

Thought on fireworks from a Buckshot Lake resident.

I'm writing this on a warm July night on the edge of Buckshot Lake, one of the most pristine lakes anywhere. The local loons are calling with their haunting cry, suggesting a closeness that is the essence of being at the cottage.

At that very moment, across the lake, a barrage of fireworks is released. They are invisible to most residents of the lake, me included, (it's a big lake) but the sound carries like claps of thunder.

How would you react to this unannounced auditory intrusion on your lakeside refuge?

I remember, years ago at a cottage on White Lake, up the valley a ways. It was July 1 and, as per the invitations and announcements handed out over the previous weeks, a celebratory fireworks display was being set off at the lakeside campgrounds. The bay was packed with boaters and the shore was packed with landlubbers. The display was great: about 20 minutes and very well choreographed. And announced to the population.

I do love a 'good' fireworks display. We have a friend with a condo overlooking Parliament Hill and he holds a July 1 party there (not this year though!) It's a great location to experience a fine show.

When my kids were young, we'd hike to our special place by the Chateau Laurier, lie on our backs and watch the show directly overhead.

So there are definitely some enjoyable aspects of a fireworks display: they're fun to watch and they're loud.

But, is the lake the best place to present a fireworks display? There are lake-heavy municipalities that restrict, if not completely ban fireworks in a lake/rural setting. Most municipalities ban all fires, including fireworks, when a fire ban is on. Some ban them when the fire warning is extreme but not banned. Other's allow fireworks at specific times, specific days or for specific celebrations. I.e. July 1, or Victoria Day.

(see THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF MUSKOKA LAKES BY-LAW NUMBER 2016-092)

North Frontenac Township has no directives about fireworks separate from the fire conditions. They do ban flying lanterns (the lighting of candles inside bags allowing the hot air to float them into the sky) These lanterns, en masse, look incredible and, in a suitable location, they are fine but, in a forest...even a damp one, letting a fire drift in the air is just silly!

Fireworks are a mix of chemicals, some toxic. They often have plastic inserts to allow them to produce whistles, bangs or fancy displays. These chemicals don't all burn up and some even change properties when burned. They, and the accompanying plastic, often end up in the lake, adding to the pollution. Taken to an extreme, this pollution can noticeably affect the water quality.

The airborne explosions also produce clouds of smoke and gases that obviously pollute the air causing problems for folks with breathing challenges and adding to the degradation of our atmosphere.

There is another kind of pollution that is much more obvious: noise pollution. Without advance warning, our lake resonates to high decibel level explosions driving away wildlife, adding a level of anxiety to pets and breaking the silence that some have come to share.



And, some folks just don't like fireworks.

I do know folks who are not fans of fireworks on the lake. But we are on a big lake with lots of cottagers. So outright banning of fireworks would be too reactionary. Is there a middle ground? Is there any interest in discussing this?

It would be excellent to hear folk's thoughts about them.

The Buckshot Lake Facebook page or letters to Buckshot Lake Cottager's Association's directors would be a good place to hear opinions.

Further reading:

FOCA is The Federation of Ontario Cottage Associations, of which we are members. Here's a link with further reading about fireworks in cottage country:

<https://foca.on.ca/flying-fire-lanterns-fireworks/>