



A.B.V. du Poisson Blanc

**ASSOCIATION BASIN VERSANT
DU POISSON BLANC (ABVPB)**

512 chemin du Grand-Poisson-Blanc,
Lac Ste-Marie, QC J0X 1Z0

lacpoissonblanc@xplornet.com

www.lacpoissonblanc.ca

Martin Ferland, ing, MBA

Direction des operation et Direction générale des barages
Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques
Gouvernement du QUEBEC
Edifice Marie-Guyart, 2^e etage, case 28
675, boul Ren-Levesque Est
Aile Louis-Alexandre Taschereau
Quebec (Quebec) G1R 5V7

March 6, 2020

Dear Martin,

In August of 2019 a Water Levels committee of the ABVPB was formed with a mandate to research the subject of water level changes in Lac du Poisson Blanc with two objectives in mind. The first objective was to collect the facts and to summarize them in a document in order to inform our members (and members of the public) about the reasons why water levels fluctuate regularly in Lac du Poisson Blanc. The second objective was to gather

comments to better understand the range of concerns that fluctuating water levels have on people who live or recreation within the watershed. The committee has now published a final report on the association website which I have attached to this letter for your review and information.

We wish to bring to your attention several concerns raised as a result of this work and hope to open discussions with the you to try to improve future outcomes related to fluctuating water levels in Lac du Poisson Blanc.

Summary of facts:

- 1) Lac du Poisson Blanc is a provincially managed water reservoir within the Lievre River watershed.
- 2) Lac du Poisson Blanc has over 500 privately owned homes situated on its waterfront which are located in the Municipalities of Lac Ste Marie, Bowman, Notre-Dame-du-Laus and Notre-Dame-de-Pontmain
- 3) The water level of Lac du Poisson Blanc is controlled by the dam located at Rapides des Cedres and which is operated by Evolgen (a division of Brookfield Renewable Partners).
- 4) Evolgen has the mandate from the province to generate as much power as possible throughout the year so long as it operates within defined regulations (Bill 54)
- 5) Regulations control how much the dam operator may lower the water levels between May 24th and September 30th of each year. The water must remain between 200.0 and 201.9 after May 24 but can be lowered to 199.0 in the month of September.

The upper limit is 201.9 m at all times of the year.

From October 1st to May 23rd of each year there is no lower limit.

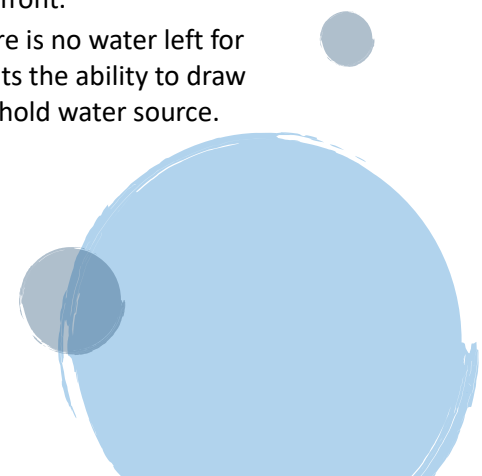
Normally between December 1st and April 15th the water level drops an average of 7.5 metres

With the above facts in mind, the ABVPB wishes to bring to your attention several concerns raised by our members (and members of the public) related to water level fluctuations in Lac du Poisson Blanc.

CONCERN 1: THE SUMMER MINIMUM WATER LEVEL OF 200.0 IS TOO LOW

DISCUSSION: Between May 24th and August 30th of the year, the water level 200.0 is too low for many property owners to allow normal enjoyment and acceptable use of their waterfront.

In the shallowest parts of the lake (when the water level is 201.0 or lower) there is no water left for recreational activities such as swimming or boating and in many cases it disrupts the ability to draw water from the lake for property owners who rely on lake water as their household water source.



at 201.0 or below, water intake pipes and water pumps become clogged with mud and weeds. This creates added repairs and maintenance costs and loss of acceptable property use for many. At 201.0 or above, none of the above concerns exist.

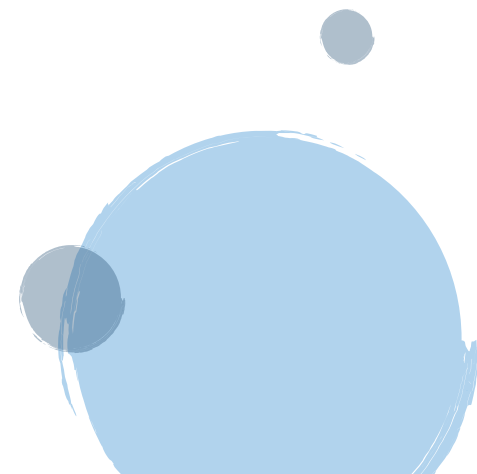
In late summer 2019 it was confirmed by a hired biologist (COBALI) that Eurasian Millfoil is spreading in the lake. There is no proven solution for removing this invasive species once it is present. A lower water level increases sunlight absorption in the water and stimulates growth of this invasive plant. A lower water level also allows for the plant to grow from the lake bottom to the water surface earlier so that boat propellers cut and spread its invasion further.

From an ecological perspective, higher water levels slow down the growth of algae and seaweed and reduce the rate at which invasive species spread throughout the lake. For fish, a higher water level allows for their natural reproductive cycles to thrive. Lower water levels are therefore killing fish and encouraging invasive plant growth.

REQUEST 1: *The ABVPB requests that the Ministry of Environment of Quebec consider amending Bill 54 regulations and raise the minimum water level to 201.0 m between May 24th and October 15th so that both ecological and waterfront property impacts are minimized.*

The ABVPB wishes to remind both the Ministry of Environment and Evulgen that low water levels are causing hardships to property owners and are harming the ecology of the lake. Both the Ministry and Evulgen should review the consequences of lower water levels on both the ecology of Lac du Poisson Blanc as well as review the human impacts to the hundreds of families who have invested \$Millions into property ownership on the lake.

The Ministry of Environment should also consider the economic impact to the regions of MRC d'Antoine Labelle and MRC de la Valee de-la-Gatineau including the \$Millions in lost tax revenue resulting from a reduced recreational season. As it stands today, summer and weekend vacations are cut off after August 30th of each year. Lac du Poisson Blanc property owners and members of the public feel that their ecological values and property rights are not being adequately considered and that priority is being placed primarily on hydro electricity production.



The ABVPB also wishes to understand how the Ministry intends to address the concern of loss of spawning grounds and other ecological impacts due to the lowering of the water below 194.00 in the Winter months. How are fish species such as lake trout expected to reproduce in this body of water when their eggs are destroyed by ice due to a 7.5 m drop in the water level in the winter? It is a clear mandate of Bill 54 and of the Ministry to protect the environment.

CONCERN 2: THE WATER LEVEL IS PERMITTED TO DROP TO 199.0 AFTER AUGUST 30th. THIS LEVEL RENDERS MANY PROPERTY OWNER'S WATERFRONT INACCESSIBLE AND UNUSABLE

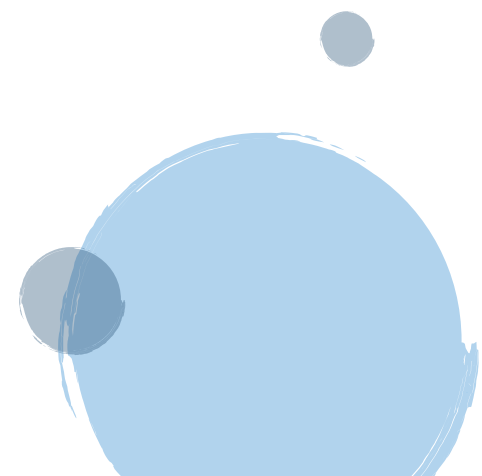
DISCUSSION: Regulations allowing the water level to drop to 199.0 after Aug 30th signal to the public and to property owners in the watershed that summer is over. Boats are removed from the lake and docks are stowed in anticipation of this date as the level at 199.0 makes much of the shallow waterfront inaccessible. The month of September and October remain pleasant, yet the recreational use of the waterfront is closed for many. This hardship is causing loss of enjoyment of property and is unnecessary and avoidable if the regulations were changed.

REQUEST 2: The ABVPB requests that the Ministry of Environment of Quebec consider amending Bill 54 regulations such that water levels do not drop to 199.0 after August 30th of each year.

Many property owners have no water at 199.0 so it is impossible to make use of private waterfront after August 30th of each season. Summer is not over, yet it is for many property owners due to this regulation. In the case such as in 2019 when water levels did not drop to 199.0, property owners remain committed to closing docks and removing boats as they have no control or warning of the potential drop so the impact of the potential water level drop requires action anyway.

CONCERN 3: WATER LEVELS FLUCTUATE WITHOUT WARNING

Discussion: Property owners and members of the public are often surprised to see the water levels drop 30 cm or more during a short period of time. In shallow areas of the lake boats may be tied to fixed



docks and boat and dock damage results from increased tension on ropes during rapidly rising or lowering events. In some past cases, property owners complain of boats resting on bottom when water levels drop without warning.

REQUEST 3: The ABVPB requests that the Ministry of Environment of Quebec consider preparing weekly water level forecasts to be posted online or to be distributed to a mailing list for all interested parties to use a resource.

Advanced warning would allow property owners time for appropriate mitigation to be undertaken so that personal property is not damaged due to a significant water level change event.

The ABVPB is interested in creating an ongoing and positive relationship with the Ministry of the Environment with a goal to collectively reduce the ecological and property impacts resulting from water level fluctuations in Lac du Poisson Blanc. As you see from the content of this letter the ABVPB feels an obligation to remind the Ministry of the high level of frustration found amongst both occasional visitors and permanent residents living in the watershed as it related to water level fluctuations. We would very much appreciate a response to our concerns and requests at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Jeff Parkes

Water Levels Committee Chair & Newton Bay Representative

A.B.V.P.B

&

Pierre Charlebois, Président

A.B.V.P.B

