

# REAL Update



For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League **November 2004**



## ***Reuse Centre Promotion***

REAL marked Waste Reduction Week this fall with a “Rediscover the Reuse Centre” promotion. In addition to the regular Saturday hours on October 23, we moved many of the larger items outdoors, offered refreshments, and had a free draw for two gift baskets. Debra Hull and Carolyn Fraser won the baskets of goodies.

Over the day, 160.5 kg. of materials went out and 38.75 kg. came in. Among the items our visitors found “Too Good to Waste” were a colour computer monitor, cross country skis with boots, a dry suit and a clothesline, which went free to good homes. It was a beautiful day and we had 42 visitors, many of whom had never been to the Centre before. Many people commented that “there should be more places like this.”

Thanks to Karl and Shirley Sarlin of Tim Horton’s for donating the coffee, and to the Record News / EMC for spreading the word.

## ***Rideau Partners Forum***

A new wind is blowing along the Rideau.

Over the past decade, as government withdrew from direct environmental protection, a number of community based, non-profit organizations have sprung up to do their part to protect and preserve the natural environment of the Rideau watershed.

There are now so many that we all don’t know what each group is doing, and seeking funds has become more competitive. This is not a working environment that any group welcomes.

The Rideau Roundtable rose to the challenge, inviting us all to a one-day forum to share and plan together. More than 60 people, on their own or representing one of 40 plus organizations, communities, and groups participated in the Partners Forum held at North Gower’s Strathmere House on Sat. Oct. 30. Four REAL members attended: Peter Au (who is also chair of the Rideau Roundtable), Susan

*(continued inside)*

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Brandum, Stew Hamill and Barb Hicks.

The forum, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, was organized for participants to share information about past and current projects, and to identify collaborative partnerships for future projects.

All groups were invited to present their ideas for collaborative projects. There are so many we can't report them all but here are a few we thought you might be interested in:

- The Friends of the Tay Watershed who mentioned their "Swim Again" program and their interest in a more formalized network.
- The Ontario Marine Operators Association, who explained their Clean Marina and Clean Boater programs, and encouraged groups to help spread the word to increase local participation.
- A new Ottawa chapter of Faith in the Common Good, whose ideas include encouraging energy and water retrofits of religious buildings.
- Earth Day Ottawa, who were looking for another organization to take over the Ecoforum they have organized the past 8 years.
- The Ottawa City Stream Watch program.
- The Ferguson Forest Centre in Kemptville, which we all rely on for our native trees, is struggling to maintain its land base.
- RVCA, CSW, Perth CGIS and the Grenville Stewardship Council are all developing distinct web-based databases which will help address our needs.

The Rideau Roundtable, and the participants, will now determine how to proceed on the many initiatives discussed. It was very inspiring to see the many organizations, volunteer or otherwise, working so hard to protect the health of the Rideau watershed, and to know that we are not alone! Hopefully, some of the proposed partnerships will get off the ground.

## *Rideau Partners Forum Proposals*

REAL proposed three collaborative projects:

- **A Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Take it Back Program.** This program, modeled on Ottawa's and similar programs, is to support, encourage and promote retailers that take back the waste from or used products that they sell (from clothes hangers to computers to use oil). REAL is partnering with the Environmental and Conservation Advisory Committee of Elizabethtown-Kitley, but would like additional partners so that we can adequately cover the area of Brockville, Smiths Falls, Merrickville, Kemptville, Perth and points in between. This would be a multi-year partnership in order to get retail partners on board, print a directory, post and maintain a website, and develop a partnership which will keep the program going.
- **The Stewardship Service.** Research has shown that one-on-one home visits have a great impact on individual actions and consequently the health of our environment. Over the years a number of groups have found funding and delivered stewardship projects, including LL Green which has delivered Green Home, EnerGuide for Houses, Green Garden, Shoreline and Well Aware visits. However, these projects are often short term, inconsistent, and may not be around when a citizen wants it. As well, human expertise is developed to deliver the project, then wasted when there is no longer an outlet for the expertise. LL Green proposed that all the groups delivering stewardship programs market their programs collectively and offer the services for a fee so that they can be provided on an ongoing basis. Funding would continue to be sought to subsidize the overall program and the services, but the availability of the services would not be contingent on funding. Collectively, the groups could offer area residents help with: shorelines, well and

septic, toxins/mould, energy, green energy, forest, landscaping, and general (including waste).

- **EMC Regional Environmental Supplement.** Lots of environmental projects are happening in the region, but the information is not getting out to the public. At REAL's initiative, Performance Printing has expressed interest in including a periodic supplement to the EMC, which would cover a large area from the St. Lawrence up to Pakenham, Kemptonville to Perth and be delivered free to residents. REAL is suggesting that if other groups are interested, we could apply for funding for a person to coordinate the contributors, edit submissions, collect photos and so on.

### *LED Christmas Lighting Saves Energy*



It sounds almost too good to be true. The new LED Christmas lights use 90% less energy than conventional lights and can last up to 20 years.

LED-based holiday lights use semi conductor chips as a light source, and are encased in plastic instead of glass, and so are much more durable than regular lights. This means less waste to the landfill when replacing them. They plug into a standard 110/120-volt wall outlet. LED's produce much less heat, making them much safer than traditional bulbs, which can become a fire hazard.

But what's really amazing are the energy savings. The cost to light six 100-light strands of traditional incandescent bulbs around the clock for 30 days would be more than \$18 per month, based on an average cost of electricity of 0.08/kWh. The cost to light six strands of FOREVER BRIGHT lights for the same period of time is less than \$2.

If you are buying new light strings this year, try Canadian Tire, Home Hardware or Costco .



### *Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup 2004*

About 20 people participated in the Saturday, September 18 shoreline cleanup, including Queen Street residents, the Smiths Falls and District Club for Youth, and REAL members. Litter was picked up along the Rideau from Abbott Street down to Old Sly's. One couple picked up garbage from their canoe around the Lower Reach Basin. Generally, the litter situation was not as bad as it has been at other cleanups, but it is difficult to get at some of the garbage through the vegetation at this time of year. And there is still a lot of dumping going on behind the ball diamonds near the Curling Club. Sixteen bags of garbage and some other large items were collected including tires, a hoola hoop, a backpack with new school supplies and a bike.

We had great weather for the diver cleanup on Sunday, September 19. Seven divers assisted by 14 volunteers on shore worked to remove debris from the section of the Rideau by the Comfort Inn and behind the LCBO. The haul of junk was quite amazing considering the volume of stuff dragged out the year before at the same location. Our finds included: 9 shopping carts plus parts, a propane barbeque, a park bench, metal pipes, tires, pilons, a storm grate, a toilet tank lid, a parking meter top, a car battery, a wallet, and the usual cans, bottles and footwear.

Thanks to Glenview Iron and Metal for supplying the dumpster and hauling it away.

## *Looking Ahead to 2104*

Do you think that in 2104 local residents will be pleased with the state of our environment? A time capsule packed by a group of SFDCI students and buried at the site of the new high school on September 25 includes memorabilia of the school and community. In it is a letter and photos from REAL giving a snapshot of the current state of the environment and saying that we tried to make a difference. The letter reaffirms why REAL does what it does.

September 1, 2004

To: Smiths Falls and Area Residents in 2104

We are a group of people who have organized ourselves to take action to protect and conserve the natural environment in Smiths Falls, the surrounding area and the Rideau River watershed.

We are writing this letter for two reasons:

The first is to tell you that there was such a group 100 years ago that cared about the natural environment in this region.

The second is to apologize to you because we fear that we will not have been able to do enough to pass on to you a planet that supports you and your lives the way Earth has supported us.

Today, in 2004, we know about such environmental concerns as climate change, about human population growth, about toxins in the water, air and food chain, about excess phosphates and nitrates, about the ozone layer, about birth defects in animals and humans, about the extinctions of wildlife, about the destruction of great fisheries, about deforestation, about lake eutrophication and about water shortages. We know that climate change is the single biggest problem facing the human species and that the human species is the single biggest problem threatening Earth.

Here in Smiths Falls, in 2004, we are still relatively blessed. For example, the exquisitely



beautiful Rideau Waterway and all the lakes in our region provide us and tourists alike with wonderful boating, fishing, bird watching, deer-hunting and relaxation. And, all this provides much of the region's income from tourism. We experience only a few smog days a year, a result of local and distant car emissions and the coal-burning electricity plants in the Ohio River Valley and Toronto that prematurely kill 1,900 people a year in Ontario. The Rideau River water is relatively clean and provides the Town's water supply with minimal treatment. While we can and do eat local fish, some limits apply because of pollutants. We have an old landfill site under Lower Reach Park that may be leaching some pollutants into the river. We have installed a new waste-water treatment plant that means we put far less pollution into the Rideau River than we used to.

Smiths Falls is home to a couple of near-extinct birds, the Loggerhead Shrike and Green Heron in particular. In the rural areas, we are seeing an increase in tree cover in this region, an anomaly in Southern Ontario and a result of marginal farms going out of business. Because of the efforts of a few people in this region over the past few decades, we can now grow and buy virtually all our food from local organic growers, though this is by no means the mainstream.

However, we are starting to see the predicted effects of climate change in more storm activity,

longer growing seasons, shorter lake freezing periods, changes in types and practices of insects and birds, and traumatic events like the Ice Storm of 1998. And, we are definitely seeing the effects of a quickly growing human population in our region, particularly on our lakes where septic drainage is contributing to eutrophication.

We still have, in comparison with the rest of North America, large stores of clean groundwater. Many people in this region are still able to drink water straight from their wells, with no treatment, although, north of here, near Carleton Place, is Canada's largest groundwater trichloroethylene plume, measuring 3 km. by 11 km.

At this point, we fully expect that you will be burdened with dealing with the full consequences of climate change – because we couldn't exert enough public pressure and political will to stop it – and that you will be facing many other environmental and human health consequences of our inability to turn some things around. For this we apologize.

From our knowledge today, we expect that you will be experiencing many more storms than we did, much higher temperatures, more medical and food supply problems, many more disputes over water supplies, the prospect of manufacturing goods from our excessive garbage – and the great and sad loss of thousands of species of fauna and flora.

As a small group of people, we have worked since 1989 to educate our fellow citizens and our political leaders about these issues. So far, our successes have been small. But we are committed to continuing because all of us have a deep and profound respect for Earth, for its beauty, its sophistication and for all life's creatures. We know too that there are thousands like us across Canada and that more join our efforts every day.

We believe we should be passing on to you a planet that is at least as clean and healthy and full of the diversity of life that we inherited, if not

better. We have included a few pictures of ourselves and REAL's volunteers, so you can have some idea of who we were. We are all simply stewards here and, so far, our generations are failing Earth, ourselves and you.



However, we continue to believe in the dictum of Margaret Mead:

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

We will not give up.

Yours sincerely,

Board of Directors of the Rideau Environmental Action League, 2004: Peter Au, Chair; Elva Corless, Past-Chair; Barb Hicks, Secretary; Carolyn Fraser, Treasurer; Ken Graham, Town Liaison; Tom Foulkes; Susan Brandum; Bunny Haughton

### ***Environmental Scholarships Offered***

Applications are being accepted until January 31 for the 2005 Toyota Earth Day Scholarship Program, which aims to cultivate tomorrow's environmental leaders. The program grants 15 awards of \$5000, to be applied directly towards expenses for the first year of post-secondary full-time studies in Canada. For more information visit: [www.earthday.ca/scholarship](http://www.earthday.ca/scholarship).

## ***Waste Exchanges***

**Biosphere Reserve.** A new, free service is offered to residents of the Westport-Kingston-Brockville area by the Biosphere Reserve. The online service has three parts.

1. For Residents, a service to help them donate or sell lower value items, instead of seeing them go to landfill.
2. For Contractors and Industries, a way to give away or sell left over building materials, and bits and ends of manufacturing processes.
3. For anyone, a Ride Share program, for the area including Kingston, Brockville, Gananoque, Westport, Smith Falls, etc. (ecoPerth also operates an EcoRide program at [ecoPerth.on.ca](http://ecoPerth.on.ca).)

Their site is [www.biosphereexchange.com](http://www.biosphereexchange.com)

**Freecycle.** The world-wide Freecycle Network is a non-profit organization whose mission includes keeping good stuff out of landfills and helping strengthen local gifting and recycling communities. It operates a website where members can post items they would like to give away (everything must be free) or respond to offers of items. Each local group is run by a local volunteer moderator and membership is free. Go to the website [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org), and look under "Freecycle groups". Currently there are almost 600,000 people freecycling in 1,716 "cities", including Brockville, Kingston, Ottawa, Ottawa Valley and Mississippi Mills.

REAL would greatly appreciate a volunteer to step forward and set up a Freecycle for our area.

### ***Cooperating to get HHW to the Depot*** *Contributed by Doug Kilpatrick*

About September 15, REAL members Isobel Conlin and Elva Corless asked REAL member Doug Kilpatrick if he would again take an end-of-the-year collection of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) to the depot in Carleton Place.

Doug agreed. Isobel brought the Conlin-Corless collection to Doug's house and Doug made 18 phone calls to neighbours and nearby friends. By 9:00 a.m. on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup>, Doug's driveway was a mini-depot of HHW, enough to fill the box of his pickup truck to a depth of 60 cm.

In Carleton Place, Doug found a LONG line of vehicles awaiting unloading, so he asked the drivers of the two vehicles ahead of him if they would like to place their relatively small loads on the tailgate of Doug's truck. They delightedly did, thereby advancing Doug in the line, reducing the emissions from two vehicles and making Doug the proud deliverer of HHW from TWENTY-THREE households!

The unhappy aspects were (1) The wait of 80 minutes and (2) The driver of the vehicle beside Doug who declined to switch off his V-8 engine while awaiting "move-ups" in the line.

Soooo -- Thanks to two REAL persons who provided a motivating reminder, another REAL person with a pickup truck and a telephone was able to keep the HHW of 21 + 2 households out of the landfills. Let's hope other REAL persons did or will do the same.

*ed. note: Let's schedule this great community action earlier next year, not the last day the depot is open, so we can reduce the waiting time!*

### ***Cut Those Skyrocketing Energy Bills and Save our Air***

Winter is coming and with it skyrocketing heating and electricity bills. It's now an old adage, but it's worth repeating: Saving energy means saving money, saving the environment and saving our health.

How's that? Burning fossil fuels produces smog, other air pollutants and carbon dioxide and methane which are fogging up Earth's natural greenhouse and causing the climate to warm.

So, the less energy you use, the more money you'll save and the less impact you will have on polluting our air and warming the Earth.

Here are some of the most recent initiatives to help you reduce your energy use:

**New as of November 18.** Two new federal programs were just announced. CMHC is offering a 10 per cent refund on its mortgage loan insurance premium when a borrower buys or builds an energy-efficient home or makes energy-saving renovations to an existing home. Also, an enhancement has been made to the existing Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), which helps low-income households repair their dwellings to minimum health and safety levels. New RRAP standards will allow repair work to include energy-saving renovations and retrofits. For more details on these new initiatives, contact CMHC at 1-800 668-2642.

**Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs.** What are you waiting for? Electricity prices to double again? Compact fluorescents are available everywhere, in all shapes and sizes and lumens. Make sure you get ones labelled Energy Star and make sure they are bright enough. (If you've been using a 60-watt, make sure you get the fluorescent equivalent to 60 watts.) Compact fluorescents are 75 per cent more efficient than the old, incandescent bulbs and fit in standard sockets. Yes, they're more expensive to buy, but they last for 7-9 years. Start by replacing the bulbs you leave on the most.



**EnerGuide for Houses.** Whether you're renovating, planning to build, or just want to save energy, have an EnerGuide for Houses. It will show you exactly where you can make changes that result in direct savings on your energy bills. Plus, you may be eligible for a

government grant that could reimburse you 1/4 - 1/3 of your costs.

In our area, contact our colleague Green Community, Envirocentre in Ottawa. Go to [www.envirocentre.ca/english/index.html](http://www.envirocentre.ca/english/index.html) to book online or call (613) 580-2582. The cost is approximately \$190 plus travel charges. But you'll likely make the cost back simply by acting on the recommendations and through the rebate.

Find out more about the EnerGuide for Houses and the government rebate, at [oee.nrcan.gc.ca/english/index.cfm](http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/english/index.cfm). Check the site regularly for updates on other rebate and incentive programs. The Ontario government, natural gas utilities and others have offered rebates in the past.

**Energy Star.** This is a new international label that identifies the top appliances, windows and doors in terms of energy performance. This is not the EnerGuide label which tells you how much energy an appliance actually use. Generally, you'll spend a little more for an Energy Star appliance, and you'll save a lot more in energy. For example, it is definitely worth getting an Energy Star refrigerator, manufactured after 1994. They can use 50-75% less than an old fridge. (And don't put the old fridge in the basement as a beer fridge – you might as well buy expensive, imported beer for the electricity it will cost you.)

### *More Online Energy Savings Tips*

- Ontario Ministry of Energy  
[www.energy.gov.on.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=conservation.tips](http://www.energy.gov.on.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=conservation.tips)
- Natural Resources Canada  
[www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca/tips/introduction.cfm?PrintView=N&Text=N](http://www.oee.nrcan.gc.ca/tips/introduction.cfm?PrintView=N&Text=N)
- CMHC  
[www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/imquaf/himu/wacon/waensatip/index.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/imquaf/himu/wacon/waensatip/index.cfm)

## ***Funding and Finance***

At REAL there is no shortage of ideas for worthwhile environmental projects. However it takes people and money to make them a reality. The Fundraising and Finance Committee, officially formed in 2002, exists to ensure we have the financial resources to meet REAL's expectations. The group budgets for the coming year, does initial planning for fundraisers, and ensures we have resources in place to cover our core expenses and special projects. Special projects usually require that we seek funding from governments, trusts and foundations.

Completing funding applications requires skill and experience. Committee members have attended a number of workshops and taken mini courses on how to do it right. Proposals also require a great deal of advance planning to accommodate the application's deadline, which may be only once a year. Proposals must conform to various criteria of the funding agency, and assembling the necessary figures and supporting documentation can be very time consuming. Once submitted, there may be a substantial waiting period while the applications are reviewed. A successful proposal is cause for great celebration, even if the money promised is much less than what was applied for! If the proposal is turned down, we attempt to find out why so that we may learn from it. However, the proposal may have been perfectly sound but turned down due to criteria beyond our control (number of applicants, funder wanted to concentrate on larger population centres, changing government priorities and so on).

In the past, REAL has been the recipient of funds from Trillium, Environment Canada's EcoAction Community Fund, TD Canada Trust, Shell Canada, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Green Communities Association, and others. We have also had applications turned down, but it doesn't thwart us.

If you would like to be involved in this very necessary behind the scenes work, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact anyone on the committee: Larry Allen, Peter Au, Susan Brandum, Bunny Haughton or Barb Hicks.

## ***Announcements***

Sunday, November 21, 1 - 3 p.m., at McMartin House, 125 Gore St. E., Perth, **Community Salon**. Discussion topic: "Beyond Healthcare: The Bigger Picture". January 23 topic: "Complementary Money Systems: Hours & Minutes with Dollars & Cents". Sponsored by the Lanark Frontenac Lennox & Addington Green Party of Canada. Call 613-267-7584.

Saturdays, 9 - 4 until November 27, **Community Compost Site**, Hwy. 43 W. of Smiths Falls for Town and North Elmsley residents. Yard and brush waste only, please.

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.



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