



Environmental Stewardship Guide

Handbook for Clear Lake Estates property owners



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in consultation with Rebecca Geauvreau, FRi Ecological Services





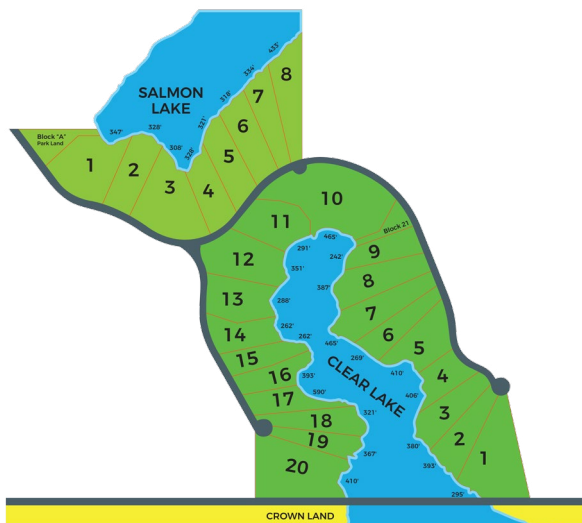
Clear Lake Estates is abundant with natural vegetation and uninterrupted tree lines. It's the home to many diverse fish, flora, wildlife and two at-risk species. This tranquil, natural setting is what makes your property so special.

Clear Lake Estates has been working with FRI Ecological Services' species-at-risk biologist Rebecca Geauvreau since 2012. FRI has been instrumental in ensuring Clear Lake development practices protect the area's native habitat. With FRI's expert assistance, this educational brochure outlines how property owners can protect and promote a healthy ecosystem on Clear Lake Estates.

This Environmental Stewardship Guide provides direction for the protection of:

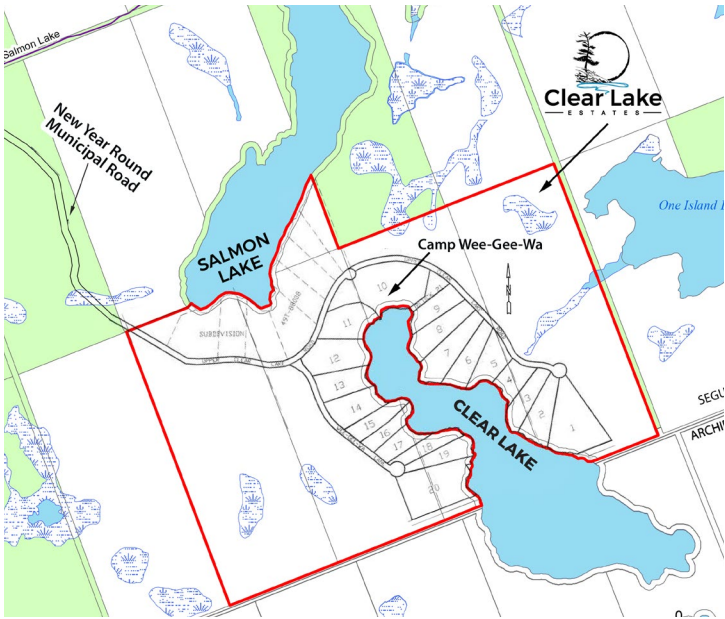
- The Lakes
- The Land
- Wildlife Habitats

About Clear Lake



Clear Lake is a small lake that saddles the boundary between the Township of Archipelago and the Township of Seguin. The lake has an interesting geography in that the southern portion of the lake is located in the Crown protected Archipelago area and the northern portion of Clear Lake is in Seguin Township, which is held under single ownership.

A Little History...



Back in the 1960s, the northern shore area of Clear Lake was home to Camp Wee-Gee-Wa, a boys hockey camp started by local minor hockey coach Royce Tennant. Tennant built the camp literally out of the wilderness.

There wasn't an ice rink but the 50-60 boys who attended the camp enjoyed the sports field, canoe tripping and water sports.

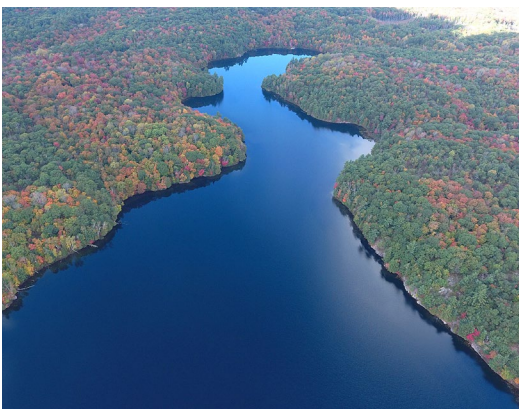
Access to Camp Wee-Gee-Wa on Clear Lake was through a narrow passageway on Crane Lake in the Archipelago that can still be navigated today in a canoe or kayak.

Fun Fact: Bobby Orr met his hero Gordie Howe for the first time on Clear lake

Bobby Orr attended Camp Wee-Gee-Wa hockey camp on Clear Lake in the 1960s. Bobby met his personal hero and fellow NHL Hall of Famer **Gordie Howe** for the first time at camp. "Mr. Hockey", Gordie Howe, made appearances at the camp as his two sons were Clear Lake campers.

The Lakes

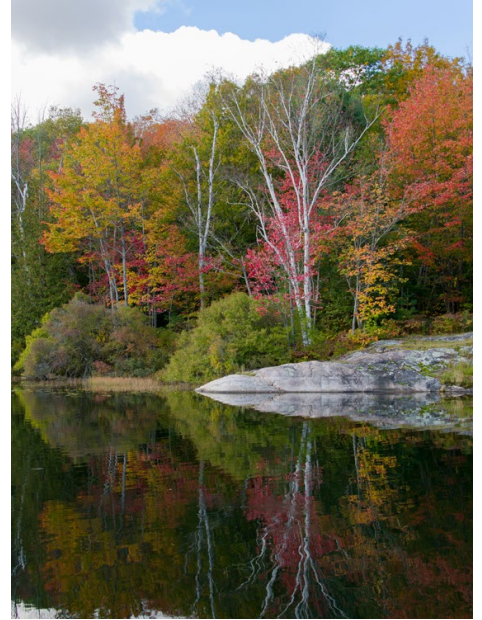
Protecting the water quality and aquatic life on Clear Lake and Salmon Lake will ensure generations to come can enjoy drinking, swimming, fishing, boating and exploring these beautiful lakes.



Salmon Lake is a cool-water lake containing a simple fish community dominated by large and smallmouth bass.

Clear Lake, also a cool water lake, connects through a narrow passage to the much larger multi-channel Crane Lake. Clear Lake contains a similar fish community to Crane Lake including largemouth bass, pumpkinseed, rock bass, smallmouth bass, and yellow perch. Rainbow smelt and black crappie have also been spotted.

The Land



Red trillium is one of the many beautiful native species that bloom annually on the Clear Lake Estates property. Look for these deep red flowers under mature hardwood maple and oak trees.



Wood fern with spores like these are found on rock cliff ledges throughout the hardwood bush, including rock ledges on Clear Lake.



Clear Lake Estates' forest is dominated with white and red oak trees. You'll find white pine trees along the Clear Lake shoreline.

The Wildlife



Clear Lake Estates is home to many animals such as the white-tailed deer, moose, beaver, great blue heron, squirrels, chipmunks, black bear, skunk, raccoon.

Keep your eyes open for moose. This majestic species thrives in the dense forests and feeds on succulent aquatic vegetation in the wetland areas on Clear Lake. You might spot a moose where the narrow southern stream connects with Crane Lake. Moose enjoy submergent and emergent aquatic vegetation like white water lilies and pond weeds during the summer. In the winter, moose eat twigs from hardwood like maples.

Did you know? Clear Lake Estates is home to two at-risk species.



The Massasauga is a stout-bodied, grey to brown snake with darker brown 'splotches' on its back, measuring 50 – 70 cm in length. It is the only native venomous snake in Ontario, similar looking to Northern watersnakes but with a rattle on the tail (representing each time their skin has shed).

Clear Lake's mosaic of wetland habitat provides ideal subterranean spaces for hibernating. The rock barrens with cracks and loose, broken or table rock are needed for females to get the right amount of sun, shade and heat units to grow and give birth.

Fast Facts The Massasauga:

- Give birth to live young (unique amongst reptiles)
- Spend more than 6 months underground when hibernating – not eating or drinking
- May stay within a 1 kilometre area for their entire life



The Eastern Hog-Nosed is a thick-bodied non-venomous snake that grows up to 1m long. They can be grey-brown with no pattern or distinctly coloured and patterned similar to the Massasauga.

The Eastern Hog-Nosed snake observed on Clear Lake Estates is typically grey-brown with no distinct pattern. The Eastern Hog-Nosed snakes are different from Massasauga as they lay eggs rather than give birth to live young. This means that a female snake needs to find a suitable nest site – typically a sandy or other well-drained site that gets enough sun and heat units for the baby snakes to grow and hatch before winter.

Fast Facts The Eastern Hog-Nosed:

- Are easily recognized because of their up-turned or 'hog' like nose!
- Use their unique snout to root through sand and other substrate looking for their favourite meal – toads

Threats to At-Risk Species

The Massasauga and Eastern Hog-Nosed snakes and their general habitat are **protected from harm and harassment under sections 9 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act, 2007**. This means certain activities are not allowed in or near protected snake habitats. Activities that could harm, harass or kill snakes as well as activities that damage or destroy their habitat require permission from the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

According to Ministry publications on these [species](#), Activities in the general habitat that are...

Generally compatible:

- General yard work such as lawn care and gardening
- Residential renovations or construction of small structures such as a shed or deck
- Continuation of existing agricultural practices such as annual harvest
- Small-scale selective removal of individual trees

Generally not compatible:

- Removal or alteration of documented hibernation or gestation sites
- Significant alteration, reduction, or clearing of habitat types such as forests, meadows, grasslands, wetlands, peatlands, shorelines, rock barrens, and alvars

The [Natural Heritage Information Centre \(NHIC\)](#) is a provincial organization that maintains a database of rare plants and animals. You can direct inquiries and report sightings of at-risk species on their website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/report-rare-species-animals-and-plants>

What You Can Do

Like all reptiles, snakes are attracted to the warm open surface that roads provide. Unfortunately, they aren't car-savvy, so roads are a real and present danger. Other threats to snakes are habitat loss and fragmentation. Having a contiguous habitat with safe access (movement) between specific microhabitats is important for protecting this at-risk species.

How you can protect at-risk species

- Watch for snakes and animals crossing the subdivision access road, especially during the active (snow-free) season
- If you see a snake, respect its space – allow it to move away on its own, take a picture! Share it and report the sighting to NHIC
- Let your guests know about the unique landscape and species they may encounter while visiting your cottage or travelling local roads
- Keep the natural buffer and forest intact as much as possible when developing and maintaining your property
- Plan landscaping to merge with the natural environment and use native species as natural vegetation on your property
- Use non-chemical means to control pests

What We Are Doing



Habitat Enhancement Area

Clear Lake Estates has created a Habitat Enhancement Area, a science-based approach to habitat management. This approach consists of nine (9) habitat circles where a previously forested habitat was cleared. This creates an open, early successional habitat for snakes. By clearing trees and exposing rocky ground, an 'edge' habitat is created. Each habitat circle will be monitored for use by snakes and the expectation is snakes will use the areas for foraging, mating, thermoregulation and gestation.

Environmental Fencing

You'll notice black fencing along the access road to Clear Lake Estates. This fencing was installed to help keep snakes and other small animals safe and off the road. Rather than crossing the road, animals are directed along the fence to 'ecopassages' under the road. Ecopassages are upsized culverts which convey or equalize water, and most importantly, allow animals to safely access habitats on both sides of the road.



On the road side, an "embossed" fence with a grid pattern lets animals grip and climb over the fence should they find themselves on the 'wrong side', ensuring an animal is never stuck inside the road corridor.

The other side of the fence – the ditch side - is smooth and has an angled lip at the top. This functions opposite to the embossed side. The smooth fencing means there is no grip for climbing and an angled lip further prevents animals from going up and over.

At both ends of the fencing where it meets Salmon Lake Road, there is a 'curl back' feature. This curl back feature redirects animals back the way they came, rather than going around the fence.

Maintaining a Healthy Eco-System

Trees, vegetation, wetlands and natural shorelines are significant contributors to the water quality, wildlife habitat and natural aesthetics of your Clear Lake Estate property.

To support a healthy ecosystem:

- Minimize tree clearing - the fewer trees disturbed means more privacy, happier wildlife and less lawn to care for!
- Avoid removing natural vegetation. Maintain a variety of healthy young and mature trees, shrubs, bushes, indigenous groundcovers, ferns, wildflowers and natural grasses. This will increase your property value and sustain the natural character of the landscape
- Refrain from planting invasive or non-native species as part of a landscaping plan
- Prevent erosion and runoff from entering your drinking and recreational water by letting the shoreline, road and side yard buffers grow
- Avoid locating structures and swimming areas near aquatic vegetation and fish habitats
- Build floating, post, pile or cantilever docks which are much better for the lake*. Don't build crib or concrete docks that block water flow
- Use untreated lumber for docks and structures in and near the water; stay clear of using treated wood, wherever possible as it can leach harmful chemicals into the lake
- Support wildlife by maintaining natural food and cover on your property, avoid feeding wildlife directly

Sustaining the wildlife and natural beauty of Clear Lake Estates depends on responsibly developing and respecting the habitat. Seguin Township by-laws ensure any development or site alteration protects the unique waterfront experience and the lake quality for both human and wildlife.

Learn more at <https://www.seguin.ca/en/explore-play/resources/livingsustainablyinseguin.pdf>

Still have questions?

Email us at info@clearlakeestates.ca with your land, lake or wildlife protection question and we'll put you in touch with the right resource.

