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February 12, 2021

All Cabin Owners of Crystal Lake

Re: Protecting the Shoreline and Waters of Crystal Lake

This letter is to inform all the cabin owners of Crystal Lake as to their legal obligation and responsibility to protect the shoreline and the lake water.

Crystal Lake is renowned for its natural beauty and clear waters. However, as we know, the lake is very developed in terms of homes, cabins and beaches with very little natural shorelines remaining. This development affects the lake as the natural vegetated shorelines help prevent erosion, siltation and forms a biological barrier for pollutants. All cabin owners would agree that maintaining the quality of water is a top priority. In order to care for the lake's future, development must be conducted responsibly.

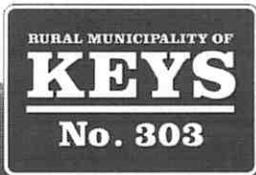
Maintaining the quality of the province's surface water is the mandate of the Water Security Agency and as such, they are responsible for managing and regulating all activities conducted near water bodies. Their goal is to manage the province's water supply, protect water quality, ensure safe drinking water and the treatment of wastewater. In terms of surface water quality, the Aquatic Habitat Protection Program protects aquatic habitat from impacts that may arise from development in, or near, water. This program also protects vegetation and habitat in the water and on the banks.

The Aquatic Habitat Protection Program uses a permitting process to regulate and manage habitat alteration, minimize soil erosion and sedimentation, reduce the impacts of construction and development on aquatic organisms and Species at Risk, and prevent the discharge of chemicals, oil, gasoline and other contaminants into water.

What does this all mean to a cabin owner at Crystal lake? Simply put, any physical work (whether by hand or machine) near the water's edge needs approval. The Water Security Agency must be contacted before any work can be conducted in or near the water. This zone extends five (5) metres back from the highwater mark, which in most cases includes a portion of the cabin's lot.

Examples of work that will require a permit:

- Constructing/repairing/altering retaining walls, patios, breakwaters or any structure
- Removing aquatic vegetation, reeds, or submerged vegetation (i.e. raking and removing chara or other weeds from the lake bottom)
- Pruning or removing trees within 5 metres of the lake shore (as measured from the ordinary or normal waterline). This includes dropping any trees within the 5-metre zone.
- Removing any large trees that are outside the 5-metre zone but which may impact the shoreline or lake (including trees or branches that may fall within the 5-metre zone).
- Any excavation (includes tilling) including adding and/or removing sand or soil or any alterations to the shoreline adjacent to the 5-metre area.
- Tilling or working up the beach or lake bottom



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- Temporary storage of any soil or other materials during construction within the 5-metre zone
- Using any equipment near or in the water
- Any physical work (by hand or machine) in the water or the 5-metre zone.
- Any permanent docks or related structures.

Please note: In most cases, seasonal boat docks whether floating, roll in or post supported are exempt.

It is important to note that in many cases, this work may be allowed with the permit establishing conditions intended to minimize any impact on the lake (as an example requiring a silt fence before working on a retaining wall). In other cases, the permit may allow the work but at a reduced scale (as an example shoreline vegetation can be cleared but only to allow a 6-foot walkway to the water or for the ability to launch a boat). However, if this work is conducted without authorization from the Water Security Agency, with a formal permit in hand, the cabin owner would be liable to legal action. Local Conservation Officers may conduct an inspection and can lay charges. Fines can be significant, in one recent occurrence, a fine of \$25,000 was levied and the cabin owner was still responsible to repair the damage and return the area to its natural condition.

More information, along with the application for the permit, is available by calling 1-306-787-0382 or going to the WSA website at <https://www.wsask.ca/Water-Programs/Aquatic-Habitat-Protection/>. Be advised it can take up to 12 weeks to obtain the permit so plan and apply well ahead of undertaking any project near the water. The best approach is to call the WSA number above to explain your project to determine if a permit is required. The onus of course will be on the cabin owner to follow through exactly as explained to WSA if advised a permit is not required.

Please be advised that Hamlet Board members, RM Reeve, Councillors and Administrator do not issue the permits or offer any kind of advice or authorizations as to the requirement for, or the interpretation and application of, the permits. The AHHP is under provincial jurisdiction and permits and recommendations are only done through the Water Security Agency.

Cabin owners are reminded that in order to maintain the quality of water in our wonderful Crystal Lake, our shorelines must be protected. The Hamlet Board has silt fence available to loan out for any permitted projects. The Hamlet Board will also be advising local contractors doing any construction or landscaping-related work of the need for permits.

We thank you for your attention to this permit requirement and for your commitment to keep the water and shorelines of Crystal Lake healthy and safe for future generations.

Crystal Lake Hamlet Board  
Rural Municipality of Keys Council