

# Committee declares war on blue algae

**M**unicipalities that skirt Lake Massawippi are launching a pre-emptive attack on toxic blue-algae to avoid occurrences such as last year's outbreaks, which caused water woes throughout the region. The Massawippi regional park association, which includes representation from Ayer's Cliff, Hatley Township, Hatley, North Hatley and Ste-Catherine-de-Hatley and works closely with neighbouring MRCs of Memphrémagog and Coaticook, along with regional environmental groups and concerned citizens, unveiled a plan last week to raise awareness and develop a rapid response plan should the presence of cyanobacteria be discovered in local waterways.

The association's management team will assume responsibility for monitoring the Lake Massawippi drainage basin and are currently in the process of completing an action plan in the event that a blue-green algae outbreak occurs in the lake and its tributaries this summer. They are also taking concrete measures to minimize the risk by launching a vast public awareness

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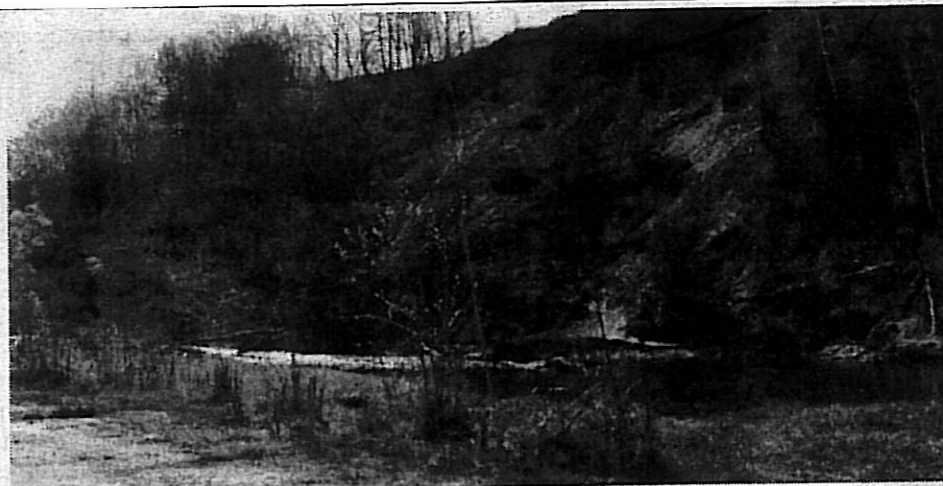
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to alert the public of their shared responsibility to ensure the quality of the lake waters.

"We all know the situation that occurred at the end of the summer of 2006," said Hatley Township Mayor and president of the Massawippi regional park association, Pierre Levac. "This year, we want to pull out all the stops to limit this phenomenon. If a crisis similar to the one at the end of the season last year were to happen, we would like to reassure all citizens that the various emergency measures in place will be rapidly made known to them by their municipalities."

An outline of policies and procedures is currently being prepared and will be distributed to the mayors, town managers and inspectors of the five municipalities concerned. All available resources, governmental or municipal, will be mentioned as will be the actions to take in the event of a disruption in drinking water because of an outbreak of cyanobacteria. This book will serve as an essential reference document for dealing with Lake Massawippi and its tributaries.



*Runoff to the Tomifobia River is a persistent problem.*

Over the last few months, the Massawippi Park Association has been working on a strategic plan to combat the blue algae phenomenon in the lake. An awareness operation aimed at the general public will be launched soon to sensitize and encourage lakeside residents to change their habits and, in some cases, their behaviour to protect their drinking water.

"For example, gestures as simple as replanting the riverbanks or not using

pesticides and fertilizers on their grounds can help limit the phosphorus content and other contaminants in the lake and give us an extra edge in avoiding the cyanobacteria blooms that might develop," noted Levac. "Not only will the shoreline dwellers of Lake Massawippi be invited to do their part, but we will make a general appeal to the entire community because the matter affects all watercourses in the lake's drainage basin."

An information pamphlet will be distributed in June to residents as well as placed in selected businesses and public places. In addition, information capsules will appear in local newspapers and residents will be able to visit a web site where information on the subject and the various-related resources will be posted. There will also be a mobile squadron that will travel across the territory to sensitize people about the best practices to adopt.

"It's important that people are aware that everyone has a role to play in this," added North Hatley Mayor Stephan Doré.

Regional municipalities will be encouraging tree planting through giveaways and workshops during the coming weeks. Ayer's Cliff held a Tree Day on Victoria Day weekend and offered a planting workshop at the same time. Residents also were given the opportunity to order different varieties of shrubs which will be given to them in the upcoming weeks.

Other talks and workshops have already been announced and will take place in the municipalities that surround Lake Massawippi.