SUMMER STEWARDSHIP ACTION PLAN

The 15-Minute "Sunny Day" Mid-Summer Estate Audit

THE PHILOSOPHY

Maintenance is stewardship—protecting your asset for the next generation. Mid-summer is the ideal time to evaluate your property while the roofline, foundation, and canopy are fully visible, preventing rushed and dangerous autumn inspections.

We designed this 15-Minute "Sunny Day" Audit to be executed safely from the ground with your morning coffee. Walk your property, identify vulnerabilities, and use the Decision Matrix to assign the heavy lifting.

NOTICE: This audit is provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute direct maintenance or structural recommendations for any specific person or property.



THE ENVELOPE
(Water Management & Pests)

The "Binocular Protocol."
Do not climb the ladder.
Inspect safely from the ground.

◌ Shingle Integrity:

Scan ridge lines and valleys for curled, cracked, or missing tabs. Identify areas of heavy moss (specifically on the North side). Moss acts as a sponge, holding moisture and rotting shingles prematurely.

◌ Eavestroughs & Downspouts:

Look for sagging aluminum, dirt streaks on the outside of gutters, or plant life sprouting from the eaves. Ensure downspouts direct water at least 4 feet away from the foundation.

◌ The Chimney Cap:

Ensure the spark arrestor screen is intact. Raccoons frequently tear these open in summer to nest, creating a severe fire hazard for autumn.

◌ Window & Door Caulking:

Inspect the weatherstripping and exterior caulking around main doors and lake-facing windows for dry rot, cracking, or peeling.

◌ Foundation Perimeter:

Walk the footprint. Check for new gaps where wood meets stone/concrete. (The Pencil Test: If a pencil fits in the crack, a mouse can enter). Ensure no ferns, tall grass, or wood piles are touching the siding, as this provides a highway for carpenter ants.

CRITICAL SYSTEMS (Infrastructure Health)

These systems work hardest in July.
Check them for signs of stress.

◌ The Septic Field:

Walk over the leaching bed. Look for "soggy spots" or patches of grass that are unusually lush and green compared to the rest of the lawn. These are early indicators of hydraulic failure.

◌ Water Filtration:

Check the UV System countdown timer. If the bulb is under 60 days, order the replacement now. Inspect the sediment filter bowl for heavy algae or iron clogging.

◌ The Sump Pump Test:

Open the sump pit and manually lift the float switch to ensure the pump activates and smoothly discharges water before autumn rains arrive.

◌ AC & Heat Pump Condensers:

Inspect the exterior unit. Clear all brush and weeds at least 2 feet away from the unit to allow for proper airflow and prevent compressor burnout. Look for signs of mice nesting in the electrical panel.

◌ Propane & Gas Lines:

Inspect exposed copper or rubber lines for teeth marks. Porcupines and rodents chew lines during dry summer months for the condensation.

◌ Fuel Levels:

Note the Propane % and Heating Oil Tank gauge to schedule early autumn fills and avoid emergency delivery premiums.

STRUCTURE & SHORELINE

Summer heat causes wood expansion and loosens critical hardware.

◌ The "Bounce" Test:

tand on the extreme corners of your deck and dock and bounce. Excessive sway or sponginess indicates rotting footings or ledger boards.

◌ Stair Stringers & Handrails:

Vigorously shake the deck handrails. Inspect the bottom of the stair stringers where they meet the ground/concrete pad—ground contact points rot first.

◌ Surface Hardware:

Heat pushes nails out of boards. Hammer in "popped" nails or replace them with screws to protect bare feet.

◌ Dock Anchors:

When the water is calm and clear, visually inspect underwater chains and cables. Rusting or thinning links will snap during the winter ice shift.

◌ Bunkies & Outbuildings:

Inspect shed and bunkie roofs for lifting shingles and check the base for signs of burrowing animals.

◌ Shoreline Erosion:

Look for "undercutting" where the bank meets the water, indicating a loss of land mass and root instability.

THE GROUNDS (Risk Mitigation)

Summer heat causes wood expansion and loosens critical hardware.

◌ The "Widow Maker" Scan:

Look up into the canopy. Identify large, dead (brown) branches hanging directly over the roof, driveway, or hydro lines. Tag them with marking tape for professional removal before heavy snow arrives.

◌ Driveway & Culvert Check:

Inspect both ends of the driveway culvert pipe for silt and gravel buildup. If it is 50% blocked now, it will freeze solid in November and wash out your driveway during the spring melt.

◌ Firewood Proximity:

Ensure all firewood piles are stored a minimum of 20 feet away from the main cottage structure to prevent rodents from migrating indoors.

FIRE DEFENCE & LIFE SAFETY

Dry summer conditions elevate hidden fire risks.

◌ Detector Expirations:

Check the manufacturer dates on the back of all interior units. Smoke detectors expire after 10 years; CO detectors expire after 7 to 10 years, regardless of whether the batteries are fresh.

◌ Fire Extinguisher Pressure:

Check the gauges to ensure the needle is in the "Green" zone. Turn dry chemical extinguishers upside down and tap the bottom with a rubber mallet to prevent the powder from settling into a hard brick.

◌ Dryer Vent Flap

Inspect the exterior vent. Is it lint-free and opening freely? Trapped lint is a leading cause of structural fires.

◌ BBQ Grease Trap:

Pull the catch tray on your grill. Is it overflowing? Grease fires are the #1 cause of summer deck fires.

THE STEWARDSHIP DECISION MATRIX

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OWNERS: Finding an issue is only half the battle; the next step is execution. Evaluate the issues you found during your Sunny Day Audit against these two categories: Risk of Injury (Heights, Chainsaws, Hydro) and Consequence of Error (Water damage, Foundation rot, Fire).

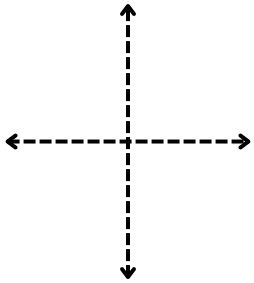
HIGH RISK

LOW CONSEQUENCE

- **Action Plan:** DELEGATE TO PROFESSIONALS. Not worth ruining your weekend (or your back).
- **Examples:** Digging out a blocked driveway culvert, wading into the lake to replace heavy dock chains.

HIGH CONSEQUENCE

- **Action Plan:** MANDATORY DELEGATION. Do not attempt. Call a fully insured professional.
- **Examples:** Removing "Widow Maker" tree branches, clearing high eavestroughs, re-securing a swaying deck ledger.



LOW CONSEQUENCE

- **Action Plan:** DO IT YOURSELF. Grab the tools and enjoy a productive hour.
- **Examples:** Hammering deck nails, moving firewood away from the cottage, emptying the BBQ grease trap.

HIGH CONSEQUENCE

- **Action Plan:** PROCEED WITH CAUTION. DIY only if you have prior experience. Otherwise, delegate.
- **Examples:** Ordering and replacing the UV bulb, replacing exterior window caulking, replacing life safety detectors.

LOW RISK

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN "TO-DO" AND "DONE."

If your audit uncovered a leaning tree,
a spongy deck, or a clogged eavestrough,
do not worry. You caught it early.

At Kacaba Cottage Care, we specialize in executing the right side of your Decision Matrix. 

Whether you need a deck repair, professional tree removal, or a full eavestrough and roofline clearance, our team can help you handle, or put you incontacrt with someone we can tackle the heights and heavy lifting so you don't have to.

Ready to delegate your maintenance list?

Contact the Kacaba Cottage Care Team at 705-809-0898 or visit us online to book your late-summer and autumn property servicing.

www.kacabacottagecare.com | "We handle the work; you enjoy the Highlands."