

## Terms of Reference Wild Rice Communication Group

### Background:

The history of the discussions with regard the wild rice harvesting practices on Pigeon Lake can be summarized as follows:

- Waterfront residents living on the Tri-Lakes (Buckhorn, Chemong and Pigeon Lakes) have for several years been requesting that the Federal Government prepare a management plan for the harvesting of wild rice.
- In 2015, the Township requested that Federal Minister Leona Aglukag follow through on a 2012 commitment to develop a wild rice policy made by predecessor Minister Peter Kent.
- The Federal Government through Parks Canada and the seven First Nations of the Williams Treaty came together to form a wild rice harvesting working group in late 2015.
- The working group established a Terms of Reference, which was ratified on October 21, 2017, to cover various matters related to wild rice that includes the management and harvesting of wild rice, public education of indigenous history and culture along Trent Severn Waterway, and related consultation.
- The development of a strategy to manage wild rice has proved to be complex and time consuming. Residents have been waiting for a management plan that was committed to in 2012.
- Waterfront property owners are particularly concerned over the mechanical harvesting of wild rice that takes place annually in the Fall. Concerns include:
  - Use of an air boat to harvest the rice vs. the traditional non-mechanical harvesting process. The air boat is extremely loud and disruptive and often operates all day including weekends.
  - Planting of wild rice and its impact on the lakes. Wild rice fields have expanded throughout the Tri-Lakes affecting waterfront owners enjoyment of the waterway for swimming, boating and navigation. The extent of the wild rice beds has grown in large part due to mechanical seeding.
  - Safety concerns have been raised by boaters who note that the height and density of the rice beds impact sites lines.
  - Selling rice for commercial purposes vs. traditional use of rice for ceremonial and personal needs.
- Waterfront property owners on Pigeon, Chemong and Buckhorn Lakes are expressing extreme frustration over the lack of progress to address the mechanical harvesting of wild rice that is severely impacting access to the waterway and the enjoyment of their properties.

- The Township is encouraged by the fact the Working Group have ratified a Terms of Reference. There remains concern that the development of a Wild Rice Management Plan will take several more years in view of the fact that 7 years plus, have passed to bring key parties to the table to finalize a terms of reference. Residents do not want to wait another year without a plan.
- The Township has passed several Resolutions strongly urging the Federal Government through Parks Canada to finalize a Wild Rice Management Plan that addresses the following:
  - Establish a method for harvesting the wild rice that considers the needs of adjacent waterfront property owners as the current mechanical method of using an air boat generates excessive noise that is disturbing to waterfront property owners and is affecting the enjoyment of their property.
  - Establish time limits on mechanical harvesting by limiting the hours per day for harvesting and establishing no harvesting on Sundays.
- At a November 3, 2018 public meeting hosted by the Save Pigeon Lake group, Parks Canada committed to convene a multi-partner workshop to provide a forum for interested parties to discuss issues and share information related to wild rice with the objective of providing advice and recommendations to Parks Canada for consideration in the development of a broadly supported wild rice management plan.

**Objective:**

The objectives of the Wild Rice Communication Group are:

- to communicate with Township ratepayers, in collaboration with the Save Pigeon Lake group;
- to maintain awareness of the experiences, impacts and concerns of ratepayers in relation to the wild rice harvesting practices;
- to provide available updates to the Save Pigeon Lake group with respect to the activities of the Parks Canada Multi-Partner Workshop Organizing Committee;
- provide available updates to the Save Pigeon Lake group with respect to the progress of the Wild Rice Working Group (Parks Canada and seven First Nations of the Williams Treaty) on development of a Wild Rice Management Plan.

**Composition:**

The composition of Wild Rice Communication Group will be as follow:

- Council representatives - Mayor Andy Mitchell  
- Councillor Donna Ballantyne
- Save Pigeon Lake group - up to 3 members identified by Save Pigeon Lake

Additional individuals/and or organizations may be requested to provide representation to the group subject to a resolution of Council to approve the same and amend the Terms of Reference accordingly.

Staff participation will be provided by the CAO and/or Manager of Community & Corporate Services.

### **Duties and Functions:**

The Wild Rice Communication Group will meet on a quarterly basis to provide for an open exchange of information as provided for under the objectives section of this Terms of Reference. The meeting schedule will be determined by the group at its initial meeting. Meetings will be held in the Township Committee room.

The Group may invite other organizations/individuals to attend meetings as resources to present information relevant to the matters being discussed.

The Group shall be chaired by Councillor Donna Ballantyne.

If it is necessary to meet more often, or meeting this often is not necessary, meetings shall be held at the call of the Chair.

Meeting notes shall be recorded by staff and provided to the Group and to Council for information.

The Portfolio Councillor for Governance and Inter-Governmental Relations, Mayor Andy Mitchell, shall provide updates to Council with respect to new information, progress and any recommendations for action.

### **Time Frame**

The Wild Rice Communication Group will function until a Wild Rice Management Plan has been adopted by the Parks Canada through the work of the Wild Rice Working Group (Parks Canada and seven First Nations of the Williams Treaty) or until the end of this term of Council, whichever comes first.