



Welcome to the 1st quarter newsletter for 2007. The new format was a hit so we'll continue with it.
So read on and enjoy.

Sincerely,
Miles Constable - Newsletter Editor

Check out the new BLESS Board

The following have chosen to seek a position on the board and have been elected from the membership to positions:

Miles Constable - President
Dave Burkhart - Treasurer
Louise Horstman - Secretary
Stuart Loomis - Vice President
Pat Collins - Director
Dustin Raab - Director
Lilo Engler - Director
Jacek Wiersinski - Director

I believe that we all have several jobs on the board as well as the elected positions. I am looking forward to working with a fine group of dedicated individuals.

Sincerely,
Miles Constable
President, BLESS

City Funding for BLESS Summer Nature Centre

The City of St. Albert has agreed to continue its partnership with BLESS by funding the children's summer environmental education program.

BLESS President Miles Constable made a presentation March 19 to St Albert City Council for their financial support for the BLESS Summer Nature Centre environmental education program. Their reception of the proposal was positive and warm, supporting it in full for 2007. Following years may be funded through the proposed St Albert Environmental Projects grant.

This is the first time that BLESS has requested City support for the program other than for the provision of the RCMP log cabin as a venue. That is supplied for the cost of the utilities.

The Summer Nature Centre should open the first week of July running Tuesday to Saturday mornings and afternoons. Come down and check it out with the kids, register them for the Young Naturalists Program, or just play a few games and look at critters, etc.



Webcam funded by Province

Mr. John Kristensen, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Parks, Conservation, Recreation and Sports Division of Alberta Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture sent us a check for \$10,000 to help pay for our web camera project.

This is a most important start to our implementation of the NAIT feasibility study for the installation of a cutting edge webcam in a rugged, remote location. Our next steps are to get a firm quote from a prospective supplier of a remote-capable, solar powered webcam, look to the infrastructure needed for installation and to start on finding an internet link point within line-of-sight to the camera. While it won't buy us a Cadillac system, it is a very positive start.

March 6, 2007

ADM-014-07

Mr. Dave Burkhart
President
Big Lake Environment Support Society
P.O. Box 65053
St. Albert, AB, T8N 5Y3

Dear Mr. Burkhart:

Thank you for your letter of February 2, 2007 to Mr. Archie Landals of the Parks, Conservation, Recreation and Sports Division, requesting financial support to assist with the start-up costs of producing a functional web camera prototype installation at Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park. It is my great pleasure to provide you with a cheque for \$10,000 for this worthwhile project.

The Big Lake Environment Support Society is a very important partner with the Government of Alberta in the protection and management of Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park. On behalf of my division, I would like to thank you and the other members of the society for your many contributions to this protected area over the years.

Sincerely,



John Kristensen
Assistant Deputy Minister
Parks, Conservation, Recreation and Sports Division

Enclosure

cc: Archie Landals

Upgrades and repairs

City and provincial crews have been busy out at the BLESS Platform.

Contractors hired by the City of St. Albert have been out repairing the BLESS platform, that is actually owned by the City. Over the years it became apparent that the platform was sagging and pulling apart. With some investigation it became apparent that one of the supports under the platform had slipped off of a brace. The City effected temporary repairs last summer until an engineer could look it over and determine what exactly was wrong with it, and why the support had slipped. This winter the City hired a firm to do a better repair based on the engineer's study. It seems that one of the large posts is sinking, not an unusual thing to have happen as the soil there is very soft. The solution was to jack up part of the platform until it was level and to install surface braces to spread the load of the platform over a wider area.



The platform should be open shortly.

Springing to Life

"Springing to Life at Big Lake takes place at the BLESS Platform this coming April 14th and 21st from 8:30 am to Noon. Access should be possible from the BLESS Shelter parking area, walk west along trail, under bridge, continue west on trails directly to the platform. The last section of trail is currently covered with gravel. **Bring binoculars.**"....

RAMSAR Nomination project

After a winter hiatus we have re-initiated our RAMSAR nomination process. We received approval for the project last year from the Minister of Environment and from the Canadian Wildlife Service and started to put together the lengthy report to support the nomination. Several members have worked on the project and it is progressing well, but we can always use more hands.



Wanted: Eager researchers and writers to help complete the nomination of Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park and Big Lake for inclusion on the Ramsar list of Wetlands of International Importance. See <http://www.ramsar.org/> for more information about Ramsar.

Last July, BLESS received approval to proceed with the Ramsar nomination from David Coutts, then minister of Sustainable Resource Development, who indicated the nomination would support provincial and other conservation initiatives and programs underway.

Our task now is to complete the Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) required for the nomination. There are 34 information blocks for the RIS that must be completed. When finished, the RIS will describe virtually every facet of the natural area.

A listing of titles for each information block along with the status of research and writing efforts to date is included below. We are fortunate to have access to invaluable research material in the form of the Big Lake Management Plan Phase 1 Report and associated Literature Review produced in 2002 for Alberta Community Development Parks and Protected Areas by Amec and Dr. Richard Thomas. The literature review provides a thorough list of documents relating to Big Lake that have been published in the past and summaries of key points contained within each document.

If you are interested in helping with the Ramsar nomination, please review the list below and send a note back indicating the topics you might wish to research and write about. Topics annotated *** remain to be started. An outline of information expected for each topic will be provided. Research material that is on hand will be made available for download as will assistance in tracking down additional required research material that might be identified.

I hope you can help with this worthwhile project to obtain further status for Big Lake and Lois Hole Provincial Park. We would be pleased to answer any questions you might have about this initiative and the work to be done.

Status of the RAMSAR Information Sheet for Big Lake and Lois Hole Provincial Park

1. Name and address of the compiler of this form (complete)
2. Date this sheet was completed/updated
3. Country (complete)
4. Name of the Ramsar site (complete)
5. Designation of new Ramsar site or update of existing site (complete)
6. For RIS updates only, changes to the site since its designation or earlier update (not applicable)
7. Map of site (obtained from Parks and Protected Areas)
8. Geographical coordinates (complete)
9. General location (complete)
10. Elevation (complete)
11. Area (complete)
12. General overview of the site (complete)
13. Ramsar Criteria (evaluated, criteria met for the nomination identified)
14. Justification for the application of each Criterion listed in 13 above ***
15. Biogeography (complete)
16. Physical features of the site ***
17. Physical features of the catchment area ***
18. Hydrological values (Some research done, draft underway)
19. Wetland Types ***
20. General ecological features ***
21. Noteworthy flora (complete)
22. Noteworthy fauna (some research done)
23. Social and cultural values ***
25. Current land (including water) use ***
26. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land (including water) use and development projects ***
27. Conservation measures taken ***
28. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented ***
29. Current scientific research and facilities ***
30. Current communications, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities related to or benefiting the site ***
31. Current recreation and tourism ***
32. Jurisdiction (complete)
33. Management authority (complete)
34. Bibliographical references ***

For more information, please contact BLESS at info@bless.ab.ca

Lilo Engler
BLESS

Big Lake Area Structure Plan

The City of Edmonton planning department is holding a public meeting to discuss a proposed amendment to the Big Lake Area Structure Plan, a 16 year old planning document that is being resurrected to enable a new housing development to go in near the shores of Big Lake in close proximity to Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park.

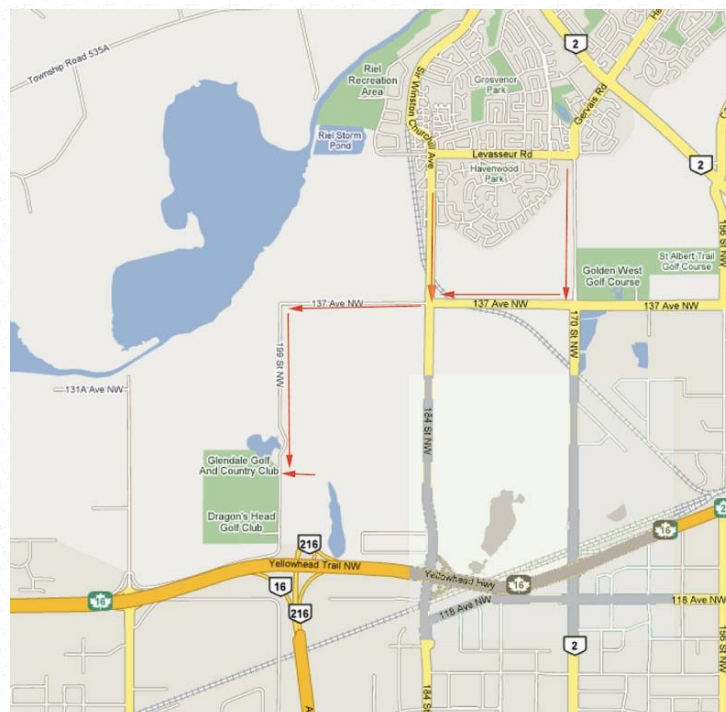
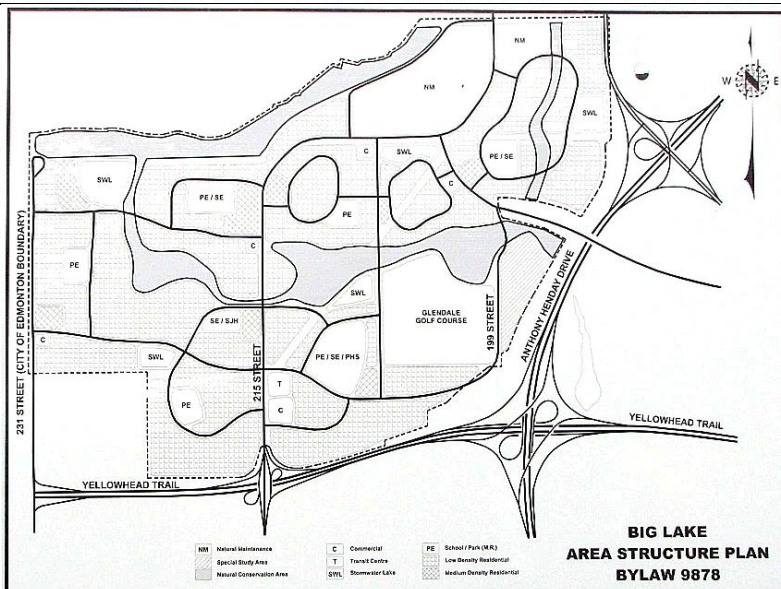
City planners will be there to gather your input to pass along to Edmonton City Council to consider when making the decision to approve the subdivision. The developer (United Developments) and its partner contractor (Stantec) will present their plans at the meeting and answer questions.

The BLESS Board of Directors will be formulating a response to the proposed development that we will send to the planning department as well as directly to Edmonton councillors and Mayor Mandel. We actively solicit your input into our submission.

City planners typically record the number of people who attend such public meetings and their affiliation to gauge the degree of support for submissions and the concerns expressed therein. This information is also passed along to city councillors who use it for the same purpose.

The meeting will be a good chance to get a sense of what is being proposed for the south shore of the province's newest provincial park. In the relatively near future we will see more than 28,000 people and some 8,000 dwelling units clustered on the south shore of Big Lake. Preliminary maps showing the location and concept of the first part of the development are posted at <http://www.bless.ab.ca/BigLakeASP/info/>

The public meeting will be held at the Glendale Golf and Country Club, 12420 - 199 Street on Thursday, April 12, 2007 beginning at 7:00 pm. It is important that



you come out to the meeting to learn more about what is being proposed and to make your viewpoint known. Please consider attending.

Directions to the Glendale Golf Course from Grandin and South Riel in St. Albert follow.

New Map of the Park

Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas installed a new map of Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park recently at the sign near the platform. It clearly identifies the current extent of the Park, which hopefully will expand further in the coming years.



Water Quality Monitoring Project gearing up

Spring, and Alberta Water Quality Awareness Day, are fast approaching. In anticipation of open water BLESS is gearing up for a second summer of sampling and analysing water samples from Big Lake.

BLESS will start it's second season of water quality sampling of the east and west bays of Big Lake as well as the Sturgeon River at the BLESS platform, Carrot Creek, the Sturgeon River at Meadowview Drive and Atim Creek at the highway. Last year due to delays in funding and assembling equipment the sampling program started in mid-July. This year it will start May 12 so that a summer-long set of samples can be collected and analyzed.

Last year Stuart Loomis and Dave Burkhart collected samples from Big Lake every three weeks with a biologist from the Alberta Lake Monitoring Society (ALMS). These samples were analyzed by a professional laboratory, but we have yet to see results. Our samples were collected once a month where possible and analyzed for: dissolved oxygen, temperature,



salinity, electrical conductivity, alkalinity, ammonia, nitrate, nitrite, phosphate, cyanide, sulphate, and silica. This is a typical suite of parameters that can tell us a lot about the general quality of the water in Big Lake. In March we also took a sample from the west bay through the ice. The water was devoid of oxygen and smelled strongly of hydrogen sulphide (rotten eggs). It isn't likely that it would support any aquatic life but bacteria.

A report on the first season of sampling will be prepared by the end of May and submitted to the Alberta Ecotrust Community Grant program.

BLESS Events 2007

- Springing to Life at Big Lake - April 14 and 21 - 8:30 - 12. At the BLESS Platform
- Earth Day, April 22 - BLESS Display at Hawrelak Park
- Next Board meeting - April 23 location TBA.
- Spruce Up the Sturgeon - May 6 behind City Hall
- Start of Water Quality Monitoring 2007 - May 12
- [Alberta Water Quality Awareness Day](#) Sampling at Big Lake - June 5
- Mayor's Walk for Charity - Saturday June 23 - starts at the Senior's Centre on Tache St.
- Summer Nature Centre - opens early July - Tuesday to Saturday - RCMP Log cabin at Sturgeon Rd and St Albert Trail
- August Summer Nature Center open - Tuesday to Saturday
- September Board Meeting
- October Board Meeting
- November Board Meeting
- Christmas Bird Count - December 26

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Dr. Margaret Mead, world renowned anthropologist