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# RIVER TALK



RIVER SAFETY

ENVIRONMENTAL  
AWARENESS

COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Photo: John Street



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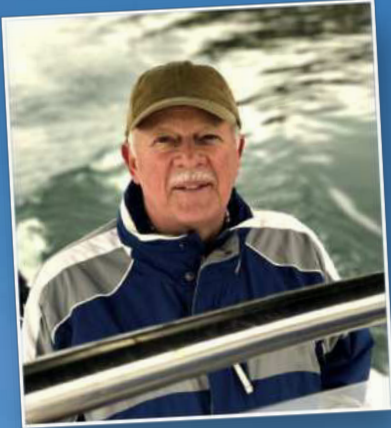
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**Peter Fitton**

# President's Message

Welcome May Day – the first day in May and the halfway point between the spring equinox and the summer solstice – get outdoors and embrace nature!

May Day is rooted in agriculture and a time to get back to gardening. [Click here to view the Almanac's Planting Calendar for the greater Kingston area and enter your local postal code.](#) Green thumbs up!

Last month we experienced a spectacular total solar eclipse– did you witness this rare event? [Click here to view the Thousand Islands Life article and pictures “Eclipse in the Islands” ... an extraordinary phenomenon of the universe!](#)

May brings many opportunities to celebrate.

Mother's Day on May 12 holds a special place in the hearts of families with strong-willed, and loving matriarchs. [Click here to find Mother's Day activities to bring her joy.](#) Lean into what she loves. Keep it simple. Take time to show appreciation!

The Canadian May 20th and US May 27th long weekends are the official dates for many to get ready for summer. Continuing from our last issue, [click here for a Cottage Life checklist for opening the seasonal property.](#) And watch out for the ticks on your person or pets!

The TIA rock shoal markers are back out on the river alerting you to these hazards. We also continue with our capital program to supply replacement markers in both Canadian and US waters to maintain compliance with regulatory requirements for hazard buoys.

We are pleased to announce that Annabel Cowan is returning as a summer coordinator to assist TIA to deliver its programs. Look for her messaging on our social media platforms about events and on how you can participate. Welcome back Annabel!

On a sadder note, I regret to announce the passing of Graham (Skip) Armstrong. He was a 40-year tireless TIA Board Member and will be dearly missed – [read more in this issue.](#)

**SAVE THE DATE!** The TIA 2024 AGM will be held on Saturday, July 20 at the Thousand Islands Playhouse. We will be celebrating a 90-year TIA anniversary!

If not already done, please be reminded to renew your 2024 TIA tax deductible memberships, or join as new members, by [clicking here.](#) Your support is essential to the sustainability of TIA.

Get excited about life on the river!



# From the Editor

**Allison Burchell-Robinson**

The daffodils are a bright patch of yellow in an otherwise drab April of rain and cold. Yes, the St. Lawrence needs the water and the grass needs to grow but a bit more sun would be welcome. Then again, in April many of us were fortunate to view the total eclipse of the sun on April 8th when parts of the world went dark for a brief time.

Imagine how people in earlier times without our knowledge and sophistication must have reacted to that phenomenon. Terror, superstition, fear of the unknown speculation that the world was coming to an end would have been rampant and then... the world went on. How fortunate we are to live today with all the advanced technology and scientific knowledge available in schools and advanced institutes of learning. Yet there are many parts of this world that do not have that access. They may well have reacted to the eclipse in the same manner as those who came before relying on their leaders for an explanation and interpretation, however misleading with no facts to serve as back up.

Interpretations can be more convenient and often replace the actual facts in the minds of many. Fact: The Thousand

Islands Association yearly places and removes approximately 200 shoal markers in the St. Lawrence River Canadian side of the 1000 Islands.

Interpretation by many is to insist that the Canadian government is responsible for doing so. Fact: the St. Lawrence River needs and responds well to the annual River Clean Up Days. Interpretation from many islanders, boaters and visitors is that the River is pristine, swimmable, and drinkable. Fact: Garbage needs to be categorized and properly disposed of. Interpretation by some is to dump it or pump it overboard as no one will know. Fact: Boaters of all kinds require a license to operate in the St. Lawrence. Interpretation among many is that rule doesn't apply to me as it's just water. Fact: Fishing in the St. Lawrence requires a license. Interpretation for some is just standing on my dock putting a line in the water, doesn't apply to me.

Fact: this world is a marvelous place. Let's work together to keep the St. Lawrence River and the 1000 Islands one of the marvels. No interpretation!



**Janet Smith-Staples**



# Getting Into the Green Scene

## Blind Bay &. US Customs and Border Patrol Proposed Facility

We've written about this, sent letters & are part of a coalition of organizations concerned for the well-being of our river & it's prolific wildlife that calls Blind Bay home. If you've haven't heard, I'll bring you up to speed quickly. The US Customs & Border Patrol continues to pursue the Blind Bay Property (owned by the Thousand Islands Land Trust) with plans to build a massive, industrial-scale facility on the property.

This 48,000 square feet facility along the water's edge is to include multiple buildings including a detention center, parking for over 100 vehicles, storage for ATVs and snowmobiles, dock and boat ramps, dog kennels, fuel tanks, communication tower, and significant perimeter fencing & lighting. To be clear, it will decimate this critical habitat for numerous fish and wildlife species, including muskellunge. The state of New York identified the bay's habitat as "irreplaceable." [Click Here](#) to view letter from CBP.

While there may be a need for a bigger facility, why not explore options that place the facility on commercially zoned land that would not decimate the wildlife in our River? Recently I noticed an update on Save The River's Facebook page that offers a glimmer of hope!

*"Thanks to Senator Chuck Schumer's advocacy efforts, U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) has agreed to a public in-person hearing on the proposed sites in the North Country region. Senator Schumer personally wrote and called CBP Acting Commissioner Miller, urging community involvement and transparency with this process.*

*Save The River, Thousand Island Land Trust, Save Blind Bay Coalition Partners and the supporters who have united for the cause, express deep gratitude to Senator Schumer for his insistence on in-person public hearings by CBP. This ensures that every voice in our River community is given the chance to be heard.*

*Senator Schumer's efforts have also ensured an extended public comment period of 45 days, allowing residents and stakeholders the opportunity to voice their opinions. Learn more about Senator Schumer advocacy by reading the [press release here](#).*

*Visit [saveblindbay.com](http://saveblindbay.com) to explore further and contribute to the effort to protect this cherished community asset. More details to follow on the exact date, time, and location of the hearing. Stay tuned!"*

If you have just a little time please watch this video, it really says it all.



# Wildlife Corridor

*Eggs - all colours, sizes and patterns*

## Stuart Arnett

With Spring in the air nest building can't be far behind. Translates to egg laying will be coming soon. Most people can recognize a Robin's egg. It's that light baby blue colour egg and is about the size of a quarter.

The identification of other eggs is a bit more difficult as there are many of similar sizes with numerous variations of colour. Birds are the only vertebrates that lay coloured eggs. All the variations are contributed by two different pigments - one brown and one blue. The diet of the female bird determines the different pigment as well as the environment in which the bird nests. The eggs of all snakes and all amphibians are either white or clear.

Here is an image showing some of the most common bird eggs in our area.

Examine the wide variety of colours and sizes. How many can you identify?

If you happen to find an egg on the ground and it appears to have come from a nest check to see if one is nearby, You can try putting it gently back. Chances are it has been pushed out of the nest for a reason and is no longer viable. Not all birds nest in the trees, some birds like the Killdeer, Whip-poor-will and Nighthawks all nest on the ground.

This Spring increase your bird watching skills and keep an eye out for nests being built. Check out the various colours as well but not too often so as to endanger the nest.





# Water Level Updates:

## The Inside Story -a Guest Perspective by Bernie Gigas

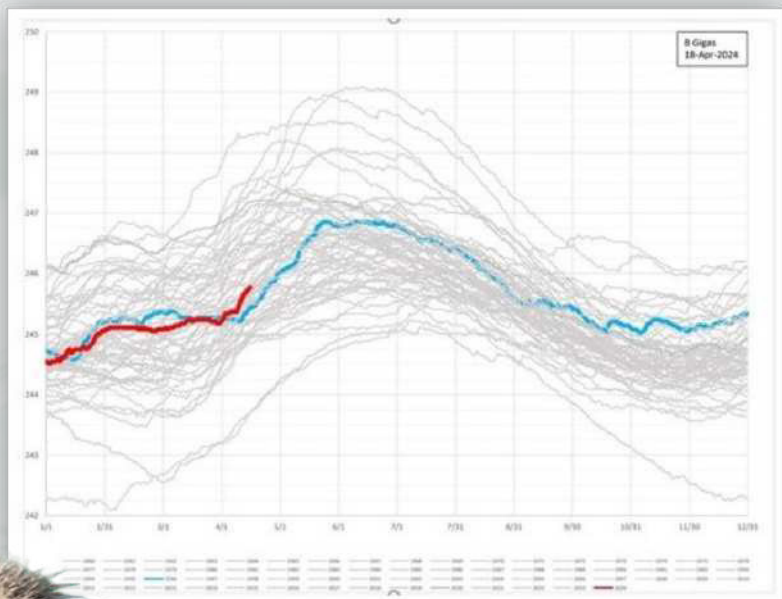
## Vince Barton, Ken White, Ross Stewart

- The water has sure felt low this early spring, hasn't it?
- Is the level in truth low for this time of year?
- Are we doomed to a summer with low levels?
- Or are we suffering from the 'Recency Effect'? Are we comparing what we see today to the last 5 years of high water supply? What does the data say?

Our special 1st guest contributor is Bernie Gigas, a professional engineer who has become extremely knowledgeable and well-spoken about all things, water level-related since flooding occurred in 2017. He has done investigative work concerning Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River water levels. Bernie is also a member of the Public Advisory Group (PAG) that is working with the Great Lakes Adaptive Management (GLAM) group to evaluate potential changes to Plan 2014. Of note from last month, TIA's own Member-At-Large Ross Stewart is also a member of PAG.

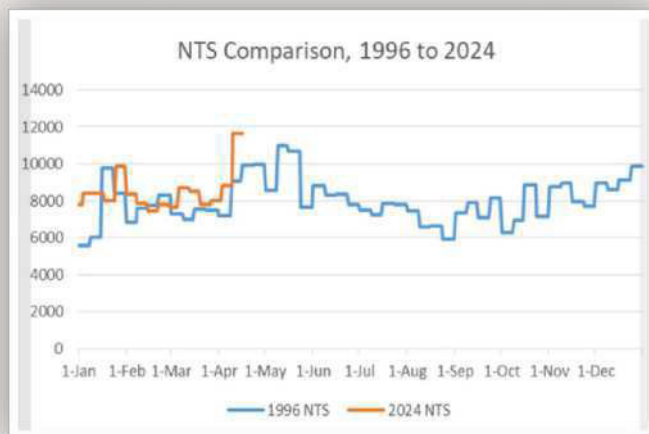
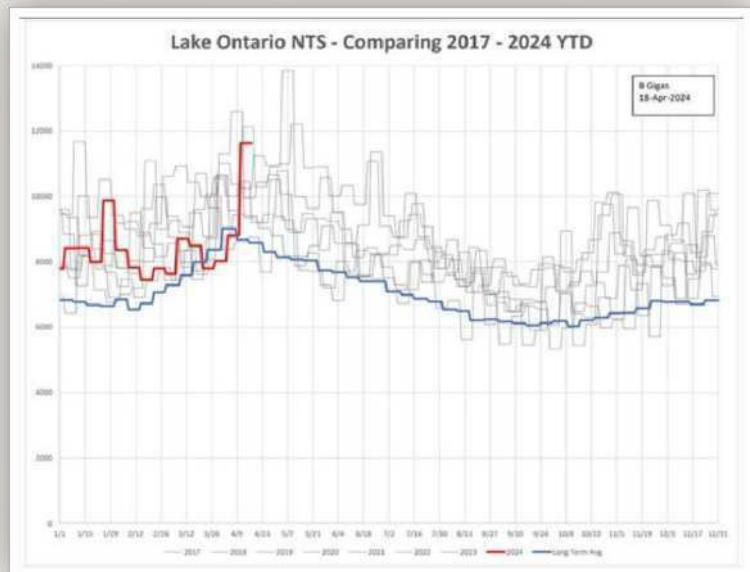
Bernie stated: “In tapping through the years, I found that 1996 is remarkably similar in [2024] level from January through now. Note that 1996 turned out ABOVE Long Term Average level in June. Digging a little deeper, it is important to understand the differences between the two years to gauge where we might wind up later this summer.”

Spaghetti Graph Levels from 1960. Blue – Long term average. Red – 2024 to 4/18/24





“NTS (Net Total Supply) in 2024 has been lower than we've seen since 2017, but wet recently. In fact, last week's 11,630 cms NTS is the 6th highest weekly NTS value in the last 7.5 years! Did we have similar behavior in 1996?”



“This third plot shows NTS (Net Total Supply) comparison between 1996 and 2024. At first glance, they look similar. Except in January when 1996 was quite low and in April when 2024 is quite wet. The difference is significant, an average of 7600 cms for 1996 versus an average of 8470 cms for 2024. As a result, in April 1996, Lake Ontario was about 12" below pre- project level (pre-Seaway). In April 2024, Lake Ontario is about 24" below pre-project.”

“Simply put, the regulations are working a lot harder to keep Lake Ontario lower. Whether that's a good thing or a bad thing depends on your personal perception. However, considering the entire system is within spitting distance of long-term average and we clearly have plenty of water coming in, I think it is entirely inappropriate to PREDICT an inevitable low summer and doomed boating season.”

As of April 19th, this articles press date, Lake Ontario's level was 74.93 m (245.83'). Average for April 16th-23rd is 74.90 m (245.73'), 0.1" apart. Note the years 1996 – 2024 when the current water level is below 2024. So is the water level ACTUALLY low right now? No, it's really not... even if it might feel that way! Feelings are not Facts!







# Noteworthy

**Allison Burchell-Robinson**

*This is a revised article from ThousandIslandsLife.com Posted in: Volume 17, Issue 7, July 2022*

TIA began life in 1934 as The Summer Residents Association of the Township and Lansdowne. Early on the Association recognized that the shoals in the St. Lawrence River were dangerous and a menace to navigation so the Association marked then shoals with planks of wood painted a bright orange which were soon replaced by tin and plastic barrels. In the 1980's the Coast Guard decreed that shoal markers had to be uniform in shape and markings. The cost went from \$10.00 a barrel to \$100 each plus the cost of anchor and chain. Today that cost including the placing and removal is \$500.00 plus. Along the way, TIA decided to incorporate and the new name became the Thousand Islands Association for the Preservation of River Quality, Inc. In the US, the legal name is the Thousand Islands Association, Inc. TIA is not just occupied with shoal marking. In past years they have addressed the issue of garbage disposal, public rest rooms, parking, vandalism on the islands, moth larvae (formerly known as gypsy moth) and, river clean up, But how best to let the audience know what TIA was doing. Before the social media world existed, there were press releases, interviews, newsletters, and town calendars. But who was the audience and were they paying attention? Attendance at the AGM was small, a smattering of people.

Then in the early 2000's when Barbara Butts was president, the idea of a shore breakfast before the meeting was launched. Attendance grew and the news spread. It was a fun way to spend a Saturday morning, an opportunity to socialize, to meet old friends and make new ones, to enjoy a delicious hot breakfast and catch up on the news and happening of the TIA.

Janet Smith-Staples, a Board member, said it well: "the AGM is your chance to gather and appreciate our special River Community." The breakfast became a social event, the meeting a success and a tradition was born!

TIA - 90 Years Young...and Counting.

## **Save the Date:**

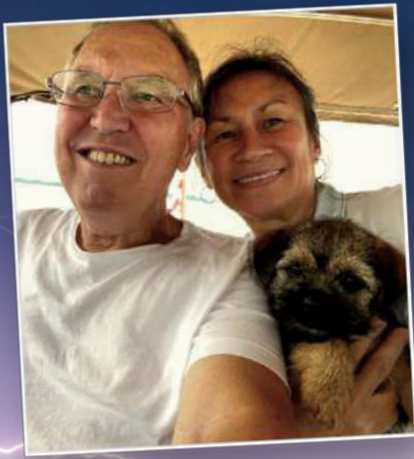
TIA's AGM will be Saturday, July 20, 2024 at the Thousand islands Playhouse.

Breakfast and live tunes featuring Tim Hallman starting at 8:00am.

AGM wrapping up at 11:30 am.

Featured Guest Speaker - -Scott MacCrimmon of Hucks Marina & Resort -  
The Evolution of Boating - Past, Present and Future





# Spotlight

The Thousand Islands Association in its ninety year history has always relied on its volunteers to step up and provide the many services required to meet the needs of the Board and the members. In 2024 the backbone of TIA is still its volunteers serving as Board members, Members-at-Large, photographers, shoal watchers, FLRS builders, cleaning up the River and list goes on.

Today I want to introduce you, although for many no introduction is needed, to Doug McLellan and Caroline Yung. Their company, McLellan Group, located in Toronto was an award-winning digital story-telling/marketing firm that did work for Fortune 500 companies in Canada and around the world. They created brands, built websites, videos and commercials.

Yet they still found time to spend the weekends on their island and finally as the weekends got longer decided to relocate to Gananoque. Doug and Caroline, long before the advent of COVID, had allowed their employees to work from home as digital access meant that files could be shared without traveling to do so.

Once ensconced in their new home they contracted with the Aquatarium in Brockville to build out the vision, which Doug spoke about in a presentation at the AGM. Now it was time for TIA.

For several years they produced the quarterly newsletter and often took the pictures that appeared in the newsletter. In addition to producing two videos, Doug and Caroline persuaded several women, young and old, to don white dresses and walk, swim or boat to their local shoal where they were photographed holding a lantern to serve as a warning. Caroline, of course, was one of those ladies but their Chocolate Labrador refused to let her shine alone in the limelight. The pictures of all were collated into a calendar for a fund raiser called the Shoal Sisters. That calendar may be outdated but it can still be found on the mantle in many cottages.

These days the married couple spend their time helping other nonprofit organizations, taking friends and visitors on River tours in their 1967 Lyman, traveling and welcoming their newest addition to the family, Brynn the border terrier.

Their love of the River and their contributions to TIA are aptly captured in the saying "if you love what you do you never work a day in your life!"





# *We Support* **WHITE SHOAL MARKERS**

Since 1994, The Thousand Islands Association has purchased, placed and maintained over 200 white shoal markers on the River. TIA is a volunteer association and relies on the support of Save the River volunteers and the contributions of residents and boaters to fund this initiative. It saves lives and property damage and we all need to support the program. Please join TIA directly and visit [LovethisRiver.com](http://LovethisRiver.com) to buy this poster and support the campaign.

[www.newtassh.weebly.com](http://www.newtassh.weebly.com)

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# 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.

## Save the Date:

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Featured Guest Speaker - -Scott MacCrimmon of Hucks Marina & Resort - The Evolution of Boating - Past, Present and Future

**MY BOAT  
MY RULES**

Dock Deck and Den Tour  
Returns August 3rd! Watch for  
article in June River Talk.

The first Trash Free River  
Clean-up day of 2024 will be  
held on June 8th. Please watch  
the website for more details.

THOUSAND ISLANDS WATERSHED LAND TRUST

## Spring Plant Sale at Glen Elbe

9 am to 3 pm

30 varieties of heirloom tomatoes,  
pre-confederation flowers,  
climate-adapted native trees and plants!

May

18th

19th

25th

26th

Glen Elbe Learning Centre  
870 County Road 42  
Athens, ON

[INFO@TIWLT.CA](mailto:INFO@TIWLT.CA)

[WWW.TIWLT.CA](http://WWW.TIWLT.CA)

**4ever**

THOUSAND ISLANDS  
WATERSHED LAND TRUST

Click here to see a variety of  
interesting activities hosted by  
the Minna Anthony Common  
Nature Center this month!





# The Next Chapter

As we celebrate TIA's 90 years this column will focus on past presidents, their memories and their accomplishments. And, to prove there is life after TIA what our ex-presidents are doing now.

## **Alan Bickerton, TIA President from 1983-1985**

Just prior to and continuing after becoming President, I was on the Membership Committee with Cliff Carpenter (Director from Rochester NY, cottage was the former and subsequent Deacon property on South Side of Hay Is and executive at Rochester Newspaper).

Prior to the days of restricted access to membership lists, Cliff & I were able to get lists from Yacht Clubs all around Lake Ontario through the Lake Yacht Racing Assoc. We worked super hard at mailings, prior to Email availability, and within two years or so our membership grew to 1100 roughly, as I recall. When I stepped aside in 1985, the membership remained very strong which made us both very pleased.

We also started talks with Gananoque Council to locate garbage bins at the Bay Dock, now Gan Marina. Those talks were hot and cold but generally went well.

Of course, Shoal Marking remained a major priority, but this was well prior to the new fancy and regulated markers. Involved orange painted 4x4's as I recall and some used draft beer containers obtained through Gus Schwarz.

I remained on the Board after my term(s) for a few years and then retired to my day job of Insurance Broker until 2007 when I fully retired.

## **Susan W Smith, TIA President from 1985-1990**

Thanks for asking me to "remember," for it is a delight. While I was president, I met so many wonderful volunteers and Islanders, but I must admit that one of my memories that comes back to haunt me are speed limits. We received many complaints about speeding boats from islanders living on narrow channels. We decided to tackle the problem and apply for posted speed limits. It took many months as we had to ensure that the limits were covered by legislation and would stand up in court. Finally, we got the news that 9KMH signs were going to be installed – suddenly, I realized that Susie Smith only knows one speed – and that is full throttle, and I had just made sure that this Susie would be breaking the law I helped to create – the result, I go out of my way to make sure I do not travel down Wanderers Channel. My love for the thousand Islands was strong before my time with TIA and afterwards I was asked by Ian Coristine to manage & run the online magazine TILife which I continue to do today. Please click here to visit the website.





The Thousand Islands Region was privileged to witness the April 8th, 2024 total Eclipse as seen by the spectacular pictures taken by Doug McLellan.





## *Remembering Skip Armstrong*

Graham "Skip" Armstrong was a true River Rat. His grandfather, RG Graham, built their cottage on Sans Souci Island, on the east side of Bostwick Island. Skip, along with his brother Bob, spent his early summers there, hanging out with the neighboring Street family. Skip lived in Ottawa and worked for the Department of Fisheries. He renovated the cottage so he could spend a longer season, accompanied by his son Jamie, daughter-in-law Phyllis (nee Jackson), their daughter Lee, and her husband, Brett.

By the early 70's, the Thousand Islands Association was floundering. Skip and Susie Smith took control. They found new board members and revitalized the association. They incorporated both American and Canadian companies and obtained charitable status of each. Skip continued to serve on the board of T.I.A. as Secretary-Treasurer for over forty years. He remained keenly interested in the activities of the association and regularly took part in the Annual General Meeting.

Skip forged the initial working relationship with Save the River, agreeing that T.I.A. would provide shoal markers to Save the River, which they would then install on the American side. This relationship continues to the present, and bears witness to the fellowship between the two organizations.

Skip was also a member of the Admirals of the Thousand Islands. Through this connection, he involved T.I.A. in several collaborative projects with the Admirals, such as the fish stocking project and the erection of the statue of St. Lawrence near Ivy Lea.

Perhaps one of Skip's greatest contributions to T.I.A. was his recruitment of new board members – some of whom later went on to become association presidents. Skip exemplified volunteerism. He contributed his time to numerous boards of charitable groups. His devotion and dedication to the communities in which he lived is a tribute to his spirit, and should be an inspiration to us all.

**Orm Murphy**



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- ❖ Acknowledgement during **TIA**'s Annual General Meeting
- ❖ Your hyperlinked business logo on the **TIA** sponsorship webpage
- ❖ Your hyperlinked business logo in our scrolling banner at the top of all **TIA** webpages
- ❖ Hyperlinked logo in all **TIA** River Talk publications (Our digital newsletter published 8 times per year)
- ❖ Invitation to submit an article about your business for inclusion in **TIA** River Talk

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### Our Mission: River Safety - Environmental Awareness - Community Support

Business Sponsorship support helps TIA to fulfill its mission to the river community and its flagship program of maintaining 200 shoal markers essential to the safety of boating and our local and seasonal residents.

[www.thousandislandsassociation.com/sponsor](http://www.thousandislandsassociation.com/sponsor)



## Thousand Islands Association (TIA)

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.

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.

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