



Cottage News

Winter 2025

Marcus Beach Cottage Owners Association

Volume 16, Issue 2

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President's Message

Hello fellow Marcus Beach owners,

Christmas season has come and gone, and it certainly looks like this year there will be no lack of snow. Although we are currently having a bit of a thaw, we had plenty of snow before Christmas - but thankfully not as much as Gravenhurst (over 140cm in two days!). However, the recent spell of relatively mild weather means that the ice rink is not yet open. We remain hopeful that, weather permitting, we may have it open by mid to late January.

Much of this newsletter deals with comments that were received from owners on last fall's annual survey. Without question, the most common theme was a request to improve the sightline from the cottage to the lake.

About 20% of all comments had something to do with landscaping, and there is certainly a wide range of opinion on how to approach the shoreline. Opinions ranged from "please don't remove any healthy trees" to "Haliburton has plenty of trees – please remove all that impede my view".

However, most comments fell somewhere in the middle – owners want a better lake view but also understand that the property is healthy and maturing and the trees are growing so there needs to be a middle ground between keeping a healthy tree canopy and allowing for a view of the lake.

I sent out a letter in November regarding the Township of Minden's new Short Term Rental by-law. Our discussions with the township staff have concluded and I will be sending owners an update in the near future.

And with that, I would like to wish you, your family and friends, a Happy New Year, and a fun and relaxing time at Marcus Beach this winter!

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...and the Survey Says

Here are the results from 2024 Owners' Survey. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts and opinions. The Board reads every single survey, so your input is extremely valuable to make sure we are on the right track and as a source of new ideas to investigate over the coming year.

One purpose of the survey is to see if there are any emerging topics of which the board should be aware. Some of the comments in this year's survey were cottage-specific; if you have a question or concern about your cottage, please don't wait until the annual survey! If there is something that you would like the board to address please send us an email at any time to marcusbeachboard@gmail.com.

The first five questions on the survey are the same to allow for year-to-year comparison. Here are the results of each:

Q1: Overall, the quality of my cottage experience is being maintained and enhanced.

97% of owners answered "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" as compared to 99% in 2023. Most of our owners continue to be extremely happy with the investment they have made at Marcus Beach.

Q2: In general, how well do you think the Board is doing?

90% of owners answered "Excellent" or "Very Good". The 2023 result was 92%. Owners



Photo courtesy of Stephanie Breurkes

have confidence in the Board and the support is appreciated.

Q3: How well do you feel the Board manages the finances of the Marcus Beach Cottage Owners Association?

93% of owners answered, "Very Good" or "Excellent". The 2023 result was 92%.

Q4: How well do you feel the Property Manager (Linda Scott) is doing? Keep in mind all aspects of the role - ensuring cottages are kept clean and supplied, managing maintenance projects, demonstrating a good customer service attitude, helping wherever needed, etc.

91% of owners answered "Excellent" or "Very Good". The 2023 result was 96%.

Q5: How well do you feel our property is being maintained?

84% of owners answered, "Very Good" or "Excellent". The 2023 result was 89%. Please note that property maintenance is undertaken by James Allison, with help from Joe Lopez during the busy summer

months.

Many of the comments on property maintenance related to the sightlines from the cottage to the lake.

Q6: This question asked owners about their usage of electric vehicle (EV) at Marcus Beach to better understand the intentions of owners.

10% of owners currently own an electric vehicle that they would like to use for driving to the cottage. A further 20% are planning on purchasing one in the next 3 to 5 years.

A similar question was asked two years ago on the 2022 Owner's Survey and at that time 2% of owners owned an EV.

The number of owners with electric vehicles is certainly increasing at a brisk pace.

The Board will continue to monitor EV usage by owners as we contemplate our next steps regarding EV charging at Marcus Beach. Please expect to get additional questions about this issue over the next few years.



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Q7: If there was one thing that we could do to improve your experience at Marcus Beach, what would that be?

There were over 98 comments and suggestions ranging from ideas for new amenities to recommendations concerning property landscaping and upkeep.

Other articles in this newsletter address some of the common themes that were raised by owners in the survey.

Large Beach

A few owners mentioned that they would like to have the large beach (between cottages 7 and 8) improved in order to take pressure off the very popular smaller beach near cottage 3.

The smaller beach has water that tends to be free of vegetation and silt by virtue of being on a bit of a peninsula. Clearly, this makes it ideal for wading, especially for small children.

The much larger beach is not on a peninsula and is in a channel, so the water is naturally muddier with more silt.

Unfortunately, by-laws and regulations that protect shorelines do not allow us to touch the water at all (suggestions were to remove all vegetation/rocks and add sand).

In fact, years ago, this beach was a popular nesting ground for geese, and some of the vegetation was planted deliberately to discourage geese from coming ashore there.

What we will do is more aggressively trim the alders along the shoreline so that there are improved sightlines. Last year we added more sand to the beach and we will continue to monitor and add as necessary.

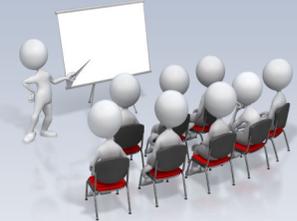
We will ensure the one small opening into the water remains clear of vegetation but there is little we can do to make it a sandier beach after the waterline.

Landscaping

As you may recall, Marcus Beach has retained the services of a landscape architectural firm - The Planning Partnership (TPP) - to review the property between the cottages and the lake with the goal of improving the view which over time has become impeded by trees and bushes.

We asked TPP to provide both a short-term landscaping plan that we could work on immediately, as well as a sustainable long-term plan to allow us to continue to maintain the shoreline. Our intention is for our own maintenance staff to carry out the plan with only occasional help

Save the Date
2025 AGM



Mark your calendars! The next AGM will be held on **Saturday, April 26th, 2025 from 10am to noon** via Zoom.

from outside firms for major work. We have already received the short-term plan, while the long-term plan will be finalized over the next month.

The goals of both plans are:

- Preserve and open views to the lake;
- Reduce maintenance effort and cost; and,
- Encourage more diversity - particularly in areas overwhelmed by goldenrod.

We received the short-term plan at the end of the summer and one of the main recommendations was the removal of specific trees in between cottages and the lake (as well as "limbing up" other trees).

Linda took advantage of the relatively mild autumn to hire a local company (Cooney's Tree Removal) to trim/remove trees from near Cottages 1 to 10. The remaining cottages (11 to 19) will have the same work completed in the spring.

Owners should be aware that there are many rules and by-laws which govern work done along a shore-



Photo courtesy of Cathie Marck



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Landscaping (cont'd)

line, including regulations and laws which are federal, provincial and local. Minden has enacted a "Shoreline Preservation By-law" which came into effect in 2023. The Shoreline Preservation By-Law applies to land within 20 meters from the high-water mark of lakes, rivers, streams and ponds in our area, which for Marcus Beach covers the area between the cottages and the lake.

Please be aware that there are very strict rules about what we can (and cannot) do to trees and the shoreline in this zone. Fines for not complying with the regulations are very high and owners should be aware that they cannot take the initiative and cut down trees themselves. Any owner who does so will be subject to significant fines, both from Minden Township and the MBCOA.

The Board feels that we are on a path to having enhanced cottage views of the lake. The staff began earlier this summer to much more aggressively prune the speckled alder bushes on our property and cut back the goldenrod as appropriate. This will continue to be a focus this coming summer, as we work on both the short-term and long-term solutions.

The Board intends to post the landscaping plan on the "Owners Dock" of the Marcus Beach website when it is completed. We will also add "landscaping" to the agenda for this year's AGM to review the plan and give owners an opportunity to ask any questions that may be on their minds.

Resources

There is so much to see and do in Haliburton! Here are a few resources on the Internet to help you:

Highlander Newspaper:
[The Highlander](#)

Tourism site with suggestions:
[My Haliburton Highlands](#)

County of Haliburton official site:
[Haliburton County](#)

Hiking Trails:
[Haliburton Hiking Trails](#)

Dining Suggestions:
[Restaurant Ideas](#)

Garbage and Recycling:
[Minden Recycling](#)

Fishing Information:
[Zone 15 Regulations](#)
[Ice Fishing Regulations](#)

Minden Short Term Rentals:
[Minden STR](#)



Photo courtesy of Clare Hahn

Dock Ladders

Several owners asked if we could replace the ladders on the docks with ones that go deeper into the water. In fact, a few years ago an owner at Dock Three purchased a ladder himself (which James installed) so there are two ladders at that dock. This request has come up a few times over the years and the Board will look into possible solutions.



Open Kayaks

A few years ago, half of the single-person kayaks were replaced with the open or "sit-up" type. This means that every dock has one 'regular' kayak and one 'open' style in addition to the two person kayaks.

A few owners have asked if all the kayaks could be changed to the 'open' model, as some people find them easier to get in and out of. We will ask a question about this preference on our next owners' survey to understand what should be purchased as kayaks slowly need replacing.

At the moment, most 'regular' kayaks are in relatively good condition, so this decision is not urgent. Perhaps this summer, you can try out both, so that you will be ready for the question!



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Rotate Check in and Check Out Times

In the survey, a couple of owners asked if it was possible to occasionally switch their check-in/check-out times. This would mean people who usually have a later check-out would occasionally alternate with earlier, and vice versa.

Unfortunately, that is not possible. The check-in/check-out times are a part of the purchase agreement and apply to all owners in a cottage.

Furthermore, the cottage check-in and check-out times are “balanced” to spread the workload for the cleaners.

Board Minutes

Another question was whether the Board publishes the minutes of its monthly meetings, and the answer is “yes”.

The minutes can be found on the “owner’s dock” section of the Marcus Beach website. As always, we welcome thoughts and comments from owners on any topic they find interesting.

Main Floor Blinds

The main-floor blinds in some of the cottages are nearing the end of life, especially those in cottages which have a very large picture window. New blinds with cords, similar to those currently being used, are no longer available.

We have made the decision to replace all blinds in a cottage at the

same time, so that the style will be consistent on its main floor windows.

Any blinds which are still usable will be stored and used as replacement blinds in other cottages, hopefully reducing the expense of replacing blinds before necessary.

The blinds on the first floor of Cottage One have been replaced. Other cottage blinds will be replaced as necessary; there is no set timeframe for doing the remaining cottages — it will be on an “as needed” basis.



Electric Vehicles and Recharging

As noted previously, about 10% of owners currently have an electric vehicle (EV) and another 20% are thinking of getting one over the next few years.

We had a wide variety of comments on our EV question in the survey, ranging from owners who want us to install EV recharging station(s) right away, to owners opposed to any investment at all in EV charging.

Other owners were more ambivalent but wanted a “user-pay” type

system.

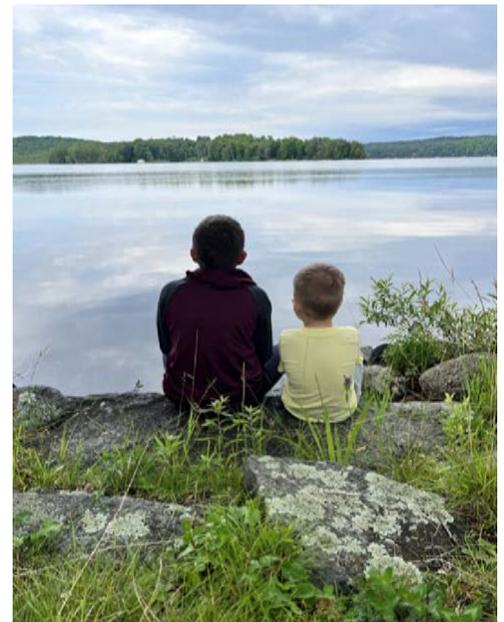
The Board has not landed on any strategy regarding EV charging and given that 90% of owners don’t currently use an EV to get to Marcus Beach, it’s not a topic that we will be focused on in the immediate future.

The Board will continue to occasionally ask owners about their EV usage and plans. If EV usage expands significantly, we will look at possible charging solutions at that time.

Cottage Numbers on Back of Cottage

One owner suggested that it would be great to add the cottage number to the backs of the cottage (e.g. on the lakeside porch). We thought that was a great idea!

The cottage numbers were added in November, so now you know which cottage you’re seeing when walking on Joe’s Trail.





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Social functions

One owner suggested that it would be nice to have a social function at Marcus Beach so that cottagers can get to know each other.

We think this is a really good idea and most owners would welcome the opportunity to get to know one another a bit better. However, this will likely involve ten social functions to fully cover, for example, each of the ten summer weeks.

We believe that this would be an excellent use of the Marcus Beach Facebook page. If one cottager would like to suggest a get-together, they could post a suggested date and location.



We can envision posts suggesting a pickleball tournament one week, or perhaps something more informal such as a get-together at one of the fire pits.

We look forward to seeing the interest and imagination of our owners in finding ways to meet their fellow owners.

Docks and Boats

Just a reminder that the docks generally go in the water around the Victoria Day weekend (weather permitting) and they come out shortly after Thanksgiving Day weekend.

The docks need to come out before the lake levels drop, after which it becomes impossible to move the docks without renting heavy equipment. The docks need to be stored for the winter, or they will be damaged by the winter ice.

The boats typically become available after the very busy Spring maintenance weeks, and remain available as long as the weather is reasonable.

Ice Rink

Hopefully this year we will have an ice rink! Of course, the rink is entirely weather-dependent and the recent cycle of cold weather followed by a thaw isn't helping, but the cold winter months are still to come so we are all hopeful that this year we can sustain a rink for more than just a few weeks.

We need a full week of temperatures below -10C in order to form a sustainable sheet of ice. Last year, the few times we had appropriate weather it was immediately followed by a warm spell, so James was never able to keep the rink going for more than a few days.

If you think you're frustrated, please be sympathetic to James, who works so hard to get the rink flooded and smooth, only to have a few days of warm weather destroy all his hard work!

Please stay off the rink if there is a "Do Not Enter" sign, even if the ice looks ready. Even boot marks on soft ice can make resurfacing very difficult.

The ice needs to be a certain thickness to protect the liner. Sharp skates on thin ice easily slash the expensive liner, at which point the rink would be unavailable to everyone for the rest of the season (as well as incurring a costly repair).

Ice Safety

With winter upon us and with the colder weather there are many great outdoor activities, from hockey to ice fishing or snowshoeing along the many trails in the area.

Ice safety is important, and the colour of the ice may be an indication of its strength.

- Clear blue ice is strongest
- White opaque or snow ice is half as strong as blue ice. Opaque ice is formed by wet snow freezing on the ice
- Grey ice is unsafe. The grayness indicates the presence of water

Marcus Beach maintains a skating rink behind the office (weather permitting). We would ask cottagers to be very cautious about skating on the lake; there are warm undercurrents in many spots that make our ice particularly hazardous.

The Red Cross website is a great source of water/ice safety so just a reminder for all cottagers:

[Red Cross Safety Tips](#)



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Linda's Report

During our fall maintenance period, we focused on the kitchen. Four more cottages (6, 7, 8, and 15) had their kitchen counters replaced.

A few owners have asked why their counters were replaced when they didn't seem to be in bad shape. Please know that our concern is mainly the underlying structures and supports, which are in need of repair in a number of cottages, especially around the sink area.

Even though the counter surface may appear to be in good shape, it has to be replaced in order to repair the wooden counter underneath. Four more counters will be replaced next fall.



Snow Plow

The snowy season is now upon us, and it is very important that when you see the snowplow driver on the property, you take the time to move your vehicle from the driveway for the plow to remove the snow.

When this does not happen, it means that you will have to shovel the driveway yourself and this leaves a lot more work both for you and our maintenance team.

Personal Items in Kitchen

Another issue we tackled was the number of personal items that are accumulating in the kitchens. Quite a few cottage action sheets commented on the number of personal items that owners leave in the kitchen after they leave. So with the help from the cleaners, we removed a lot of them from the kitchens and placed them in bins in the basement.



During maintenance weeks the cleaners clean all the cupboards, and then check, replace and clean all the Marcus Beach inventory. If there are too many additional items in the cupboards, this becomes a much more consuming project. For example, in one cottage there were fifteen cutting boards!

Although you may think you're helping your fellow owners, the feedback we receive is that most owners do not appreciate the extra items, particularly in the kitchen. I'd like to suggest that you put your personal items in your bins when you leave the cottage.

This will make a much neater and cleaner kitchen as well as keep your items in good working order for your personal use.

Porch Handrails

James and Joe have sanded and painted any exterior handrails that needed an extra coat of paint.

Issue Follow-Up

A couple of owners commented that they had submitted an issue for resolution and never heard back. This is just a reminder that when an owner drops off a "Cottage Action Sheet" it is normally resolved within the week, often the same day.

We receive enough requests for service that we don't usually follow up with the owner unless there's an issue. Of course, if you are concerned, you are welcome to reach out and ask for an update.

The best way to communicate with me directly is via my email at : marcusbeachmanager@gmail.com.

If at any time you feel that there is issue or suggestion that needs escalation, you should contact the board directly at: marcusbeachboard@gmail.com.

Recycling Shed

We have also replaced the recycling sheds near the office with one single walk-in shed. All the recycling is now in one place and a little more owner-friendly on a rainy day!

