

Nominations for FOCA achievement awards due Nov. 30

By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

According to the latest Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association newsletter, nominations for the FOCA achievement awards for 2021 will be due by Nov. 30. This will be the 25th anniversary of these awards, which are presented to the FOCA member association as voted on by the FOCA Board of Directors, and celebrates the successes of the FOCA community and encourages the sharing of best practices among the member associations. Winners will be announced in February, 2022, with the award being presented at the FOCA annual general meeting next March.

This year's FOCA achievement awards will be the 25th anniversary of these awards, and will be given out by the FOCA Board of Directors for member associations that successfully fulfill FOCA's mission of protecting thriving and sustainable waterfronts across the province, and sharing those practices with their fellow lake associations within FOCA.

FOCA has been around since 1963, when it represented 125 people from 40 cottage associations across Ontario. Today, it represents 50,000 families from more than 500 cottage associations, with the primary goal of safeguarding freshwater resources and waterfronts in the province for generations to come.

Previous winners of the FOCA achievement awards in the areas surrounding Bancroft include the Limerick Waterways Ratepayers' Association in 2006 for actively opposing overdevelopment on an at capacity cold water lake trout lake, the Faraday (Trout) Lake Association in 2005 for providing support for local residents and educating and encouraging the community on issues like boating safety, environmental monitoring and stewardship and maintaining safe and healthy well water, and the Paudash Lake Association in 1998, who created wetlands protection educational signage. Last year's awards recipient was the Long Point Ratepayers' Association on Lake Erie, who successfully advocated for their seasonal residents, who were prohibited from visiting their cottages under threat of onerous fines by the local medical health officer starting in late April, 2020 due to COVID-19. Engaging with local and provincial governments and garnering media attention to the issue, the order was subsequently rescinded just before the May long weekend, 2020.

Nominees for the FOCA achievement awards must be current FOCA members in good standing and their activities must be current, although they can be long standing programs, according to the FOCA website. They should also relate to the following criteria; environmental stewardship, land use planning activities, research and/or education, political involvement and any other innovations that fall in line with FOCA's mission to protect thriving and sustainable waterfronts in Ontario. More details on the nomination process can be found at www.foca.on.ca/member-services/foca-achievement-award/

The FOCA achievement awards recipient will be announced next February, and will be presented in person at the FOCA annual general meeting in March, 2022. FOCA requests a representative of the winning lake association be present at this meeting to give a brief presentation about the association's award-winning activities.

Terry Rees is the executive director at FOCA and confirms that this annual award has been handed out to a deserving member association for the past quarter century and will be presented at their annual general meeting next March.

It is an opportunity to recognize the great work that our volunteers accomplish in their waterfront communities. Winners receive a sign of recognition to post in their home community and their story is featured as part of the annual general meeting and in our various news/social media channels.?