



# Wizard Lake Watershed & Lake Stewardship Association

**Newsletter #8**

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**Fall 2008**

## **Sink Hole**

*April Larkin*

We have lived in Wizard Ridge Estates for over 8 years and there is a dead end road that is a path to the lake. Along that road is a quarry where we would go and get sand stones. It was a mini canyon about 20 feet deep which was very interesting as it consisted of layers of sand and rock. However, it was a great danger for skidoos or quads going down the trail if they decided to do a quick swoop into the creek runoff area. Also it was a fast, deep runoff from Wizard Lake Estates plus all the county/farms from RR281. It was not environmentally friendly and a huge issue for the Wizard Lake Watershed.

Members of the Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship contacted the County of Leduc to access this concern. The Following pictures show the before and after the area was reconstructed.



The County of Leduc explained that they have extensive training in assisting the environment to accomplish the task. They first laid down heavy landscape cloth that would be covered by many tons of recycled cement blocks. Drain sewers were replaced in the appropriate places and then the elevations and direction of the flow

of the runoff water was accessed. Many trees and plants were left undisturbed to keep it natural and the growth helps drain into the soil with less silt and mud or contaminants flow into the lake. A huge cat was brought in to replace all the rocks naturally. Now there is no concern for personal safety and when the vegetation grows in, it will be a natural ditch to the lake. This project was a great concern for the WLWSA and a great success. We are very grateful that the County Leduc was so willing to work with our Watershed committees. The after photos show a gentle ditch into a lower creek that meanders slowly into Wizard Lake.







## **Heat Wave Hits Wizard Lake Awareness Day**

*Laura Riechert*

Under a scorching hot sun on Saturday, August 16, those playing in the bocce tournament at Wizard Lake Awareness Day took to the grass courts in spirited



competition despite the heat. The teams battled it out all afternoon, finding shade under the canopies in between games, until the finals concluded and the winners were announced, anxious to celebrate their victory.



This was the second year the Wizard Lake Watershed & Lake Stewardship Association sponsored a family activity day at Jubilee Park in the overflow area. The event was held for members of the lake community to get together to learn that there is a watershed organization at Wizard Lake, and to show their support for the Association while having fun.

Activities for the children included games, organized by Carole Ellsworth and face painting courtesy of Leduc County summer staff. Several other volunteers from the Association were instrumental in organizing this year's event, with Chris Daniel heading up the Awareness Day Committee.

"Thanks to a great group of volunteers for being involved in organizing this event," Daniel stated. "While the numbers were not what we expected, the event went off without a hitch and those who attended thought it was great." He added, "They enjoyed the company, food, games and most of all what a wonderful job the Watershed Association does as a whole."



Attendance was lower than expected, perhaps because of the heat and other events taking place that day within the area. Those who did attend, however, appeared to be having a good time, stopping at the concession, beer tent, visiting under the shade of the canopies, playing bocce, or bidding on the many silent auction items. A chicken bingo attracted attention all afternoon, as some watched and waited for the chicken to leave its mark in



the square they had chosen. A beef on a bun supper was served up at 5 p.m. with large pieces of delicious apple pie or cherry pie available for those who still had room for dessert.



Chairman Laverne Faulkner thanked everyone for coming and supporting this event and made a brief presentation to Ken Litzenberger, who had recently stepped down from the Board.

The event was a major fundraiser for the Association, with door prizes, silent auction and raffle items contributed by many businesses from Calmar, Leduc, Millet, Thorsby and the local area.



The use of canopy tents were donated by both Counties and Lizzee's Berry Farm, with other support from Roughneck Brewing, Allan and Lorraine Coles (the chicken), and the Alberta Stewardship Network. Displays from the Association's working groups, with information available on water quality, shoreline and watershed, safety and enjoyment, communication and education, fundraising and membership were there. As well, information was available on Home Site Assessments.

Some participants summed up the day this way: "What a great bunch of people in our watershed." "I'm looking forward to the beef on a bun and the pie!" "I'm sorry that more neighbors didn't come, as it was fun." "A water-

fight or dunk-tank would have been great to have with this heat today." "I was disappointed in the turn out, because it was a good time so others missed out." "I think it's a lot of fun, and I'm doing well at bocce ball!" "The lake is awesome this year!"

## **ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT'S LAKE LEVEL MONITORING PROGRAM**

*Rick Pickering*

*Water Quantity Supervisor/Specialist*

*Alberta Environment*

Alberta Environment directly monitors the levels of 187 lakes across the province, and partners with Environment Canada and Trans Alta Utilities to monitor approximately 50 more. The information collected is vital to the many people and organizations that depend on it for their own work. This includes federal, provincial, and municipal governments and agencies, universities, park staff, fisheries biologists, watershed groups, consultants, industry and resource companies, cottage owners, and many others. Data collection may be initiated on a particular lake for a variety of reasons. For example, the information may be needed for licensing requirements, regional hydrologic indicators, water supply issues, water quality issues, recreational concerns, or land use impacts, to just name a few.

Water levels are monitored on the various lakes three times per year: after ice-out, mid-summer and again late fall. Prior to 2000, surveyed levels were also obtained during the winter season. A two-person crew is required for these trips, and levels are collected using a surveyor's level and rod. Lake surface elevation is determined in reference to established benchmarks on the shoreline at each site.

Local observers, where available, supplement the surveyed levels with weekly or better staff gauge readings. We maintain a network of observers at approximately half of our lake level stations.

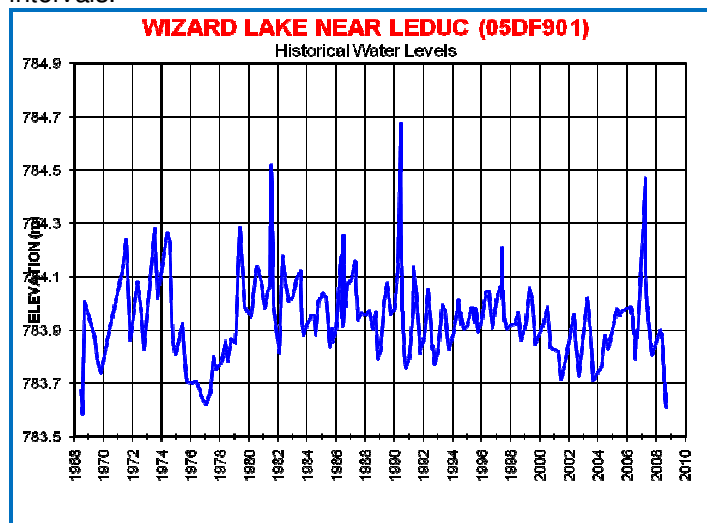
Approximately 2000 additional data points are obtained yearly through this volunteer observer program.

It is also important for people to realize that we are measuring the vertical fluctuation of the lake surface. Many people will say "our lake has dropped ten feet" because there is an additional ten feet of exposed shoreline, but the lake surface itself may have only dropped a few centimeters, dependant on local topography. In some cases, information on the level of the lake may go back close to 50 years, however, on average, we have approximately 30 years of level data used to establish trends and address current and ongoing issues.

Field staffs are usually the first line of contact for many members of the public, and represent Alberta Environment on these occasions. They are often called upon to address specific concerns, such as cottage owner or farmer conflicts, low water concerns, questions on illegal discharges, pollution, fish (or lack of) etc. or to refer individuals to an appropriate contact.

Monitoring of Wizard Lake first began in 1968. The lake's highest level was 784.677 meters, occurring in July 1990, and its lowest was 783.586 meters in July 1968. Wizard

Lake has had two separate hydrographic surveys done, one in 1966 by the Government of Alberta, and the second in 1982 by the University of Alberta. Water quality information has also been collected at the lake at various intervals.



WLWLSA has taken an active role in assisting Alberta Environment with lake level readings on Wizard Lake. LeVerne Ellsworth is taking weekly readings from a staff gauge installed by Alberta Environment and reports to the department



## **SHEDDING LIGHT ON WATERSHED ACTION**

Do you know which watershed you live in? You can think of a watershed as the sum of many streams, channels, drainages, wetlands, ponds and lakes. It is an area of land that catches and collects rain and snow, and then drains into a wetland, stream, river or lake.

There are nine large watersheds in Alberta, each containing smaller watersheds within them. For example, the North Saskatchewan watershed, which drains east into Hudson's Bay, can be divided into many smaller watersheds such as the Iron Creek watershed. Many different communities may exist in one watershed, and through their watershed, great numbers of people are linked together.

Healthy watersheds and riparian areas - the areas of lush vegetation bordering rivers, streams and lakes - provide good water quality, sustain animal and fish populations, reduce the impact of flooding and support agricultural production.

Watershed and riparian health is greatly affected by what your neighbors do and what activities may be occurring upstream, far from your property. Likewise, management practices on your property impact the areas downstream from you.

Assessing activities and evaluating the condition of riparian areas can help people work together toward improving or maintaining the health of riparian areas in their watershed. When a community works together, the individual efforts pay big dividends on a watershed scale. Cows and Fish is a voluntary stewardship program that works with communities on watershed and riparian awareness and management. A number of resources are available including 'Caring For the Green Zone' booklets, colorful fact sheets, a field workbook to help determine the health of a riparian area, and a user-friendly website, [www.cowsandfish.org](http://www.cowsandfish.org)

## **Wizard Lake is one busy, little lake**

Being so close to Edmonton and with the steep banks to protect it from the wind, it is a haven for boats. The boating part of the lake covers about 640 acres, about 7,380 meters long and 580 meters at the widest part and 125 meters at the narrowest. Sharing the lake are fishermen, wake boats, water skiers (Wizard Water-ski Club is the oldest, 1961, and largest in Alberta) canoes, jet skis, high powered motor boats and pontoon boats. The 1980 Wizard Lake Management Plan called for a 12 km/hr speed limit offshore from Jubilee Park and at the west end of the lake beyond Wizard Heights. Following requests by the two municipalities, the federal government (which has jurisdiction over traffic on navigable waterways) agreed to impose restrictions under the Canada Shipping Act. Restrictions were gazetted in the Boating Restriction Regulations. The July 1998 version of the regulations lists Wizard Lake in Schedule I (all vessels prohibited in posted areas) and in Schedule IV (maximum speed limit in posted areas).

The 12 km/hr zone is a safe area for motorboats to anchor their craft for a quiet day of swimming and anglers are not being bounced around by a speed boats wake. Pontoon boats are becoming very popular and can now enjoy calm, less dangerous water, as well as canoeists and birdwatchers. Nesting waterfowl enjoy a safer, undisturbed environment. The west end is the spawning ground for Northern Pike.

With the cooperation of the boating community and the RCMP enforcement of the west end 12 km/hr speed limit, Wizard Lake will be a safer and more enjoyable lake for all recreational users.