

Whitewater Ontario advocacy Committee 2016 annual Report

The consuming issue this season was the purchase of River Run by wilderness Tours and its new monopoly on takeout access to the Rocher Fendu section of the Ottawa river.

Unfortunately, the late announcement of the new takeout access regime to one paddling club (CDB) and going over the heads of the local paddling community to the international paddling community with a press release disguised as an interview did further damage to the tense relationship between the Ontario paddling community and Wilderness Tours. Much of the spring was spent in attempts at mitigating the anger and refereeing the rhetorical social media battle between the Ontario community and WT management.

Wilderness Tours is using ski areas as their model for operation of this new monopoly, with paid day and season passes for simple river access, and a per night per person fee for camping which included takeout access.

One very legitimate concern was the omission of a discounted camping fee for people with season passes. Larry Broome, River Run operations manager, made concessions for takeout pass owners who complained about the double dip. In a meeting in July at River Run, between members of the paddling community and Joe Kowalski, a concession of lowering the camping fee for seasons pass holders and agreeing to meet again at the end of the season was made.

Research on land ownership of river adjacent property revealed that in another example of the complicated relationships between the three companies, OWL rafting had purchased a road allowance that separates the river run property from the traditional Black's Farm takeout road owned by Wilderness Tours. While a road to within 400 meters of the river could be easily developed, a long set of stairs would have to be built to connect the road head to the river and parking would be limited. A rough estimate for road and stair construction is \$100,000.00 which could largely be raised through grants but would also take some fundraising by the community.

If push came to shove OWL (our best friend on the Ottawa) would work with WO to develop a public takeout but understandably Dirk Van Wijk is not ready to start a war with WT. The search for a landowner with the right location and willingness to work with us continues.

For the past 3 seasons the Advocacy Committee has been setting a lump sum amount in the \$1,000.00 range and allocating it between the road access points being provided at no charge to help cover maintenance costs . 2/3 would go to OWL for the Put in and Lorne Access points and 1/3 to WT for the blacks Farm takeout rd. The response from OWL was appreciation but that it was not necessary. WT was not cashing the cheques and in follow up conversations Joe did not want to acknowledge receiving our contribution. Last year WT agreed to accept our contribution on condition that it was for Freestyle World championship sponsorship.

This past year the \$1,000.00 contribution was allocated to the two access points provided by OWL.

The Advocacy Committee receives funding contributions yearly from most notably the Hell or High Water race on The Petawawa. This year we were the benefactors of another fundraiser. In august Katrina Van Wijk organized a video premier fundraiser to benefit the WO Advocacy Committee at OWL rafting. \$266.00 was raised. We are continuing to build our war chest and are keeping our powder dry.

The new WT regime for takeout access is to be released by the end of November and distributed far more widely to the Ontario paddling community. Joe has agreed to copy in WO in so that it can be immediately posted to our website and Facebook page. Without detail, there will be some modifications to the regime including the introduction of a camping season's pass and more improvements to the property buildings and services.