

# REAL Update



For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League **February 2005**

## Famous Ecologist Addresses REAL

REAL and the Friends of the Tay Watershed (FoTW) were thrilled to have Dr. David Schindler come to Perth for an informal question and answer lunch meeting in early December.

Dr. Schindler is likely Canada's most articulate exponent of the climate change and water link. He is widely recognized for his clear and outspoken defence of the natural environment and specifically for his path-breaking work in proving the effects of high levels of phosphorous on lake ecologies in Ontario, with the notorious curtain hung down the middle of the lake. He currently teaches ecology at the University of Alberta, and is the recipient of many awards, including the 1991 Stockholm Water Prize (considered the "Nobel of Water"), the 2001 Gerhard Herzberg Gold Medal, eight honorary doctorates and most recently, the Order of Canada.



Dr. Schindler began the session summarizing what he had just finished explaining to the Senate Committee. Water shortages are likely to become a serious problem in Canada, especially in the Western Prairies and in Southern Ontario as population growth, industrial development and agriculture use more and more water. The

climate has warmed 1 - 4 degrees Celsius since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, evaporation has increased by 10-15%, and we will be returning to drier years, as the last century was unusually wet. We need to take steps to lessen the impact.

Attendees to the lunch then posed a great variety of questions on water issues, including the privatization of water, Environmental Impact assessments, citizen science, how to change attitudes, how to get more scientific information into the decision-making process, recommendations for designing municipal water treatment systems, the Kyoto accord and what he expected to happen in the next 30 years.

Sue Brandum asked Dr. Schindler what the particular effect of climate change would be on the water in our region. He answered that despite the pressures of population and industrial growth, the effect will not be as great as in the  
*(continued inside)*

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west. But evaporation will steal more of our water as the average temperature increases, and more of the winter precipitation will fall as rain and will seep away rather than being stored in snowcover. There is a general misunderstanding of how vulnerable our water system is; for example, there is only a 1% exchange of the water in the Great Lakes per year. Water diversions are a real concern because we do not have reliable data on current water diversions, and there is insufficient monitoring.

On the issue of lake planning, Dr. Schindler was asked, now that phosphorus levels in lakes seem to have stabilized or are declining, what should we be looking for as an indicator of lake health. He suggested that fisheries were a good indicator. There is abundant anecdotal evidence that the quantity, size and variety of fish in our lakes has declined, but this needs to be measured. Steps also need to be taken to monitor and reduce flow through. He predicted that inland lake fisheries would be in the same crisis state as the east coast cod fisheries within 10 years.

The audience consisted primarily of committed local environmentalists. Peter Au asked that if we were students of Dr. Schindler, what would he recommend we do? His answer was that we ensure we have a good scientific database to base our decisions on, and that as people we take control of our own destiny - too many people expect someone else to do the job for them.

Dr. Schindler will be speaking at the International Joint Commission's (IJC) 2005 Biennial Meeting in Kingston, on Thursday, June 9. See [http://www.ijc.org/2005biennial/about\\_en.php](http://www.ijc.org/2005biennial/about_en.php) for details.

### ***Update Feedback***

We love to get feedback on our newsletter! Here are a few recent comments:

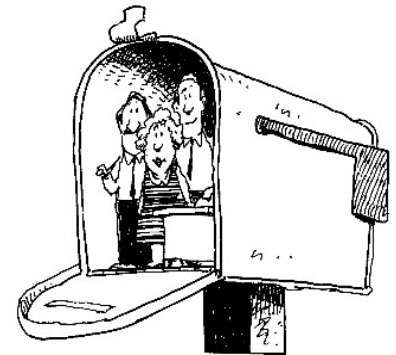
Dorothy Rose of Abbotsford, B.C., who will soon be celebrating her 97th birthday, sends

greetings and notes how much she enjoys reading the REAL Update. Dorothy wrote the weekly bird column in the Record News in the 80's. She was among artists who donated works to REAL's fundraising auction in the early days.

"Congratulations on your newsletter which I enjoy so much receiving. It's really encouraging to know what you are doing." - Rita Burtch, an Honourary member who has now moved to Gananoque.

"The update I had sent along ...had come from another notable group working for the good of the community and environment just to the north of us, the Rideau Environmental Action League. It's

comforting to know that we are truly surrounded by folks doing well by doing good." - Jim Franchetto, The Biosphere Network



And thanks to Stew Hamill for his clarification on our time capsule letter printed in the last issue:

"Thanks for the informative newsletter. The Green Heron is actually quite a common, though sometimes hard to find, bird in Eastern Ontario. It has been reported from over half of the 40 squares in the Thousand Islands Region of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project so far (one year to go on collecting data)."

### ***Local Threat of WNV Declining***

It appears that the threat of West Nile virus is on the decline in Lanark County. Stew Hamill, a REAL member, has been attending the meetings of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Health Unit's WNV Advisory Committee. At the October 2004 meeting, it was reported:

- Of 888,000 mosquitoes trapped by the

surveillance program 0.85% (less than 1%) were of the genus *Culex*, which is the mosquito which can transmit WNV.

- 36 birds were submitted for testing. There was one positive case of a bird with WNV (in the Westport area).
- There have been four cases of WNV in humans in Ontario this year (none in eastern Ontario). There were 21 cases of human WNV in Canada this year, but no deaths.

Dr. Gardner of the Health Unit will be reviewing the results to determine whether larviciding will be necessary next year. Regardless, it is likely that mosquito surveillance will continue. It cost Lanark \$15,000 to do mosquito surveillance in 2004.

### ***Pitch-In Needs You!***

We need your help to keep Pitch-In going and growing. This year's event is set for April 18-24, 2005 with a focus day of Saturday, April 23. The Waste Committee could use you on the organizing committee or to handle a specific task: publicity, supplies, contacting community groups, lunch, garbage collection, certificates, school contact and to be site coordinators on the Saturday. If you could assist in any of these areas, contact Barb at 283-9966 or [dhicks11@cogeco.ca](mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca). Last year over 600 people and 20 community organizations participated. This is now too big a project for a few volunteers to handle alone. We want to keep this going but we really need a couple of people to help. Let's do our best to keep this community wide clean-up going.



### ***Seeking Funding for Projects***

In our last issue we explained the purpose of our Fundraising and Finance Committee, which is actively searching for funds for a number of projects.

In June, Sue Brandum crafted an excellent proposal which was submitted to the One Tonne Challenge Community Challenge Program. The proposal included various community projects that address climate change, including retreeing Smiths Falls, integrating environmental stewardship into strategic and operating plans of local organizations, an expanded Reuse Centre and a regional newspaper column. The change in government led to a delay in the review process, and we eventually were notified that we were not successful. (No other small or rural community in Ontario was successful either.)

Aspects of the proposal, including the community leaders workshops and an idle-free campaign, were then revamped for another proposal to EcoAction, a federal government funding program. The workshops would be organized to educate community leaders about climate change and its implications, and take first steps towards a community plan to address climate change. The anti-idling campaign would educate drivers who allow their vehicles to idle at the Rideau Canal Lock Crossings in Smiths Falls and Merrickville during the summer. The proposal was supported by the Town of Smiths Falls, Parks Canada, the Merrickville and District Community Health Centre, The Record News, Johnson Controls, and RANA International.

REAL was recently informed that application was not successful either. The EcoAction review process has become very competitive, and just 17 of the 37 applications submitted were approved.

However, we were very pleased to have our application to the Valley Heartland program accepted. We were given \$7,400 to hire a youth intern to conduct a feasibility study and business plan for an expanded Reuse Centre. We were very fortunate to hire Andrea Swain for the position. Andrea began work on January 4 and will finish on March 31.

The Fundraising and Finance Committee is also

researching funding possibilities for a number of other projects: Retreeing Smiths Falls (which would have to begin with a town-wide tree inventory), the Take it Back and the Low Income Energy Retrofit programs, and securing a Volunteer Coordinator.

### ***Meet Andrea Swain, Our New Intern***

REAL is pleased to announce that we have hired Andrea Swain to develop a Business Plan for an expanded Reuse Centre in Smiths Falls.

Andrea defines herself as committed environmentalist and an avid dumpster diver. We let her introduce herself to you:

Your slogan “REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment” really hits home for me. I am committed to taking action in my own life to reduce my impact on the planet. As I mention in my resume, I am committed to environmental education and communication. The goals of environmental education are often stated in terms of changing behaviour. Reuse centres, such as the one that REAL has already established, represent tangible opportunities for local residents to take action. I will be working on this project over the next three months and look forward to meeting many residents of Smiths Falls and surrounding communities over the course of my work.

I am committed to environmental action. I have a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and I am currently pursuing a Master Degree in Environmental Education and Communication.

In addition to my academic pursuits, I have continued to search for employment opportunities that allow me the opportunity to work on environmental projects with rural communities. In my most recent role as a project manager for a



small consulting firm in Manitoba, I completed a number of feasibility studies and business plans. Some of my volunteer work includes coordinating a youth program called Envirothon and participating as a member of the Ottawa Stewardship Council Board.

I have come by my nickname, dumpster diver, honestly. I have a reputation amongst my friends and family for being the only person they know who would rather furnish their apartment with treasures found in back lane dumpsters, garage sales, or thrift stores than from IKEA. I am looking forward to working with the REAL Board to complete this project to expand the opportunity for Smith Fall’s residents to reduce, reuse and recycle!

### ***New Online Service: Rideau. Reuses.com***

REAL and our area now have our own online waste exchange! Rideau.Reuses is up and running.



You read about Freecycle and the Biosphere's online reuse service in our last newsletter. Norm Ruttan, the developer of the Biosphere Reserve site and several others, volunteered to set up a site for our area: Perth, Smiths Falls, Carleton Place, Westport and Kemptville and points in between.

Using this site you can post items you would like to give away (or sell for less than \$99) or post items you are looking for. There is also an area where you can post your garage sale. In this way we hope to ensure more used but useful items find their way to new owners, and out of the waste stream.

The more people who use the service, the better

it will be for everyone. We need REAL members to get the ball rolling and put up some listings. We will soon be promoting the site more widely, and we want the public to get a good picture of how this will work. We'll also be linking the site to the physical Reuse Centre for more opportunities to give and get more stuff.

To get started, log on to [www.rideau.reuses.com](http://www.rideau.reuses.com), and click on "create account" in the centre of the top of the screen.

### ***Our Business Plan for 2004-2009***

The REAL Board of Directors recently approved its five-year Business Plan for 2004-2009.

Basically, the Business Plan lays out the values that drive us as an organization, the issues we face, our vision, the key areas and projects that we plan to focus on, the results we want to achieve, and some of the nuts and bolts of getting the resources we need to achieve our goals.

This is the first year that REAL has produced a Business Plan. It is a living document and we plan to review it every January to ensure we are on track and to extend the plan by a year. The Business Plan grew out of the Strategic Planning exercise we went through and the community consultation, called Stopping the Slide, that we held in September 2002.

To ensure REAL is focusing on your most pressing local environmental concerns we invited members and the participants on the Public Consultation to comment via e-mail. In addition to a number of e-mail comments we received, a number individuals and organizations sat down with us to discuss the plan on January 13.

The key project areas are summarized below. If you wish to view the plan in its entirety, see the "About Us" page of our website, [REALaction.ca](http://REALaction.ca).

### **Key Results Areas of REAL's Business Plan**

- 1) All area municipalities and organizations (such as the BIAs, Chambers of Commerce, Police and Hospital Boards, etc.) have integrated environmental stewardship into their various strategic and business plans.
- 2) Smiths Falls has been re-treed.
- 3) Smiths Falls has helped people conserve water.
- 4) Citizens throughout Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, and surrounding and including Smiths Falls, have further reduced the production of solid waste by:
  - a. Developing a plan to become a Zero Waste Community
  - b. Using home composters
  - c. Installing waste/recycling receptacles in parks
  - d. Having another community organization adopt the successful Smiths Falls Pitch-In which REAL has developed
  - e. Recycling cell phones, printer cartridges, and batteries
  - f. Integrating Backyard Burning issues into all solid waste considerations
  - g. Developing a regional Take-It-Back program
  - h. Developing an Expanded Regional Reuse Centre that will handle electronic waste and construction waste useful for renovation, and integrating web-based systems with these programs.
- 5) Watershed are protected by:
  - a. REAL/LL Green delivering an expanded and strengthened Well Aware program
  - b. REAL leading Rideau River and Canal clean-ups
  - c. REAL/LL Green delivering shoreline visits
  - d. REAL/LL Green developing the photo display of good shoreline practices
  - e. REAL delivering the Voyageur Canoe project in Smiths Falls.
- 6) Climate change is reduced and mitigated by:
  - a. REAL/LL Green delivering Community

- Leader Workshops on climate change
- b. REAL/LL Green delivering an Idle-Free campaign at lock crossings in Smiths Falls and Merrickville.
  - c. REAL/LL Green developing and delivering a Low-Income Energy Retrofit Program.

- 7) Public is educated by:
- a. a regular, regional environmental supplement produced in the EMC
  - b. REAL holds 4 public education sessions each year.

- 8) REAL has built its capacity to effectively deliver these projects by:
- a. Retaining a volunteer co-ordinator
  - b. Developing its human and financial resources
  - c. Ensuring its Board of Directors is healthy.

### ***The Ten Values of REAL***

- **Fundamental Role:**  
We believe our fundamental role is to persuade the leaders and citizens of our communities to protect and enhance our natural environment with an eye to the ability of future generations to benefit and to take their pleasure from the natural environment as we have done.
- **Ecosystem Based:** We believe that natural resources should be managed on an ecosystem and watershed basis.
- **Stewardship:** We believe our local community infrastructure (governments, agencies, non-profit organizations, etc.) can commit to being environmental stewards on behalf of the common good.
- **Respect:** We believe that our actions should be based on respect for the earth and all its life forms - human and non-human, past, present and future.
- **Participation:** We value the diversity of individuals, volunteers and organizations that



make up our communities, and strive to reflect this diversity in our programs and activities.

- **Equity:** We believe that all individuals, sectors and communities have the right to be heard and involved in decisions affecting them. We also strive to give a voice to people and non-human species that cannot speak for themselves.
- **Empowerment:** We believe in empowering individuals and organizations to take action, rather than imposing our ideas on others.
- **Sound Knowledge:** We believe that decisions should be based on sound scientific, traditional and community knowledge, and that this knowledge should be shared freely.
- **Positive Action:** We believe that positive reinforcement, recognition and other incentives are effective motivators to bring about social and environmental change.

### ***REAL's Website Revamped***

Our website has undergone a major overhaul and went live the first week of January. We hope that members and the public will find the site easier to navigate, and a one-stop location for everything you need to know about REAL.

One new feature is the News Exchange area. Read past newsletters, see some of the past questions directed to our website, or read how REAL has made the news in the past year. Or link to Earth Talk, a weekly installment of two questions and answers from people like you, to an online environmental magazine.

The Communications Committee will continue to tweak the information presented on REALaction.ca, post additional information about projects and events as they occur, and provide more photos to show we are a living, breathing organization. Thanks to Sue Calver of Pakrat PC's in Jasper for translating our vision into a workable product. We would appreciate hearing your comments and suggestions. From the website, just click on "Contact Us" to send us an e-mail.

## ***CSW Recognized by Environment Canada***

The Centre for Sustainable Watershed (CSW), an environmental non-profit organization based in Portland, was recently recognized by Environment Canada's Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN). Sarah Rosolen, Executive Director, accepted the Patricia Roberts-Pichette Award on behalf of the CSW for demonstrating enthusiastic leadership and commitment to advancing ecological monitoring and research in Canada. Past recipients include individual scientists, the Canadian Museum of Nature, and the Geological Survey of Canada.

## ***Donation Received from Local Students***



REAL recently accepted a donation from the students of the Chimo Life Skills Program located at SFDCI.

In October, SFDCI Principal Ian Stewart had challenged a number of classes with the Environmental Responsibility Initiative. Their class used three periods to beautify the school property by removing debris and litter, and were awarded fifty dollars to use as they wished.

The Senior Life Skills students decided it would be appropriate to donate the proceeds to a local environmental organization. REAL would like to thank the students for their hard work and for putting the money back into their community.

## ***Emergency Preparedness and Conservation -- The Lesson for Ontario***

*Chris Winter of the Conservation Council of Ontario reflected on the Southeast Asian tsunami in the latest edition of "Green On".*

Sadly, nothing motivates like a crisis. It was another crisis just over a year ago -- the August 14 blackout in 2003 -- that led to a resurgence in support for conservation and the creation of the provincial Conservation Action Team. It took the Walkerton e.coli tragedy to wake up the government to the dangers of cutbacks in environmental programs. Looking further back, it was Hurricane Hazel in 1954 that led to a stronger role for Ontario's conservation authorities in acquiring and protecting floodplain lands. In each case, the crisis led to a long-term commitment to prevent any future occurrence of a similar scale.

Ideally, we want to act in advance of a crisis -- "anticipate and prevent" is the commonly used term in eco circles. While the challenge is always to be able to predict what the next crisis will be, the key point to remember is that a conservator society is always more resilient to crisis, whether it be a catastrophic event, gradual climate change, pollution, or the gradual loss of essential resources (such as energy, food, water, or raw materials).

Emergency preparedness and prevention should be among the goals for conservation, in particular with respect to how we design our buildings, communities, and economy. Energy efficiency, renewable power, conservation, and a diversified energy system will help protect against inevitable energy shortages or emergencies. Efficient urban and building design are critical components -- we need to design for scarcity, not for abundance. Investing in local agriculture will help maintain a secure regional supply of food. Greenspace protection, stormwater retention, and watershed management is protection against both water

shortages and sudden storms. Efficiency and recycling of natural resources braces our economy against fluctuations in price and supply. In short, sustainable development is also resilient development.

We also need to develop the depth and coordination within non-governmental organizations that will allow us to respond to crises. When the 2003 blackout hit, there was an immediate call for emergency conservation measures. However, there was no effective way to reach people with the conservation message, outside of repeated calls through the media by our political leaders. A year later, and we still have scant few resources or volunteers on the ground. Ontario needs a strong conservation movement with support services and a network of organizations and community networks to get the message out to the public.

The Cassandra approach (i.e. fear of shortages and blackouts) may not be the way to market conservation, especially in times of prosperity, but those who plan Ontario's future should certainly ensure that our infrastructure is resilient and that our society can react or adapt to future crises.

### ***Time to Renew Your Membership***

A new year has begun, so it is time for all individual and family members to renew their membership. Please help by getting your 2005 membership fees to us as soon as possible so we can spend our volunteer hours on other more pressing REAL concerns.

If you are not already a member, maybe 2005 is the year! Sign up through our website REALaction.ca or mail your cheque, name and address to the box address given at the end of this newsletter.

Annual rates are: Individuals - \$15, Family - \$20, Partners in Future (schools) - \$15, Students - \$5, Corporate - \$50.

### ***Announcements***

Saturday, February 12, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.. W.B. George Centre at Kemptville College, **Energy Efficient Lifestyle Day**. Admission \$5 for adults. Sponsored by the Grenville Land Stewardship Council. Contact (613) 342-8528 or [www.ontariostewardship.org](http://www.ontariostewardship.org).

Sunday, February 20, 1:30 p.m, Smiths Falls Legion, **Trivia Challenge**. Come cheer on the REAL Action team as they try to repeat their win of 2003.

Saturday, May 7, Perth Civitan Club on Hwy. 43, **2005 Tree Sale Deliveries**. Trees are \$2 or \$17.50 for 10. Order now as they sell out. Contact ecoPerth at 267-1128 or [ecoPerth.on.ca](http://ecoPerth.on.ca).

Week of April 18 - 24, and Saturday April 23, **Pitch-In Smiths Falls**. Volunteer your time to plan or participate that week. Contact Barb at 283-9966.

Wednesdays, 1:30 - 4:00 and Saturdays, 9:30 - 12 , **Reuse Centre**, end of Johnston St., Smiths Falls. Free exchange of household goods too good to throw away. Call Elva at 283-0309.

1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month, 9 - 12. **Plastics (#2 through #7) Recycling Depot** open to Drummond-North Elmsley and Perth residents, at Town Yard, Perth.

### ***Contact Us***

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