

Stewards of Jackfish and Murray Lakes Report to the Hamlets June, 2020

Last summer a study entitled “Jackfish Lake Water Quality Assessment” was performed by a masters student for partial fulfillment of his Masters in Water Security degree. Aid was in part given by the Stewards of Jackfish and Murray Lakes (SJML), the North Saskatchewan River Basin Council (NSRBC), the Water Security Agency and a University of Saskatchewan student advisor. This report was distributed to you and we received responses expressing concerns about water quality and endangered fish habitat from concerned cabin owners.

The report indicated that ongoing testing should be undertaken to study the quality of the water. The current concern is the algal bloom on the lakes. This requires research on the influence of farming activities, septic tank integrity, human activity and shoreline management. Intensive and consistent testing is required for all of these influences and is very expensive. Stewardship by stakeholders, while monitoring the lakes with focused objectives, is an ideal compromise. Efforts such as using phosphate free household and personal care products; not fertilizing lawns to the lake shore; planting trees to filter nutrients from runoff before they enter the lakes and inspecting septic tanks for leaks as they can contribute to the nitrate and phosphate load in the lake. Lake bottoms contain naturally occurring phosphate and should not be disturbed to release the phosphate as this contributes to weed and algae growth. For the same reason no wake zones should be respected so that the shoreline is not disturbed. While natural causes of algal blooms including excessive runoff and warm weather heating the lake can't be controlled, these are a few things that those surrounding the lakes and their feeder tributaries can control to aid in lake health.

Cost-effective, long-term nutrient monitoring would be ideal. This information can be used to compare to historical data to continue to monitor the health of the lakes. This can aid in decisions about activities in and around the lakes. Currently the SJML are working with the Citizen Science Program through the University of Regina and with the NSRBC with funding from the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program to take and analyze water samples from various areas around the lakes.

A letter of concern was sent to the RM of Meota by the SJML about a large marina and campground proposed for Jackfish Lake. A study done in the 1980's indicated that at that time the lake was already at capacity, much more development has taken place since that time. The proposed marina is currently on hold until a new lake impact study is done.

The health of the lakes contributes directly to the enjoyment of the lakes and the health of the business communities and properties surrounding them.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathie Ornawka
Hamlet Representative, SJML