

# RAINY LAKE CONSERVANCY

Preserving the Rainy Lake Watershed



## Autumn 2015 Newsletter

### President's Message



It was a pleasure to see so many members of the Conservancy at the August Annual Meeting and to welcome new members. We were refreshed with information on the trees that surround our homes and cabins and had a wonderful display of edible and medicinal wild plants in the Rainy River District, complete with menus!

This year the Board will be reviewing our Strategic Plan and setting out our priorities for the next five years. You will be hearing from me on that. There is lots of interest in protection of shoreline and island properties, so we are looking forward to a busy 2016 in that regard. Research on wolves and beaver habitat and sustainability is ongoing - the Conservancy is a supporter of such research. We will keep you advised of the results.

Trees have changed, our cabins are closed for the winter and fireplaces are being stoked once again. I am already thinking ahead to getting up to our lake cabin next spring. I look forward to continuing to work with you all on advancing our mission of Rainy Lake stewardship, education and land conservation.

*Carolyn Wallis*

### Networking News

Rhoda Dickson and Phyllis Callaghan, representing the Rainy Lake Conservancy, attended the first Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Lake Associations Network Event on



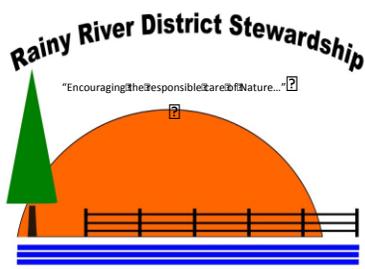
Thursday, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015. It was a hot day with no air conditioning in the classroom at the Rainy River Community College, but the event was well worth attending. Members of the various lake associations enjoyed exchanging stories and information about common goals and challenges in the watershed and we also received informative updates from the IJC, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Federation of

Ontario Cottagers and the MN Sea Grant Aquatic Invasive Species Agency. We came home with a number of great resources dealing with a variety of conservation issues in the watershed. Along with over 20 participating organizations who shared their experiences, RLC had the opportunity to explain our mission and to elaborate on what we're doing through research, education and land protection to achieve our goals.

*Phyllis Callaghan*

## **Annual General Meeting**

A well-attended AGM was held at La Place Rendez-Vous on Sunday, August 16<sup>th</sup> from 2-4 p.m. Highlights of the meeting included a presentation on trees by Tony Elders, retired MNR forestry technician. Tony gave a primer on identification of local tree species on the mainland and Rainy Lake islands with lots of helpful information – he even gave us all a short quiz, which we passed! Another presentation was given by Sandra Tassel, American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts (AF). Sandy elaborated on how RLC’s partnership with AF works to facilitate cross-border conservation easements and protection of the clean water and abundant plant and wildlife on the lake.



## **Environmental Research/Community Outreach:**

RLC is now a partner in the Rainy River District Stewardship Council’s tree project. Other partners include the Town of Fort Frances, the Fort Frances High School, the Ministry of Natural Resources (Fort Frances), the North West Health Unit and the Fort Frances Library and Tech Centre. RLC representatives have attended meetings over the summer and fall and the Conservancy has donated \$500 to help defray the costs of buses to transport High School students to the sites and to purchase some of the labels and a measuring device. The project is designed to identify trees, map their locations and measure tree diameter and height. Tony Elders, who is leading the project, has stated that he wants to raise awareness about trees and to involve students in a challenging and worthwhile project. RLC shares the Stewardship Council’s commitment to raising awareness of our natural environment and to involving young people whenever possible. They are our future!

## **Workshop on Canadian Tax Considerations for Owners of Canadian Property**

BDO Accounting Firm and American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts partnered with the Rainy Lake Conservancy to put on a workshop that was held at Echo Island to provide information to lake property owners of camps and cottages about Canadian and US taxes on property gifts, transfers to the next generation, or sale of property. BDO related that all such gifts, sales, transfers are subject to Canada’s 25% capital gains tax on the increase in value, which is reported by both Canadians and US property owners on a Canadian tax return as income. All agreed that they needed to be better educated about tax considerations as they engage in planning for the future of their properties. American Friends noted that donations of conservation easements are a way to reduce the value of one’s property and thereby reduce the amount of capital gains to be paid upon gift or transfer of one’s property at some future date. BDO staff from both the Fort Frances and Thunder Bay offices came to present this information and would be happy to help landowners with questions.

*Carolyn Wallis*

## **Rule Curve Methodology Meetings Add Value: Summary of Initial Stakeholder Meetings**



### **International Rainy—Namakan Rule Curve Study Board**



The International Rainy and Namakan Lakes Rule Curves Study Board (Study Board) met via webinar on September 25, 2015 and in person from September 29-30, 2015 in International Falls MN and Fort Frances ON with local stakeholders and government agencies to discuss the methodology to be used for their work.

The methodology provided by the International Joint Commission (IJC) to the Study Board in the evaluation terms of reference directs the Study Board to look at:

- whether the 2000 Rule Curves worked as expected;
- whether they are better than the 1970 Rule Curves and why;
- what benefits and negative impacts may have resulted from the 2000 Rule Curves relative to likely impacts of the 1970 Rule Curves;
- what benefits and negative impacts would result from a “state of nature” operating plan;
- what benefits and negative impacts would result from a few alternative operating policies or plans; and
- what benefits and negative impacts would result from a changed climate.

The Study Board will also examine climate scenarios and regulation alternatives, such as:

- testing various climatic scenarios (drought, earlier snow melt, etc.);
- at least the following three regulation alternatives:
  - operating according to state of nature releases;
  - modified 2000 Rule Curves based on evaluation; and
  - 2000 Rule Curves with target elevations shifted by current data (soil moisture, temperature, snow pack, etc.).
- A Shared Vision Model to run approximately 18 scenarios composed of:
  - six operating plans (1970, 2000, State of Nature, three regulation alternatives); and
  - three water supply sets (historical, extreme, climate change).

During the meetings, the Study Board heard many suggestions for potential inclusion in the evaluation, including:

- targeting the lower 25 percent of the 2000 Rule Curve band on Rainy Lake in the spring;
- coordinating Rainy Lake and Namakan Lake outflows;
- determining Rule Curve triggers for altering flow by using basin conditions such as the volume of snowpack, ice-out timing, regional forecasting or spawning locations and timing, rather than a specific calendar date;
- allowing the Rule Curve to take increased natural variability into account;
- analyses of the Ranier Rapids pinch point at the railway bridge; and
- effects of the Rule Curve on docks.

The Study Board will submit its recommended methodology to the IJC on November 2, 2015. Any individual interested in joining the Rule Curve Public Advisory Group is encouraged to contact the IJC directly at [commission@ottawa.ijc.org](mailto:commission@ottawa.ijc.org) or [commission@washington.ijc.org](mailto:commission@washington.ijc.org).

*(Information provided by Kelli Saunders Study Manager, International Rainy-Namakan Lake Rule Curve Study Board)*

### **Rainy Lake Fisheries Trust Northern Pike Research Project**



The Rainy Lake Conservancy continues to have a representative on the Board of the Rainy Lake Fisheries Trust, a local organization that supports fisheries research on Rainy Lake. This year the Trust is helping to fund a Northern Pike research project on Rainy Lake. This project is especially relevant since, although Rainy Lake supports both a commercial fishery and a highly desirable recreational trophy fishery for Northern Pike, according to recent (2013) assessments by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, catch rates are below average for the lake using fishery-independent surveys, and recruitment has been poor since 2005.

Using province-wide data from fishery-independent surveys (Malette and Morgan 2005), only the North Arm of Rainy lake has catch rates of pike greater than the provincial mean, whereas catch rates in Redgut Bay and the South Arm of the lake fall below this provincial benchmark. Rainy Lake pike tend to

be larger than the provincial average (Malette and Morgan 2005). The research team for the project is headed by Dr. Michael D. Rennie, Adjunct professor, University of Manitoba and Research Scientist, IISD-Experimental Lakes Area Inc. (ELA)

The study will:

- evaluate temporal stability of Northern Pike life history characteristics from Rainy Lake
- evaluate pike growth and life history variation among Rainy Lake sub-basins
- frame growth potential of Rainy Lake northern pike within context of provincial databases (FWIN, BSM) and data from the Experimental Lakes Area
- partner with commercial fisheries on the Rainy lake basin to help provide current data from the Rainy Lake fishery, and
- identify key limnological and community dynamics that affect Northern Pike growth potential.

The information from the study will be used to provide science advice informing proposed changes to Northern Pike recreational fishing regulations.

*Information provided by the Fisheries Trust  
Photo by Don Cumming*

## **Membership in the Rainy Lake Conservancy**

### **Thanks for Renewing your 2015 RLC Membership Renewal!**

Most of you are receiving this newsletter because your 2015 membership is up-to-date, or you have complimentary membership. Hurrah!

A few other recipients have yet to renew; please watch for a correspondence in the near future from Chery offering assistance for you to either renew or join the RLC.

Note: a complimentary membership is granted to any individual or family who donates a total of \$500.00 or more to the RLC. The RLC membership period runs July 31 to August 1 of the following year. Where possible, the complimentary membership will be granted for the year in which the qualifying donation(s) occur; however, depending on the time of year when they are received, the RLC may grant the complimentary membership for the subsequent membership year.

### **How to Donate**

Donations made by U.S. citizens to the Minnesota Land Trust's Rainy Lake Fund, or by Canadians to the Rainy Lake Conservancy are tax deductible. Your donations support our mission to preserve the ecological, cultural and historic values of the watershed. You can choose from one of the following methods to make a donation:

Mail your donation:

- to: Minnesota Land Trust (Rainy Lake Fund), 2356 University Ave. N. Suite 240, St. Paul MN 55114

- to: Rainy Lake Conservancy, P.O. Box 223, Fort Frances, ON, P9A 3M6

Online donations by Canadians or Americans to the Rainy Lake Conservancy using a credit card are available at the RLC website, here:

<http://www.rainylakeconservancy.org/Online-Donations>

***A pdf of this Newsletter can be viewed and downloaded at the RLC website, click on "Newsletters," Fall 2015.***