



Lake Simcoe Needs You.

(for a few minutes)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Citizens Invited to Help Build a Lake Simcoe Website and Win a Flight around the Lake

Wouldn't it be great if all the people around Lake Simcoe could easily share news, information and concerns? The Ladies of the Lake (LOL) think so, and have partnered up with the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition (RLSC), the Windfall Ecology Centre (WEC) and four Ontario Stewardship groups to create an interactive "must go to" community website. Its purpose will be to draw in Lake Simcoe watershed residents and businesses on a daily basis.

Everyone who loves Lake Simcoe is invited to contribute ideas for the new site by taking part in a survey at www.whataboutlakesimcoe.com. The survey takes less than two minutes and those who give suggestions will get a chance to win a flight for three around Lake Simcoe with Canadian Flyers out of the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport at Oro Station, a dinner for four at Michael and Marion's restaurant in Barrie, or a Ladies of the Lake T-shirt. Public input collected from the survey site, which will run from July 5th till August 30th, 2007, will be used to construct the new website scheduled to go live in the fall.

At www.whataboutlakesimcoe.com, residents can have a say about the name of the new Lake-wide site, as well as its features. So far, some of the proposed features include: weekly Lake news, public forums, beach reports, job postings, news from volunteer groups helping the Lake, community events, kids' pages, and polls, to list a few. The survey is brief, comprising only six questions and an optional comment field. "We want feedback on how we can create a site that is interactive, popular, and a daily provider to the communities," explains LOL member Patti Dawson. "This new site will be tailor-made to residents' specifications."

Why a community website? "One of the barriers to helping Lake Simcoe is poor communications," states Annabel Slaight, one of the LOL founding members. "People on the right side of the Lake simply don't know what the left side is doing. Successful rehabilitation, protection and enhancement of Lake Simcoe depend greatly on community participation."

"The site can help people learn about Lake strategies, tools and ideas to protect it, and also network with other groups," says RLSC's Claire Malcolmson.

Brian Peterkin from Ontario Stewardship claims the site will centralize community involvement. "Our role is to safe-keep the land and water for future generations. We see this website as a way to help people get involved, see what groups are doing, and find out what they can do to help."

Also, as WEC's Hilary Van Welter points out, the site should attract visitors on a weekly to daily basis. "That's why we're involved. We want to help provide a fun go-to place, a gathering hub for people who want to save Lake Simcoe and the watershed."

But it's not just about the lake, says Annabel Slaight. "Although the main purpose is the Lake, who's to say where it will go? It's not out of the question that the site may grow to include other important community information."

The LOL, WEC, RLSC are all not-for-profit groups, and along with the Ontario Stewardship program, are championing a healthy Lake Simcoe and watershed. Their mandate is to give voice to all people who love Lake Simcoe and to bridge the gap between what governments can do and what *everyone* can do to help the Lake. CHAY FM, the York Region Newspaper Group, and Mountain Equipment Co-op have recently joined as supporters, and will provide publicity and funds towards the development of the new site.

To have your say on the future Lake Simcoe website, go to www.whataboutlakesimcoe.com.

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