shoreline vegetation – lower boat speeds through the river to reduce shoreline erosion

2. Boat wakes

18 responses - Increased police presence/enforcement to ticket/caution speeding boaters

5 responses - More 10 km. Speed limit zones

2 responses - Slower speeds for boats that produce large wakes

Fine boaters for wake damage

There is a perception that the large boats are exempt from police enforcement.

Provide education when boaters enter the system at Big Chute or Swift Rapids

Larger/better signage on the river for boat speed and wake

3. Garbage disposal

11 responses - Keep the garbage bins at the Big Chute and police it better

4 responses - Extended dump hours

Better availability of times to dump large items

Reduce dump fees

Cottagers must take more responsibility for illegal dumping at Big Chute

Must use bear proof containers for end of road pick up – township to supply at no cost

4. Marina access issues note: comments in quote marks were taken verbatim from survey responses.

6 responses - Build a road so that we are not “held hostage by marinas”.

2 responses - Municipalities should support docking /parking availability for water access cottagers

2 responses - Townships to make some land available for docking/parking

“Township should zone the land at Big Chute for marina use only”

Proceed with cottager owned marina/parking at Big Chute

“Better access to handicapped parking/boat loading area”.

5. Unregulated Camping

3 responses - Permits should be required /charge fee for all camping

2 responses - More government patrol/enforcement of all campsites

Provincial law that allows camping on all crown land should be changed

Regulate camping to make some areas off limits for a few years to allow damage to the site to repair itself and to break the pattern of abuse.

Ban illegal camping

Heavy fines for illegal camping

Enforcement of existing regulation regarding littering/ site destruction

“No camping unless you own the land”.

24. If you have other actions for other issues, feel free to list them here:

Other issues

Only 12 of 128 people answered this question. The most notable comments were:

Boat engine repairs must be performed at least 100 feet back from the shore and with proper containment for oil/gas spills.

The township division line should be changed to minimize the number of government jurisdictions involved.

Fishing on the Severn River should be catch and release only.

Ontario Hydro to do more preventative tree trimming to prevent power outages.

Part FOUR – Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, based upon the information gathered from the survey, Severn River residents are very concerned about protecting and conserving:

- Water Quality and Swimming
- Peace and Tranquility
- Natural Shorelines and Landscapes
- Controlled water levels
- Night skies

The above issues were consistently rated as very important or important to the respondents to the survey.

Respondents also recognize several issues which impact the quality of life on the Severn River:

- Water Quality and Pollution
- Boat wakes and traffic
- Garbage disposal
- Access to marinas
- Control of unregulated camping
- Water levels and flooding

Thank you again for your participation in the survey. We will advise everyone shortly of the steps that SRAPO will be taking to act upon the issues that have been highlighted by this survey.