

The

**Lake Ontario Organizing
Network**



"LOON"

*Your invitation to join a growing body of environmentally
concerned organizations in the Lake Ontario Basin*

LOON Is:

- **A vehicle for communication**
- **A medium for coordination**
- **A technique for cooperation**
- **A means of supporting other groups**
- **A mechanism for increasing our impact**
- **A forum for idea exchange**
- **A community**
- **A set of resources**
- **A strategy for action**

LOON is a network. It does not handle money. It does not set policies. It does not have a hierarchy. It is the embodiment of a set of concepts. Those concepts listed above are what makes the potential of this network so great.

Through the increased communication avenues provided by the network, we can coordinate our efforts, avoid duplication, and find projects to work on jointly with other organizations.

We can give to and receive support from this community we have created by sharing ideas, resources, by linking efforts and by formally signing on to projects, agendas and declarations.

Thus, LOON is a strategy to increase our visibility and our effectiveness. We will all benefit. So will our environment.

A Bit Of History

In December of 1987, Great Lakes United sponsored a regional meeting of groups active and concerned with the quality of the Lake Ontario ecosystem. Groups attending that meeting unanimously agreed that in the ten years since Love Canal, we had not accomplished enough, that new mechanisms were needed to coordinate public agendas for action around Lake Ontario.

This project was soon christened the Lake Ontario Organizing Network (LOON). While no one group owns the network, each participating group can, through LOON, carry out common goals, objectives and projects.

Past LOON Projects

- Citizens' Agenda for the Restoration of Lake Ontario, a much expanded and embellished report of the first regional meeting. LOON members released the report in simultaneous news conferences around the Lake in July 1988. Lead organization: Great Lakes United.
- LOON Caravan around Lake Ontario to reach and involve more people in the constituency-building of the Network. Lead Organization: Pollution Probe.
- A LOON meeting in Kingston at the conclusion of the Caravan to endorse the Citizens' Agenda and to plan further co-operative projects to advance that agenda. Lead organization: Pollution Probe.
- An election campaign which took the form of an open letter to President Reagan and Prime Minister Mulroney. In the fall of 1988 that letter was circulated widely to the press and politicians in both countries. As a result of this campaign in Canada, all three parties made increased commitments to the Great Lakes and the Canadian funding was doubled, bringing it in line with U.S. levels. Lead organizations: Atlantic States Legal Foundation, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Energy Probe, Great Lakes United, Pollution Probe.
- A Great Lakes electronic communication network. This is a means for those organizations with computers to be in communication on another level. Lead organization: NirvNonprofit.
- An attitudinal survey of the residents of the Lake Ontario Basin that demonstrates the collective anxiety of the people about their health and gives a clear message that governments have to respond in a meaningful way to new scientific information that was coming to light. We hope that the LOON survey can be the tool that will coalesce the public call for action on this issue. Progressive Great Lakes regulators are aware of and have encouraged this survey because it will help them make the case that public health agencies have to plan a role in the Great Lakes which have always been the exclusive territories of the environmental agencies. Lead organization: Pollution Probe.

LOON, in its short life of two years, has been the most effective organizing effort on Lake Ontario. Its accomplishments and momentum in this short period are impressive and will be used as a model for similar networks around the other Great Lakes. LOON's success largely is because of its methods of co-operative strategy and consensus-building, and task sharing to a common end.

Your organization is invited to join. By participating in the network, you will:

- Have more information about what is going on in the Basin.
- Have many opportunities to communicate with other groups.
- Benefit from the experience and expertise of other individuals and groups in the network.
- Be invited to add your own knowledge to our resource pool.
- Be invited to add your voice and impact to projects.
- Be able to ask for support on your own projects.
- Have opportunities to participate in larger projects.
- Help shape the agenda for Lake Ontario.

The range of commitment from members of LOON varies according to the scope and resources of each organization. The basic commitment that all members make, however, is to communicate. This means, at the very least, letting people know what you are doing and keeping up with the major initiatives of the Network. You will, however, have lots of opportunities to be on steering committees, sign-on to projects and help organize Basin-wide campaigns.

We all have primary concerns within our organizations and primary commitments for our time, energy and money. LOON is not intended as another drain on already stretched resources. Rather, it represents a way of getting support for what we are doing, getting new energy and ideas, and getting involved with the bigger picture. You are welcome in this developing community.

For more information, call Sue Mihalyi at Atlantic States Legal Foundation, (315) 475-1170; or Craig Boljkovac at Pollution Probe, (416) 926-9876