



Lake Bernard

Property Owners' Association

MEDIA RELEASE:

Drinking water safety at the heart of local initiative

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2025 – Sundridge, Ontario

The Lake Bernard Property Owners' Association (LBPOA) is taking steps to better understand and protect local sources of drinking water in this region, through a new project launching this month.

This past May was the 25th anniversary of the Walkerton drinking water tragedy.

To mark this, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) and the LBPOA are excited to announce 'Phase Two' of a new rural drinking water protection initiative for 2025. The LBPOA is working with FOCA to develop a local citizen-led source water protection plan, and ultimately a 'best practices' volunteer-led protocol to make source water protection planning more accessible across rural Ontario.

The local project builds on the completed 'Phase One' of FOCA's rural waterfront source water protection pilot project in 2024, which marked a critical step forward for protecting drinking water in small communities.

This initiative plays a vital role in safeguarding our community's future by addressing the pressing need to protect our local drinking water source. It directly complements the recent expansion of the LBPOA's Lake Water Testing programs and strongly aligns with our core mission: preserving the health of Lake Bernard for generations to come.

Through this project, we aim to identify potential threats to our watershed, gather meaningful data, and implement effective, science-driven solutions. The results will support not only the immediate wellbeing of our residents, but also the long-term sustainability of our most precious natural resource.

Background about the FOCA Source Water Protection Pilot Project:

While municipal water systems are subject to many protocols, testing and safeguards, private water sources are an essential—yet often overlooked—part of Ontario's water safety framework.

A special report by Ontario's Auditor General released in late March 2025, "[*Safety of Non-Municipal Drinking Water*](#)," identified ongoing gaps that affect drinking water safety for the nearly three million Ontario residents who rely for their drinking water on private wells or small systems, many of which remain untested and unregulated.

Over the past year with support from Ontario's Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP), FOCA partnered with a lake association in the City of Kawartha Lakes to develop a

source water protection plan for their waterfront community. Working with consulting engineers and local volunteers, the pilot project assessed threats to the community's drinking water including risks posed by septic systems, fuel storage, and the area's vulnerable fractured bedrock geology. The project provided practical recommendations to help the local community mitigate risks and safeguard private water sources, in keeping with FOCA's longstanding commitment to healthy freshwater systems.

The LBPOA has a long history of looking out for the health of Lake Bernard and the welfare of local residents. This program should help us to improve our knowledge of local drinking water threats, and provide the impetus for better protection of our local sources of drinking water, and ultimately the health of local residents.

FOCA is putting the Walkerton Inquiry's "multi-barrier approach" into practice where it is needed most, by adapting source water protection tools for small communities not serviced by municipal systems.

"FOCA is proud to work with LBPOA to help close the rural water safety gap," said Lesley Lavender, FOCA's CEO.

Terry Rees, concierge of Phase 2 of this project, will be presenting further details, including community involvement, at LBPOA's 2025 AGM on July 5, 2025. Terry is the former FOCA Executive Director and has been intimately involved with water initiatives for over 20 years, including the development and implementation of the Ontario Clean Water Act, 2006.

About FOCA:

FOCA is the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, the only go-to provincial advocacy organization committed to sustaining and enhancing the Ontario cottage experience. We work collaboratively to identify and address key issues by providing credible expertise, environmental stewardship, targeted programs and services, and a robust network of strategic partners.

Since 1963, FOCA has united Ontario's waterfront community. We are a non-profit membership organization representing over 525 lake, road, cottage, camp, and rural waterfront associations—together, 250,000 families and voters who steward 15,000 km of shoreline and 50 hectares of privately owned waterfront land from Kenora to Kingston, Lake Erie to north of Temagami. Our 2022 Economic Impact Study confirmed that every 100 waterfront properties generate 63 jobs in Ontario, with most of those in the local community.

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For more about FOCA's work on this subject, visit: <https://foca.on.ca/source-water-protection/>

For more information about the LBPOA, visit www.lakebernardpoa.com