Safe Quiet Lakes

Stakeholder Research
Port Carling, Ontario
April 13, 2015

by ERIN Research Inc.

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Safe Quiet Lakes (SQL) was formed in 2011 by representatives of lake associations in Central Ontario. It works collaboratively with lake community stakeholders to promote safer and quieter lakes.

Safe Quiet Lakes held its second annual Stakeholders Meeting on April 13, 2015 in Port Carling, Ontario.

Of the 66 participants, approximately half were representatives of the lake associations in the surrounding area, while half were elected officials, representatives of boating organizations, representatives of boating/water sports industries, the Ontario Provincial Police, and marina owners. Directors and members of SQL also attended. A list of the participating stakeholders appears in the Appendix.

At the meeting, stakeholders participated in two complementary research activities designed by ERIN Research Inc. They completed a short questionnaire and they participated in small group discussions. The focus of the research was on the impact that SQL has had to date and what SQL and its partners might do in the future. The high level results of the survey and group discussions are presented following.
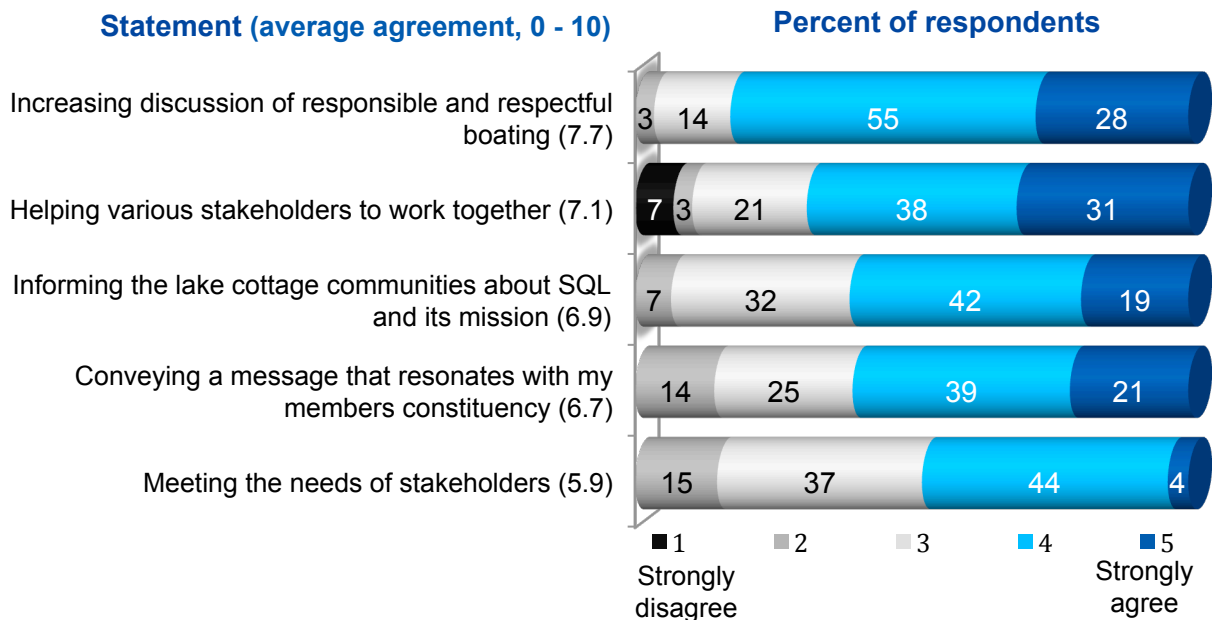
2. POSITIVE IMPACTS

A brief questionnaire asked for stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts that SQL has had and the communications tools it has produced. The results are a useful gauge of the merit of these ideas.[1]

Seventy-three percent of respondents agreed that SQL's activities have increased the discussion of responsible and respectful boating (Figure 1). This is a very high rating given that SQL is a young organization.

A two-thirds majority also found that SQL has helped the various stakeholders to work together. In the discussion groups, individuals described how SQL had shared information and ideas, informed them of new initiatives, and helped build partnerships and alliances.

Figure 1. Broad impacts of SQL

Statement (average agreement, 0 - 10)   **Percent of respondents**

Increasing discussion of responsible and respectful boating (7.7): 3, 14, 55, 28

Helping various stakeholders to work together (7.1): 7, 3, 21, 38, 31

Informing the lake cottage communities about SQL and its mission (6.9): 7, 32, 42, 19

Conveying a message that resonates with my members constituency (6.7): 14, 25, 39, 21

Meeting the needs of stakeholders (5.9): 15, 37, 44, 4

1 Strongly disagree — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 Strongly agree

Stakeholders' comments in the discussion groups echo these results. SQL's primary contributions to date have been:

- Raising awareness of safe quiet boating: This is seen as the primary contribution by a wide margin;
- Bringing stakeholders together;
- Providing valuable materials such as the Boater's Code and navigation decals; and,
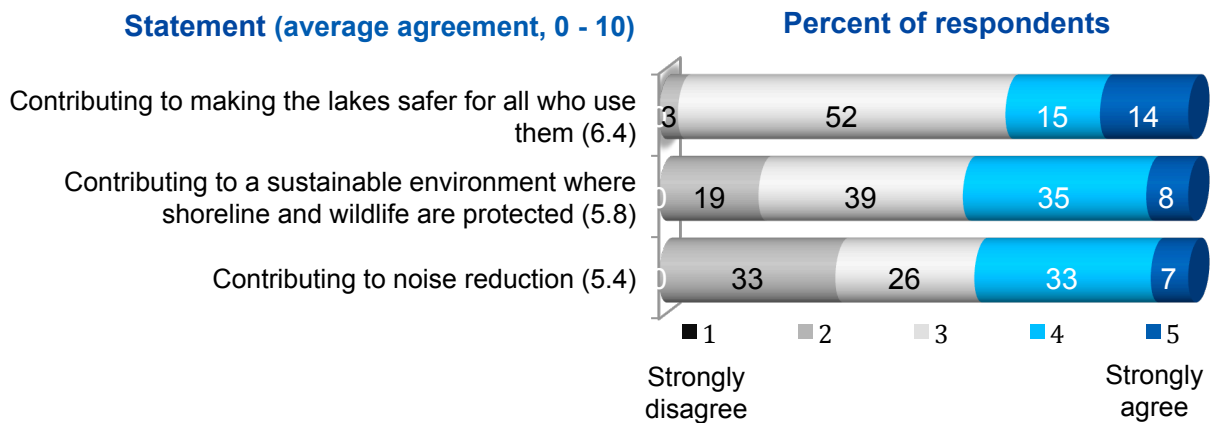- Developing messaging that others such as Lake Associations can use.

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[1] These results apply only to stakeholders who attended the meeting. Members of SQL are not included.

Changing boating behaviour and practices

Boaters develop habits over years and decades, in a context that is far less structured than driving on the roads. There are no speed limits, few signs and guide posts, and minimal presence of police enforcement on the lakes in many areas. While drivers of cars and trucks tend to follow the same rules and share a sense of courtesy, the culture of boating is less defined and thus, arguably, harder to change.

The survey posed three questions about SQL's impact on the behaviour of boaters. Stakeholders see that SQL has made positive gains in these areas, especially in terms of making the lakes safer. This vote of support is extremely encouraging, given that the fact that SQL has been working for less than 4 years.

Figure 2. SQL's impact on changing behaviour

Statement (average agreement, 0 - 10)   **Percent of respondents**

Contributing to making the lakes safer for all who use them (6.4): 3 | 52 | 15 | 14

Contributing to a sustainable environment where shoreline and wildlife are protected (5.8): 19 | 39 | 35 | 8

Contributing to noise reduction (5.4): 33 | 26 | 33 | 7

■1 ■2 ■3 ■4 ■5
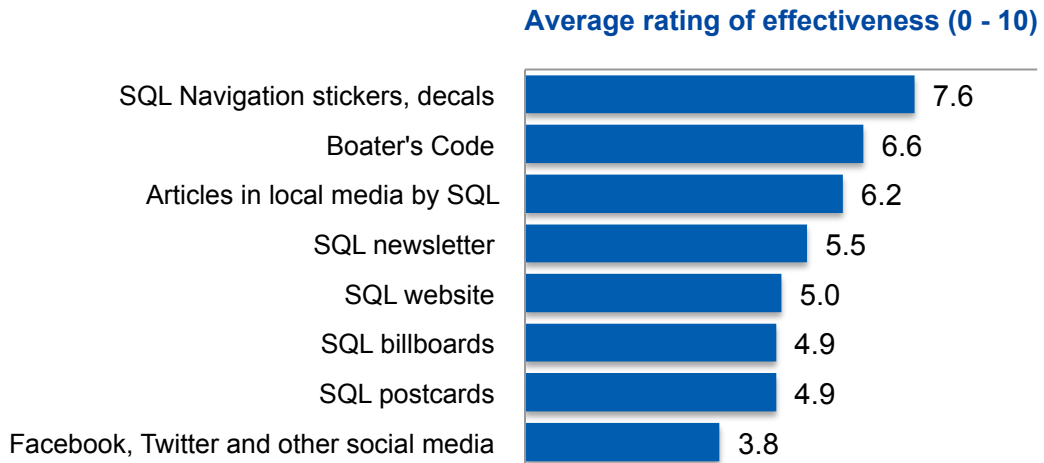Strongly disagree   Strongly agree

3. VALUABLE COMMUNICATIONS

There was a strong consensus across each of the discussion groups that personal contact has been a most effective way that SQL conveys its message. Personal communications have taken a number of forms, including SQL presentations to Lake Association Meetings, presence at shows, (e.g., the Antique Boat Show), presence at events (e.g., Farmers Markets, cottagers' BBQs), and by having representatives at locations such as the Port Carling locks, where boaters are a captive audience.

Print and media communications aid in this task and reinforce what SQL members do. Stakeholders rated the effectiveness of SQL's communications tools, and consider the navigation stickers and the Boater's Code as very successful.

Figure 3. Effectiveness of SQL communications

Average rating of effectiveness (0 - 10)

Communication Tool	Rating
SQL Navigation stickers, decals	7.6
Boater's Code	6.6
Articles in local media by SQL	6.2
SQL newsletter	5.5
SQL website	5.0
SQL billboards	4.9
SQL postcards	4.9
Facebook, Twitter and other social media	3.8

Opinion was divided on the utility of billboards, with opinions forcefully stated both for and against. This being said, it seemed clear that almost all had seen the billboards and remembered them.

There was some discussion, and differing opinions, on the effectiveness of leaving materials on docks and "dock talks", where a cottager engages neighbours in discussion of the issues.

While there was debate on the effectiveness of individual channels of communication, there was a clear consensus that multiple channels are a key to success. Use of different channels will reach more people, and repetition of the message will drive it home.

4. WHAT CAN SQL DO TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS?

Stakeholders made the following specific suggestions for improving communications:

- Simplify or shorten the Boater's Code.

- Adopt simple catchy tag line such as Three C's: ***Care, Courtesy, Common sense***.

- Repeat message in all possible channels.

- Promote Boater's Code and other relevant material by inserting in tax bills. This has the advantage of reaching all residents, not just those who are naturally receptive to the SQL message. The Township of the Archipelago has taken the lead in this regard.

- Provide short information pieces that organizations can insert in their own communications (e.g., Lake Associations, municipalities, marinas, national organizations).

- Consider (co)designing and promoting a "Captain Program" where one person is designated in a boat to quickly review safe boating elements, where equipment is, wearing of PFDs, etc. each time boat used.

- It may be useful to focus the safety message on wildlife (e.g., loons) when trying to get boats to slow down or not create large wakes. This may appeal to some people more than personal safety or courtesy for fellow cottagers, docks, etc.

- Marinas are seen as natural allies, as all residents use them.

One debate considered whether SQL should target safety messages for different types of watercraft. Safe practices are different in canoes and large power boats, as are the risks and dangers. One counter-argument is that most people seem to use both larger and smaller craft.

5. HOW CAN SQL BEST SERVE YOUR MEMBERS/CONSTITUENTS?

Stakeholders offered a number of suggestions for SQL to reach the resident communities:

- Hold more frequent Stakeholder Meetings, e.g., twice per year. Schedule one in cottage season.

- Work closely with or partner with specific organizations on initiatives.

- Work with all partners to ensure consistent messaging. SQL should ensure that its message aligns with other organizations such as the Power Squadron. One participant suggested SQL might convene a meeting of all parties who issue safe boating materials through marinas to see if there can be a consolidation of messages.

- Explore whether having a Power Squadron Certificate could lower insurance rates.

- Enable co-branding of materials with associations, municipalities, other organizations (e.g., provide brochures etc. with a space where the partner organization can insert its logo).

- Develop an initiative to promote wearing of PFDs, especially among adults. Older boaters are seen as more of a problem than younger ones, who have grown up with a more safety-conscious approach. Getting older boaters to wear PFDs would be an important modelling step.

- Consider including Georgian Bay in SQL's outreach.

6. CHALLENGES

Stakeholders raised a range of issues and concerns that they would like to see addressed. Some of these challenges involve various levels of government and other parties, and SQL is not in a position to deal with them without the support of others.

- Operators of small craft such as canoes and kayaks deserve a special focus, as a high proportion of boating accidents consist of capsizes and other mishaps with these craft.

- Engaging resorts in promotion of safety to their guests, some of whom are renters.

- Renters are a concern in that no Pleasure Craft Operators card is required. Renters may be unaware of the "rules of the road" as well as basic courtesy conventions.

- On-water testing would be nice some time in the future (this would need a change in federal regulations and is not something that SQL should spend time on).

- The use of buoys to mark swimming areas and protect shorelines is a common practice, but some installations may transgress Transport Canada guidelines. Many or most cottagers are not aware of what is allowed, and clarity on this matter would be valuable.

- Suggestions for noise reduction include:

    - Consider time restrictions for running noisy boats (say between 6am and 9pm).

    - Encourage marinas to disconnect exhaust toggle switches on boats if they are to operate on smaller lakes where there is no 5km off-shore possibility.

    - Approved quiet motors can create loud noise if engine tilt causes the cavitation plate to be out of the water.

    - Encourage municipalities to limit fireworks to a few specified dates such as Canada Day.

- The US places decibel limits on the noise of boat motors. The OPP says it would be impractical for them to enforce such regulations here due to the measuring equipment and training that is required. The current prohibition on above-water exhausts is enforceable.

7. PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Stakeholders voiced broad and enthusiastic support for SQL's role as educator, facilitator and collaborator. SQL plays a valuable service in raising awareness, bringing groups together and facilitating change in Central Ontario.

Many stakeholders were unaware of the advocacy work that SQL is currently engaged in, such as working with the National Marine Manufacturers Association to limit engine noise levels. Some cautioned that advocating for changes to federal boating regulations could be a long and costly process with no guarantee of success. Any actions in this area should therefore be clearly focused and possibly undertaken in partnership with other organizations.

Stakeholders universally agree that SQL's priority for the next two years should be to maintain its focus on education and local action, and to facilitate cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders – lake associations, municipalities, law enforcement, the boating industry and others.

Appendix: List of participating stakeholders

The following people attended the 2015 Stakeholder Meeting and most participated in the research.

Maria Frost	Bayfield Nares Islanders Association
Karen Bush	Clear Lake Property Association
Lynda Mead	Crane Lake Association, Director
Bob Duncanson	Georgian Bay Association, Executive Director
Peter Frost	Georgian Bay Association, Township of the Archipelago
Anne Stewart	Georgian Bay Association, Boating and Safety Committee
Jonathan Hutcheon	Gull & Silver lake Association ,President
David Thacker	Horseshoe Lake Association
Janet Thacket	Horseshoe Lake Association
Betty McDonald	Lake of Bays Association, Chair of Safety Committee
Brett Lagamba	Lake Rosseau North Association, President
Michael Hart	Muskoka Lakes Asscociation, President
Walter McCormick	Muskoka Lakes Asscociation, Small Lakes Initiative
Lisa Noonan	Muskoka Lakes Asscociation, Office Manager
AJ Mueller	Otter Lake Ratepayers Asscociation
Kerry Mueller	Otter Lake Ratepayers Asscociation
Allan Campbell	Pine Lake Ratepayers Asscociation
Harry Wilson	Raven Lake Association
Bill Mooney	Raven Lake Cottagers Association
Denise Boyer	Royal Muskoka Island Association
Nick Nicolaou	Royal Muskoka Island Association
Doug Palmer	Royal Muskoka Island Association
Wayne Corston	Seguin Estates Rate Payers Association
Paul Smith	Skeleton Lake Cottagers Organization
Anne Stanway	South Muskoka Lake Community Association
Karen Gillies	Star Lake Woods Asscociation
Gail Hepworth	Sucker Lake Cottage Association
Rob Tanner	Three Mile Lake Asscociation
Bill Evans	Brandy Lake Asscociation
John Bowlby	Muskoka Lakes Asscociation, Director
Cassandra Rowswell	
John Sisson	Bracebridge Chief Adminstrative Officer
Bruce Gibbon	Seguin Township, Mayor
Jack Hepworth	Seguin Township, Ward Councillor
Nancy Alcock	Town of Huntsville, Town & District Councillor
Don Furniss	Town of Huntsville, Mayor
Jean-Ann Baranik	Township of Muskoka Lakes, Deputy Mayor & Township Councillor
Sandy Currie	Township of Muskoka Lakes, Township Councillor
Phil Harding	Township of Muskoka Lakes, District & Township Councillor
Ian Mead	Township of the Archipelago, Councillor
Ryan Bush	Bush's Watersport Park
Chris Poole	Muskoka Boat Gallery, Owner

Tom Bailey	Pride Marine Group Ltd., Marketing Coordinator
Bob Campbell	Walkers Point Marina
Larry Butterfield	OPP Highway Safety Division
John Graham	OPP Detachment Commander, Huntsville
Jim Lewis	OPP West Parry Sound Marine Unit
Tim Nicksy	OPP West Parry Sound Marine Unit
Dave Strickler	OPP Huntsville OPP
Craig Hamilton	Boater Skills.ca
Al Donaldson	Boating Ontario
Graham Lacey	Boating Ontario
John Gullick	Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons, Manager, Government and Special Projects
Terry Rees	F.O.C.A., Executive Director
Sara Anghel	National Marine Manufacturers Association of Canada, Executive Director
Jasmine Northcott	Wakeboard and Waterski Canada, CEO
Geordie Newlands	Water Ski & Wakeboard Ontario, Board Member
Dustin Titus	Water Ski & Wakeboard Ontario, Board Member
Jane Evans	Brandy Lake, Director
Andrew Wagner-Chazalon	Dockside Publishing Inc., Executive Director
Frances Carmichael	Lake Joseph North Association, Director
Ken Buchanan	Port Carling Locks, Lock Master
Nancy Cohen	Safe Quiet Lakes, Director
Linda Stockton	Safe Quiet Lakes, Director
Greg Wilkinson	Safe Quiet Lakes, Director
Craig Reith	SQL, Committee Member