



THE NORTHERN REFLECTION

SPRING 2026

Lake Steward's Report by Fred McConnell

Wollaston Lake Water Quality 2025 Results

As previously communicated, Wollaston Lake is situated at the top of the Crowe River system with the land surrounding the Deer River flowing into Wollaston Lake having a low level of development and few farm properties. This implies that the nutrients that occur in Wollaston Lake are most likely to originate in the lands within proximity surrounding Wollaston Lake. In recent years, Wollaston Lake has experienced (as observed through water quality testing) an increase in nutrient levels above historical levels. In past years, the most likely explanation for this increase was thought to be runoff due to more frequent, large volume, rainfall events such as the deluge in the summer of 2024 that flooded portions of Toronto.

However, 2025 was a very dry summer with drought conditions dominant and extremely low water levels. The dam was locked down the third week of June, so little to no outflow was taking place after that timeframe. As identified in the Phosphorus nutrient table following, the sampling results in the first two months of the season were well below typical. However, during the last two months of the season, the sampling levels were much higher than typical

and in the eutrophic range which is alarming for Wollaston Lake. Based on the drought conditions, the most likely cause of these high nutrient reading is septic systems. All property owners are reminded to ensure your septic is operating properly and pumped out on a recommended (every 2-3 years) schedule.

Blue Green algae was reported during a hot calm period in September. The sighting was reported to the local MECP office but dissipated before a representative could attend on site to test and verify the report. The most likely cause was the higher-than-normal nutrient levels combined with the drought conditions.

As identified through the Love Your Lake survey, fishing is one of the most popular recreational activities on Wollaston Lake. Elevated nutrient and silt levels threaten the viability of the spawning beds utilized by Lake Trout and Walleye to reproduce. Through our partnership with Watersheds Canada, cleaning/ augmentation of the materials making up the largest spawning bed was completed in September 2025. The WLHCA and Watersheds Canada have been active in applying for funding for spawning bed improvement, in addition to the continuing work to manage invasive species. This work will continue in 2026 with the second major spawning bed washed and augmented with the

correct clean granular material.

A survey of key stakeholders regarding management results and strategies for Eurasian Milfoil was completed. The results of the survey will be reviewed at this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) scheduled for Sunday August 9, 2026.

Partners

The Wollaston Lake Home and Cottage Association (WLHCA) has partnered with several environmental expert organizations such as the Trent Aquatic Research Program (TARP), Watersheds Canada, The Land Between, Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and Ontario Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks (MECP) to name a few for advice, programs, and peer review of our initiatives. These key partners will continue to be consulted as part of the permit renewal process. As part of this process the results of the survey will be reviewed with the appropriate regulatory groups.

Wollaston Lake is a cold deep naturally reproducing Lake Trout Lake deemed "at capacity for further development" by the MECP as first recognized in the County of Hastings official plan 2002. Because Lake Trout is a sensitive species that is adapted to a narrow range of environmental conditions, it is an excellent indicator of the health of fragile aquatic



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ecosystems (indicator species). It can be thought of as the “canary in the coal mine” species as it will be the first (but not the only) species to be impacted by changes to its environment brought on by several influences.

The following is an example of the type of data presentation and

comparisons with similar lakes in the area the report provides:
Total phosphorus ($\mu\text{g/L}$) is an important water quality parameter as phosphorus is a growth-limiting nutrient that supports algal biomass. Values below $10 \mu\text{g/L}$ are generally associated with good water quality and typically support low algal biomass.

Total Phosphorus (Filtered - all in micrograms per litre - $\mu\text{g/L}$)					
Date (2025)	Lake Partner Program (MECP)	WLHCA Program (Caduceon)			
	Main Lake: Deep spot	Main Lake: Deep spot	Second Lake	Third Lake	Inlet
May 29	N/A	2	2	2	2
June 25	N/A	2	2	2	3
Aug 5	N/A	9	8	14	6
Aug 26	N/A	18	15	12	14
2025 Average		7.75	6.75	7.5	6.25
Historical Avg 1997 - 2016**	6.7				

 Readings in the eutrophic (very hi) nutrient Category

*The average was calculated using all the data we have for each lake between the years of 2015-2021 which for most lakes is 4 or 5 sampling years.
Wollaston historical average is 1997 to 2017 of Lake Partner sampling data.



Photo Credit Dianne Nofle



Photo credit Stacey-Ann Sukharrie



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