

## The 2012 Survey

### Introduction

The BLCA conducted a survey among property owners on Belmont Lake in October, 2012. We had two lists of email addresses:

- one of 196 BLCA members; and
- another of 92 non-members.

Membership, or not, was determined by payment to the BLCA by mid-September, 2012.

In addition, we had a list of 38 members with postal addresses and no email addresses. Each of these cottagers was sent a paper questionnaire, along with a postage-paid return envelope.

By using these different lists, the BLCA made every reasonable effort to include all Belmont Lake property owners in our study.

The interviews were collected throughout October. At the time of data-tabulation, we had received 145 on-line questionnaires and 16 paper questionnaires, for a total of 161 completions.

The results throughout this report are derived from the cottagers who identified themselves as BLCA members at the end of the questionnaire. A few cottagers indicated that they were non-members and their responses were tabulated separately and not considered here.

### Ratings And Rankings Of The Importance Of Specific BLCA Events

BLCA members were asked to rate the importance of the main BLCA activities to “you and your family”. A three-point scale was offered for each item: “Very Important”, “Moderately Important”, and “Not Important”.

The following table shows the percentages rating each activity as “Very Important”, and either “Very” or “Moderately” important:

	<u>Very Important</u> %	<u>Very or Moderately Important</u> %
Lobbying the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority on Issues of Importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. water-levels, maintenance and repair of dams	98	100
Lobbying the Township on Issues of Importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. taxes and by-laws	96	99
Rock-Marking	92	98
Testing Water Quality	90	99
Newsletter	85	99
Regatta	36	71
Fireworks	26	68
Calendar	19	68
Pike Tournament	17	49
Parade of Lights	14	66
Black-Out Night	11	57
Lake Party	10	45
Golf Tournament	5	25

The Association's lobbying efforts are judged to be highly important, as are rock-marking and testing the quality of the lake water. The Summer Newsletter is also seen to be important.

It is not surprising that lobbying the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority features prominently, given the severe declines in lake-levels throughout the 2012 summer.

The Regatta, the BLCA fireworks display and the calendar are all judged to be of some importance, with roughly 70% in each case indicating that they are 'very' or 'moderately' important.

The other items are perceived to be less important, with the Golf Tournament thought to be the least important, in these terms. However, it is in a relatively weak position because it is the only activity which was not held in 2012 or, really, to any extent in earlier years. Later, we will see that golfing is a reasonably popular sport among our Association members.

We also gave respondents the opportunity to tell us about any other activities which are thought to be important; we received over fifty spontaneous comments.

There were some common themes in these responses: the reduction in the lake-level is mentioned frequently, followed by a few comments on the need for speed control on the lake, environmental concerns, noise pollution, and the need for a Lake Association directory of cottagers' names, addresses and telephone numbers. Some of these subjects are beyond the BLCA's purview but we are compiling a directory of cottagers' names, etc., which should be available in 2013.

Communication-related items are also raised spontaneously and some cottagers would like to have more frequent updates on the BLCA website about social events (time and place) and the success, or otherwise, of our lobbying efforts.

We can also examine the perceived importance of the listed activities in terms of a ranking. We asked members to identify their first, second and third choices on this basis. The following table shows the percentages ranking each item as most important, and in the top two and top three.

	<u>Most Important</u>	<u>First and Second</u>	<u>First, Second</u>
	%	%	and Third
			<u>Most Important</u>
			%
Lobbying the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority on Issues of Importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. water-levels, maintenance and repair of dams	44	66	84
Rock-Marking	26	48	66
Lobbying the Township on Issues of Importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. taxes and by-laws	14	48	74
Testing Water Quality	6	20	31
Newsletter	5	9	24
Regatta	3	6	11
Fireworks	1	2	5
Black-Out Night	0	1	2
Parade of Lights	0	1	2
Pike Tournament	0	0	1
Lake Party	0	0	1
Golf Tournament	0	0	0
Calendar	0	0	0
Other	1	1	1

So, for example, 5% think that the Newsletter is the most important of these activities, 9% place it in the top two and 24% in the top three in these terms.

The two lobbying activities are very popular choices, especially dealing with the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority: close to one-half (44%) select it as their first option.

Rock-marking is also thought to be a priority and, in fact, more cottages choose it first on this basis (26%) then lobbying the Township on taxes and by-laws (14%).

Testing water quality and the Newsletter are also seen to be relatively important, with one-fifth (20%) placing the former in the top two of importance, and about one-quarter (24%) choosing the latter as one of their top three choices.

### Value For Money

BLCA members were asked to evaluate the value for money of the \$30 BLCA annual membership fee. The results are:

	<u>Value for Money</u>
	%
Excellent	47
Very Good	26) 73
Fairly Good	16
Fair	8 )24
Poor	0
Don't Know	3

There is general satisfaction with the value for money: some three-quarters of members (73%) believe it to be either "excellent" or "very good". Clearly, though, a significant minority (24%) is less satisfied.

To try to assess any reasons for being less than very positive about the value for money, we can look at the opinions throughout the study of the two groups of members: those saying "excellent/very good" and the remainder who evaluate it as "fair/poor" or "don't know".

The following tables present the percentages of the two groups who assess each of the listed topics as "very important" and as either "very important" or "moderately important". Apologies for the reams of numbers but I think they begin to establish the reasons for the differences in opinions of the perceived value for money:

Members Rating the Value for Money As:

	<u>Excellent/Very Good</u>		<u>Good/Fair/Don't Know</u>	
	<u>Very Important</u> %	<u>Very/Moderate Important</u> %	<u>Very Important</u> %	<u>Very/Moderate Important</u> %
Newsletter	90	100	74	100
Rock Marking	96	99	80	95
Testing Water Quality	91	99	88	98
Lobbying the Township on Issues of importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. taxes and by-laws	95	99	98	100
Lobbying the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority on issues of importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. water-levels, maintenance and repair of dams	98	100	98	100

First, let us look at the topics where there is little differentiation between the two groups, as seen in the preceding table. Regardless of opinions of the value for money of the membership fee, there is general agreement about the importance of lobbying both the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority and the Township. Similarly, there is widespread acceptance of the importance of rock-marking and testing water quality.

The suggested importance of the Newsletter deteriorates slightly among those with less favourable views of the value for money (74% of this group consider the Newsletter to be “very important”, compared to 90% among those who are more positive about the value of money).

However, all of the preceding topics are thought to be far more important than the remaining activities, as shown below:

Members Rating the Value for Money As:

	<u>Excellent/Very Good</u>		<u>Good/Fair/Don't Know</u>	
	<u>Very Important</u> %	<u>Very/Moderate Important</u> %	<u>Very Important</u> %	<u>Very/Moderate Important</u> %
Black-out Night	11	62	10	40
Calendar	20	78	12	40
Fireworks	31	69	10	64
Pike Tournament	19	50	10	45
Golf Tournament	5	27	5	20
Lake Party	14	52	2	30
Parade of Lights	15	70	10	56
Regatta	39	75	31	62

The Calendar is thought to be far less important among those with only moderate views of value for money, as is the Lake Party. The BLCA fireworks display generates stronger ratings of importance among those with the more favourable opinions of value for money (31% of this group think the fireworks display is “very important”, compared to only 10% among the remainder).

These three activities appear to contribute more than the others to different impressions of the membership fee’s value for money. Of course, the reverse might also be true: stronger opinions of the fee’s value for money might result in enhanced impressions of the specific activities; I will return to this topic later.

The Black-out Night is believed to be at least moderately important among the more positive group, and less so among the remainder.

There are fewer differences in these terms in impressions of the importance of the Regatta, Pike Tournament, and the Parade of Lights.

We can also compare attitudes of the two groups in terms of the specific topics which are ranked in the top two of importance (i.e. “most important” combined with “second most important”). We have:

	<u>Members Rating the Value for Money As:</u>	
	<u>Excellent/Very Good</u>	<u>Good/Fair/Don't Know</u>
	<u>Most/Second Most</u>	<u>Most/Second</u>
	<u>Important</u>	<u>Important</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Black-Out Night	0	2
Calendar	0	0
Fireworks	2	0
Pike Tournament	0	0
Golf Tournament	0	0
Lake Party	0	0
Newsletter	11	4
Parade of Lights	1	0
Regatta	6	4
Rock-Marking	52	35
Testing Water Quality	24	12
Lobbying the Township on Issues of Importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. taxes and by-laws	39	70
Lobbying the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority on Issues of Importance to Belmont Lake, i.e. water-levels, maintenance and repair of dams	66	68

There are higher rankings among those with the more positive assessments of the value for money on two topics which both groups agree are important, i.e. rock-marking and testing water quality.

As seen earlier, rock-marking places second on this basis among members in total and this is mainly due to the ranking among those who hold high opinions of the membership fee's value for money. They place far less emphasis on lobbying the Township than do those with lower opinions of the value for money (39% and 70% respectively).

So, considering all of the results so far, poorer assessments of the membership fee's value for money are related to less interest in the Calendar, the Lake Party and the Fireworks Display. Those who are somewhat critical of the value for money emphasize the importance of dealing with the Township

on tax and by-law matters. Presumably, they are not especially satisfied with the Association's efforts on this subject. However, in our defence, it is a very difficult issue to affect changes, i.e. with respect to reductions in taxes. We might address this matter in more detail in the next survey by establishing how well our members think we are performing in these areas.

Clearly, my conclusions are based on rather sketchy evidence and we encourage all cottagers, especially those with criticisms, to voice their opinions on these or other matters by either using the BLCA website or talking directly to any Board member.

#### Participation In BLCA Events In 2012

Let us turn now to the BLCA activities in which members participated in 2012. Those who did not take part in an event were asked to select a broad reason for not doing so. We have:

	<u>Participated</u>	<u>Did Not Participate Because:</u>		
		Not Aware	Not Interested	Other Plans/ Inconvenient Timing/Location
	Yes			
Black-out Night (%)	36	12	24	28
Bought a Calendar (%)	39	29	25	7
Watched BLCA Fireworks (%)	42	16	15	27
BLCA Pike Tournament (%)	3	8	64	26
Lake Party at Meyers' Cottage (%)	12	11	42	36
Parade of Lights (%)	19	9	31	40
Regatta (%)	29	1	36	33
Read the Newsletter (%)	97	3	0	1

The 2012 Newsletter has almost universal readership (97% of families have read it). The three next most popular activities achieve similar participation-levels, all being substantially lower than for the Newsletter. They are watching the BLCA Fireworks (42% say they and/or their families participated), buying the BLCA Calendar (39%) and taking part in the Black-Out Night (36%). There are more claimed participants in the Regatta (29%) than the Parade of Lights (19%), the Lake Party (12%) or the Pike Tournament (3%).

A suggested lack of awareness is more prevalent for the BLCA Calendar (29% say they were not aware) and the BLCA Fireworks Display (16%) than the other listed activities. The Association needs to do a better job of informing its members of them but, on the other hand,

the 2012 schedule of events was widely available and, in future years, members should take a few minutes to acquaint themselves of forthcoming events and their locations.

Many BLCA members (64%) indicated that they were not interested in the Pike Tournament, being a far higher level than for the other specific activities, although large numbers also said they were not interested in attending the Lake Party (42%) or the Regatta (36%). Again, the Association looks to its members to explain how these events could be made more appealing.

More members said that they were otherwise engaged at the times of the Parade of Lights (40%) and the Lake Party (36%) than the other activities. Again, the Association might try to promote these events more heavily but members could also mark their BLCA Calendars well in advance.

Participation in the Regatta was highest in households where 6-to-12 year olds “typically” spend time at the cottage (37%) and lowest in cottages with children under 5 years of age (17%), tying in with observation at the event itself. Viewing the Fireworks Display is greatest in households with teenagers 13 to 17 years (51%), compared to about 40% in the other age-ranges typically spending time at the cottage.

So, not surprisingly, age does play a role in the composition of cottagers at particular events.

Let us now look at participation-levels among those with higher and lower opinions of the value for money of the BLCA membership fee:

Members Rating the Value for Money As:

	Excellent/Very Good	Good/Fair/Don't Know
	%	%
<u>Participated In:</u>		
Black-Out Night	40	25
Buying a Calendar	48	17
Watching BLCA Fireworks	44	38
BLCA Pike Tournament	3	3
Lake Party at Meyers' Cottage	14	3
Parade of Lights	19	22
Regatta	27	34
Reading the Newsletter	97	97

So, for many of the activities, participation-levels are similar among the two groups. In contrast, more favourable views of the value for money are correlated with greater participation in buying a Calendar, the Lake Party and the Black-Out Night.

I would like to establish whether there is a causal effect or whether the correlations are spurious. In other words, do the higher opinions of the Association (seen through more positive ratings of the fee's value for money) result in greater participation in events, or does participation generate more favourable impressions of the BLCA, or is there no causal relationship at all? The conclusions would help the Board to focus its promotional efforts.

For what it is worth, I think that the more positive opinions of the BLCA tend to come first, resulting in purchasing the Calendar and, perhaps less so, in attending the Lake Party. The reverse might be a small factor too, but I fail to see how taking part in Black-Out Night has any noticeable effect on overall views of the BLCA!

Yet again, we need your input.

Although the tables are not shown here, the main, suggested reason for not buying the BLCA Calendar among those with poorer ratings of the value for money is, simply, a lack of interest (44%).

Reasons for not attending the Lake Party among the less-positive group, are, again, a claimed lack of interest (51%) but also a lack of awareness of it (24%), pointing to the need on everybody's part to emphasize when it will occur and to highlight the reasons for attending.

Interest In Current And Potential Regatta Events

BLCA members were asked to say whether various current and potential Regatta events would be of interest to them and their families. The following table shows the percentages saying "we would like this" for each event.

Members who attended the 2012 Regatta have, presumably, more interest in these activities and this is apparent in the following table, which shows the results not just among total members but also for those who attended, and did not attend, the 2012 Regatta. The results are shown in the descending order of interest among members in total.

	<u>Total Members</u>	<u>Attended the Regatta</u>	<u>Did Not Attend Regatta</u>
	%	%	%
<u>We Would Like This:</u>			
BBQ Sales/Soft Drink Sales	57	89	41
Canoe/Kayak Races	57	90	41
Children's Races	56	92	36
Paddle Boat Races	47	83	30
Sail Boat Races	44	66	33
Tug-of-War	40	68	25
Nail Hammering	40	71	24
"Fire Bucket" Brigade	39	71	21
Log Sawing	36	54	30
Adult Races	36	66	18
Dunk Tank	30	63	13
Soccer "Beat the Goalie"	27	46	19
Cotton Candy Sales	26	59	12
Limbo Contest	22	47	9

The BBQ/Soft Drink Sales appeal to many cottagers, as do races in various forms. Indeed, the types of races could be expanded in 2013 and the Board welcomes suggestions.

A Tug-of-War contest could be a popular addition. Without a description of it, this potential event performs as well as many of the existing activities. The Board has still to decide whether to include it but I see it taking the form of four-person teams, comprising at least two women, in perhaps a "best-of-three" format. If children are on the teams, and I think they should be, the judges might decide, at their discretion, whether more than four team members would be allowed.

Predictably, cottagers who went to the 2012 Regatta are more positive about these events than those who did not. What is rather surprising is the extent of the differences: people who did not go have far less interest in any of these activities than have attendees.

Again, the Board would like to hear from those who did not go in 2012 about which new activities might appeal to them in future Regattas but, frankly, it appears to be an uphill struggle.

Space was provided in the questionnaire for anyone who wanted to propose new Regatta activities which were not on the list. We received over thirty suggestions from members and they cover a wide range of possibilities but with some common themes:

- environmental information sessions; and
- more children's activities, with one suggestion being a fishing contest on that day (also mentioned as a possibility for adults).

Several other topics were also raised by one or two cottagers and they should appeal to both children and adults:

- egg toss (not part of the 2012 Regatta);
- "3-leg" races;
- Water balloon race (not described and I am not sure how it would work);
- Arts or crafts;
- Music;
- Triathlons (some combination of biking, boating, swimming and running);
- A baseball game; and
- Cottage "how to".

I believe they all have merit, apart from, perhaps, a baseball game at the Regatta. It could, though, work well at another time and place.

Although not mentioned, I think that children's face-painting would be popular but, in this and every other case, we need volunteers.

We can look at interest in the listed Regatta events by family composition: the different age-ranges "typically" spending time at the cottage. The households were split into six age-categories on this basis:

- Adults 18 to 34 years;
- Adults 35 to 54 years;
- Adults 55 years and over;
- Teens 13 to 17 years;
- Children 6 to 12 years; and
- Children 5 years or younger.

Of course, many of the age-ranges display a similar interest in the specific activities. Where there are variations, many of the differences might be expected. I have not shown the tables here but, for example, we have:

- Greater interest in children's races among households with 6 to 12 year olds (73% versus 56% among members in total);
- There is also greater interest in adults' races in these households (those with 6 to 12 year olds), with 47% expressing interest, compared to 36% among members in total.

- Presumably, the age of the adults in these households plays a part in the appeal of the adults' races, along with the fact that these parents tend to be attending the Regatta anyway and so are more interested than others in event-participation;
- Re-enforcing this theme, households with children 6 to 12 years and those with teens 13 to 17 years show similar, and heightened interest in several events, indicating the activities which attract these individuals, and, perhaps, which could be expanded in one way or another. These activities include:
    - o The BBQ and soft drink sales (about 67% in these two groups show interest versus 57% among members in total);
    - o Cotton-candy sales (!) (about 34% versus 26% among total members);
    - o A limbo contest (30% in households with teens versus 22% among total members); and
    - o A tug-of-war contest (about 51% in households with teens and children 6 to 12 years, compared to 40% among total members), underlining the need to include younger children in this activity.

Perceived Likelihood Of Using Various Services Etc. In The Belmont Lake Area In the Next 12 Months

We asked cottagers how likely they and their families are to visit or use various types of stores, entertainment facilities, products and services in the Belmont Lake area "in the next twelve months". The point of this is to help the Board to identify the interests and needs of our members, and to highlight these characteristics when talking to potential advertisers for the Newsletter, etc.

In descending order of likelihood (based on being "very likely" we have:

	<u>Percent of Total BLCA Families Being:</u>	
	<u>Very Likely</u>	<u>Very/Fairly Likely</u>
	%	%
Grocery Stores	96	99
Sam's Country Store (Cordova Mines)	56	71
Belmont Lake Marina	43	69
Golf Courses	28	42
Plumbing Services	25	56
Home Furnishing Stores	23	44
Electrical Services	20	46
Structural Changes (Deck, New Room at the Cottage, Extension, etc.)	17	38
New Dock/Dock Renovations	16	38
Antique Stores	12	38
Lawn Rangers	9	27
Stirling Festival Theatre	9	27

Westben Theatre	7	29
Havelock Country Jamboree	4	10
Real Estate Services	3	7
Marmora Country Jamboree	1	4

Predictably, virtually everybody indicates that they are likely to visit grocery stores in the next twelve months in the Belmont Lake area. Sam's Country Store and the Belmont Lake Marina are also popular choices in these terms, with about 7-in-10 members suggesting that they are at least fairly likely to do so.

Of course, for some items, it is difficult to project how likely it is that they will be used or needed within the next twelve months. Construction and skilled labour needs fall into this category, with some 16% to 25% believing that these services are "very likely" to be needed, but substantially more claiming that they are at least fairly likely to be required. Plumbing services edge out the remainder, and 56% think that plumbers might be needed on this basis (very or fairly likely to use).

The two listed theatres (Westben and Stirling) do not generate strong interest at this time with, presumably, cottagers waiting to hear which programs will be presented in the next twelve months. However, the potential exists, as almost 3-in-10 are open to considering this entertainment (being very or fairly likely to attend).

The Havelock Country Jamboree shows a similar pattern and 1-in-10 claims that they or their families will consider attending this event in 2013. The Marmora Country Jamboree is less appealing in these terms.

Some stores, companies and services would not, presumably, expect to be widely used in the next twelve months but might be content to be considered by a few BLCA members. Home furnishing stores, Lawn Ranger, antique stores and real estate services might fall into this group. Projected interest in them does, of course, vary considerably depending upon the product being considered.

Golfing is a popular hobby among BLCA members and their families; roughly 4-in-10 (42%) believe that they are at least fairly likely to visit a local-area golf course in the next twelve months. Earlier, I noted that there is little, current importance placed upon the golf tournament but the current findings suggest that the potential for a successful BLCA tournament exists. Such an event has been planned for Saturday, August 24, 2013, and we ask that all golfers check for information in this newsletter or various emails, or contact Lyle Stricker ([artistic@nexicom.net](mailto:artistic@nexicom.net)) or Donna Deas ([donnadeas@hotmail.com](mailto:donnadeas@hotmail.com)) for more details.

That is about it. Any comments or questions about this report could be directed to the BLCA website, any Board member or me, in particular.

Before finishing, I would like to give special thanks to Diane Pick for setting up the survey and tabulating the data, and to Donna Deas for typing the questionnaire and the various reports. Both of them offered tremendous support, plus some criticism, especially from my wife.

BRIAN DEAS

