Appendix D

Public Consultation Record

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) identified the Muskoka River to be a priority for water management planning in Ontario due to its social (recreational), environmental and economic importance. MNR developed guidelines in 2002 for the preparation of a water management plan. A key component of such plans is to undertake a comprehensive public and agency consultation program. The guidelines indicate that the public should be involved in the identification of issues and resource values related to the management of water levels and flows, in the development and review of options for problem solving, and in the ongoing review and evaluation of plan implementation. This appendix summarizes the activities and results of the public consultation program.

2 CONSULTATION PLAN/OBJECTIVES OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROGRAM

A comprehensive consultation plan for the Muskoka River Water Management Plan project was developed by the MNR in early 2002. The plan identified the following communication objectives for the consultation process:

- report on the existing environmental, engineering and social information available on the Muskoka River System
- engage the public's knowledge of issues and concerns related to water flows and levels on the Muskoka River
- actively seek MNR/water power industry/public input on options to
  - arrest any ongoing degradation of or decline to ecosystems that are attributable to water power facilities
  - improve ecosystems
  - restore ecosystems and maximize net benefits
- create public support for operational changes to improve and/or restore ecosystems and maximize net benefits.

The plan identified the consultation strategy that was to be used for plan development, the target audience and key messages to be brought forward during the consultation process. The plan also identified the range of consultation tactics/methodologies that would be employed, and identified future opportunities for post-plan "follow-up" consultation. The approved plan was contained in the Muskoka River Water Management Plan Background Information Report, Volume 2 – Appendixes (Acres & Associated, 2003), and is provided in Attachment 1.

Additional objectives of the consultation process included:

- inform stakeholders and other members of the public (including nongovernment organizations) of the water management planning process
- outline the time frame (schedule) for the water management planning process
- receive stakeholder/public comment on water management strategy options that were considered.

3 INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION SESSION

Prior to the general public notification, an introductory information session was held for local politicians and municipalities, First Nations, major cottage and lake associations, and interest groups to advice of the upcoming public notice. The purpose of this pre-consultation meeting was to provide information on the project team, planning process and anticipated goals, and to ensure that these major stakeholders were aware of the commencement of the project. In this manner, they could direct subsequent comments or questions arising during the public consultation process to the appropriate project personnel.

4 METHODS OF INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The mechanisms that were used to ensure adequate opportunities for public input to the planning process were as follows:

- Phase 1 project newspaper and subsequent distribution of 2,000 copies
- Development of a Spring 2003 newsletter and subsequent distribution to those on the mailing list (see Table 1), and distribution by the Public Advisory Committee (PAC) members at cottage associations meetings throughout the summer of 2003
- Notices in local newspapers (Table 2).
- Formation and involvement of a Public Advisory Committee (PAC), (refer to Section 5)
- Contact with lake and cottager associations (see Table 3).

- Public Open Houses (see Section 6)

- Setup of a project website (www.acres.com/muskokawmp)

- Development of a comprehensive stakeholder list with subsequent mail outs to those stakeholders

- Presentations and/or responses to local organizations and/or to interest groups (including the Kawagama Lake Cottagers' Association, District Municipality of Muskoka, Fox Lake Cottage Association, Moon River/Bala Reach residents).

A comprehensive account of the Phase 1 consultation program is provided in the Muskoka River Water Management Plan Background Information Report – Volume 2, Appendixes (A&A, 2003). This consultation record summarizes those findings and provides additional information regarding the Phase 2 consultation program.

Table 1
Newspaper Announcements

Newspaper	Purpose	Date
Huntsville Forester	Notice of Study Initiation & PAC Application	June 2, 2002
Bracebridge Examiner	Notice of Study Initiation & PAC Application	June 2, 2002
Gravenhurst Banner	Notice of Study Initiation & PAC Application	June 2, 2002
Haliburton Echo	Notice of Study Initiation & PAC Application	June 2, 2002
Parry Sound Beacon Star	Notice of Study Initiation & PAC Application	June 2, 2002
Parry Sound North Star	Notice of Study Initiation & PAC Application	June 2, 2002
Huntsville Forester	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 14, 2002
Bracebridge Examiner	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 14, 2002
Gravenhurst Banner	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 14, 2002
Haliburton Echo	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 13, 2002
Parry Sound Beacon Star	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 14, 2002
Parry Sound North Star	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 14, 2002
Muskoka Advance	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 17, 2002
The Muskoka Sun	Notice of Open House – Phase 1	August 17, 2002
Huntsville Forester	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 24, 2003
Bracebridge Examiner	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 24, 2003
Gravenhurst Banner	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 24, 2003
Haliburton Echo	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 23, 2003
Parry Sound Beacon Star	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 24, 2003
Parry Sound North Star	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 24, 2003
Muskoka Advance	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 27, 2003
The Muskoka Sun	Notice of Open House – Phase 2	Sept 27, 2003

Table 2 **Cottage/Lake Associations**
Bala Reach
Bigwin Lake Cottagers'
Bird Lake Cottagers
Buck Lake
Dotty Lake
Fairy Lake Association
Fox Lake
Georgian Bay Association
Gibson Lake
Go Home Lake Cottage Owners Association
Harp Lake Cottagers
Kawagama Lake
Bella-Rebecca Community Association
Paint Lake Ratepayers Association
Lake of Bays Association
Ril Lake Cottage Association
Raven Lake Cottagers' Association
Roval Muskoka Island Association
Lake Joseph North Cottage Association
Lake Vernon Association
Leech Lake Cottagers
Lower Fletcher Lake Cottager's Association
Mary Lake Association
McKay Lake Cottagers' Association
Menominee Lake Cottagers' Association
Moon River Property Owners Association
Muskoka Lakes Association
Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers Association
Oxbow Cottagers' Association
Peninsula Lake Association
Prospect Lake Cottagers
Skeleton Lake
Springsvde Cottagers Association
Tasso, Toad, Camp & Blue Lakes Association
Three Mile Lake
Walker and Pell Lakes Cottagers
Waseosa Lake
Wood Lake Cottagers' Association

5 PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The water management plan for the Muskoka River was deemed to be a "complex" plan, and as such, the MNR (2002) guidelines indicated that a PAC was required to enhance the process of consulting and communicating with the public. The public was invited to apply for a position on the PAC through newspaper announcements, the website and mass mailings. From the available applications, a PAC was formed consisting of 11 citizens who represented a broad cross section of interests and geographical location throughout the Muskoka River watershed. Members and the area in the watershed which they represent include:

- Steve Alcock – Huntsville
- Michael Ankenman – Mary Lake
- Patricia Arney – Bala Reach/Moon River
- Ben Boivin – Huntsville/Lake of Bays
- Margaret Casey – Lake of Bays
- Tim Clarke – High Falls Heritage
- Jack Fenn – Lake Muskoka
- Bill MacKillican – Kawagama Lake
- Stewart Martin – Lake Muskoka (Chair)
- Robin Tapley – Huntsville Lakes
- Mike Wilton – Algonquin Eco-Watch.

During the water management planning process, the PAC's mandate was to assist the Planning Team with:

- development of the water management plan for the Muskoka River by reviewing study documentation and advising on matters such as, the plan's goals and objectives, public issues and concerns, aquatic resources, wildlife, recreation, water levels, flows and fluctuations, economic opportunities, water management alternatives

- public consultation and communications by seeking to ensure the participation of all interested parties in the consultation process; attending public open houses; and reviewing and advising on the comments received from the public and interest groups during the consultation process.

During Phase 1 and 2 of the planning process, the PAC met a total of 16 times respectively. Steering Committee and/or Planning Team representatives attended the PAC meetings to provide updates on the progress of plan development, and as

resource, information and/or advisory roles. Minutes of the PAC meetings are contained in Attachment 2.

6 OPEN HOUSES

Two series of open houses were held during plan development - one in Phase 1 and one in Phase 2.

Phase 1 open houses were held in Dorset, Huntsville and Port Carling on August 23, 24 and 25, 2002, respectively. The purpose of these open houses were to advise stakeholders and the general public of the water management planning process, identify key issues, values and concerns (social, environmental, economic), and solicit relevant background information on the watershed. A number of information boards were prepared for the open houses, and a formal presentation was provided at advertised times. The public was asked to fill out a comment form prior to leaving the open house and/or to submit one at a later date (within the next 30 days). A summary of the issues documented at the open houses and from comment form responses is provided in the following section.

After the option development process for Phase 2 was complete and a preliminary preferred option was selected, a second round of open houses was held at the Bracebridge Community Centre on Friday and Saturday, October 3 and 4, 2003. After consulting with the PAC, it was agreed that an open house at one central location would be more appropriate than the three locations provided in Phase 1. Two time sessions were provided to increase opportunities for attendance. The Phase 2 open house was advertised in similar newspapers and public locations as for the first phase (Table 2). The dates were also announced in the spring 2003 edition of the project newsletter, and they were provided for many of the lake and cottage associations meetings/newsletters.

Ninety-six members of the public attended the two sessions (34 attended the Friday, October 3 session and 62 attended on Saturday October 4, 2003). The majority of the Planning Team, Steering Committee and PAC were available at some time during the 2-day session to assist in answering the public's questions. Over 30 display boards provided information on the process and the preferred option that was being proposed for each dam/river reach. As well a formal 1-hour presentation/question and answer session was provided three times during the weekend. This presentation gave an overview of the water management process and highlighted the proposed changes to the current operational conditions. Display and presentation material is provided in Attachment 3.

7 PUBLIC CONSULTATION ISSUES

7.1 Phase 1 Consultation

7.1.1 Summary of Comment Form Responses

A total of 164 comment forms were returned. Table 3 summarizes the public issues and concerns raised by respondents, while specific concerns, on a geographical basis, are presented in Tables 4, 5 and 6. Table 7 identifies how the responders rated current water management practices in the watershed on a geographical basis. Many respondents identified or commented on more than one issue or concern, and not all respondents rated current water management activities. The manner in which the preliminary preferred strategy (as presented to the public during the October 2003 open houses) addressed the initial issues and concerns is also noted in Tables 4 to 6.

Table 3
Summary of Public Issues and Concerns
Phase 1

Issue[1]	Number of Comments				Nature of Comments
	North Branch	South Branch	Lower Watershed	Total	
Low Water (26%)	7	53	5	65	Navigation Property Damage (boats, docks) Access to property Ability to draw water Freezing intake lines Decreasing property values Smelly water Dry wells Recreation Fish and wildlife
Water Level Fluctuation (27%)	7	50	10	67	Fish and wildlife Wetlands Scenery Water Quality Makes navigation dangerous Access to/from property (can strand owners) Impossible to construct docks at correct levels Impacts trapping
High Water (17%)	8	31	4	43	Property damage (i.e., docks and boathouses) Damage resulting from ice Loss of property frontage Shoreline erosion Loss of beach area Fish and wildlife habitat Navigational concerns Flooding of wells Impacts to cruise line navigation
Water Quality (13%)	4	24	3	31	Drinking water Recreational use (i.e., swimming) Fish and wildlife Stagnation / no natural flushing Contamination through faulty septic systems
Winter Drawdown (3%)	1	6		7	Lake trout spawning, incubation and hatching Littoral zone ecology
Fish & Wildlife (10%)	3	20	3	26	Management not geared towards them Fish populations decreasing Water level fluctuations affecting loon nesting Lack of habitat More attention to levels during spawning Dried up fish eggs in the South Muskoka Moon River fish populations
Shoreline Erosion (3%)	1	6		7	Loss of property Fish and wildlife Water quality
Siltation (1%)		1	1	2	Impairs navigation Fish and wildlife

[1] Percent compared to all issues identified.

Table 4
Muskoka River North Branch
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy*[1]
North Branch (General)	Occasional flooding of riverfront property and/or artesian wells in spring	2	Occasional spring flooding is not an unusual event and cannot be controlled.
	Water level fluctuation affecting fish, wildlife and plants	1	A more natural flow regime is proposed
Big East River	Low water levels affecting boating and fish and wildlife	1	Improved early – mid summer flow, but less flow during the end of summer – early fall period. An improved 7Q10, but lower median weekly flow in summer
Fox Lake	Erosion of sand beaches resulting from lower than historical spring levels	1	No change to spring water levels.
	High early summer levels with a slow lowering to normal summer levels affects shoreline erosion, fish and wildlife (i.e., loon nesting).	3	Proposed to gradually reduce water levels from May 1 to meet more natural water regime for fish, wildlife and riparian vegetation
	A summer level of 294.4 at the Hoodstown (Fox Lake) dam seems adequate.	1	Mid-summer TOL to remain at specified elevation
Lake Vernon	Low water affecting boat navigation and docking	1	Higher summer levels.
Peninsula Lake	Late winter drawdown of water from Peninsula Lake affects littoral zone and all associated wildlife	1	Late winter drawdown reduced
	Removal of water for irrigation	1	Marginal quantity; a Permit to Take Water required from MOE for these withdrawals.
	High water in spring causes damage to boathouses and docks – especially if water is high when ice is going out	1	Ice damage potential will be similar to present situation
Fairy Lake	Property flooding and dock and beach damage due to high water	2	Spring levels similar to existing situation
	Boat and motor damage due to low water	1	Slightly higher summer levels, marginally lower late fall level.

[1] This column identifies the manner in which the Preliminary Preferred Strategy (the Case Two Option) addresses issues and/or concerns that were raised during the initial consultation for the WMP. A number of the issues and comments are not related to water levels and flows, but are factors that will be addressed by other agencies or planning processes.

Table 4
Muskoka River North Branch
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy*[1]
Huntsville Lakes (General)	Freezing of water intake levels in spring due to low water levels	1	Reduced winter drawdown level
Mary Lake	Satisfied with current management	1	Noted
	Water level fluctuation and impact on docks (i.e., water level too high or too low)	3	Number of high water exceedances will decrease, however, summer seasonal 80th percentile range will increase by 0.14m and median daily level range will increase by 0.19m
	Water pollution	3	Higher early summer flows and levels will provide greater assimilation
	Low water impacting fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, docks	1	Lake levels improved for aquatic habitat
Mary Lake to High Falls	Water levels fluctuate 5-6" affecting shoreline erosion, fish and wildlife, water quality and aesthetics	2	More consistent summer flows to be targeted.
	Poor water quality in river	2	Slightly higher base flow to improve river reaches.
	Low water levels	1	Slightly higher base flow to improve river reaches
Downstream of High Falls	Water level fluctuations	1	More consistent summer flows to be targeted.

Table 5
Muskoka River South Branch
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy
South Branch (General)	Low water levels impede recreational pursuits and affect ability to draw water	2	More consistent summer flow regime.
Little Joe Lake	Necessary to maintain current water levels	1	Operating regime proposed to improve ecological conditions in lake and downstream reaches.
Oxtongue River	High spring and low summer water levels cause difficulty crossing river	1	High spring levels not an unusual event. Higher flows expected during summer months.
Oxtongue Lake	Speed and variation of water level fluctuation effects (i.e., dry wells in summer, damage to boats, docks floating away or left dry)	2	Increase spring storage in upstream lakes and higher summer flows should improve situation.
Kawagama Lake	High water levels in the spring result in shoreline erosion, loss of beach and wetland areas and impact on docking and access	8	Lower spring and summer TOL to reduce shoreline erosion
	High water levels force property owners to change nature of their shoreline, therefore affecting fish habitat	1	Lower spring peak and summer TOL. No change to fall drawdown level
	Highest water level should be lowered by 2 ft	1	
	Reduce spring peak by 15-30 cm and raise fall low by 15 cm	1	
	Winter drawdown affecting lake trout populations	2	Significantly less differential between winter and spring levels, providing better lake trout spawning conditions.
	More consideration should be given to fish and wildlife and their habitat requirements	1	
	Degree of water fluctuation	6	
	Shoreline erosion	4	Reduced spring levels.
	Low water levels in March cause levels in dug well to be very low	1	Higher late winter water levels (i.e. less late winter drawdown) should improve water level in wells
	Low water affecting water lines in winter (i.e., freezing)	1	
	Water quality	1	No change anticipated.
Lake of Bays	High water causes loss of beaches, shoreline erosion, property damage (docks) and fisheries issues	6	No change in high water levels

Table 5
Muskoka River South Branch
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy
Lake of Bays	Winter drawdown affecting Lake Trout spawning beds	4	Improvement anticipated as differential between fall and winter levels reduced by 0.26 m
	Levels in excess of 6 in. of normal summer level cause shoreline erosion and dock damage	1	No significant change from present situation
	Low water levels are always preferable to high water levels	1	Lower summer levels proposed.
	Wide fluctuation in water levels should be restricted	2	Lower water levels will be experienced towards the end of the summer – however, still within normal operating zone
Paint Lake	Paint Lake Creek flows backward in the summer and the lake has no natural summer flushing	1	Lower late summer levels in Lake of Bays should reduce backflow.
Baysville to Matthias Falls	Water levels fluctuating up to 5 ft on a daily basis, with no advance warning, affecting fish and wildlife, wetlands, scenery, water quality, shoreline erosion,	40	More flexibility to utilize Lake of Bays operating range and greater attention to river flows. More consistent summer flow regime.
	Flooding during spring and fall causes shoreline erosion and loss of terrestrial property, property damage	13	
	Water quality (especially drinking) at low water levels	21	
	River water smells during low water periods in the summer	13	
	Low water levels eliminate access to water-access only property, affect fish and wildlife, fishing, impair water intake lines and may affect property values and enjoyment, navigation	43	
	No advance warning of water level fluctuation	6	More flexibility to utilize Lake of Bays operating range and prevent sudden flow changes.
	Rapid rate of water level fluctuation	2	
	Water pumps need replacing too often because of low water	4	Improved summer low flow regime
	Fish and wildlife impacts	14	

Table 5
Muskoka River South Branch
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy
Matthias Falls to Trethewey Falls	Low water affecting fish habitat, boating and navigation	1	Improved summer low flow regime.
	Water level fluctuation	1	
Confluence of South and North Branches	High water impacts cruise lines	1	Lake Muskoka levels similar to present situation.
	Drastic changes in water levels	1	Goal to reduce magnitude of flow changes in river reaches.

Table 6
Muskoka River Lower Watershed
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy
Lake Rosseau	Excellent management	1	Noted
Indian River	Low water levels from May to Oct./Nov. result in boats being grounded in boathouses	1	Higher early summer levels in Lake Muskoka. Higher median weekly flow during summer period.
	Shoreline erosion during high water	1	No change anticipated.
Lake Muskoka	Flooding causing damage to property (i.e., docks)	2	No change anticipated.
	Not impacted	1	Noted
	Levels tend to be within reason although fluctuation makes navigation challenging	1	Noted
	High water levels during spring runoff and ice break up	1	Normal occurrence, which is not anticipated to change.
Hoc Roc River	Siltation of the river affecting fish habitat and recreation	1	No change anticipated
	Low water in fall affecting boating and docking	1	No change anticipated
Bala Reach	Regular fluctuations of 3-4 ft result in property damage (i.e., mainly docks, boats)	1	No change anticipated. Need for management tools identified.
	Moon River water level downstream from Bala seems to be of little concern when corrections upstream are made	2	Goal to moderate river flow changes during normal operating conditions.
	Consistent water levels are important (high water floods property, low water leaves docks high and dry)	1	Difficult to accomplish as all water in Muskoka River system passes through Bala Reach on way to Georgian Bay.
	Sufficient flow to help protect water quality	1	Improved base flow during summer period.

Table 6
Muskoka River Lower Watershed
Public Issues/Comments
Phase 1

River Reach/ Lake System	Issues/Comments	Number of Comments	Resolution of Issue by Preliminary Preferred WMP Strategy
Moon River	Consistent water levels are important (high water floods property, low water leaves docks high and dry)	1	No change anticipated
	Stagnation of water resulting in poor water quality	1	No change anticipated
	Low flows and drastic fluctuations having a major negative impact on walleye reproduction and fish populations in Georgian Bay	4	Consistent flows to be maintained below Moon Dam during walleye spawning period
Gray Lake / Musquash River	Water level fluctuation makes use of the river and lake dangerous for navigation, boating and boat docking/launching	1	Signage installed by OPG. A degree of operational flexibility required to supply power to grid.

Table 7
Public Perception of Current
Water Management Effectiveness
Phase 1

River Reach/Lake	Rating								Total
	Excellent		Good		Adequate		Poor		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
General					4	67	2	33	6
North Branch									
General			3	5	2	33	1	17	6
Big East River					1	100			1
Fox Lake					1	50	1	50	2
Lake Vernon							1	100	1
Peninsula Lake					1	100			1
Fairy Lake							2	100	2
Mary Lake	2	40	2	40	1	20			5
Subtotal	**2**	**11**	**5**	**28**	**6**	**33**	**5**	**28**	**18**
South Branch									
General			3	100					3
Little Joe Lake					1	100			1
Oxtongue River					1	100			1
Oxtongue Lake					1	50	1	50	2
Kawagama Lake			2	15	2	15	9	70	13
Lake of Bays	1	9	4	33	4	33	3	25	12
Paint Lake					1	100			1
Baysville to Matthias Falls	1	1	1	1	14	18	62	79	78
Matthias Falls to Trethewey Falls							1	100	1
N/S Confluence			1	100					1
Subtotal	**2**	**2**	**11**	**10**	**24**	**21**	**76**	**67**	**113**
Lower Watershed									
Joseph River							1	100	1
Rosseau Lake	1	100							1
Indian River	1	100							1
Lake Muskoka	1	17	2	33	3	50			6
Hoc Roc River			1	100					1
Brandy Lake					1	100			1
Bala Reach							3	100	3
Moon River							4	100	4
Subtotal	**3**	**17**	**3**	**17**	**4**	**22**	**8**	**44**	**18**
Total	**7**	**5**	**19**	**12**	**38**	**25**	**91**	**58**	**155**

7.1.2 Special Interest Group Responses

The Kawagama Lake Cottage Association presented a brief to the water management planning team in January 2003 concerning the present management of the lake. Their concerns included:

- wide fluctuations in water levels
- rapid lake drawdowns
- negative impacts from these water level changes on lake trout propagation, loon nesting, safe boating and shoreline erosion
- lack of water access to properties in the fall (up to Thanksgiving) due to extremely low water levels
- late March water levels can be drawn down too low to supply water systems
- seemingly unfair treatment of Kawagama Lake levels in comparison with those of lakes further downstream where water levels appear to be more closely maintained at the target level.

7.2 Phase 2 Consultation - Presentation of Preliminary Preferred Strategy (Case Two Option)

The option development process examined various operational strategies for individual lakes and river reaches, and then modeled these potential changes in an integrated manner for the entire river system (using the ARSP model). After a series of iterations and discussions with Planning Team, Steering Committee and PAC members, a Preliminary Preferred Strategy was developed which met the overall objectives (see Section 9, Draft Plan Report) and addressed river reach and lake specific issues (to the extent possible). This strategy, termed the Case Two Option, was then assembled for public review and comment by means of open houses in October 2003. The following documents the results of that consultation process.

7.2.1 Summary of Comment Form Responses

A total of 65 comment forms were returned after the preliminary preferred strategy was presented to the public in October 2003. In addition to information pertaining to watershed location, occupation or interests, and requests for identification of specific issues or concerns, the open house comment forms asked for responses to four specific questions related to the

proposed operational regime for the river system (lakes and river reaches). The following summarizes the responses for the proposed strategies.

a) Retain Target Operating Level within the present Normal Operating Range

Of the 58 responses to this question, 76% strongly agreed/agreed with the strategy. There was 100% support from those in the Lower watershed, 87% support from the North Branch and only 53% from the South Branch.

b) Improve Lake Trout Habitat (by reducing the differential between the fall and winter drawdown levels)

Of the 59 responses to this question, 85% strongly agreed/agreed with the strategy. There were only 2 respondents who disagreed with the concept while 7 had no opinion.

c) Improve River Flows/Improve Riparian Zone (by gradually reducing lake levels over the summer season)

Sixty responded to this question, of which 77% strongly agreed/ agreed, 14% disagreed/strongly disagreed and 8% had no opinion. The strongest disagreement (26% of the local responses) was from those replying from the South Branch.

d) Maintain and/or Improve Waterpower Generation

There were 62 responses to this question, 66% strongly agreed/agreed, 10% had no opinion and 24% disagreed/strongly disagreed. The most support for this strategy came from those in the lower watershed, and those generally interested in the water planning process.

In response to a general question as to whether it was felt that the proposed water levels/flows would affect individual properties, 48 people replied of a total of 52 respondents who noted that they had shoreline property. Twenty-five thought that the proposed water levels would affect their property, 3 in a positive manner; 20 thought there would be no effect, while 3 people did not know.

Table 8 summarizes specific concerns regarding how the respondent anticipated the proposed water level/flow changes might affect their property, and identifies concerns by specific reach/lake. Some respondents reiterated similar concerns as raised in Phase 1 without necessarily factoring in the new strategy.

Table 8
Comments Regarding Specific Reaches/Lakes,
as outlined in Comment Sheet Responses - Case Two Option

Location	Comment	Number of Respondents	How Issue is Addressed by Strategy
North Branch			
General	Positive improvements, better flows in late summer	1	Agreed
Peninsula Lake	Extreme winter/fall water level drawdowns affect aquatic and amphibian life – limit as much as possible, regardless of hydro requirements.	1	The fall draw down is undertaken to encourage lake trout to spawn deeper in their shoals, and lessen the potential adverse impact of the subsequent winter drawdown. The winter draw down is undertaken to protect shoreline property.
	Impacts to amphibian communities have not been considered	1	Considered – less winter drawdown anticipated to improve conditions.
	Suggest winter drawdown be delayed to latter part of March at Mary Lake locks/more moderate approach to winter drawdown	1	Delay could result in excessive flooding if spring thaw and rains occur together. Gradual approach better for ice conditions and power generation.
	Vernon Narrows resident commented that water levels should be kept similar from season to season	1	Seasonal variability is a normal, natural occurrence.
High Falls	Nothing in the proposed plan addresses the problems at High Falls	2	High Falls is being addressed through its own EA process
	Improve hydro generation potential	1	Small improvement (approximately 1%) anticipated
Below Bracebridge	Concerned regarding: - erosion from high flows in Spring - low flows in summer affecting recreational uses - low water levels on navigation and docking	1	Improved summer base flow anticipated

Table 8
Comments Regarding Specific Reaches/Lakes,
as outlined in Comment Sheet Responses - Case Two Option

Location	Comment	Number of Respondents	How Issue is Addressed by Strategy
South Branch			
General	Proper coordination is required between dam operators so there are no sudden drawdowns between June and September	1	Draft Plan will document communication strategy between dam operators.
	Reduce dramatic/frequent water level changes Severe drawdowns leave important wetland habitat dry	2 1	Increased summer flows will help to address both concerns.
Kawagama Lake (10 respondents)	Cottage Association submission has not been taken into consideration with the proposed option. Essentially there is no change from existing conditions, it had been hoped that the inequalities in water levels would be addressed (e.g. the next lake down the system (Lake of Bays) has no change). It does not appear that anything has really been done to address the problems on this lake. Kawagama has lowest summer water levels already and these are going to be lower. Presently, twice the range of water levels on this lake as any other in the system.	4	Fall level maintained to protect lake trout spawning habitat (see Section 8). Range of seasonal water level fluctuation reduced to 1.0 m at the TOL. Spring high water and shoreline erosion concerns addressed.
	Suggest reduce gap between high and low water levels	1	Done, seasonal range of TOL reduced to 1.0 m
	Suggest fall drawdown is started 2 weeks later as cottages presently cannot be used after September	2	The model (ARSP) will be used to examine the consequences on downstream flow of delaying the start of the fall drawdown by two weeks.
	One respondent only had water access and low fall lake levels make loading and unloading boat difficult and dangerous, boathouse designed for higher lake levels	1	Fall water levels are unchanged from conditions present since 1969.
	Improvements in winter drawdown will benefit water intakes and lower spring maximum will decrease erosion potential, however, only minor improvements	1	Noted

Table 8
Comments Regarding Specific Reaches/Lakes,
as outlined in Comment Sheet Responses - Case Two Option

Location	Comment	Number of Respondents	How Issue is Addressed by Strategy
	Higher water levels in Fletcher Bay during the summer would assist accessing boat from dock	1	Higher summer water levels are difficult to achieve if one starts with lower spring levels.
Baysville Dam	Uncertain what flows are correct for this section of river but respondent has been monitoring flows and 2.5 m^3/s is too low while 48 m^3/s is too high	1	Ecological base flow (7Q2 and 7Q10) to be 3 m^3/s. Median weekly summer flow predicted to be 8 m^3/s.
Wood Lake	Water levels on Wood Lake should be maintained below 301.60 m, otherwise significant erosion occurs along the eastern shoreline	1	Maximum spring peak under Case Two is predicted to be 301.15 m.
Fraserburg	Low summer flows result in stagnant water	2	Increased ecological and summer flows will address this issue
Near Purbook	Would seem that the plan will address the vast fluctuations which occur in this area – it would appear that there will be more stability of water levels on the South Branch	1	Noted
Matthias Dam/ Trethewey Dam	Power generation targets liable to add to river level fluctuations Plan is not addressing extreme fluctuations Hourly changes will still occur Major concern is hydro generation – must be harmonization of turbine capacity Water levels above Matthias must be kept within normal 'green' band – otherwise the plan is a waste of time. Water levels should be kept within 0.5 m Base flow is shut off in summer when Matthias is not being used for peaking. This must stop.	3	Increased summer flow from Baysville dam should allow power producer to meet operating demands while still improving ecological and social situation.
Muskoka Falls	Beach at Muskoka Falls should enjoy level water levels.	1	Increased summer flow should result in more stable levels.
Lower Watershed			
Muskoka Lake	Planning a new dock – need a clear understanding of water levels for construction	1	Spring water level up to 5 cm (2 in.) higher; median summer water level range predicted to be 225.27 to 225.45 m elevation.

Table 8
Comments Regarding Specific Reaches/Lakes,
as outlined in Comment Sheet Responses - Case Two Option

Location	Comment	Number of Respondents	How Issue is Addressed by Strategy
Bala Reach/ Moon River	Any minimal water level changes on Lake Muskoka results in water being 'dumped' into Moon River giving high levels. Belief that new plan will bring higher levels and reduce water frontage of properties	1	More fluctuation in operating levels on Lake Muskoka and upstream lakes in an effort to smooth river flows (higher, more constant flows).
	Levels are often too low below Big Eddy	1	7Q2 marginally increased (to 5.8 m^3/s from 5.1 in Base Case).
	OPG understands the normal operating level required on the Bala Reach and if maintained correctly not a concern	1	Noted
	Keep water levels in the Bala reach fluctuating within 1 foot in the summer.	1	Possible during normal operating conditions, not possible during high flow events.
	Levels too low	1	Increased base flow (7Q2) below Bala dams should improve water levels.

7.2.2 Special Interest Groups Comments

Kawagama Lake Cottagers' Association (KLCA) expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed strategy for their lake, and requested a meeting with Planning Team representatives to discuss their outstanding issues and concerns. Their primary issue was the fall drawdown level, which is unchanged from the existing operating plan. The KLCA had hoped for a higher fall water level which extended further into the fall season (i.e. to Thanksgiving). The low level in late fall was noted to create concerns with water access to shoreline properties at that time of year. A secondary concern was expressed regarding the lower summer water level that would arise as a result of the lower spring peak. Given the limited inflow, large surface area, and need to maintain a minimum outflow (for ecological needs in the Hollow River), a lower summer water level would be the end result of a lower starting water level in the spring.

Residents in the Bala Reach portion of the watershed also requested that the Planning Team review the management of flows and water levels within their area of interest. MNR staff subsequently undertook a presentation to the Township of Muskoka Lakes Council Management Services Committee on December 9, 2003 to outline present operational strategies and limitations, subsequent to the successive rainfall events in November 2003 that created high flows and levels throughout the watershed. The Planning Team concluded that the present operational strategy does not allow for significant alteration of upstream lake levels (i.e., outside the NOZ) during abnormal inflow events. It was however recognized that some limited moderation of downstream flow and flow related impacts may be possible during less extreme events by application of appropriate actions and tools (i.e., municipal development restrictions, floodplain mapping, flow forecast model acquisition and utilization, installation of automatic gates at select locations, etc). Further investigation will be required.

Fox Lake residents also expressed concern that the proposed operating plan did not take their comments and requests into account, specifically related to the summer level. It was noted that the preferred summer level should be 294.37 m to reflect a traditional pattern and to reduce the continuing shoreline erosion and changing shoreline vegetation patterns caused by the current summer operational level of 294.45 m.

8 RESOLUTION OF PUBLIC ISSUES/CONCERNS

The proposed strategy was developed to balance the needs of all users of the river system (both human and animal) in light of the identified social, biological and economic values that are inherent components of the watershed. The development of the strategy was molded by the comments and concerns brought forward by the public. The manner in which issues raised by the public were addressed during the planning process is provided in Tables 4 to 6 and 8. In addition, specific consultation sessions were undertaken with select groups to discuss their issues and concerns, and provide information on operational limitations and constraints and work toward solutions to the noted issues. The results of those discussions are summarized below and provided in Attachments 4.1 to 4.3.

8.1 Kawagama Lake – Summer Levels and Timing of Fall Drawdown

Following the initial discussions with KLCA representatives, a meeting of the Planning Team and the KLCA was held (April 29, 2004) to further discuss concerns and develop a potential course of action (see Attachment 4.1, Item 1). The results of the recently completed lake trout spawning survey were provided to KLCA and discussed relative to the Case Two operational strategy for the lake. The study indicated that there is one primary lake trout spawning shoal in Kawagama Lake, and that the present water management strategy (0.62 m difference between fall and winter levels) may be exposing up to 30% of deposited lake trout eggs to desiccation or ice damage. The strategy proposed for the Case Two option is anticipated to reduce this potential damage to less than 10% of deposited eggs (due to maintenance of the present fall water level and a higher late winter drawdown level). Additional investigations undertaken in March 2004 confirmed that lake trout fry within the current winter drawdown zone (from 354.18 m to 354.8 m elevation) do not survive dewatering.

While the Planning Team and PAC recognized that low fall water levels may provide an inconvenience with respect to water access to properties during the late fall, it was noted that the proposed strategy does not change that situation, although it has not improved it either. It was noted that usage patterns have changed over the years, with people now wanting to spend a longer time at their seasonal properties, with many wishing to extend that period to Thanksgiving or later. It was suggested that the opportunity exists for the KLCA to partner with MNR in an effort to improve lake trout habitat on the lake with the ultimate goal of elevating (by some undetermined amount) the fall drawdown level, which would improve late fall access to shoreline properties. The goal of the joint studies would be to improve and expand lake trout spawning habitat to a number of new and/or previously used locations around the lake (by the placement of artificial substrates) such that the population was not restricted to the single shoal. Should these efforts be successful in encouraging lake trout to spawn on these alternate materials (and potentially at higher lake bed elevations), the opportunity may exist in the future to elevate the fall drawdown level to address fall shoreline access concerns.

KLCA also expressed concern that lower summer levels (as a result of the lower spring level) would further aggravate access to shoreline properties and asked the Planning Team to investigate options to retain the former summer level. It was also noted that the start of the fall drawdown (September 1) was two weeks earlier

than occurred on the majority of other lakes within the system. It was requested that the Planning Team also investigate options to delay the start of the fall drawdown to September 15.

An investigation of the potential to retain summer water levels at the current TOL in conjunction with the lower spring level proposed under the Case Two option was undertaken with the ARSP model (see Attachment 4.1, Item 2). The modeling exercise indicated that a lower spring and higher summer water level is sometimes attainable, although these higher early season levels results in significantly more variability in late summer water levels. Due to the need to conserve water within the lake in order to meet the higher summer water levels targeted by this option, the outflow from the lake (Kawagama) during spring and summer is lower by up to 0.5 m^3/s. Thus, during an average (hydrology) year, maintenance of the suggested level would be achievable, however downstream flows would be reduced. During a below average year, input would be insufficient to maintain lake levels, and the lake level would fall unless all outflow was eliminated. However, during years with above normal inputs (rainfall), the higher summer lake level and the maintenance of the target downstream flows would both be attainable.

Delaying the start of the fall drawdown from September 1 until September 15 serves to lengthen the summer recreation period, but also requires that the fall drawdown occur over 4 weeks instead of 6 weeks. At the outlet of Kawagama Lake, the average outflow over the September 1 to October 15 period is predicted to increase by 0.7 m^3/s under this option (compared to the Case Two option), and would result in an outflow that is similar to the Base Case value for the same period. Considering only the September 15 to October 15 period (the proposed fall drawdown period), the outflow for the new option is predicted to be about 1.5 m^3/s higher than the Case Two option, and almost 2 m^3/s higher than the Base Case. This change is however moderated by Lake of Bays, with average outflow for the same period increasing by about 1.3 m^3/s. This is less than a 10% increase over the predicted Case Two value, and would return fall flows during this period to essentially the same level as presently occur with the Base Case. A similar pattern is present at the South Falls location further downstream. This change then appears to be workable, with the changes being relatively small and largely mitigated by the storage capability within Lake of Bays. While the change would help to address the social issues identified by the KLCA, the anticipated flow increases at Lake of Bays and South Falls are not expected to create adverse effects as they are essentially the same as the Base Case flows.

Thus, the options suggested by KLCA appear to be workable under above normal hydrologic conditions, but would not be attainable during years with normal or below normal rainfall. The preferred solution proposed by the Planning Team was to establish a Best Management Practice TOL for the summer and early fall period, which would be followed when hydrologic conditions permitted.

MNR staff (K. Benner and B. Bergmann) attended the KLCA annual meeting on July 10, 2004 to provide additional information on the lake trout investigations undertaken during 2003/04 and provide a comparison on the existing and proposed operating plans for the lake (see Attachment 4.1, Item 3). Planning Team recommendations relating to lake operating levels were subsequently provided to the KLCA via letter on October 21, 2004 (see Attachment 4.1, Item 4). The proposed operating plan was carried forward into the Draft Plan report.

8.2 Bala Reach – Water Levels During High Flow Events

Bala Reach water levels during high flow events has been an issue for many years, and was a significant topic of discussion during the last water management planning initiative undertaken in the early 1980's (MacLaren, 1985). While MNR controls input to the reach via the Bala Dams, OPG controls outflows by means of Ragged Rapids GS and the Moon Dam. The constriction at Moon Chutes, further complicates the water management process when flows exceed 85 m^3/s (natural chute restricts outflow from Bala Reach to the Ragged Rapids/Moon Dam head pond). During the current planning process, concerns regarding high water levels in Bala Reach during high flow events were brought to the Township of Muskoka Lakes by the Moon River Property Owners Association following the high flow event in November 2003 (see Attachment 4.2, Item 1). Those concerns were subsequently forwarded to MNR by the Township (see Attachment 4.2, Item 2) with a request that MNR address the issues and concerns.

A comparison of the current water management activities (i.e., Base Case) and the proposed strategy (i.e., the Case Two option) for Bala Reach indicates that there is no significant difference between the two in terms of flows or water levels. Upstream lakes and associated dams are operated to relatively narrow ranges during most of the year and have limited ability to absorb flows arising from large precipitation events. MNR's operating strategy is typically reactive, and operates/adjusts the dams in response to water levels that deviate from the target operating level (either up or down). However, during periods when high runoff is expected (i.e., spring snow melt/rainfall), lakes are intentionally lowered an

additional amount (often up to 1 m) to capture a larger portion of that runoff and minimize the impacts (to lake shoreline and residents and river reaches) of these events. Even during those periods, the dams have limited ability to control flows.

In order to substantially reduce flow and water level fluctuations within Bala Reach, a large percentage of upstream precipitation events would need to be captured in upstream lakes and released under controlled conditions. While the Case Two option does allow for more seasonal fluctuation of lake levels (and hence more storage and moderation of river flows), the limited storage available in upstream lakes means that any improvements arising from the Case Two option would be very modest. In addition, appropriate tools (i.e., such as a flow forecast model) would be required to assist with decision-making (i.e., store or release and how much?) in order to effect any improvements. MNR staff (M. Phillips and O. Pastinak) attended a Council meeting in the fall of 2003 to describe the operation of the system, the present limitations during high flow events and the potential improvements that could be realized in the future.

The Planning Team subsequently responded to the Township's January 2004 letter, and noted that high water levels within Bala Reach will continue to be a result of high flow events. It was suggested that regulatory measures within the Township's jurisdiction be applied, being:

- identification of a regulatory flood level
- floodplain mapping, and
- appropriate municipal planning policy and zoning restrictions.

In addition, Policy 3.1, "Natural Hazards", of the Provincial Policy Statement requires new development and site alterations (such as filling) to be located outside of the floodplain. The Bala Reach should be considered under Policy 3.1.1 (b) of the Provincial Policy Statement, those being hazardous lands adjacent to river and stream systems, as well as Policy 3.1.2.

While floodplain mapping is not available for the Bala Reach, there is information available (such as the Bala Reach Discharge Curve) and historical flow and level data which could be used by the Township to provide direction to the general public. Further, the MacLaren report identifies a preliminary 1:100-yr flood elevation of 221.15 m CGD. Until better information is available, new development should be restricted to areas above the 221.15 m CGD elevation.

MNR encourages the Township to carry out an engineering study of the Bala Reach to determine the regulatory flood elevation, which is defined as being the greater of:

- the "100 year flood", which is the area that would be flooded on average, 1-in-100 years, or
- the "Regional Flood", which is the area flooded by a storm modeled on a particularly intense flood which occurred in Timmins in 1961, and could occur in this area.

Once the regulatory flood elevation has been established, development restrictions applying to the Bala Reach will be required in both the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law. For this area, MNR recommends that flood plain management be implemented through use of the "one zone" approach. That is, no new development, expansion of existing uses and/or site alteration (i.e., filling) should be permitted below the regulatory flood elevation.

8.3 Fox Lake – Summer Water Levels

Planning Team (K. Benner, M. Phillips and O. Pastinak) members and a PAC representative (M. Casey) attended a Fox Lake Stakeholders' Meeting in May 2003 to provide information concerning the works management plan (see Attachment 4.3, Item 1). Results from a recent Fox Lake Cottager survey (undertaken during preparation of the 'lake plan') were provided to Planning Team representatives in June 2003.

Subsequent to the publication of the Options Report (Acres, 2004), a letter was received (April 7, 2004) from a resident of Fox Lake concerning the current and proposed summer water levels. The letter (see Attachment 4.3, Item 2) noted that the present summer TOL (294.45 m) is higher than most residents prefer, and suggested that the historic summer level was lower, with the preference being about 294.37 m. It was suggested that the installation of the new dam (mid-1980's) resulted in higher water levels. It was noted that the new dam was more water-tight, and may be contributing to higher summer levels by eliminating the substantial leakage that was present with the old dam.

The Planning Team subsequently reviewed the information from the lake resident survey (June 2003, see Attachment 4.3, Item 3) and consulted historical lake level data to determine whether the proposed summer level could be maintained for the lake. The resident survey noted that the lake levels experienced during the summer of 2002 were acceptable to most residents, while the review of historical

water level data noted that summer 2002 levels were lower than normal. Consequently, the Planning Team agreed to revise the proposed operating plan to target an elevation of 294.35 by the end of summer and lower the NOZ accordingly to accommodate the change to the TOL. Those conclusions were provided to the concerned residents by letter on February 9, 2005 (see Attachment 4.3, Item 4).

9 DRAFT PLAN CONSULTATION

A preliminary version of the Draft Plan was prepared for Steering Committee, Planning Team and PAC review in early April 2005. Following critical review by those bodies, the same version was provided to the MNR Regional Office (Peterborough) for review. Comments arising from those combined review processes were then addressed, and changes arising from those reviews were incorporated into the Draft Plan prepared for public review (September 2005).

Newspaper advertisements were published and a newsletter (Attachment 5.1) was distributed to stakeholders in early September 2005 to advice of the availability of the Draft Plan and the opportunity to provide comments. Notices were placed in the following newspapers:

Newspaper	Date
Muskoka Sun	September 6, 2005*
Huntsville Forester	September 6, 2005*
Bracebridge Examiner	September 6, 2005*
Gravenhurst Banner	September 6, 2005*
Haliburton County & Minden Times	September 6, 2005*
Parry Sound North Star	September 6, 2005*

*Week of September 6, 2005

Hard copy versions of the Draft Plan were provided for public review at the following locations:

- MNR Bracebridge Area Office
- MNR Algonquin Park, East Gate Complex
- Local libraries in Dorset, Huntsville, Gravenhurst, Bala, Bracebridge and Port Carling
- Government Information Centre, Peterborough and Toronto.

Electronic versions (on CD) were also available on request (see Attachment 5.1). In addition, the report was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Registry (Number XB03E3002).

9.1 Draft Plan Review Comments

Review comments were received from the following organizations, and are summarized in Table 9.1:

- Township of Muskoka Lakes Ratepayer's Association
- Muskoka Lakes Association
- Moon River Property Owner's Association
- Kawagama Lake Cottagers Association – Water Level Committee
- Township of Lake of Bays
- Mary Lake Association
- Go Home Lake Cottage Owners Association.

The first three organizations expressed concern over the release of the Bala North site in March 2005 by MNR for waterpower development, and the potential effect of a waterpower facility at that location on Lake Muskoka water levels and outflows in Bala Reach. Comments from other organizations were predominantly favourable. Copies of correspondence are presented in Attachment 5.2.

Table 9.1
Draft Plan Comments
Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005

Date	Name	Comments
September 12, 2005	Township of Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers' Association	• The Board extends thanks to all parties for the partnership between the MNR and the power generation companies which produced this comprehensive review of the Muskoka River and appreciation for the opportunity for comment. • We are gravely concerned about the potential impact of the proposed power generation installation at the Bala North dam site on the management of Lake Muskoka and the upper lakes. • Concerned that this report was not available prior to the end of the summer season given that so many of the residents potentially impacted may not have the adequate time to review and respond to this final draft. • Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers strongly object to the development of a hydro generation plant at the Bala North dam site which would result in unacceptable and damaging fluctuations of Lake Muskoka water levels as it would become a head pond reservoir. • The Board of Directors respectfully request that this potential threat be specifically addressed in any final Muskoka River Water Management Plan.
September 19, 2005	Muskoka Lakes Association	• The Muskoka Lake Association has serious concerns with the Draft Plan – these center around the potential development of a new power generation installation on the Bala North Dam by a private investor. • The possibility of Lake Muskoka and Lakes Rosseau and Joseph becoming a reservoir for this venture seems to be a certainty, especially if the new operator is allowed to control the water flow. • The Muskoka River Water Management team has left too large a range above and below its summer target operating level. This range appears to open up the opportunities for the new operator to build up and release a

Table 9.1 Draft Plan Comments Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005		
Date	**Name**	**Comments**
		potential head of water approximately 38 cm/15 in. for production for hydro in the high need season of the summer. • This is not acceptable to the Muskoka Lakes Association, a membership of 3000 families, or any of the property owners of these lakes. It would be a significant move away from the guaranteed operational patterns of the past. • Lake Muskoka cannot and must not be used as a reservoir.
September 26, 2005	Moon River Property Owners' Association	• The members have very much appreciated the cooperation of the MNR in reviewing their concerns in the development of this plan. • It is therefore, with dismay, that we review the final draft after MNR has granted a proponent the right to seek approvals to construct a hydro generation plant at the Bala North Dam Site and take over the operation of the Bala South Dam and find no reference to this potential development in the (Draft) plan. • MRPOA respectfully requests that the MRWMP include an addendum at least to ensure that all of the values which we worked to have reviewed and considered in the development of this plan are respected by any power generation operation. • In the past, MNR and OPG have cooperated to address many issues in the management of this very complex riverine/lake like body with its complicating natural restrictions at the chutes. The potential dramatic negative impacts on the human and other life forms existing below the 'Bala dams' as a result of a power plant must be addressed in this plan to protect the integrity of the intent of the plan – to provide a more 'natural' control system for the Muskoka River.

Table 9.1
Draft Plan Comments
Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005

Date	Name	Comments
September 29, 2005	Kawagama Lake Cottagers' Association Water Levels Committee	• Acknowledge the thoroughness and completeness of the Draft Plan • Commend all who were involved with the project on the openness, process, communication and dedication that have been demonstrated form the very beginning. • Greatly appreciated your willingness to consider our submissions and to provide an effective forum on at least two occasions for discussion of issues and concern. • We were always treated with dignity and respect and we felt that you were always open and honest with us and that if you had the information, you were always willing to share it with us and to explain the reasons behind your positions and then, when possible within the terms of your mandate, you were willing to accommodate or at least to compromise. • Kawagama is a unique lake in terms of water management – a lake that historically has been regarded as a storage lake for flood control and to provide water through the winter months for power production. • Our biggest issue has always been the early fall drawdown that makes navigation difficult for most and impossible for many by the time Thanksgiving arrives. • We accepted the conclusion drawn from the Kawagama Lake Spawning Study which indicated that raising the fall drawdown should destroy the primary spawning bed and virtually wipe out the lake trout population. • On the advice of our consultant, we accepted that the October 15 drawdown target could not be changed without breaking the law which states that it is illegal to knowingly destroy fish habitat. • We were pleased with the compromise postponing the start of the drawdown from September 1 to September 15 that was reached and that has been built

Table 9.1
Draft Plan Comments
Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005

Date	Name	Comments
		into the new plan. This will bring us in line with all other controlled lakes in the watershed. • The trout spawning survey is vitally important toward supporting our lake planning goals of protecting the lake environment and ecology. We are most pleased to read that Kawagama is to be the test lake for the region and that the project is to continue in order to monitor the effects of the change in the winter drawdown aimed at lowering the mortality rate caused by de-watering and ice scouring on the primary spawning shoal that has occurred every spring for the past thirty-five years as a result of the existing management regime. • While we accept that implementation of the full plan will have to wait until the entire process is complete, we are upset that this coming winter lake trout spawning beds will be dewatered resulting in another 30% mortality. We are seriously dismayed that the implementation of the new plan has been delayed until April 1, 2006. • You can count on our support and appropriate volunteer assistance as the monitoring proceeds. We are as hopeful as you are that the changes will bring about a significant improvement in the lake trout fishery on Kawagama. • We are most appreciative and supportive of the recommendation to lower the spring target level by 10 cm in order to relieve that annual spring flooding and erosion on the east beaches. We are really concerned that this lower spring peak may result in significantly lower summer levels than we are used to in seasons of normal or lower than normal precipitation. Such a result will arouse great dissatisfaction from many of our members, especially those with already shallow water at the docks at late summer.

Table 9.1 Draft Plan Comments Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005		
Date	**Name**	**Comments**
		• We appreciate the commitment which as been built into the plan to manage the summer water levels as closely as possible to previous levels in every summer that the precipitation will allow MNR to manage to the Best Management Practice which should approximate summer levels as we have known them. It is critical that the BMP be administered very conscientiously as failure to do so in a summer when rainfall conditions permit its application will be seen by our members as an agreement that is worse than the one that we have now and will result in numerous calls from angry residents to the MNR Water Technologist and to the chair of our own Water Levels Committee. • Section 14 describes the Effectiveness Monitoring program that is implemented and we take this very seriously. We have also read Section 16 regarding plan review and renewal with great interest and care. • We realize very well that we have not been successful in rectifying all of the irritants and issues that our membership feels strongly about, however, we are confident that all of us, KLCA representatives, MRWMP planning team and your consulting firm have done the very best we could to balance competing needs in a spirit of cooperation, compromise and mutual respect we hope that our constituents, who must live with the results, will agree.
October 5, 2005	Moon River Property Owners' Association	• Letter is confirmation of the discussion at the Public Advisory Committee meeting held October 5, 2005. • They (the Public Advisory Committee members who expressed concerns with the Bala North dam proposal) assure that if petitions or huge mailings of the paper or electronic kind are required to impress the fact that there is significant public concern about the impact of a hydro generation plant at the Bala North dam site and the loss of control of the Bala South dam site on the

Table 9.1
Draft Plan Comments
Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005

Date	Name	Comments
		'more natural' Muskoka River water management plan which has been worked on for the past 3 years, such response can be produced by the MRPOA, TMLRA and MLA. Given that each of these organizations has environment protection in their mandates, single submissions were provided (to MNR) to represent all of the members. • This letter confirms the remarks that reflect serious issues among our members about the lack of information about the successful 'proponent'. Since Swift River Ltd. is not an energy company of any repute, and there has been no contact made available, concerns about the potential for the destruction of the proposed and almost final MRWMP, insofar as it applies to the Lake Muskoka and Bala Reach, are significant. • MRPOA would appreciate a response to a question about the potential impact of this hydro development on the efficacy of the flood forecast modelling which was recommended as one tool to assist in the management of the flooding in the Bala Reach. Will the proponent be required to respect this aspect of water management as well, or will there be no benefits realized by those who worked very hard to have the recommendation included in the MNR budget? • Muskoka Lakes Association, Township of Muskoka Lakes Ratepayers Association and Moon River Property Owners Association all have significant vested interest in this proposed development and will be following it closely.
October 6, 2005	Township of Lake of Bays	• Council adopted resolution: "Be it resolved that the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Lake of Bays recommends to the Ministry of Natural Resources that they continue to study the impacts of fluctuating water levels on flora and fauna."

Table 9.1 Draft Plan Comments Consultation Period – September 7 to October 7, 2005		
Date	**Name**	**Comments**
		• Resolution supports conclusions/recommendations of Ms. Judi Brouse, Director of Waters Program for the District Municipality of Muskoka dated September 16, 2005 in that the data required to fully understand the implications of water fluctuations on flora and fauna is incomplete. It is recommended that the MNR continue to study the impact of fluctuating water levels on the flora and fauna of the watershed and that operating procedures be reviewed and updated from time to time to incorporate new findings and understandings.
October 7, 2005	Go Home Lake Cottage Owners' Assoc.	• It would appear that the operating plan proposed will have little effect on Go Home Lake. • We recognize that the improved regulation of flows upstream may in fact help reduce the fluctuations in water levels that we experience. The draft plan identifies the proposed automation of one sluiceway, at the outfall of our lake, but does not include the fact that the Ministry does not have the funds to proceed with this work and are currently re-evaluating this project. We ask that more emphasis be put on the need for this improvement in the plan so that this project may proceed in the near future. • This dam is part of the Muskoka River system and therefore should be entrenched in the overall plan.
October 14, 2005	Mary Lake Association	• Noted very little change in water levels from May to October and no change to the NOZ, therefore, no concerns with this proposal

10 FINAL PLAN REPORT

The Final Plan was completed in January 2006. Hard copy versions of the Final Plan are available for public review at the following locations:

- MNR Bracebridge Area Office
- MNR Algonquin Park, East Gate Complex
- Local libraries in Dorset, Huntsville, Gravenhurst, Bala, Bracebrige and Port Carling
- Government Information Centre, Peterborough and Toronto.

Electronic versions (on CD) are also available on request from the MNR Bracebridge Area Office (705-646-8747).