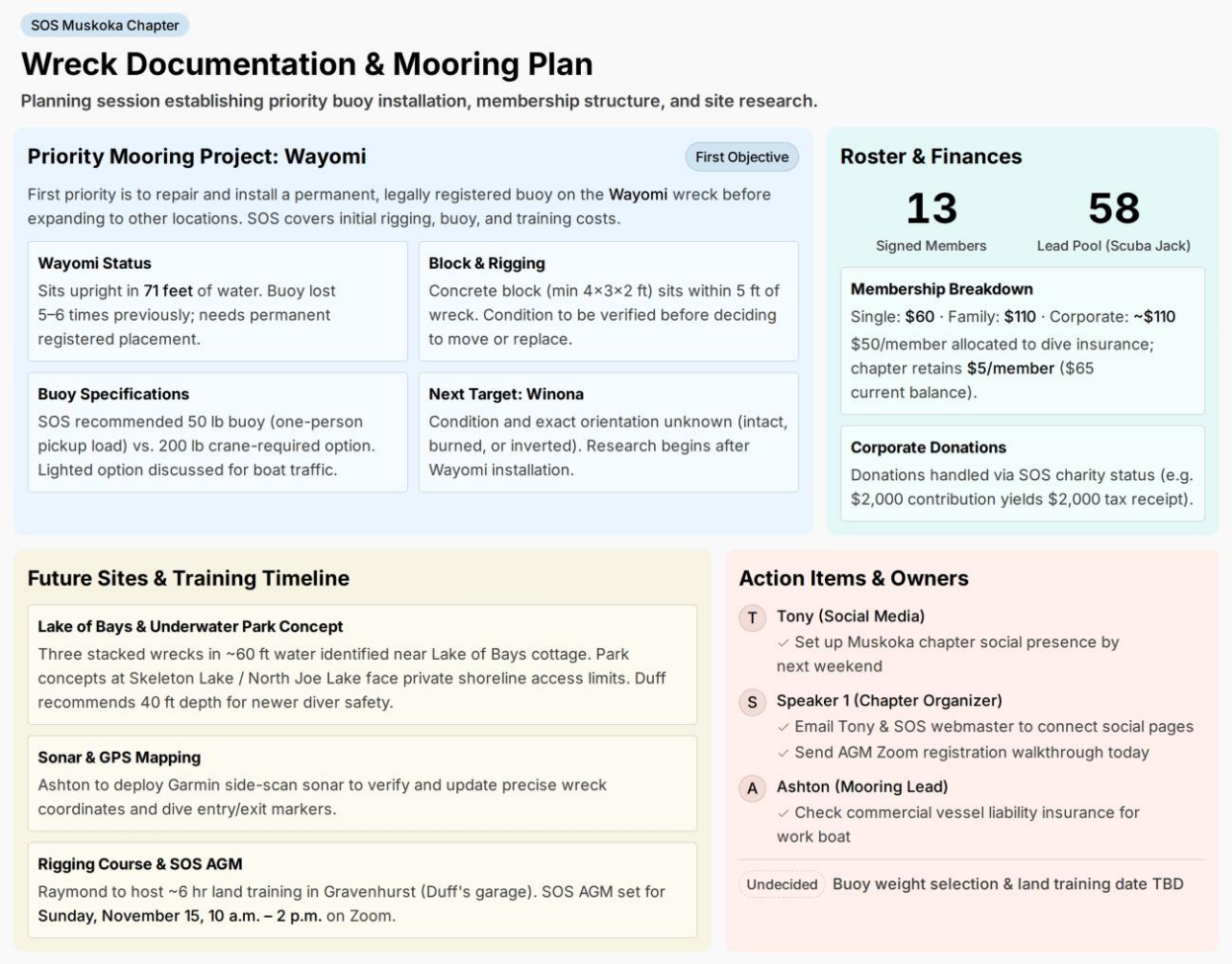


A planning meeting for the SOS Muskoka chapter covered its first mooring project, chapter operations and possible future wreck sites. The chapter's main goal is to document wreck history while making sites easier to visit legally and safely.

Introduced the first Executives – Duff (Chair), Bill (Secretary/Treasurer), and Ashton (Mooring) while making it clear the group is seeking more members, support and Department Heads in many areas

Chapter priorities — mooring first, then wreck research

Duff said the chapter's first priority is to **repair the mooring** before expanding to other sites. The chapter also wants to fill gaps in the history of local wrecks and document what happened to them.

- **Waome**: The wreck lies in roughly 71 feet of water and sits upright. The group has lost its buoy five or six times and wants a permanent replacement.

- **Winona**: Its condition and location are unknown; it may be burned, intact or upside down. Duff said the group would turn to it after getting the first wreck set up.
- **Longer-term scope**: The chapter may survey other nearby wrecks and eventually look into Lake of Bays.

SOS is a not-for-profit charitable organization that works with the Coast Guard. The group said its registered buoy setup would be official and legally binding. It will fund the initial project, including rigging and training, so the chapter will not pay those costs out of pocket.

First mooring — equipment, placement and open questions

The group wants to move the existing mooring line off the boat, which is already showing wear, and install a buoy system. SOS will supply the rigging and expertise. The chapter expects to remove the buoy in fall or winter and reinstall it in spring.

- **Buoy options**: SOS recommends a 50-pound buoy that one person could handle and load into a pickup. A larger option may weigh about 200 pounds and require a crane and storage arrangements.
- **Visibility**: One option has a light. The group saw that as potentially helpful on Muskoka, where boat traffic may not notice an unlit marker.
- **Cost estimates**: The buoy alone was estimated at about $1,000 and, elsewhere, $1,600. Chain would cost more. The group was told SOS would cover the first setup; the process and cost for additional buoys remain unknown.
- **Existing block**: Divers said the block sits very close to the wreck, within five feet, and may be broken. Duff raised moving it; another member agreed it was too close. The group still needs to verify its condition and decide whether to move or replace it. Chaining a cradle under the block was suggested.
- **Installation**: The group discussed using the existing anchor and may need a boat to guide the equipment into place. Members have contacts with boats and crane access, but the installation method is not settled.
- **Dive conditions**: The site is very dark, so divers will need flashlights and surface support. The group noted that moving away from the lights could make it hard to stay oriented.
- **Concrete dimensions**: A minimum block measuring four feet by three feet by two feet deep was mentioned for one boat. Its weight was said to be listed in the handbook, but the figure was not established in the conversation.

Ashton is the chapter's mooring contact, and Raymond is expected to reach out to him. Ashton said he would check with his insurance representative because a possible work boat is a commercial vessel owned by a company, not by him. The group had not decided which buoy to use; it may depend on what SOS provides.

Chapter funding and membership — basic costs covered

The chapter plans to use its own funds for incidentals, while SOS covers the first mooring setup. Fundraising could support boat charters, fuel and other costs of getting to sites.

- **Annual memberships**: A single membership costs $60; a family membership costs $115; and a corporate membership @ $140 per term.
- **Insurance and chapter share**: About $50 of each membership goes toward insurance for members who dive. The chapter receives $5 per member; with 13 members signed up thus far, that would bring in $65.
- **Fundraising**: Ideas included selling shirts or sweatshirts and using proceeds for chapter expenses. Members expected that much of the early fundraising would come from people already interested in the work while the group is seeking someone to take the lead on this.
- **Charitable donations**: The organization's president, Daryl, explained that a company could donate an item or money through the charitable organization. The example given was a $2,000 contribution that could provide the company a $2,000 tax write-off.
- **Current roster**: Thirteen people have signed up. Using Kate's resources, the group also identified 58 additional names from a weekly scuba dive through Scuba Jack and other sources. Membership driver is another Management position the group would like filled.

Chapter outreach — social media and new members

The group wants to grow the chapter's base and spread both the work and the word about its sites. A Muskoka chapter page is already on the SOS website.

Social media. Tony agreed to take on social media after the group asked for a presence. The chapter discussed using Facebook and other channels to communicate and direct interested people to the SOS website. Nearby chapters, including Brockville and a chapter the group thought might be Welland, were cited as active examples.

Fundraising and membership. The group also raised the possibility of assigning someone to coordinate fundraising and recruit members. No separate owner was assigned to those efforts during the meeting.

Future sites — access, depth and diver experience

Members discussed possible wreck sites and a simple underwater park as longer-term ideas. They did not choose a location or commit to building a park.

- **Lake of Bays wrecks**: Three boats were described as lying on top of one another near a cottage. A line system might connect them. The bay is roughly 60 feet deep, and a mooring could make the site accessible, though the nearby cottage remains a consideration.
- **Underwater park**: Skeleton Lake and the north end of Joe Lake were mentioned as possibilities. Access is a major obstacle because much of the shoreline is private. The group also discussed public docks near Rosseau, where parking and access may be easier, but the water may be muddy and busy.
- **Depth and diver experience**: Duff said a 40-foot site would suit both newer and experienced divers better than 60 feet. He worries that some newer divers at 60 feet may neglect no-decompression limits and safety stops. Others noted that sites at 60 feet could attract divers, but dark, cold water makes a rapid ascent risky.
- **Other chapters**: Brockville was suggested as a model, though members noted its shipwrecks, clear water and diving conditions differ from Muskoka's. The group wants to learn from other chapters about their needs and expenses.
- **GPS locations**: Ashton has a Garmin and side-scan sonar and said he could mark boat locations. Members also want to update the coordinates if the existing positions prove inaccurate. The group discussed sharing dive entry and exit points.

Training and AGM — dates and format still being arranged

Raymond is expected to travel to Gravenhurst to train interested members in rigging. The group said the first course would be held on land in a garage, with Duff offering his garage. The date is not set.

- **Course content**: The roughly six-hour session would cover rope tying, designing the setup and obtaining the required equipment, including the appropriate block for a site around 75 feet deep.
- **Attendance**: SOS welcomes training as many people as possible. Members said arranging one date for 20 people could be difficult and raised the possibility of

smaller groups. Whether course participants could later teach others was not known.

- **Timing**: The group needs dates that work for most interested members. A weekend was expected, but Raymond's preference was not confirmed. The discussion also mentioned possibly waiting until June next year and combining a dive with ice diving if Raymond is willing.
- **AGM**: The SOS annual general meeting is **Sunday, November 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**, on Zoom. Members need to pre-register to get the link. Duff and Tony planned to listen together and compare notes; Tony noted that the discussion would be useful from the treasurer's perspective.

Action Items

@Calib

- Share the GPS co-ordinates with Ashton

@Tony (social media volunteer)

- Set up a social media presence for the Muskoka chapter

@Bill (Secretary/Treasurer)

- Email Tony and the SOS webmaster for background on connecting the chapter's social media to the SOS website

@Ashton (mooring lead)

- Contact his insurance representative about liability coverage for using a company-owned commercial vessel

@David Kopas

- Offered making contact with a prospective supporter to supply a barge, anchor (cement), and labour to assist us securing the Waome