

# RIVER TALK


mar / apr, 2025

**RIVER SAFETY**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL  
AWARENESS**  
**COMMUNITY SUPPORT**



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The Thousand Islands Association (TIA) is a not for profit organization that is proactive in addressing safety on the river, promoting environmental preservation and supporting the interests of the Community for the benefit of the 1000 Islands region of the St. Lawrence River.

# From the Editor

I'm not sure how it's possible for the days to drag so much during the final countdown to boat launch but they do. The numbered days on the calendar bring hope, but Mother Nature dampens anticipation with a rollercoaster of rain and flurries.

While attempting to wait patiently, I'm using this time to locate my boater's license, buy new batteries for my emergency kits, and plan my summer social calendar.

I look forward to visits with my longtime River friends each summer and this year will be no different. I love that we are a community regardless of citizenship and that fills my cup.

See you soon, my friends.

*Stephanie Scott, Editor*



Due to seasonality, varying water levels, vandalism and equipment failure, the Thousand Islands Association (TIA) disclaims any liability for the absence of any of its shoal markers from time to time.



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# President's Message

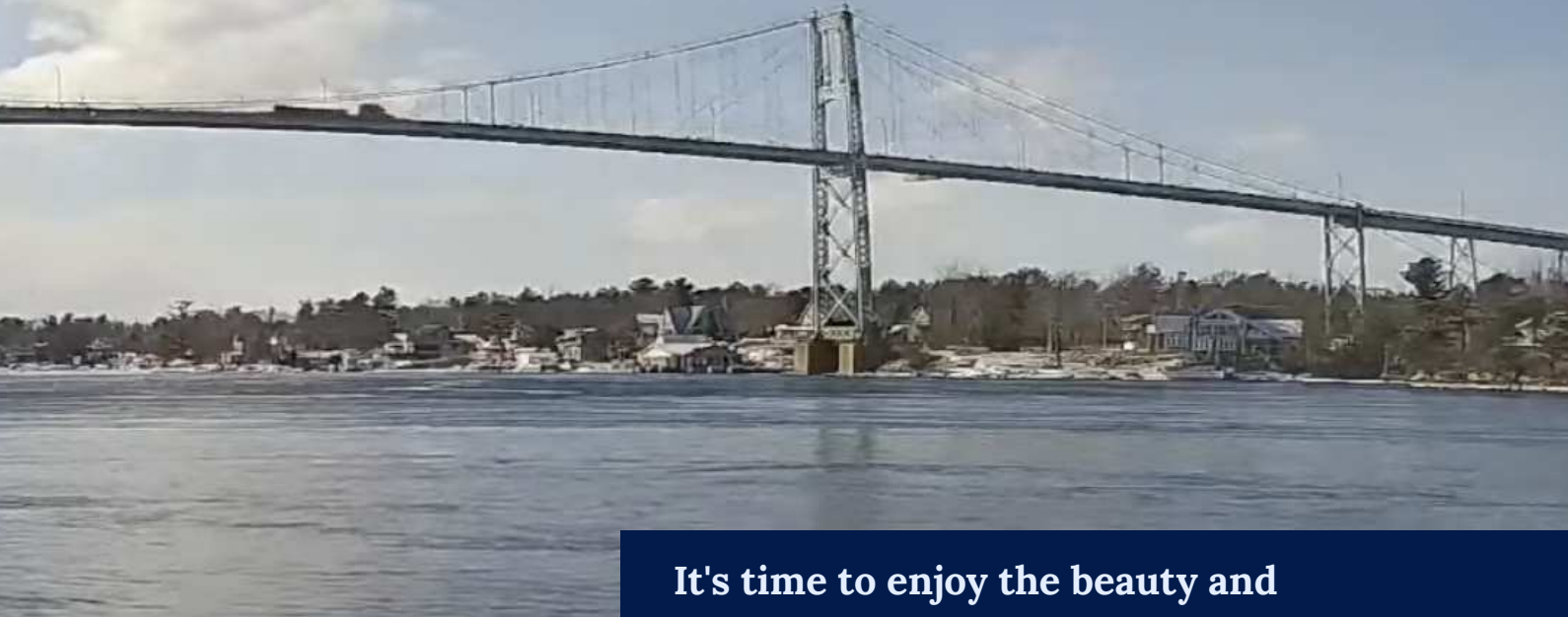
## Peter Fitton

A new season was born on March 20 with the arrival of the spring equinox. Days now stay light longer and warmer weather welcomes us back to the river!

St. Partick is the patron saint of Ireland and advanced Christianity throughout the Emerald Isle. Many Irish personalities have influenced the world with warmth, wit and passion. I celebrated March 17 this year in Japan sipping brewed green sake and witnessing Tokyo's St. Patrick's Day Parade – Asia's largest and oldest!

The first full moon of spring is on April 12 and determines the date of Easter. How many of you plan to open your seasonal river place to gather, celebrate and make new memories over the Good Friday and Easter Monday weekend?

EARTHDAY.ORG is the global force behind Earth Day. This year's theme is "It's Our Power, it's Our Planet". Join them on April 22 to demonstrate support – 55 Ways To Invest In Our Planet. You can make a difference!



**It's time to enjoy the beauty and sounds of springtime on the river!**

TIA is offering 2025 Canadian and American Scholarships for graduating students from eligible Thousand Island River Community High Schools enrolling in first year undergraduate University or College environmentally related courses or programs in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics (STEAM) or business. Find the Application Form [here](#) and on our website. The deadline for applying is May 5.

Note on Thursday, July, 10 TIA is again offering a 4-hour CPR and AED Certified Training Session at the 1000 Islands History Museum. Sign up on our website – a maximum of 18 spots are available.

SAVE THE DATE! The TIA 2025 AGM will be held on Saturday, July 19 at the Thousand Islands Playhouse. Our speaker is Chad Buchner, Assistant Director of Ontario Waterways presenting “Navigating the Historic Rideau Canal” and talking on intercoastal links with the New York canal systems.

If not already done, please be reminded it is time for everyone to [renew their 2025 TIA tax deductible membership](#), or join as new members, [online now](#) . Your support is essential to the sustainability of TIA and its essential shoal marking for the safety of our river community.



# TIA's 2025 Fire Pump Initiative

By: Jim Côté,  
Chair, River Safety

Twenty years ago, TIA subsidized the purchase of 47 fire pumps for islanders, some of which are still in working order. This year TIA is planning to undertake an additional initiative in conjunction with the Leeds 1000 Islands Fire Services. Pictured here is Chief Mike Prior accepting the first of two portable emergency fire pumps being donated by TIA as part of the 2025 Fire Pump Initiative. In the background of the photo is the new Fire Rescue Boat that will be put into service this spring and docked at Brennan's Marine.

These pumps will be used this summer by the Fire Prevention Team, headed by Fire Prevention Officer (FPO) Doug Richardson and Station Captain Peter Evans, for the education and training of island property owners in fire containment and

will be permanent additions to the Fire Services emergency fire-fighting gear. In addition to their Dock-to-Door Island Program, where the Team will remind island residents about the importance of working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, the Fire Prevention Team will provide a series of clinics at various locations this summer demonstrating the use of these pumps, as part of their overall Fire Prevention Program. These clinics are not intended to train the public how to be fire fighters but rather to educate islanders about fire pumps and the benefits of islanders having a pump on hand to contain island fires on their, and neighbour's, properties until Emergency Fire Services arrive. Stay tuned to the Fire Department's social media and TLTI website for upcoming dates.



In consultation with the Fire Services, two pump sizes have been identified as most useful to islanders for these purposes. Both are Honda high pressure pumps, which can be purchased and serviced locally at Brockville Honda. One is a 1.5" pump, which may be useful for island properties where the cottage is close to the water; the other is a more powerful a 2.0" pump, which may be useful for properties where the cottage is elevated from the water. The 2.0" pump is

also available as part of a complete emergency fire-fighting package, and it can be purchased through a number of Canadian outlets, including Princess Auto. Recommendations will also be forthcoming about fire hose types and lengths based on the unique topography of individual island and cottage locations.

Future River Talk issues and TIA's social media posts will provide more exciting news about the Fire Pump Initiative and the new Fire Rescue Boat, so stay tuned.



Fire Chief Mike Prior accepting the first of two fire pumps donated by TIA from Jim Côté, Chair TIA River Safety Committee

# CPR & AED Certification

July 10, 2025

10am-2pm

Thousand Islands  
History Museum



Action First Aid.ca

Empowering People to TAKE ACTION



**\$70**  
/person

Register today.  
Limited spaces.

**CLICK TO  
REGISTER ONLINE**



The Action First Aid Company has tossed out the status quo when it comes to training – they get you up and out of your seat to create a ‘real life’ training experience. No PowerPoints here – come ready to learn and walk away empowered to take action. Action First Aid is one of the largest WSIB training agencies in Ontario, and their commitment to exceptional customer service along with their unique delivery style is why training participants keep coming back.

TIA is facilitating this event in support of its mission pillars of River Safety & Community Support.



**Certification: 4 Hours**



# Renew Your Membership Today

Welcome to another year and new beginning on the river! Founded in 1934, and now 90 years and 5 generations later, our roots are deep in traditions and memories with friends and family in our world-renowned beautiful Thousand Islands of the upper St. Lawrence River.

Today we share the responsibility of its stewardship as we deliver on our Missions of River Safety, Environmental Awareness, and Community Support. Your renewed membership ensures the safety and support of residents and boaters alike.

- Purchase & maintenance of 200+ shoal markers
- Support of emergency response equipment & services
- Environmental awareness programs
- News and information on the river & its community
- Fellowship opportunities
- Information on water levels & a unified voice for local regulatory agencies and proposed legislation


**RENEW NOW**



**TIA is an international registered not-for-profit organization, which issues tax receipts for all Canadian and American memberships and donations.**

# TIA Scholarships

By: Jean Dabros



The Thousand Islands Association is not just an Association, but also a community organization that is proactive in addressing river safety, promoting environmental awareness, and supporting the interests of the community for the benefit of the Thousand Islands region. To show our commitment to the river communities, TIA awards one scholarship in memory of John Taylor to a graduating student from a Canadian high school and one scholarship in memory of Marjorie Heagy to a graduating student from a United States high school each year. Both John Taylor and Marjorie Heagy were lifelong stewards of the St. Lawrence River and their donations supporting this passion for the environmental stewardship of the Thousand Islands region brought life to these scholarships. The TIA Board has pledged a significant award of \$1000 to each student chosen to receive a scholarship, a testament to a strong belief in the potential of students in the area.

In order to be eligible for this scholarship applicants must be graduating High School Students from Thousand Islands River communities, either a Canadian or American citizen, enrolling in first year undergraduate University or College environmentally related courses or programs in science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics (STEAM) or business.



# Two \$1,000 Scholarships are available to students graduating this year. Applications are due May 5th, 2025

Successful applicants will be notified by May 31, 2025 and are expected to acknowledge the scholarship in a letter to the TIA Board of Directors. They will also receive an invitation to attend the Thousand Islands Association Annual Meeting, if they are able, which will be held on July 19, 2025, at the Thousand Islands Playhouse Theatre in Gananoque, Ontario. This meeting is a great opportunity to network with TIA members and learn more about the organization's work in the region.

Deadline to apply for these scholarships is May 5, 2025 and submissions sent to:

Attention: Jean Dabros

[thousandislandsassociation@gmail.com](mailto:thousandislandsassociation@gmail.com)



**John Taylor, photo from Taylor Family**



**Marjorie Heagy, photo by David Orr**

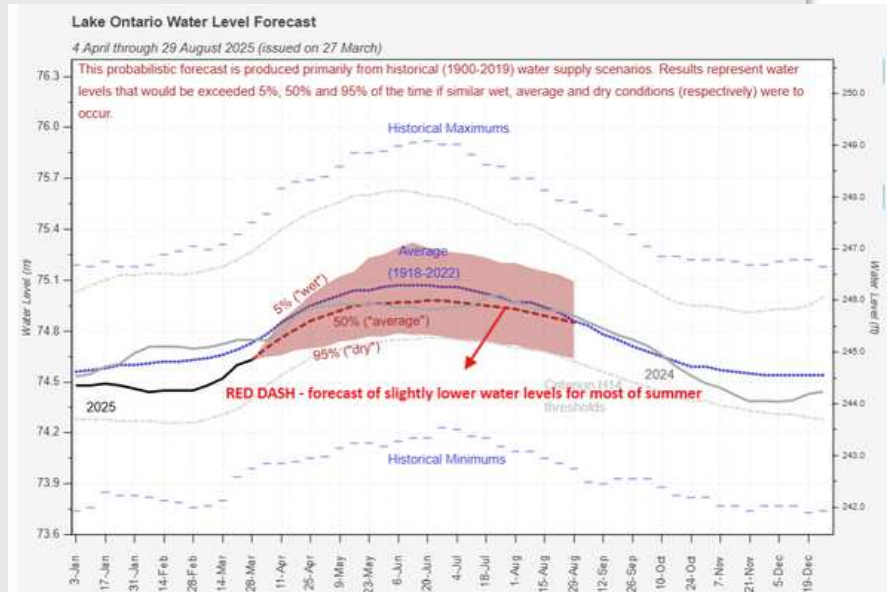


# Spring Water Levels 2025

By: TIA Water Levels Committee,  
Barton, Stewart & White

# The Big Melt Was Abrupt And Welcome

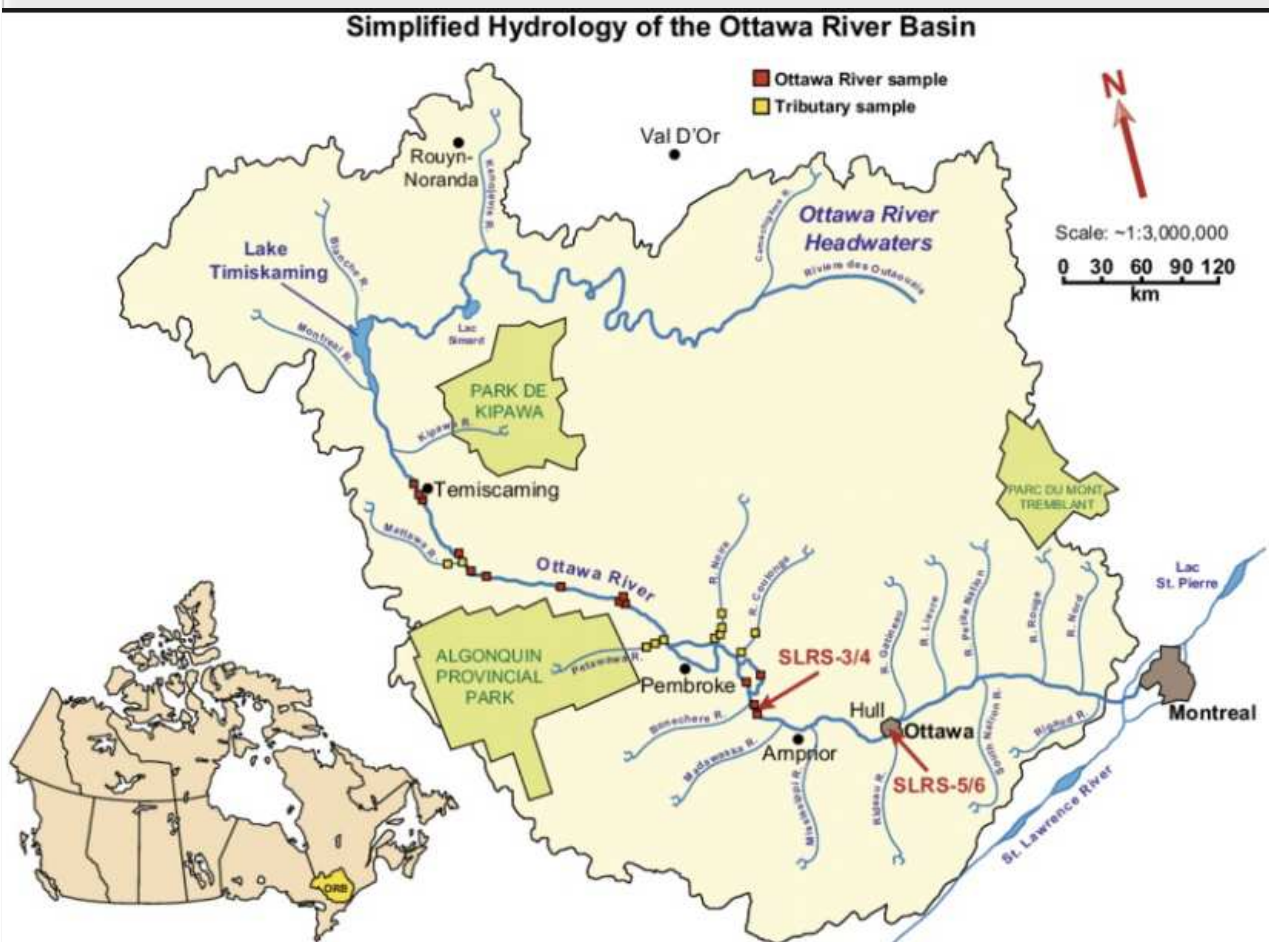
The current water level in Alex Bay has risen from 8-9" below average, when our prior River Talk came out Feb 1st, to just 4" below average for this time of year. Although some wind events have spiked the level up and down a few times, the level has steadily increased since mid-May and may end up that way (if the weather we're above average at today (and the weather) will tell!



**Source: International Lake Ontario  
St. Lawrence River Board**

Having been the coldest (and snowiest) winter in 3+ years, Rockport resident Ed Lynch reported shore-to-shore ice consistently 1.5 feet solid, perfectly safe for ice fishing. Then on Tuesday, March 11th, our weather suddenly turned spring (10 days early). In just a few days, ice covers on the main channels opened up as a week of daytime 50's & 60's F temperatures, the infrared first, released the ice's hold on the shore, then warm winds and some rain raised levels and the ice sheets broke.

“Depending on weather and water supply conditions during the next several weeks, the Lake Ontario outflow into the St. Lawrence River may need to be adjusted in accordance with the Plan 2014 F-Limit. Since the level of Lake Ontario is below 75.3 m, the first F-limit tier applies and the outflow would be adjusted to maintain a maximum level of 22.1 meters at Lake St. Louis. (Measured at Pointe Claire)” [from ILOSLR Board]



The previous paragraph from the ILOSLR Board is in anticipation of a typical outflow from the Ottawa River. It is only beginning to flow as there is still snow to thaw in its headwaters near Lake Timiskaming and beyond. (see map)

NOTE: The snowpack in Ottawa's headwaters is normal, and nothing like 2019 when we had major flooding due to outflow reduction at the Moses-Saunders Hydro Dam, where outflows were regulated to follow the F-Limit.

On March 18th, a week after the warming began, snowbirds Pete & Jan Medcalf returned from Hilton Head Island. By request, Pete shot the following photos. (Keep in mind that the week before, walking was possible in most areas across most channels)



American Channel looking NE to Alex Bay, Wellesley Island on left



Canadian Lost Channel looking NE Georgina Island on left



Canadian Channel looking downstream NE, mainland on the left



Rockport at old Customs Dock looking East toward US and Yeo Island

The Lake of the Isles is just opening up now and many of the inland lakes are likely to remain ice-covered yet slushy till the end of the first week of April.

## ➡ QUIZ

**What is the oldest and deepest lake in the world?**

☐ Great Bear Lake, Canada

☐ Great Lakes, Canada

☐ Lake Tanganyika, Africa

☐ Lake Baikal, Russia



# 2025 Business Sponsorship Packages

Business support helps TIA fulfill its mission to the river community and its flagship program of maintaining more than **200** shoal markers essential to the safety of local boaters.

## Captain Level **\$200**

- One year business membership to TIA
- Social media mention on TIA socials
- Your logo hyperlinked on TIA webpage

## Admiral Level **\$500**

- One year business membership to TIA
- Social media mention on TIA social
- Your logo hyperlinked on TIA webpage
- Acknowledgement at TIA AGM
- Hyperlinked logo on TIA website
- Hyperlinked logo in 6 issues of River Talk
- Invitation to submit an article about your business for inclusion in a River Talk issue

**CLICK TO  
SUPPORT ONLINE**



**REQUEST AN  
INVOICE**





# Restoring Pitch Pines in the Thousand Islands Region

By: Jean Dabros in interview with Doug Bickerton March 13, 2025

Photo from Doug Bickerton

After an enjoyable hike up to the top of Blue Mountain in 2003, Trail Patrol members Peter Murray and Doug Bickerton, made a somewhat disturbing observation – although there was a nice collection of Pitch Pines in the area none of them were younger than 90 years old. The trees had a good supply of cones so where were the seedlings and saplings? This observation was the beginning of one man's journey to save the Pitch Pine from extinction.

The Ontario Pitch Pine population is found at the northeastern range margin of the species, mainly occurring within the Thousand Islands Ecosystem on the Frontenac Arch Precambrian shield exposed rock. To the south the Pitch pine occupies eastern United States habitats from central Maine



south to northern Georgia where it is often the dominant species in pine barrens. The US “Fire Effects Information System” reports that most often pitch pine forests are early colonizers and are replaced by oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and other hardwoods in the absence of fire.

When Doug Bickerton brought home cones from those trees and set about learning the secrets of Pitch Pine germination there were fewer than 20,000 pitch pines left in Canada. Seeds had to be extracted manually from the cones. Fire helped. The local First Nations previously had held controlled burns in July after the blueberry harvest, to help maintain production of an essential for survival blueberry crop.



Could the lack of fire be the reason for the decline? However, fire was not the only requirement. Pitch Pines needed the acidity of a granite soil and no grass to impede the development of the seedlings, to be successful. The original attempts to germinate seeds resulted in only one seedling out of 200 seeds but Doug prevailed and soon was able to achieve a 100% germination rate. Out of his basement germination chamber he was able to produce around 1000 seedlings a year.



Map of Pitch Pine area in Leeds County:  
Doug Bickerton  
Photo of Pitch Pine by Gananoque East Gate:  
Jean Dabros



Approximately half of Doug's seedlings went to Parks Canada where they were planted on Parks Canada property in the Thousand Islands. The rest were the responsibility of the Tree Committee in Gananoque where, "In 2004, the Gananoque Urban Forestry Advisory Committee encouraged the Gananoque Town Council to name the pitch pine as our official Municipal Tree. The Gananoque Urban Forestry Advisory Committee planted 22 pitch pines in Confederation Park and installed a stone plaque in front of this grove. The committee has, since then, grown and distributed thousands of little pitch pine seedlings in Leeds County and beyond. Gananoque now has over 60 pitch pines in our parks, street allowances and in private yards. About 10% of all the pitch pines alive in Canada today were started right here from seed collected by the Tree Committee within Leeds County."

Some of Doug's babies have made it out to the islands where they have survived and grown,



Doug Bickerton oversees hundreds of Pitch Pine seedlings that are sprouting in his basement. Photo by Wayne Lowrie, for the "Gananoque Reporter".



Top left: Doug Bickerton featured in Gananoque Reporter

Bottom left and top right: Doug's seedlings

soon to be majestic windswept pines. Hill Island, Georgiana Island, Gordon Island and Camelot Island have undergone prescribed burns to encourage the germination and growth of Pitch Pines. It seems like the Pitch Pine is in good hands and may avoid the endangered list.

## How to germinate a seed or plant a seedling

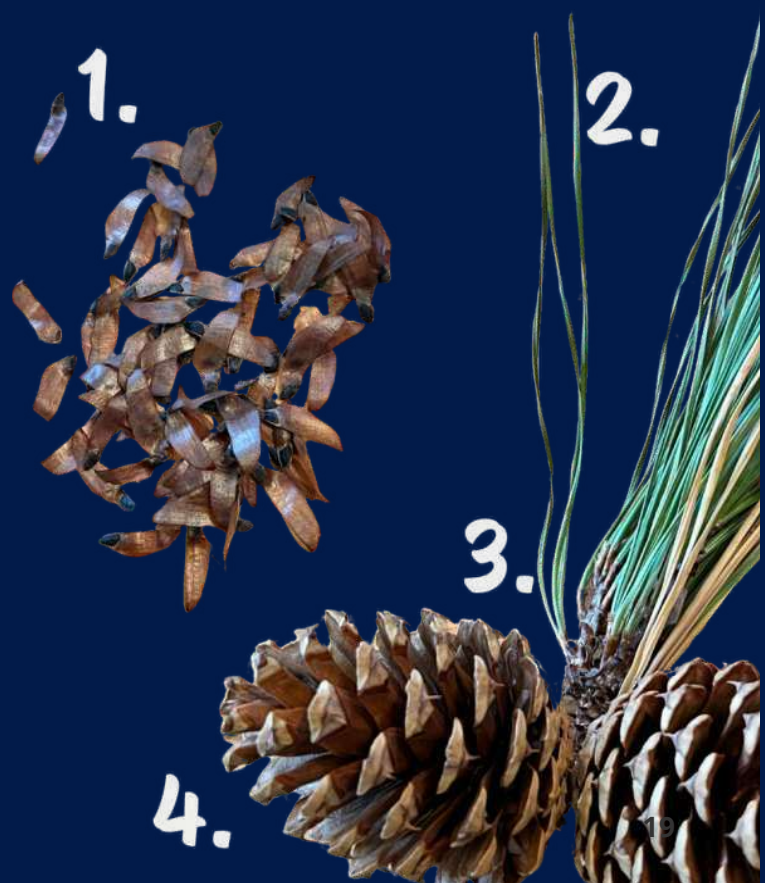
Full instructions on how to germinate pitch pine seeds are posted on the TIA website under the Returning Species tab along with specific planting instructions if you are lucky enough to obtain a Pitch Pine seedling.



If you would like to purchase a Pitch Pine seedling all of Doug's seeds have gone to the Ferguson Tree Nursery in Kemptville (a not for profit) where they sell young trees in 2 gallon pots.

## Identifying Pitch Pine Cones & Seeds

1. Seeds leave cones with a samara, a wing to help with seed dispersal.
2. Needles are in clusters of 3. Building on the baseball reference, you can consider these similar to the 3 bases.
3. Cones are found in clusters on the tree branches and do not annually fall from the trees.
4. The cones have very sharp prickles.





# Turtle Nesting Season is Almost Here

By: Tara Bauer, Director Turtles Kingston

Check out [turtleskingston.com](http://turtleskingston.com) for more details and how you can help.



With turtle season upon us, you can expect to start seeing turtles on land in April/May with nesting starting the end of May. Our local turtles are species at risk (meaning they are at risk of becoming extinct) and living in a turtle hotspot you are in a unique position to help the turtles in your area!





## Help Turtles Cross Roads

One of the biggest ways you can help turtles is by moving them across a road. It is important to always move them in the direction they are headed (even if away from water). For most species, use two hands, grabbing the side of their shell between their legs, to move them. For snapping turtles, we recommend using a car mat, blanket, or shovel to move them across the road. Don't touch the front half of their body as they can snap (it will hurt if you are bitten, but it is a myth that they can break bones). To get snappers onto a car mat, grab their shell above a back leg – never grab their tail – and gently drag them onto the mat.

## Bring Injured Turtles to Help

Turtles are resilient when injured and can recover from many injuries. Even turtles that appear dead may be alive or have eggs that could be extracted. If you find an injured turtle you can bring it to Rideau Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in North Gower, Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre in Napanee, the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre in Peterborough, or even the Perth Veterinary Clinic in Perth.

## Protect Turtle Nests

If you ever see a nesting turtle, please keep your distance (>10 m) as they can spook easily. Once the mother is done, you can help protect the nest by installing a nest protector (2x4s with exit holes for the hatchlings and a mesh top to let sun and rain in for incubation). This can be done on your private property or other public/private property as long as you have permission from the land owner. Unfortunately, turtle nests on the sides of roads cannot be protected as these areas need to stay clear for vehicle safety.

# Take the Earth Day Quiz

## Questions and Answers from EarthDay.org

**What happens to plastic waste when left in the environment?**



- ☐ It is a biodegradable material so it eventually disintegrates
- ☐ It never fully goes away, it just breaks into little pieces
- ☐ There is no such thing as plastic waste, all plastic is recycled

**What percent of its plastic does the U.S. recycle?**



- ☐ 5%
- ☐ 35%
- ☐ 50%

**How many marine species are harmed by plastic pollution?**



- ☐ 52
- ☐ 800
- ☐ 1,326
- ☐ 5,489



Did you know that the average life span of a single use plastic is approximately 15 minutes?

Approximately, Americans use about how many plastic drinking straws per day?

- ☐ 25,000
- ☐ 100,000
- ☐ 250,000,000
- ☐ 500,000,000



By what year do scientists predict plastic will outweigh fish in the ocean, pound for pound?

- ☐ 2020
- ☐ 2050
- ☐ 2250
- ☐ 3000



How many million tons of plastic are dumped in our oceans every year?

- ☐ 1 million tons
- ☐ 11 million tons
- ☐ 20 million tons
- ☐ 50 million tons







# Law and Order in the Thousand Islands

By: Tim Compeau

Photo: Gananoque waterfront circa 1920 from Parks Canada

In the Spring of 1796, thieves struck the little cluster of homes and barns in what is today Gananoque. Under the cover of darkness, they pilfered several barrels of pork and flour from the mill and the personal stores of the local landlord and Justice of the Peace, Joel Stone. Determined to find the culprits, Stone sent his men to conduct a door-to-door search in the surrounding area but turned up nothing.

A few days later, a local resident named Peter Rosbach arrived at Stone's house and "appeared to be much offended." He was insulted at the search, especially when everyone knew who was responsible: the people living in "shantys" on the "Islands." Whoever they were, Rosbach warned Stone not to trifle with them. They were hungry and, had Stone confronted the thieves, "they would have Beat your Branes [sic] out with a Club, as soon as not." Undeterred, Stone replied that he "wished for nothing more than peace and good order, but that when ordered upon the king's service" he would "ever exert myself to do my Duty."

The Thousand Islands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was a rough frontier zone of migrants and refugees, trying to eke out an existence, usually in the lumber trade. Necessities such as food and clothing were in short supply, and Stone's records include many examples of petty larceny and smuggling. With no police force, Stone and other JPs were the face of the law. To track down and capture thieves, Stone deputized trusted locals and empowered them to pursue and apprehend suspects "by force of arms if necessary." In time, the islanders came to respect Stone and his frontier justice.

On June 17, 1809, a distraught lumberman working on Grindstone Island (then considered on the Canadian side of the border), came to Gananoque to report the theft of a chest containing valuable papers and gold. The suspect, Richard Carl, a "slender man" dressed in "corduroy overalls...and a poor old hat," allegedly robbed the lumberman's barge and escaped in a canoe. It didn't take long for Stone's men to catch up with Carl and, at 4:00 PM the next day, they dragged him into Gananoque. Stone does not record what methods he and his men employed to extract a confession, but Carl readily admitted his crime. The stern JP records that he forced Carl, clapped in irons, to guide the deputies back into the islands to find the hidden chest and return with the valuables. After two return trips, each taking six hours, Stone's men reunited the lumberman and his chest. What happened to Carl is unrecorded. This is just one example of how Stone enforced "peace and good order" in the Thousand Islands.



**Tim Compeau, originally from Gananoque, is an assistant professor of history at Huron University in London, Ontario. He is currently writing a book on the life of Joel Stone.**

Photo of Joel Stone: Town of Gananoque



# TIA Community Board

River Talk is introducing the Community Bulletin Board to allow organizations, businesses and persons to post notices, events and meetings relevant to the River Community.



**Tall Ships are back!**  
**Brockville June 20-22, 2025**

## INTERNSHIPS

available at  
**SAVE THE RIVER**

2 paid internships are available for college aged students this summer. Applications are due April 15th, 2025.

Learn more [HERE](#).



## CPR & AED Certification

July 10, 2025  
10am-2pm  
Thousand Islands  
History Museum

**Action First Aid.ca**  
Empowering People to TAKE ACTION



Mark your  
calendar for  
the July 19th  
AGM!

AGM  
KEYNOTE  
SPEAKER  
ANNOUNCED

## Chad Buchner, A/Director of Ontario Waterways

Step back in time and embark on a journey through the historic Rideau Canal, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that has connected travelers for centuries. This interactive 40-minute presentation will guide you through the experience of boating along this remarkable recreational corridor, revealing the unique charm, heritage. You will get some insider tips and tricks that will make your trip the highlight of your summer.

Discover why boaters and adventurers travel over 5,000 miles of the intercoastal waterways and learn how the canal seamlessly links North America's boating networks—from the New York system via the Champlain and Hudson River, all the way to Canada's capital on the shores of the Rideau. Whether you're a seasoned mariner or a first-time explorer, this presentation will immerse you in the beauty, history, and practical insights of navigating one of the world's most iconic waterways.





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