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Draft Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

A Role For Aboriginal Communities

Lake Simcoe is under stress and facing increasing pressure from urban and rural development, population growth, pollutants, invasive species and climate change. New legislation, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, calls for the province to develop a comprehensive plan to protect and restore the lake's watershed. The draft Lake Simcoe Protection Plan has been released for public consultation.

The draft protection plan proposes a framework that is comprehensive in scope and targets key priorities. These range from improving water quality in Lake Simcoe, to protecting natural heritage and resources in the watershed, to managing impacts from human activities, and emerging threats such as climate change and invasive species.

Aboriginal communities have traditional and historical knowledge about the lake and ideas on how to protect it. The draft plan recognizes the contributions made by First Nation communities to protect the health of Lake Simcoe and the special relationship that the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation have with the lake. The draft plan anticipates that Aboriginal communities will maintain an active interest in the development of protection initiatives. The draft plan provides for ongoing opportunities for Aboriginal communities with cultural, heritage or economic links to Lake Simcoe, to continue to collaborate in the design, development and implementation of programs and initiatives to protect the lake.

First Nations and Métis communities will have opportunities to assist in developing protection measures and initiatives with provincial ministries and other Lake Simcoe watershed partners. Activities that may be of interest include:

- Improving and restoring the health of aquatic life by developing fish community objectives, evaluating the value of aquatic resources, reviewing the coldwater species stocking program, and mapping aquatic habitats.
- Developing a strategy to reduce phosphorus loadings to the lake from sewage treatment plants, tributaries, subsurface sewage systems, stormwater runoff, and atmospheric deposition.

Protecting our environment.



- Protecting, enhancing and restoring natural heritage by delineating priority areas for restoration, mapping areas of high quality natural cover, identifying stressed subwatersheds, mapping undeveloped and natural shoreline areas, and developing a shoreline management strategy.
- Preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species by developing and delivering public education programs, developing a watch list of invasive species, developing a regulation to restrict the use of live baitfish, and developing and implementing a monitoring program for invasive species.
- Developing a strategy for adapting to climate change.
- Developing stewardship activities and programs.
- Establishing the Lake Simcoe Stewardship Network/Alliance and representing the interests of Aboriginal communities on the network/alliance.
- Developing policies to support sustainable tourism and recreation.

The Ministry of the Environment is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal communities have the necessary support to respond to and participate in opportunities related to designing and developing Lake Simcoe protection initiatives.

Learn more about the draft Lake Simcoe Protection Plan

The draft plan is posted on the Environmental Registry at www.ontario.ca/environmentalregistry. The posting number is 010-4636. The closing date for commenting is March 16, 2009.

More information about [protecting Lake Simcoe](http://www.ontario.ca/lakesimcoe) is available at www.ontario.ca/lakesimcoe.