

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2020

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Local Shoreline Cleanup During Waste Reduction Week by Jake Wilson

Near the beginning of October, 2020, the Rideau Roundtable hosted a voyageur canoe tour on the Rideau River in between Old Slys and Combined Lockstations. On this tour, it became obvious that there was a lot of garbage along the shoreline of the river. Canada's approaching Waste Reduction Week inspired the Rideau Roundtable and the Rideau Environmental Action League to conduct a collaborative project of a shoreline clean-up.

This clean-up took place from the Swale (west of Detached Lockstation) downstream to Edmonds Lockstation, in the Smiths Falls area. It was conducted over four days, starting on October 22, and was led by the Rideau Roundtable's Riparian Restoration Specialist, Jake Wilson. On one of these days, there was a collaborative effort of community members, including a family with kids, who attended our community garbage pick-up by voyageur canoe between Old Slys and Combined Lockstations.



The garbage collected totalled 392 lbs. Recyclable materials composed 15.5% of the total weight, while accounting for approximately 30% of the total volume of the waste collected. A very small portion of the trash labelled as "garbage" (around 1%) was able to be recycled as scrap steel. This data was collected by the municipality of Smiths Falls' Environmental Coordinator, Vanessa Bernicky. The total volume of the garbage collected was enough to fill the bed of a pickup truck about three times. The municipality recycled and disposed of the waste collected.

Springtime high waters would have caused much of this garbage to flow further down the river. A lot of it would make it all the way to the Ottawa River, then to the St. Lawrence, and eventually to the Atlantic Ocean.

The world's oceans are facing a plastic crisis right now. Ocean Cleanup estimates that there are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic either floating or resting at the bottom of the oceans. The Canadian government estimates that over 8 million tonnes of plastic flow into our oceans worldwide every year.



continued inside....

Shoreline Cleanup (continued)

Garbage Collected Day by Day				
Location	Garbage	Recyclable Plastic and Glass	Recyclable Cans	Total Weight
Day 1 - The Swale (West of Detached Lockstation)	56 lbs	3.4 lbs	1.8 lbs	61 lbs
Day 2 - Between Olds Slys and Edmonds Lockstation	62 lbs	15.4 lbs	3.1 lbs	80.5 lbs
Day 3 – Between Old Slys and Combined Lockstation	49 lbs	8.5 lbs	0.6 lbs	58 lbs
Day 4 - Between Olds Slys and Edmonds Lockstation	164.5 lbs	23.2 lbs	5.7 lbs	192.5 lbs
Totals:	331.5 lbs	50.5 lbs	11.2 lbs	392 lbs

This vast amount of plastic in the oceans results in major health risks, as well as death, for marine animals, especially seabirds, whales, and sea turtles, who are all ingesting large amounts of plastic. It also causes major challenges for phytoplankton, which are the main primary producers of the oceans. According to Science Direct, primary producers in the world's oceans create around 80% of the world's oxygen, but when exposed to microplastics floating near the surface, their ability to photosynthesize (the process in which they fixate carbon and produce oxygen) decreases by around 45%.

What happens if the plastic remains in the rivers, and doesn't make it all the way to the ocean? Slowly, the plastics will break down into smaller pieces, eventually becoming microplastics; these small pieces will flow into the oceans or remain in the local lakes and rivers. Researchers have found microplastics in nearly every water sample they have recently taken from

the great lakes. This causes health risks for humans when we drink water containing plastic particles, and for the aquatic wildlife living in the water. According to the Canadian Wildlife Foundation, when fish absorb these microplastics or ingest the plastic particles, contaminants leaching from these particles can cause liver damage.

Here are some ways we can help reduce the amount of plastic in our waterways, lakes, and oceans:

- Clean up any garbage we find floating in the water, or along the shorelines.
- Ensure that our trash is disposed of properly, either in the recycling or in the garbage where it will be properly handled and brought to a landfill.
- Reuse and recycle whenever possible, and avoid buying single-use plastics.

Potato Tower Experiment by Greg Charette

Greg Charette was interested in giving these potato towers a try, so we found him a spot in our Community Garden. The idea is to grow potatoes in layers so you don't need as much space. He harvested a nice crop of red russet potatoes, which will be used by REAL Deal staff and volunteers. November 26 we enjoyed some scalloped potatoes and potato wedges (along with ham and coleslaw). Potato latkes might be next!



Here is the spot chosen in the back left corner of the community garden. The totes contain topsoil set aside for planting the next layers.



I found that you need to make sure the dirt is as light as possible by adding leaves and using potting soil so that your plants have the ability to sprout roots or branch out.



Both Cole (in the photo) and Isaac gave me a hand when needed.



The two potato towers took me around 45 minutes or so to build. The wood I used was reclaimed wood from shipping pallets. The cost to build the towers at my house was around \$80 using rough cut 2x6 cedar.

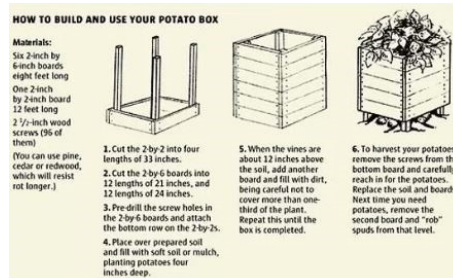
Here is [a video on how to do it.](#)



Another layer can be added when there is about 12" of plant growth above the soil.



It is important to get mid to late growth seed potatoes and plant them as soon as possible for the highest yield. This spring I would like to [get some varieties that you don't usually find in grocery stores](#) like fingerling, blue or purple potatoes.



I am doing this for fun and want to try something different. Here's a [link to the the plans that I used.](#)

REAL Deal News

Sales. The REAL Deal has been a very happening place this fall. We continue to experience some excellent sales days and had a record breaking sale week November 11-14. Donations continue to be very strong, even though they are usually slowing down by this time of year. There does not seem to be any one reason but a combination of factors: Our reputation is growing and customers are coming from further away, we are accepting debit and credit cards and we are receiving better quality donations. The Salvation Army Thrift Store was closed for several months and is not accepting as much larger stuff. Facebook Marketplace has proved to be an effective and inexpensive tool for us, as has Google My Business, and we are on some online lists of things to do in Smiths Falls.

Christmas. Christmas is a big project at the store as we accumulate stuff all year long, and it takes a long time to price and put it all out while keeping on top of regular household donations. We started putting Christmas things out at the start of October, and it peaked early to mid November. While we have put everything out that we had set aside, we know from experience that in early December it starts coming in again. Our theory is people open up their home collections and decide they want something new, so pass their old stuff on to us. This is actually great because there is new stuff for customers to consider. Watch for big discounts on Christmas items beginning December 10, as we have to sell it all before the holiday shutdown.

Physical Changes. The outer office/board room/lunch room/work room got a facelift in late October. Donna and Peter McKenna and Diane Pearen have repainted it a lighter colour and redecorated the space. We also received a donation of a metal garden shed. We were originally going to use it to replace our leaking and doorless free shed, but decided to put it behind the trailer in our enclosed yard. It will be used for furniture or smalls overflow, but at the moment is a handy photo spot for furniture items being put on Facebook Marketplace. We will try to get some more mileage out of the free shed by putting on some wooden doors. Outside, Bobby Semple removed the Manitoba maples growing along our septic bed, started a new path from the community garden, and levelled some dangerous bumps in the parking lot. Thanks to the Town of Smiths Falls for splitting the cost with us.

Art. We have more art donated to the store than you might think. It is a challenge to find enough surfaces on which to display it, and some of it is more valuable than our customer base is expecting. Marje Fletcher and Donna McKenna have made arrangements to sell some of the more valuable art pieces on consignment through Merrickville Antiques. An antique slag lab donated by Mercedes Steedman sold for \$575, an AY Jackson serigraph we had been hanging onto for years sold for \$500, and an Andy Warhol printed poster fetched \$150 (prices are before commission). But these are not typical donated items! Marla McKenna has volunteered to photograph the oversize pieces that are particularly hard to display, and has posted them on Facebook Marketplace, where several have already sold.

Champion Award. REAL was delighted to receive a Champion Award from Community Living Lanark County. The Champion Award is presented annually to the persons, community partner, or corporation that supports the mission and vision of the association. The association believes we share and strive for a world where all individuals regardless of their abilities are treated with respect and dignity, have opportunities for personal development to fulfill their dreams and participate fully in their community. One of the association's clients has been helping out at the store on Thursday mornings. Shane Bowes-Shanks, who accompanies the client, presented the award to REAL President Katie Hoffman at the association's Sept. 28 Zoom AGM. The award is a lovely piece of glass sculpture, currently on display at the REAL Deal cash.



Investment Readiness Program (IRP)

REAL continues to work with Jonathan Wade at Social Delta on developing some new business ventures for the REAL Deal. This is being funded by a grant being overseen locally by the Perth and District Foundation (PDCF).

Part of the research involved a customer survey. Over three weeks in September, volunteers talked to 260 customers outside the entrance to the store or yard. We found that by the third week we were approaching people who had already been surveyed. In fact the survey determined that 42% of respondents come to the store more than once a month, and 67% come more than six times a year.

Some other findings: 56% of the customers are over 60, and 42% in the 46-60 age bracket, and only 8% are aged 30-45. Slightly more (52%) of the customers were female, which is in line with other thrift stores. Seventy six percent of those surveyed spent less than \$10 on the day they were surveyed. Thanks to: Daisy Au, Nancy Andison, Beth Graham, Barb Hicks, Katie & David Hoffman, Brenda King, Donna McKenna, Mia & John Rowlands and Dave & Joni Thornley for gathering the data, and to Katie for scheduling the volunteers.



Neil Rowlands ready to survey REAL Deal customers. Twelve member volunteered to help.

2021 Monarch Garden Plans

The monarch garden has been put to bed for the winter. A number of perennials were split and moved and some donated plants dug in to be placed more permanently in the spring. Some sunflower, tithonia and zinnia seeds were also collected, and will be made available for sale in the spring. Bruce and Marje Fletcher were busy the day before our first major snow installing a base for an obelisk between the first two gardens, which will support a clematis. You may also notice some logs that will be placed in a ring for seating. The logs have been moved to the edge of the gardens for the winter so they will not be impacted by snow removal.

Team members are hoping to tackle a third garden in 2021, across the parking lot, closer to the Community Garden. An edible to humans but attractive to pollinators theme is being considered. A design will be developed over the winter.



The garden in early October. You can see some photos of the garden at different points in the season [on our website](#), where there are also some resources to help you plan your own butterfly garden.

Online Auction a Hit!

Our sincere thanks to sponsors of REAL's first online fall auction, which concluded October 17. These generous people and organizations contributed just over \$2,000 towards our fundraising total. We truly appreciate their financial support of environmental action in our community.

Platinum Supporters:

Andress Your Independent Grocer
Stephen Bennett
Allison and David Gibbons
Linda Kulkarni
Smiths Falls Optometrists

Gold Supporters:

Greg and Judy Fournier
Healey's Glass

Silver Supporters:

Peter and Daisy Au
Katie and David Hoffman
Sandi Howell
Frank Roy
Tim Hortons, Smiths Falls
Top Drawer Temporary Services
Norma Wrightly

Bronze Supporters:

Marion Forster
Isabel Kinch
Cheryl Nash
Ruth and Peter Nelson
Scotiabank
Judy Snider

Apologies for any omissions! Friendly bidding on the 92 auction items raised \$2,168.29 for a grand total of just over \$4,000. Most of the items were gently used treasures donated to the REAL Deal, but we also had some lovely donations from friends of REAL as well.

Ninety seven people registered to bid in the auction. There were some familiar names, but very little overlap with the local foods dinner crowd, and many people not on our membership or mailing lists. Fourteen of those people have now signed up for our mailing list, so the auction has been a great promotional tool. We thank everyone for their bids, and are sorry if you didn't get what you were looking for. There is always lots of great stuff at the REAL Deal if you missed out!

Thanks to Donna McKenna for coordinating the auction, setting aside the merchandise over the past year and preparing it for sale. She was assisted by Aira Sarmiento, Marla McKenna, Brenda King and Barb Hicks. Katie Hoffman looked after approaching the sponsors.

Terracycle Capsule Collection

REAL has collected over 7000 coffee pods since it began offering this recycling option in May. The pods are shipped to a Terracycle facility in Elora for recycling. It is costing REAL money to participate in this program, and given the volume, more than we anticipated.

As a result the board has decided to encourage financial donations towards coffee pod recycling, and will reevaluate at the end of February. The collection box is on the counter near the cash.

We will also be purchasing a quantity of reusable coffee pods to distribute to encourage people to kick the coffee pod habit! We hope to have them by the time we reopen in January.

If you are a workplace using this service, you could also consider getting your own Terracycle collection box. Its purchase includes a prepaid shipping label. Order through Staples or directly through Terracycle.



In REAL Life



PayPal
Giving Fund

Shoreline Restoration. The Queen St. shoreline restoration project proposed by the Rideau Roundtable will be going ahead on the portion of the land owned by Smiths Falls. Town council also authorized a community grant for 25% of the wages for the Rideau Roundtable's Riparian Restoration Specialist intern; the rest is coming from the Natural Resources Internship program. Jake Wilson will be taking the position until Mar. 31, 2021, and other funds will be sought to cover the spring projects.

Face Mask Project. Very few masks are being handed out at the REAL Deal lately, so the sewers are getting a bit of a reprieve. If you happen to discover you don't have your own mask when you arrive at the store, please just ask for one. Fabric masks are also available at the Smiths Falls Public Library and Modern Thymes on Russell St.

Radon Action Month. November is over, but the season of sealed up houses is upon us, so now is a good time to test for radon in your home. REAL has three meters to lend, and at times there is a waiting list. Contact Katie at (613) 983-3360. Here's a link to a [recent Lake 88 interview on radon dangers](#) with a Health Unit representative.

Facebook Giving. When Peter Au celebrated his milestone birthday last summer, he suggested that people consider contributing to one of his favourite charities (REAL!) instead of giving a card or gift. Nine donations were the result, most coming through Facebook's Paypal Giving Fund.

WE LOVE
OUR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Coordinator. We would love to enlist a part-time volunteer Volunteer Coordinator to look after volunteer intake and orientation, and to maybe even do some recruitment. If you are a people person, this might be a job for you! Please contact [Katie](#) at (613) 983-3360 to find out more.

Energy Efficiency Workshop

Wed. Jan. 13, 2021

via zoom

organized by REAL's

Journey to Sustainability Team



Watch our website and Facebook for details in January



Christmas Hours

**Note that we will be
closing Thurs. Dec. 24**

and will reopen

Wed. Jan. 6 at 10 a.m.

Have a safe and happy holiday!



**RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE**

Box 1061
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
info@REALaction.ca

We're on the Web
www.REALaction.ca

**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

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

Open Wednesday
through Saturdays
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Holiday Break:
Closed Dec. 25 to
Jan. 5 inclusive

For Home Energy Audits,
contact Alan Leonard
alanleonard9@gmail.com
or (613) 864-3099

Find us on:
Facebook, Twitter
and Instagram

Send contributions to the
February issue by January 15 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

There are an estimated **5 TRILLION** pieces of plastic in the ocean worldwide, with **8 MILLION** metric tons added to the ocean each year*. Wildlife are dying at a rapid pace due to the ingestion of or entanglement in plastics.

<p>1</p> <p>PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE</p> <p>→</p> <p>REUSABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINER</p>	<p>2</p> <p>TO-GO COFFEE LIDS</p> <p>→</p> <p>TRAVEL COFFEE MUG</p>	<p>3</p> <p>PLASTIC AND PRODUCE BAGS</p> <p>→</p> <p>REUSABLE CLOTH BAGS</p>
<p>4</p> <p>SINGLE-SERVE COFFEE PODS</p> <p>→</p> <p>A POT OF COFFEE</p>	<p>YOU can help reduce waste by removing single-use plastics from your everyday activities.</p>	
<p>5</p> <p>COFFEE PLUGS AND STIR STICKS</p> <p>→</p> <p>TRAVEL COFFEE MUG</p>	<p>6</p> <p>BALLOONS</p> <p>→</p> <p>ECO-FRIENDLY DECORATIONS</p>	<p>7</p> <p>STRAWS</p> <p>→</p> <p>STRAW FREE</p>
<p>8</p> <p>DISPOSABLE LIGHTER</p> <p>→</p> <p>MATCHES</p>		

CANADIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION | **#StopSingleUse**

* JERIKSEN ET AL. 2014, JAMBECK ET AL. 2015

**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

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