

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

25 Years of Environmental Action

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEB 2015

Inside this issue:

[Give Bees a Chance](#) 2

[Palm Oil for TransFats](#) 2

[Evergreen Volunteers Needed](#) 3

[Kill a Watt Meters Available to Borrow](#) 3

[De-Icing at Your Home](#) 4

[E-Waste Update](#) 4

[Shorewood Donates Office Supplies](#) 5

[Meet Pamela Craig](#) 5

[REAL Reflections](#) 6

[In REAL Life](#) 7

[Waste Materials Accepted at REAL Deal](#) 8



Reduce Neonicotinoid Use

For the last decade there have been reports of declining bee populations, but the reason was not completely clear. While the decline still could be a combination of factors, today the focus is on a particular group of pesticides called neonicotinoids. The Ontario government is now moving to restrict the use of this widely used pesticide.

The decline of honey bees is an issue of food security. At least one third of the world's food crops depend on pollination, so an absence of bees could drastically reduce the world's ability to produce food. Colony collapses have been happening across Europe and North America. Ontario has seen a 35% decline in honey bees over the last two years, and 58% of the Ontario bee colonies did not survive last winter. Europe has banned the use of certain neonics for two years because of the risk they pose to bees. In Canada, Health Canada controls pesticide use, so a province cannot ban a pesticide. However, Ontario may soon become the first North American jurisdiction to regulate the use of neonics.

Neonicotinoids have been in use since the late 1990s to protect crops against worms and other pests. In Ontario they were approved for use on corn in 2004. The largest use of the chemical in Ontario is on corn, canola and soybean crops, but neonics are also used on vegetables and ornamental flowers. Seed companies coat the corn, canola and soybean seeds with the product before sale. Besides becoming part of the dust produced during the planting process, the neonicotinoids are taken up by the whole plant, including the pollen and nectar consumed by bees. The neonics persist in the soil and water, too. Their residue is found in various insects, and ultimately birds and other animal life that consume them.



Neonicotinoids act on the central nervous system of both harmful and beneficial insects indiscriminately, impairing their development and behaviours. So, while an instance of chemically tainted dust from corn planting could cause a sudden die-off, it is the chronic exposure that is of more concern.

Other possible causes of the bees' decline are viruses, Varroa mites, habitat loss, starvation during a long winter, or lack of nutrition due to their dependence on commodity crops like wheat and corn. Research continues on these other

(Cont'd page 2)



Give Bees a Chance - Reduce Neonicotinoid Use (Cont'd)

factors and how they interact, but a growing body of evidence suggests that neonicotinoid pesticides are the major factor.

The proposed Ontario legislation is not going to eliminate neonicotinoid use. It applies only to corn and soybean crops, and requires farmers to demonstrate a need for them. It will stop the completely indiscriminate use of treated seed whether there is an infestation or not. It is expected that the number of acres planted with neonicotinoid treated seed could be reduced by about 80% by 2017. Not soon enough for Ontario bees, however, as the rules would come into effect July 2015 and apply to the following growing year.

Predictably, producers do not support the legislation. While they are concerned about the health of pollinators, they are concerned how this will affect their bottom line. But they will continue to work towards some recommended 'best practice' methods that can reduce negative effects of the neonicotinoids.

You can sign an online petition at Change.org to support the Ontario restrictions, or sign a petition asking for a complete ban on the Sierra Club Canada site. Friends of the Earth is asking Canadian gardeners to avoid purchasing plants that have been treated with neonicotinoids. A petition on their website asks Canadian garden centres to eliminate the use of neonicotinoids in their nursery plants and facilities. Some retailers, including Home Depot, have agreed to label plants treated with the chemical.

Palm Oil for TransFats—A Mixed Blessing By David Hoffman

Most public health advocates applaud efforts by processed food producers, restaurants and fast food chains to get rid of so-called "trans fats"—partially hydrogenated oils added to foods to improve texture and extend shelf life but which can aggravate heart disease. In 2013 the U.S. Food & Drug Administration proposed eliminating trans fats altogether, but it is unclear if and when such a change will take effect. In anticipation, many big transfat buyers have switched to palm oil, much of which comes from former tropical rainforest lands cleared for agricultural production across Southeast Asia.



But the shift may not be all it's cracked up to be:

- ◇ Palm oil may be a good substitute for trans fat but it isn't much healthier: consuming either type of fat results in similar spikes in artery-clogging LDL ("bad") cholesterol and a protein that distributes it throughout the bloodstream.
- ◇ The explosion in palm oil use over the past few decades for biofuels and as a food ingredient and additive has wreaked havoc on tropical rainforest ecosystems across Southeast Asia, threatening to push some endangered species over the brink.
- ◇ Higher carbon emissions are another downside. Clearing and draining the tropical peat soils that predominate in Southeast Asia rainforests (which store huge amounts of carbon) releases carbon into the atmosphere.

What's the solution in the short term?

Currently, for applications requiring a food product to sit on store shelves at room temperature, like baked goods, palm oil remains the most cost-effective substitute for trans fats. Maybe the best answer is to cut out the store bought pies and cakes altogether and bake your own—free from both transfats and palm oil!

Evergreen Volunteers Needed

The Evergreen Avenue Committee needs you! This shaded walkway in Victoria Park was established in 2000 as a living memorial to veterans and peacemakers of the armed forces and demonstrates the benefit of using native plants and shrubs to beautify the community. Donors have sponsored engraved granite stones to be placed in memory of loved ones, to mark special occasions and to pay tribute to outstanding volunteers. Residents and local organizations make donations to purchase the native trees and shrubs, park benches and waste receptacles along Evergreen Avenue.

But the committee is aging and needs some new blood to help with the heavier work of maintaining the native plantings and installing the new granite stones. Other volunteers are working to solicit new donors for memorial stones, and raise funds for the upkeep of the walkway. A new interpretive panel is waiting to be installed early in 2015 to explain to visitors their vision.

If you are interesting in joining this dedicated committee, or even joining an occasional work party, please contact Peter Au, (613) 284-8338 or Dick Donaldson (613) 283-3274.



Kill a Watt Meters Available to Borrow

REAL is extending its Kill a Watt meter lending program, so that the energy usage meter is available in even more locations.

Households concerned about high electricity bills should take a look at the electricity used by their household appliances. The Kill a Watt Meter helps determine how much it costs to run a given appliance and if there are phantom loads – appliances using electricity when they appear to be off.



The meter is very simple to use. Simply plug the three prong device into 120 VAC, three-prong (grounded) electrical outlet, and then plug the appliance into the meter. An LCD shows the AC volts, AC amps, watts, volt-amps, frequency, power factor, kilowatt-hours (up to 9,999 KWH) and elapsed time (up to 9,999 hours.) Appliances like fans, computers, heaters, stereos and lamps are easily tested. For appliances that cycle on and off, like fridges, freezers, pumps and water coolers, it is best to keep the Kill a Watt meter plugged in for up to 24 hours to get an accurate reading. This device cannot be used to measure the electrical consumption of appliances that are directly wired, such as stoves, dishwashers, driers, water pumps, furnaces, electric hot water heaters or some lighting fixtures.

Once a householder has determined the number of kilowatt hours consumed, they can find the energy costs of that appliance and compare it to typical models or energy efficient models using listings provided online by Natural Resources Canada and Hydro One. Some appliances may turn out to be energy guzzlers and could be used more sparingly or even replaced with a more energy efficient model.

The meters come with some additional tips from REAL that will help borrowers get the information they need. These instructions are also available on REAL's website www.REALaction.ca under the energy tab. Various YouTube videos from other organizations may be helpful, as well.

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Kill a Watt Meters Available to Borrow (Cont'd)

Residents can borrow a Kill a Watt meter free of charge from various area libraries. Smiths Falls, Perth, Almonte and South Elmsley have had meters for several years, and Carleton Place, Pakenham and Elizabethtown-Kitley now each have one. It is advisable to call ahead as each location has only one meter, as does the REAL Deal Store.

REAL is making the meters available to residents to encourage the sensible use of our province's energy resources.

De-Icing at Your Home

The salt that Canadians use in winter to keep walkways and driveways free of ice eventually ends up in our lakes and rivers, affecting plant and animal life. These same salts can even make their way into our wells and municipal water supplies. So put your driveway on a low salt diet! The following appeared in the February 2012 edition of REAL News.



Here are some suggestions for homeowners and small organizations who need to de-ice surfaces:

1. Determine if you really need to melt ice, or if you simply need better traction.
2. Keep in mind that salt causes cement and paving stone to deteriorate. It should be kept ten meters away from plants that are sensitive to salt, such as red and sugar maples, white pine, dogwood, spirea, and Kentucky bluegrass.
3. To improve traction, you can use sand, wood ashes or kitty litter. Wood ashes should not be used near or on food producing plants or trees.
4. Salt works best at temperatures between 0 and -10 degrees C. Outside those temperatures, don't bother with salt.
5. To use salt, shovel snow early and often. Salt works best on a thin layer of ice. Apply salt early and sparingly. Give it time to work, then shovel up the ice.
6. Calcium chloride is better than sodium chloride since you use less, and it can be used at somewhat lower temperatures. Use about one handful of calcium chloride for three square meters of ice or one handful of sodium chloride per one square meter of ice.
7. Urea is not recommended. While it is a fertilizer, it will run off into water courses, contributing to nitrogen loading and weed growth in our waterways.

For specific information on various de-icing substances available, see "Alternatives to Rock Salt" on REAL's website. A small number of rack cards printed with this information are available at the REAL Deal.

E-Waste Update

When the REAL Deal became an electronic waste depot more than a year ago, we had no idea how much electronic waste would come in. Turns out, it's a lot. Lots of televisions, a surprising number of the monster, super expensive type, the ones that use a huge amount of power; a fair number of computers and lots of printers. In fact, we estimated at the beginning of the year that we would get about 20 tonnes - or about 44,000 lbs. We've gotten just about twice that amount. While we don't have final numbers quite yet for 2014, we're close to getting 35 tonnes -- or about 77,000 lbs. That's just about the same weight produced by all the other household materials that we divert through the REAL Deal annually!



Shorewood Donates Office Supplies to REAL Deal Reuse Store

Shorewood Packaging has generously donated 1600 kilograms worth of office supplies and other things to the REAL Deal Reuse Store.

The REAL Deal handles more than just reusable residential materials, and now has a large supply of the following to offer: file folders, hole punches, paper cutters, printer ink cartridges, rolls of various types of tape, printer paper, binders, clip boards, signs, allen keys, wrenches, screwdrivers, cork boards, step stools, microwave ovens, artwork and a number of crimpers (tensioners) used in strapping.

As well, Susan Hewitt at Shorewood arranged the donation of their used electronic waste to the REAL Deal's e-waste collection depot, a participant in the Ontario Electronic Stewardship, ensuring that all that waste is properly dealt with, dismantled and recycled in Canada.

REAL wants to extend its thanks to the remaining Shorewood staff for thinking of the REAL Deal as they prepare for their final closure.

"They could have just sent this to landfill, but Shorewood has been a conscientious recycler for many years," said Shawn Merriman, President of REAL. "We've lost a local industrial leader in recycling."

The items donated by Shorewood were available in the REAL Deal Store beginning Friday, January 16.



Meet our Board - Pamela Craig

Pamela Craig has been a REAL board member since the fall of 2014. By day Pamela is a secondary Visual Arts and Geography teacher at Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute (SFDCI). She has a degree in Fine Art and Environmental Geography from Guelph University, as well as a Bachelor of Education from Queen's University.

At SFDCI, she has led many environmental initiatives involving students and the community, including: a schoolyard greening and forestation project; installing a large butterfly garden and trellis; annual school yard Pitch-In cleanups; outdoor education programs; the Eco-Schools Initiative (attaining the highest standard for sustainable schools in Ontario); and highly successful recycling drives for electronics. Pamela is deeply involved with SFDCI clubs and teams, including: the Environmental Club; the Enviro-thon team; the curling and rugby teams; as well as several arts endeavours.



Pamela has always had a keen interest and appreciation for the environment, having grown up in a rural setting. She enjoys camping, canoeing and hiking, and travelling throughout Canada and internationally. In her spare time, Pamela enjoys experimenting with gardening and cooking.

Pamela became involved with REAL five years ago when she and her Art Club designed and created the mural you see on the REAL Deal exterior, to the left of the customer entrance. She looks forward to contributing to and encouraging youth to engage in environmental activities.

REAL Reflections By Ron Stewart

Last issue, Peter Au described the formation of REAL in 1989. Ron Stewart, REAL's other founding member, had these comments to add on the activity this inspired in our area those first years.

Yes, 1989 was an interesting year for this Science teacher. I had taken my Grade 8 students from Queen Elizabeth School in Perth to Kingston to hear and to meet the amazing David Suzuki. Later that fall, Peter and I attended the Science Teachers of Ontario Conference in Ottawa and got to meet and hear Robert Bateman and David Suzuki talk about the urgent need to protect our environment and they made us believe that ONE person CAN make a difference. These environmentalists really inspired Peter and myself. The outcome was the formation of REAL.



Thanks to the wonderful support that my teachers at Queen Elizabeth School gave us, we were off and running. Val Eady was able to get the recycling program started in Perth and taught our students how to become involved. We signed up for the Green School program that an oil company in Alberta was promoting. We pledged to complete 100 Environmental projects during that school year.

Duane Coughlar came up with some great ideas to get every student involved. One was to have each class plant trees on the corner of our unused big playground back of the Perth Day Care School. (Today, it is a mature mixed forest providing a natural habitat for many creatures.) We had a big progress chart up in our hall just outside our staffroom and we had each teacher record the environmental achievements that their pupils were accomplishing. Their daily pick up of litter on the playgrounds gave us the cleanest school grounds in town. Our senior students took part in our first Pitch In that Spring by cleaning up the roadsides, a park and the Tay River banks and basin. As a result, we had no problem filling our chart with 100 projects and won the award to become the first GREEN SCHOOL in our county... if not our province.

In 1990, Duane came up with the idea of burying a time capsule on our playground bearing each student's and teacher's promises to our environment, showing how we could make the 1990's turnaround years. The Chairman of our School Board, Mrs. McRae, came to participate. When we dug up our milk can time capsule ten years later in 2000, it was great to meet our students and to hear of all that they had achieved. Sad to say, Val Eady, Duane Coughlar, and Mrs. McRae had passed away. We planted three maple trees in front of our "forest" to honour their memory. TOGETHER WE REALIZED THAT WE DID MAKE A DIFFERENCE. 1989 - 1990 was another unforgettable year!



In REAL's early years, Environmental Youth Corps grants enabled REAL to hire as many as seven summer students. One project was operating an environmental day camp. Counsellor Amy (Tysick) Blair is pictured here with some campers.

In REAL Life

Planning for Pitch-In. The two weeks, Sat. April 18 to Sun. May 2, are being designated Pitch-In Smiths Falls. We encourage anyone out there – individuals, families, neighbourhoods, schools, churches, community groups and businesses - to set aside some time to do a litter clean up somewhere important to them. REAL matches groups with locations. Bags will be available at the REAL Deal starting April 9th. Contact: Bonita Lucas, 283-1174 or call the store, 283-7999.



Evergreen Panel. The long-awaited “Evergreen Avenue – A Living Memorial” information panel has been produced and delivered and is being stored thanks to Drummond/North Elmsley. The panel describes the reasons for the memorial walkway and the benefits of native plants planted there. We hope to install it as soon as possible in the spring.



Membership Renewal. Watch your mailbox for a membership renewal request from REAL. Individuals pay \$15 and families pay \$20 for the calendar year. New members are always welcome (check the website or ask at the store.) Some folks also take this opportunity to include a donation towards the ongoing work of REAL. We are a registered Canadian charity and can provide a tax receipt for donations (but not for membership fees). Our 2014 Annual Report will be included with that mailing, so you can see how your dollars make a REAL difference!



REAL Deal Yard is Open. We are keeping the garage door to the yard closed to keep the heat in, but you are still welcome to go out and explore. Just ask “one of the guys” : Arthur, Don, Nathan, Chance or Ed, to help you. So far “the guys” have been able to keep the snow clear enough to move around out there.



Binders. Included in the Shorewood Packaging donation was a whole skid of gently-used three ring binders, so we offering them to customers at no charge. We would love to find a non-profit who could make use of a large quantity. They are a variety of thicknesses and colours. Ask if

<http://www>

- Thanks to Transitions Brockville for this reference <http://transitionbrockville.com/2015/01/09/peak-oil-and-peak-water-explained/> where Peak Oil and Peak Water are explained in a 5:45 clip.
- Explore the site <http://www.greenerideal.com/> for green news, including this infographic on five weird new energy sources. <http://www.greenerideal.com/alternative-energy/0121-five-weird-energy-sources-that-could-change-the-world/>
- See a [one minute](#) video on the Walking School Bus concept by Green Action Centre in Winnipeg, and learn about a [pilot project in six Ottawa schools](#) this past fall, in GCC’s Active and Safe Routes to School newsletter.
- In celebration of the 20th anniversary of Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights, this website has captured some stories from Ontario’s environmental history. <http://environmentalbeginnings.ca/welcome>.

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We're on the Web
www.REALaction.ca

Environmental
Projects Manager
Sue Brandum
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**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.,
Smiths Falls ON
613-283-7999

Store open Thurs, Fri, Sat
10am—4pm

Well Aware, Energy Audits,
RAIN or other programs

Phone: 613-283-9500

Send contributions to April issue
by March 15, 2015 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Waste Materials Accepted at the REAL Deal

These can be reused, recycled, or used to raise funds.



Electronics. Televisions, stereo components, computers and peripherals, cellphones, VCRs, DVD players etc. earn funds through the Ontario Electronic Stewardship (OES).



Batteries. We accept single use batteries (no car or truck batteries) for proper disposal.



Ink and Toner Cartridges.

These are given to Lanark County United Way for a fundraiser.



Electrical Cords and Wire.

Whether leftover from projects, discarded appliances or Christmas lights, we get a little cash for them.



Plastic Milk Bags. Are crocheted into mats and bags for developing countries.

Mercury Thermostats. Make sure your old home thermostat makes it to our Switch the Stat collection bin.



Materials are accepted during store hours ONLY,
Thurs - Sat, 10 a.m - 4 p.m.
See www.REALaction.ca

Scrap Metal. Unusable metal items are collected and sold for scrap. We will accept cookware, mailboxes, tools, etc.



Make a REAL Difference

Please return this form to:
REAL
Box 1061
Smiths Falls, ON
K7A 5A5

Or bring to
The REAL Deal

Make a Donation

I would like to make a donation of

\$ _____

A charitable receipt for income tax purposes will be issued. To donate by credit card, go to www.Canadahelps.org.

Volunteer

I want to help

Become a Member

I would like to become a member

- Individual membership \$15
- Family membership \$20
- Student membership \$5
- Corporate membership \$50

Contact Information

Name

Street/RR Address

Town, Province

Postal Code

Home Phone

Work Phone

Best time to reach me

Email address