

Vaseux Lake Stewardship Association

Our Timeline of Successful Action

Winter 2016

A small group of community members started working with the Okanagan Basin Water Board in an attempt to get a rototiller on Vaseux Lake to help control the milfoil. The Vaseux Lake Stewardship Association (VLSA) was a natural development of this process and was officially created to help ensure that the lake and its immediate surroundings had a voice.

July 2017

The VLSA was officially recognized by the Provincial Government as an Association under the BC Societies Act.

Board members met with the Ministry of Land, Forest and Natural Resources and formalized an agreement to dredge the siltation pond at the point where Shuttleworth Creek joins the Okanagan River each year. The pond is determined to be too small and by the fall of 2017 its size was increased to accommodate more of the flow created by the spring runoff.

March 2017

The RDOS, on behalf of the Vaseux Lake Stewardship Association, received a \$25,000 grant from the Okanagan Basin Water Board to complete the Vaseux Lake Land Use and Water Quality Assessment–Sedimentation, Nutrient Loading and Invasive Milfoil Study. This was completed by Larratt Aquatic. The study took two years and was completed in the spring of 2019.

Spring 2018

VLSA purchases the domain for a website and establishes an online presence. The association's official address is established: **vaseuxlake.com**

The public access off Hwy 97 is widened after receiving a grant of \$3000 from RDOS to allow the Rototiller into the lake. The work is completed by the fall of 2018.

Summer 2018

The public access closest to the highway on Sundial Rd is cleaned up and opened. VLSA partnered with the fire department to help remove trees and debris and make this area accessible. This venture was paid for by the Fire Department at a cost of approximately \$5000

VLSA board begins negotiations with the RDOS to ensure that the wetland by the Water Treatment plant, which was incomplete, be finished. This wetland was required by the Provincial government as a final cleansing stage for effluents from the treatment plant. It had not been completed due to costs but VLSA, with the support of the RDOS Reps for Area C and D at the time, was instrumental in standing up for the required measures that were not being done. This final cleaning stage cost over 1 million dollars to complete and helped to ensure that

heavy metals, phosphates, nitrates and other toxic effluents did not drain directly into the lake. The treatment wetland was completed in the spring of 2020.

2019

VLSA liaised with the 'Love Your Lake' program to bring it to Vaseux Lake at no cost, providing a free report to all homeowners on how to improve their property for the benefit of the lake environment. The reports were sent to all participating owners during the spring of 2020.

Signs were installed at all three public access points indicating that no motorized boats were allowed, electric or gas, on the lake. Cost \$180

2020

The VLSA led a public awareness campaign to convince the Agriculture Land Commission to turn down an application for a 35 pad trailer park due to the environmental impacts a site of such a magnitude might have on a small lake. The application was turned down in the summer of 2020 with over 15,000 individuals signing the online petition.

Spring 2020

The VLSA received a 2-year \$6000 grant from Okanagan Basin Water Board to provide water testing. Water testing was done at multiple locations around the lake, by board members each month with the main objective of determining the levels of phosphates and nitrates that were flowing into our lake from upstream. This information was entered on the Vaseuxlake.com web site and was used to monitor the treatment plants emissions as well. Project completed November 2022 with grant application to be submitted this fall for next two years.

Received \$1000 to maintain public accesses on Sundial Road and on Highway 97. This is now a yearly budgeted item by the Area "C" Director Rick Knodel.

2021

The VSLA applied and received a \$35,000 grant to study the remediation and prevention of siltation that was accumulating at the north end of Vaseux Lake. This study was completed by Water Smart Water Management Solutions in the fall of 2022 and it has provided the Province and the RDOS with a wealth of information regarding the causes, as well as potential ways to limit or reduce the impact of siltation. This project is still ongoing as the issue will not resolve on its own and requires government attention.

In November of 2021 the Association completed a survey of the general membership on the proposed bike path that was planned to run directly through the Vaseux-Bighorn Wildlife Management Area on the west side of the lake. General membership were provided with all relevant studies in relation to the proposed bike path and its potential impacts. The survey found that a large majority, 79%, voted not to have the bike path on the west side of the lake. Results are shown below.

	1) NO - Either SIDE	2) Yes - EAST SIDE	3) Yes - WEST SIDE	4) Unsure - More Info
Percent = Votes Per Question / Total Votes	46.91%	32.10%	4.94%	16.05%
Votes / Question	38	26	4	13
Total Votes	81			
# No Response	18			
Possible Votes	99			
Voter Response Turnout	81.82%			

With **82%** of our membership casting votes, the results clearly indicated to the board that the membership was not in favour of a trail / path on the **west** side of the lake. With **47%** indicating that a path on either side of the lake was unacceptable and **32%** indicating only the east side would be acceptable. These results showed that the west side was not an option for the board to consider. Basically **79%** of our membership felt that a trail on the west side of the lake would be detrimental to the environment and the Species at Risk which utilize this territory as a safe haven to either raise their offspring or rest when migrating to their summer nesting territories.

DID YOU KNOW? This wildlife reserve is currently home to thirty species included on Schedule 1 of the Species At Risk Act with an additional 19 species tracked by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre as either red- or blue-listed. Canada.ca National Wildlife

As a protected region it is only 1 of 10 Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in Canada and is the **ONLY** WMA of its kind. Vaseux-Bighorn Wildlife Management Area is the only sanctuary with such a diverse list of species because of its location at the tip of the Okanagan Desert. It is one of the rarest and most endangered ecosystems in Canada.

Summer 2022

For the first time in over 30 years the milfoil harvester was brought into the lake to help reduce the proliferation of the milfoil. Low water levels in 2023 prevented the now annual harvest from occurring. Recent good news for our lake is that a new harvester has been ordered which does not rely on water depth, so this inconvenience should not occur again.

2023

The Association is now contracting with an expert to review the Government process that led to the authorization to move forward with the bike path on the west side of the lake. The review will look at the inconsistencies of their own studies, which clearly show the recommended bike path location to be on the east side of the lake due to the potential harm a trail might cause to over 30 Species at Risk.

Over the past 6 years, the VLSA board has raised awareness of the issues affecting Vaseux Lake through media releases, television and radio interviews. Any studies referenced in this document may be requested by emailing us at Vaseuxsa@gmail.com or downloading them from our website?

We would like to thank our membership and donors for all their support with special recognition going out to *Noble Ridge Winery*. Over the past 4 years Noble Ridge has donated over \$2500 to help support our Association. As Jim D'Andre once said, " Our winery looks over one of the most beautiful lakes in BC!"

To date, the total estimated funds spent by the RDOS or acquired by the Association through grants and donations to support or benefit Vaseux Lake is \$1,079,500 on top of the annual membership fees? In the past 6 years we have collected \$5810 from membership fees.