



Ville de / Town of
BARKMERE

Spring/Summer Bulletin

June 26th 2024

Vol 54, No. 1



MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Dear residents of Barkmere,

A mild winter brought us an early Spring, with an ice-out that took everyone by surprise. I do not know if it was the earliest on record, but it was certainly very early. What thing seems sure: it is a harbinger of what a future with global warming will bring to us and to the natural cycles in the Laurentians.

With the melting of the snow, some good news emerged. We have gained one more year, in pushing back the forest cut on the peninsula. Representatives of the Ministry of Forests have confirmed that the cut is not in the plans for the Fall of 2024. But we are not done yet. They want to meet with the Town representatives at the end of the summer with a plan to address most of the arguments that our community has expressed during their public consultation of last year. Our position remains firm: a cut in the middle of our Town, in an area that we want to protect and dedicate to nature trails, is simply not acceptable, whatever mitigations measures they want to propose.

Talking of public consultations, we will have two coming this summer, to present and discuss the plan to protect a large swath of forests in Barkmere and Montcalm, as well as the changes that Council will propose to our urban plan. With these changes, and the new land use plan of the MRC, our bylaws will need to be revised to adapt to these newer objectives. This is very positive, as the MRC is now going the same way as Barkmere always did, which is to increase the protection of our natural assets, the forests, the lakes and the rivers.

As always, at the beginning of another warm season, I encourage you to be prudent on the waters of Bark Lake, to respect the residents of our community, by keeping away from their docks with your pontoon or speed boat, avoiding making big waves and respecting the speed limit in the village. We do not want any bad accidents to happen, and we want everyone to enjoy their time in our little paradise.

Have a good summer, looking forward to see you!

Luc Trépanier
Mayor

Our Conservation of Natural Spaces: the rest of the Laurentians is catching up to Barkmere

By: Stephen Lloyd



A quick look at our history, our website, our newsletters and our by-laws will tell you that Barkmere has always been a conservation community: it is part of our *raison d'être*. In the past, we have been a little out-of-step with our other, more “pro-development” Laurentian municipalities. But no more - they are catching up to Barkmere!

Due in part to international pressures, our provincial government is taking steps to reach the now universally accepted goal of “30 by 30”, i.e. protecting 30% of its territory by 2030. The province has even proactively called for “bottom up”, regionally-backed conservation projects to be prepared, particularly for the southern area of the province.

Our own MRC des Laurentides has enthusiastically taken up this challenge, on behalf of its member municipalities. The MRC has recognized that its natural wilderness is an inherent advantage to be protected. And it notes that only 18% of the territory of the MRC is currently designated for protection. We have some work to do.

Barkmere as you know is ahead of the curve. As discussed more fully in Councillor Jake Chadwick’s article, we have already submitted our conservation project, together with the municipality of Montcalm, for the peninsula and the inlet area extending to the Jackrabbit nature reserve.

Very concretely, the MRC has also just adopted a new *schéma*, or development plan, with very strict nature protection provisions. One of the main elements of the plan is the prohibition of new roads or the extension of current roads in our Laurentian lake watersheds. This new provision will affect virtually all of Barkmere.

Changing “development culture” in the Laurentians will be difficult and will take some time. The Town of Mont-Tremblant, long the epicenter of commercial and real estate activity in the Laurentians, has recently surveyed its citizen taxpayers. It turns out they are now massively in favour of restricting development and protecting their remaining natural heritage. The Town of Mont-Tremblant has begun to adjust its by-laws in this regard, through some initial baby steps.

However changing the prevailing Mont-Tremblant consensus will not happen overnight. Commercial real estate development around Lac Tremblant has been an entrenched community value there for ages, and there are many interests vested in that mindset. A recent series of articles in *La Presse*, describing the friction and controversy associated with the pending “Lago” luxury condo project in Mont-Tremblant, speaks to how it is one thing to adopt new environmental protection rules and it is quite another thing to enforce them. Especially when there is a lot of money at stake.

At least in Barkmere we have an existing community conservation consensus. Let’s continue to build on that consensus, rather than building up our shoreline with luxury condos!

Stephen Lloyd,
Councillor

Environment Matters

By: Jake Chadwick



ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

Three important environment subjects for this spring’s bulletin – 1) water quality testing results from last summer; 2) an update on the protected area project; and 3) introduction of a new environmental testing protocol we will initiate this year.

Summer 2023 Water Quality Results

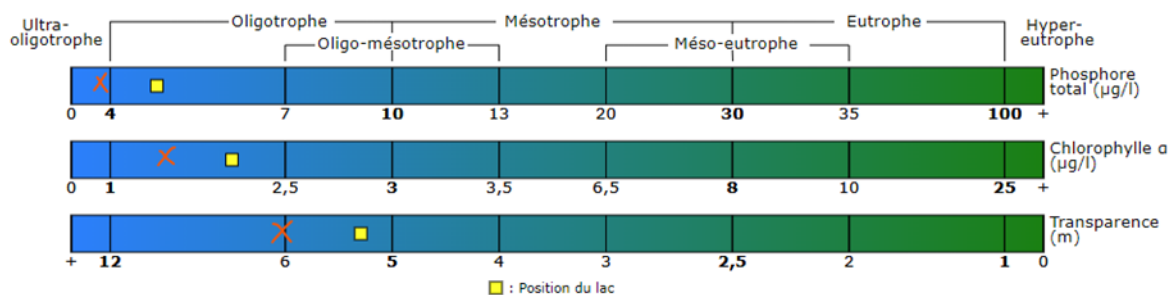
As usual, with the BLPA we participated in the annual RSVL (Réseau Surveillance Volontaire des Lacs) program of the Ministry of the Environment, the fight against Climate Change, Wildlife and Parks.

The following table highlights the results from the RSVL water quality testing program. We have superimposed with a red X the results from 2022 for comparative purposes.

Données physicochimiques - Été 2023

Date	Phosphore total (µg/l)	Chlorophylle a (µg/l)	Carbone organique dissous (mg/l)
2023-06-18	4,2	2,9	3,3
2023-07-18	5,7	1,5	3,7
2023-08-20	4,5	1,7	5
Moyenne estivale	4,8	2	4

Classement du niveau trophique - Été 2023



We can see that comparing the position of the lake in 2023 (yellow marks) vs 2022 (red Xs) that on all measures, we have shifted to the right. Has the lake aged that much over one year? Of course, the results of one year do not necessarily confirm a trend and, we have seen these numbers before. Nevertheless, any results that indicate aging are of concern. Looking at transparency for example, the average reading in 2023 was 5.5 meters vs. 6.1 meters in 2022. Although this seems to be a significant reduction, we have had several years lower than 6 meters. In 2019 for example, the average transparency was also 5.5 meters. The reasons for this lower reading could be numerous. Transparency is measured using a Secchi disk with a black and white marker that is slowly lowered into the water until it is no longer visible to the researcher's eyes. More organic matter in the water (direct result of aging) reduces visibility, but so does turbulent water, heavy pollen springs, cloudy skies, time of year, and other factors. Because of variable conditions, 15 to 20 readings are taken during the summer to arrive at the average. Results could also vary from researcher to researcher as it relies on the person's eyesight. Luckily our transparency measurements have been taken by Lyndsey Ackroyd for several years now (thank you Lyndsey!). She did comment that last summer's testing days were a bit windier than usual. A quick check of some neighbouring lakes confirmed that it wasn't just Bark Lake that had reduced transparency readings in 2023. It is for this reason that we take readings year after year so that long term trends can be measured. If you don't measure, you can't manage!

The average phosphorus level of 4.8 µg/l was higher than the 2022 result of 3.6 µg/l but similar to the 4.4 µg/l registered in 2021. You will conclude correctly that there is also quite a variation year over year. We are currently challenged in comparing recent phosphorus results with historical figures since the ministry is still adjusting historical data prior to 2017 due to a change in the testing methodology.

Bottom line, the good news is that our lake is still well within the Oligotrophic stage of its lifespan which confirms a very healthy state.

Protected Area Project

As announced in last fall's bulletin, we have been busy over the winter months advancing our protected area project together with Montcalm. Under the leadership of our project leaders Éco-Corridors Laurentiens, we have made good progress. We have gathered the support of most of our neighbouring municipalities and are now collecting resolutions of support from all municipalities within our MRC. The MRC has also been very proactive in promoting our project along with the other three major projects within the MRC. We feel that we are in a leadership position on these initiatives across Quebec with tremendous support from our local governmental representatives. It is important to note that the BLPA will be contributing their lot in Silver Bay to the project and the Town of Barkmere will be contributing three lots; two in Cope Bay and one in Silver Bay. Also in 2024 a detailed biodiversity study of the area was completed. Although our forests are "typical Laurentian", several endangered species were noted which will help our cause.

Another recent development in the project is the start of the socio-economic study. This study is being led by researchers from the University of Sherbrooke and is a requirement of the process. As part of the study, a questionnaire is being developed that will be sent to all residents of Barkmere and Montcalm to help in determining the social and economic value of the project to citizens. It's a difficult challenge – what value to YOU put on establishing this protected area? What dollar value would you put on it? Tricky stuff, but the researchers have experience with similar public benefit studies. The questionnaire will be sent to residents in the coming months.

Due to the increased interest in establishing protected areas in line with Quebec's 30 – 30 objective (described by Stephen Lloyd in his article), the government has decided it needs to make a general "call for projects" in order to assess the overall interest across the province and to help them make decisions on the various projects. Obviously, this sounds like putting additional bureaucracy in the mix potentially causing delays. Unfortunately, we have no choice but to follow the lead of the

government. That said, our project plan is ready to submit to the new process which was launch just last week.

Finally, please be advised that there will be a public presentation of the project by Éco-Corridors Laurentiens at the Community Center on July 6th at 10am. We encourage all residents to attend to get a full briefing on the project by the team and enable them to ask any questions they may have. Mark your calendars!

New Environmental Testing Protocol – Benthos Monitoring

Starting this year, we will be monitoring benthos in two main tributaries of the lake.

What is benthos testing and why do it?

Benthos testing, also known as benthic testing or benthic monitoring, involves the study and analysis of benthic organisms, which are the plants, animals, and microorganisms that live on, in, or near the bottom of water bodies such as oceans, rivers, lakes, and streams. These organisms, collectively known as benthos, include a wide range of species such as worms, crustaceans, mollusks, and various microorganisms.

Benthos are excellent indicators of the environmental health of aquatic ecosystems. They are very sensitive to changes in water quality and pollution levels. By studying the composition and abundance of benthic communities, we can detect the presence of pollutants and assess the extent of environmental degradation. A decline in certain species can signal pollution or habitat degradation. High benthos diversity typically indicates a healthy ecosystem. It helps in understanding the quality of the habitat and the impacts of human activities like road and building construction. As such, researchers believe that benthos testing is likely the best long-term warning indicator of the negative effects of climate change. By starting to collect data now we will be in a better position to anticipate and manage in the future.

The benthos measurements will be taken by biologists from our water basin organization L'organisme de bassins versants des rivières Rouge, Petite Nation et Saumon (OBV RPNS). They are trained to conduct the sampling and do the analysis. One benthos testing site is upstream from the main inlet, the second in the Cope Bay tributary. At the end of the season, we will get a “benthos score” for each site which will enable us to compare with future years’ results and anticipate the effects of climate change and other threats to the healthy environment of the lake and its surroundings. We will also be able to compare our benthos score with other lakes in the MRC who are also doing benthos monitoring. As it is a long-term determinant, we will likely do the testing every two to three years. To learn more about benthos monitoring you can reference the OBV’s website <https://www.rpns.ca/projet/rivieres-surveillees-sadapter-pour-lavenir-survol-benthos/>.

*Jake Chadwick,
Councillor*

Barkmere's New Parking area at the Landing

By: Kim Lamoureux



You may have noticed a new parking area at The Landing. This marks a significant stride in catering to the needs of Barkmere's community.

Enhancing Accessibility:

The Landing has always been a hub of activity, serving as a gateway to Bark Lake. However, the lack of extra parking in the recent years mostly around holidays and the months of July and August, has been a persistent challenge, often causing inconvenience to residents and visitors.

With the new parking area, accessibility has been greatly enhanced. Situated conveniently close to The Landing, visitors can now park their vehicles with ease, eliminating the hassle of searching for a spot or having to park at a distance and walk back.

Beyond its practical benefits, the new parking area at The Landing fosters a sense of community engagement. By providing a central gathering point, it encourages interaction and camaraderie among residents. Whether it's exchanging friendly greetings, sharing tips or simply enjoying a moment of connection, the landing serves as more than just a place to park—it's a vibrant space where community spirit thrives.

Hope you have a delightful summer!



*Kim Lamoureux,
Councillor*

Our Forest

By: Marc Frédette



Most of us agree that Barkmere is a jewel and our lake is very special. Surrounding this majestic body of water is a unique and beautiful wilderness.

The forest around us provides the perfect setting to immerse ourselves in nature. From sitting on your dock with a gentle breeze to sleeping at night and hearing barred owls, we all benefit from what the forest wants to give us.

We come to Barkmere to find ourselves and Mother Nature allows us to do this. In each of us there is a little bit of Henry David Thoreau when he said in his book published in 1854 the following:

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Over the past 40 years I have explored and walked the forest of Barkmere. Our wildlife is plentiful and very present. In addition, the forest also hides numerous historical marks for the one who wants to find it. It is like going back in time.

One can find marks from the first surveyor Allbright in 1856 or traces of the 1915 forest fires from calcinated rocks or old burnt stumps. There are small residues of fences in surprising locations in the middle of the forest from abandoned agriculture activities 75 years ago. What is fascinating is Mother Nature fights back and very slowly takes over.

We are privileged to have at proximity, the Jackrabbit ecological reserve where wildlife comes and goes such as wolves and the bald eagles. Some of us have seen wolves on the ice but the pack is with us all year around and covers huge territory. Not too far from the lake, bears are wandering. Similar for coyotes, moose and I can go on.

While you relax and reenergize, the town counselors are always thinking about an uncertain future such as developments and roads. For example, as you probably know, the team is working hard led by dedicated Jake Chadwick and our tireless Mayor to create a protected area to ensure that the wildlife can circulate and have a corridor to allow them to seek appropriate shelter and food.

We are working hard to save the peninsula also from a cut and forestry road. These forestry roads are not only a threat from an environmental perspective but from potential development including the government itself. In a municipality close to Barkmere, the Québec government is developing vacant crown land via a random draw process to promote constructions. These vacant lots are small with no lake frontage and on improved forestry roads. Barkmere is surrounded by crown land. Therefore, our beautiful forest which is substantially on crown land can't be taken for granted and we need to keep fighting to preserve the soul of Barkmere.

Have a wonderful summer!

*Marc Frédette,
Councillor*

This summer, my goal is a perfect score

By: Ken Mann



Here I sit, thinking about how to word my thoughts regarding navigation and water safety. The new season is upon us and so it is a good time to write a few reminders of course. However, what I quickly realize is, as I am about to write, that I don't have a perfect score in applying safe boating practices! I don't always wear a life jacket. I don't always insist that my passengers have their life jacket on. It can save lives. I don't slip the kill switch band over my wrist every time I drive the boat. It would cut the engine if the driver is ejected from the boat. I don't check regularly that my boat safety flashlight is working. It needs to be a waterproof one, another essential piece of equipment when navigation lights are not functioning well anymore while on the water. Safe boating practices can prevent accidents and save lives. Why not respect them all!

Make sure of good functioning of your navigation lights (turn them on when sun is going down, at night and during foggy weather), get enough life jackets for you and all passengers. Wear them rather than using them as cushion. Make sure you have all necessary safety boating equipment according to the law.

I wish you a beautiful and safe summer; and a last reminder, drive with courtesy to others.

Transport Canada has a Safe Boating Guide that is very thorough and worth taking a look:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/marine-transportation/marine-safety/boating-safety>

Below you will find an example of a recent adventure that could have ended up really bad. It is from a person well known in Barkmere who has been navigating the lake for 25 years....

On Saturday afternoon, May 18th, I was driving back to the landing with my little 14' aluminum boat, to pick up my daughter after her day of work. Like usual, when I use that boat, I put my life vest on, as I know it can easily flip over, if there is too much wind or big waves. And I am not a good swimmer. As I reached the Main bay, I noticed that one of my dock lines was floating behind the boat. Afraid that it would get caught in the propeller, I raised myself from my seat to try to reach it and bring it back aboard.

I did not put the motor on neutral, just turned down the throttle to nothing, feeling it was safe enough, and kept my hand on the throttle. Standing up, I unbalanced the boat, and here I go overboard.

As I am falling, my hand grabs the throttle, and ends up turning it to the maximum, while steering the motor completely to the left. I also found out that, like most people, I did not attach the kill switch to my wrist or my life jacket.

When I resurface, I see my boat going full speed in crazy circles while moving slowly towards me. I managed to swim clumsily away, and got picked up by some good young people who happened to be nearby. As I sat scared about what happened, I think that I was just lucky to be alive.

Two good Samaritans passing by managed after a long time to catch up with my boat and to pull the switch off.

Conclusion: if they put a kill switch on motors, there is a reason for it. And do not stand in a moving boat, and if you have to, make sure the motor is in neutral.

*Ken Mann,
Councillor*

The pride of being in Barkmere

By: Marie-Hélène Lemarbre



This summer, I would like us to take the time to highlight the importance of our community. Our lake and its territory would not be what they are without it. It is thanks to this community that we have been able, for almost a century, to preserve our natural and undeveloped lake. Preserving the natural and wild appearance of Barkmere is the founding element of our community and our municipality. As my colleague Stephen Lloyd mentioned in his article, many municipalities in the MRC des Laurentides want to follow Barkmere's footsteps in land conservation. This shows how visionary the founders of Barkmere were.

All the work we do together is essential and we must not give up. Since I have been at the lake, your community always touched my heart. You know this already, I have written it in a few newsletter articles. At the risk of repeating myself, I did not choose Barkmere by chance. Everything that Barkmere embodies has won me over and I am really proud to now be a part of it. I love working with you. I feel like what we do is super important.

We are lucky, in Barkmere, to enjoy rich nature and to practice several leisure activities. The environment is extraordinary for taking long walks in the forest, for canoe, kayak, paddleboard rides, for gathering for sailing, for regattas, for exceptional fishing, for swimming in magnificent water, for boat rides, for all the activities organized by the BLPA and so on. To ensure that all this happens respectfully and so that everyone can benefit, the community has worked together to establish a code of conduct. It is available at city hall if you haven't already had it. This allows everyone to enjoy the lake and its environment while respecting the dear wish of our community of preserving our nature. I think we have everything we need to have a great summer. I hope you enjoy your lake, beautiful moments with family and friends and the stunning beauty of our little corner of paradise. Happy 2024 season!

*Marie-Hélène Lemarbre,
Councillor*

The Director General's column

By: **Martin Paul Gélinas**



Spring 2024 is here at last.

I'd like to take this opportunity to point out that this year, landing attendants will be a little more insistent in asking you to park your motor vehicle so as to optimize the use of our parking lot. The aim is to avoid having to create more parking spaces. We owe it to ourselves to protect the green spaces surrounding the Town Hall. From time to time, we will ask you to identify yourselves so that we can warn you in the event of a problem. In years gone by, we've found a bunch of keys on the ground near a vehicle, or a sunroof that had been left open, and so on. We would have appreciated it if we could have contacted the owner to inform him or her of the situation.

I ask you to respect the instructions given to you by these young people and to support them in their work. They are eager to help you and to succeed in our mission to avoid unduly expanding the parking lot. This spring's improvements should meet our needs. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

SEMI-BURIED CONTAINERS

Around October, we plan to install semi-buried containers to replace those currently in place, which nobody really appreciates. The aim of these new containers is to reduce odours, since the majority of materials end up underground, to reduce the intake of large objects through a smaller opening, to facilitate access to the opening since it is more accessible and smaller, and finally, the aesthetics of this equipment is more pleasant than the current situation. Another advantage of this project is that it will be entirely financed by the GST-sharing program, so there will be no additional cost to taxpayers.

Of course, I wouldn't want to end my message without reminding you that all Town employees are here to help you, and that all your requests are welcome. I wish you a wonderful summer.

*Martin Paul Gélinas,
Director general*

The Administrative Assistant's column

By: Shanny Larose



As we embrace the busy summer season, here are some important reminders and updates to ensure a smooth and enjoyable time for everyone. Our office is open daily from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. Please feel free to reach out during these hours for any assistance you might need.

Our summer staff

We're delighted to introduce our dedicated team of landing attendants: Daphnë, Zoé, Oscar, Mathilde and Frédérick. They are committed to keeping our water quality and environment clean and safe. We're glad to have them with us this summer!

Fireworks throughout the territory

Please note that fireworks are prohibited in Barkmere under Section 270 of the Nuisance Act. The particles from these fireworks are harmful to the health of the lake and the surrounding forest. You can consult this bylaw on our website to learn more: http://barkmere.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/271_FR_Nuisances.pdf

Milfoil monitoring

Between July 1 and August 15, we encourage everyone to monitor their shoreline for milfoil or any other anomaly. Your observations are crucial to maintaining the health of our lake. You can submit your reports to the CEAP program: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1D54Z3ZLZKpHhhVb5yl5dCR-CCBJUFFzifN9nwVePitU/edit>

To this end, we are planning to form a team to eventually take over from our divers Sylvain Miller and Annie Létourneau. It's essential to be able to count on this kind of succession to ensure we can control milfoil for years to come.

Enjoy the sunshine and have a great summer! We look forward to seeing you enjoying this beautiful season.

*Shanny Larose,
Administrative assistant*

The Inspector's column

By: Annie Larocque



Have a good summer!

Shoreline protection

I'd like to take the opportunity of this newsletter to remind you of certain provisions concerning shoreline protection contained in the town planning bylaws.

These provisions demonstrate our concern for protecting the shores of Bark Lake, water quality and the aquatic environment.

Lakes and watercourses are complex and fragile ecosystems, and we must all play our part in maintaining the quality of the water in Bark Lake, which is our greatest asset.

In order to maintain the shoreline of a lake or watercourse, development or maintenance work aimed at controlling vegetation, such as grass cutting and brush clearing, is prohibited within 15 metres of the shoreline. Vegetation retains and eliminates pollutants from runoff before they reach the lake.

This summer, we will be paying special attention to compliance with shoreline protection regulations.

If you have any questions, please refer to the town planning bylaws or contact me, I'll be happy to answer them.

We also remind you of the following points:

Limit boat speed to avoid waves that cause bank erosion. Speed in shallow areas suspends nutrients in the water, promoting the growth of algae and aquatic plants;

Use phosphate-free cleaning products;

Wash all boats to protect the water. One source of contamination by foreign species is the movement of boats from one body of water to another;

Do not place flower pots on docks or shorelines. Fertilizer causes the same damage to the lake as nutrients from many septic tanks dumped into the water.

Outdoor lighting

I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind you that no exterior lighting attached to a boathouse or dock is permitted.

Within a five-metre strip of shoreline, no ground-mounted lights or other exterior lighting devices are permitted.

In addition, for safety reasons, docks must be equipped with reflective tape on at least two sides.

Please ask me if you need a building permit or certificate of authorization, and what documents you need to enclose with your application.

I'll be happy to answer your questions and help you with your projects.

*Annie Larocque,
Inspector*

INFORMATION ON CITY HALL



OPENING HOURS

June 21st 2024 to October 2024

Open everyday from 8:30am to 4:30pm

Mayor:	819-681-3374, ext. 5100	maire@barkmere.ca
Director General and Treasurer:	819-681-3374, ext. 5101	dg@barkmere.ca
Finances (tax bill):	819-681-3374, ext. 5102	finance@barkmere.ca
Communications:	819-681-3374, ext. 5100	communications@barkmere.ca
Urbanism and infrastructures:	819-681-3374, ext. 5103	inspecteur@barkmere.ca

