

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEBRUARY 2020

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## The Problem with Palm Oil

Palm oil production has become a serious environmental threat and is not necessarily good for your health, but boycotting it is probably not the answer.

Palm oil production has increased rapidly, but really took off in 2006 when the dangers of trans fats came to light, and manufacturers scrambled to find a healthier alternative. Palm oil is free of trans fat but high in saturated fat. This edible vegetable oil is squeezed from the fruit of the oil palm tree, and palm kernel oil comes from squeezing the stone within the fruit. The trees are native to Africa, but are now grown in Asia and the Americas. Eighty five percent of the world's palm oil production is from Malaysia and Indonesia.

Palm oil is extremely versatile. It is odourless and colourless, has a long shelf life, is semi solid at room temperature, and stable at high temperatures. It is used in a wide variety of processed foods as well as some cosmetics, animal feed and biofuel (the food vs. fuel debate is ongoing.)

To keep up with the demand, more and more forests are being cleared, reducing wildlife habitat for orangutans in particular, as well elephants, rhinos and tigers and other animals. Converting forests and peatlands to plantations releases huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, contributing to air pollution and climate change. Many times the waste products from the oil production are released into a river, making the water unusable for the people who live there. There are also reports of worker and child exploitation, and expansion at the expense of indigenous communities. And this is just a quick summary. [Read EcoWatch](#) for more on the devastating effects.

However, palm oil is here to stay. It has become the most consumed vegetable oil in the world. It is a very efficient crop and produces more oil per land area than other vegetable oil crops. For example, it would take four times as much land to produce soybean oil. It is also an important crop for emerging economies. These two references explain the economics further: The [Guardian](#) and [Ensia](#).



Orangutan habitat has been destroyed with the deforestation done to establish palm oil plantations. (World Wildlife Fund photo.).



(continued inside )

### ***New Board Member Dave Thornley***

REAL is pleased to welcome a new director to REAL's Board.

Dave Thornley moved to Smiths Falls in 2012 after retiring from software development management with Hewlett Packard. Dave has been busy volunteering in many capacities in Smiths Falls, including Search and Rescue, The Foodbank, Friends of the Library, Station Theatre, and Lanark Services income tax preparation. Dave's favorite activity is playing pickleball, and he is the treasurer of the Smiths Falls Pickleball Club.

Dave looks forward to working with the REAL members on local environmental issues and, in particular, helping on the financial side of the organization.



*David Thornley was voted onto the REAL Board at our December board meeting..*

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### ***New Board Members Always Welcome!***

There is still room on the REAL Board for new members! If you are concerned about the local environment and want to take action, we'd love to hear from you. REAL has what some would call a working board. Each member is actively involved in REAL's projects, as our activities are primarily volunteer driven. Please contact Katie Hoffman, President, if you'd like to know more. We would ask that you send a letter describing your interest as well as a resume or bio. If you aren't already a member or volunteer, you would need to take out a REAL membership and complete a volunteer form, both of which are very simple. A couple of current board members would meet with you and give you a chance to attend a couple of our monthly board meetings before committing. We like to take things slowly so we are sure new board members and REAL are a good fit for each other. If you decide the board is not your style, we would be happy to help you find another way for you to participate in the organization.

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### ***The Problem with Palm Oil (continued)***

The Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) came about in 2004. They have set production standards for the producing and sourcing of palm oil, and these standards were strengthened in November 2018. You can look for RSPO trademark on products, but for producers using the trademark on product labels is optional. Palm oil also has a very complicated supply chain. Batches are mixed, so you could actually be getting palm oil that is a mix of certified sustainable palm oil and conventional palm oil. Without this trademark, you may not even be able to tell if a product contains palm oil, as its derivatives go by many different names. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has prepared [a scorecard](#) that details how specific companies have fared on the route to sustainable production, including becoming deforestation free.



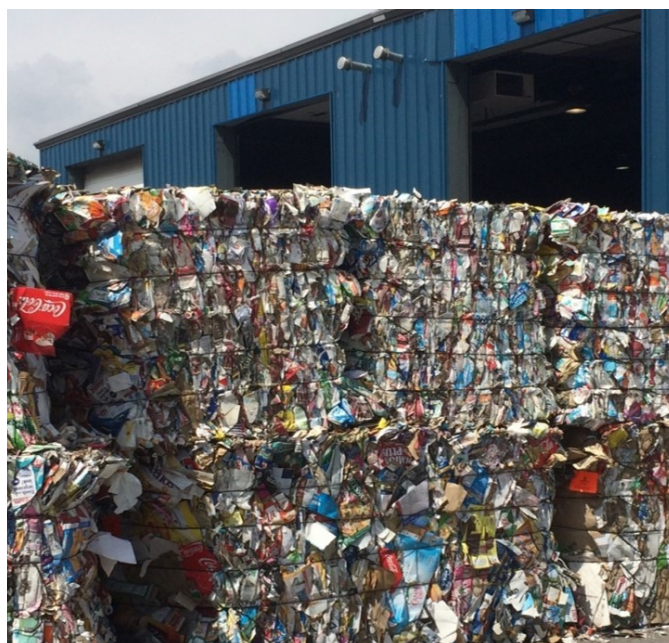
## **“Waste Audit” Session Provides Lots of Ideas**

The January 16th Waste Audit information session organized by the Sustainability Committee provided lots of tips and food for thought to help local residents reduce their household waste. Thirty three people from Smiths Falls and neighbouring municipalities attended the session at Trinity United Church and heard from three local municipal experts.

Tony Mack, Engineering Technologist with the Town of Perth, described their community compost program that has operated since 2008. Organic waste is picked up curbside from about 3000 households. Challenges include public education about what is acceptable and dealing with plastics and other foreign materials in the compost. The resulting material is used for the Town of Perth’s own landscaping projects.

Cathie Green, Public Works Assistant with the Township of Drummond North Elmsley, explained what happens to our recyclables once they reach the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), and what kind of products the various recycling streams become. She also had some suggestions on properly preparing materials for recycling, and just as importantly, what not to include.

Vanessa Bernicky, Environmental Coordinator for the Town of Smiths Falls, explained how to take an inventory of the waste created by your household and provided suggestions for reducing it. She also explained that growing your own food is one way of reducing waste. Organics account for about 30% of the municipal waste stream. If you aren’t already backyard composting, give it a try. It can really make a dent in the volume of garbage you put out. Vanessa highlighted some other community waste reduction options, including of course the REAL Deal Reuse Store.



Recycling bale at a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

Watch for other presentations in the Journey to Sustainability series, which will be announced on this website, in local media and on Facebook.

We have posted the speakers’ presentations on our website so those of you who were unable to attend can be inspired to make some positive changes in reducing waste.

[Town of Perth Composting Program](#), Tony Mack, Town of Perth

[Recycling](#), Cathie Green, Drummond North Elmsley

[Waste Audit](#), Vanessa Bernicky, Town of Smiths Falls

## **Dates to Watch for in 2020**

Earth Day Potluck Dinner – Wed. Apr. 22

Pitch In – April 25 to May 3

Bea Johnson on Zero Waste – May 28

Evergreen Dedication – Sat. June. 6, 11:00 a.m.

Rideau Canal Heritage Show – June 6, 1 p.m.

Paddlefest – Sat. June 13, 10 am. – 3 p.m.,

AGM—weeknight in mid June

Local Foods Dinner– Sat. Oct. 17, Legion

Watch our website and Facebook for event information. Or [sign up for our mailing list](#) to get reminders in your inbox.



## Rideau Lakes Recycling Changes

Changes in the world wide plastic recycling market mean that many municipalities are going to see changes to what they accept in their programs. Rideau Lakes is one of the first in this area that has had to adjust. Beginning Jan. 1, 2020, the following plastic items are not accepted in their recycling program: all plastic bags, all black plastics, milk/soup/juice cartons, tetra paks, foil juice containers, clam shell containers, bubble wrap and most coffee pods. As a result, residents will be permitted to put out up to three bags of garbage a week, up from the previous limit of two, but still need to affix a \$2 tag.

The recycling industry in general is experiencing high levels of contamination, say the contractors. Contamination in the form of nonrecyclable items and items with food debris on/in them is becoming a major issue. The facilities are demanding higher-quality recycling – clean and free from unacceptable materials.

There is a long list of plastic products that are no longer recyclable in Rideau Lakes' program including wrappers from foods, plastic straws and utensils, hygiene items, toys, hard rigid plastic, hangers, office supplies and home improvement items. Styrofoam products are not acceptable either! If you are not sure if an item is recyclable, you should just put it in the garbage.

### These plastics are NOT recyclable:



## Ten Recycling Suggestions

Each municipality's recycling program is slightly different, and their MRFs may have varying requirements, but these tips are pretty universal.

1. Put it in the right recycling container. Check your municipality's website or call their office if you need clarification.
2. If it isn't recyclable or you aren't sure, put it in the garbage. Wishful recycling does not help the program.
3. Food containers must be emptied and rinsed.
4. Do not include food scraps (unless your municipality has a program for that.)
5. Put any shredded paper in a closed cardboard box.
6. Do not include plastic bags – most MRFs do not handle them.
7. No stringy things like electrical cord, ribbons, garland etc.– they clog the machinery.
8. Try putting small metal lids in a larger can and crimping the end shut.
9. If the lid is the same material as the container, squish the container, screw the lid back on. If they are not, separate e.g. remove metal lid from a glass jar.
10. Don't put your beer, wine and liquor containers in the recycling. The township does not get funding for accepting them, and you have already paid the deposit! Take them to The Beer Store, a depot, or donate to a charity e.g. Scouts.

## REAL Deal News

**Free Stuff.** We continue to experiment with freeing large classes of goods at once. We tried fondue pots, punch bowls and drinking glasses before Christmas, and in January we are letting clear glass vases go for free to anyone who would like them. There are certain things we get way too many of and cannot sell even at rock bottom prices, but free seems to get some people very excited! Some other things we will be trying to unload in this way will be cookbooks, large kitchen knives and picture frames. For the winter we will have one free table inside (currently on the left at the entrance). We are pleased to have people help themselves so it doesn't have to go into the garbage. The free shed is still in operation, however; help yourself to anything you can use in there.

**Cashiers.** Tiffany Carrol worked her last day at the cash January 10. We are sorry to see her go, but are very pleased that she has found full-time employment at Canopy Growth. Nathaniel Healey and Taylor Levick are on placement with us and share cash duties weekday mornings, Vicki volunteers Wednesday morning, and Heather Warren does afternoons and Saturdays.

**Books, Movies and Music.** The REAL Deal accepts and sells books, movies and music, with a few exceptions.

To avoid being inundated with books that don't sell, we do not accept encyclopedias or textbooks more than 15 years old, and can only accept limited quantities of dictionaries, atlases, self-help or spiritual books. If you have run out of other options, most municipal recycling programs will accept books, even with hard covers. You should remove any plastic or metal bindings, however. We will also take current (within the past few years), magazines.

We have a non-fiction section, and separate hardcover and softcover sections. The shelves are in alphabetical order, but the books within a shelf are not! There is also a rack of unsorted paperbacks outside the book nook. Paperbacks are .25 or 5 for \$1.00 and hardcover books are .50 or 3 for \$1.00. A few more valuable books, often of the "coffee table" variety, are generally priced up to a few dollars, and are displayed away from the booknook to avoid confusion.

There are still people out there with working VCRs who buy VHS movies, and people who want 8 track tapes, so we will accept both. DVDs are \$1.00, Blue Ray movies \$2.00, and video games are priced from \$2 - \$10.

We accept and sell music on cassette, CD and vinyl. Vinyl LPs are .50 or 3 for \$1.00. We seem to get lots of classical and country music, but occasionally we get other genres.



Nathan



Tiffany



Taylor

### **Keep Those Donations of Use Stuff Coming!**

REAL appreciates your donations of gently used goods year round, but especially this time of year when donations and sales can be a little slower.

If you are decluttering or downsizing, please think of REAL. Our extended hours should make it easier. We accept a wide variety of household goods and renovation materials, many that are unacceptable to other charities. We aim to reduce waste, so unlike other charities, the garbage bin is a last resort. We also do not have a set time limit for an item to move. If it looks sellable, we can be very patient. If we can't sell it, we are happy to give it away to someone who can use it.

Some things that folks are asking for these days are wooden bookcases, vanities, power tools, winter sporting goods and chairs.

Check our website to see what we do and don't accept, ask in person, or to call (613) 283-7999. Small donations can be brought through the customer doors to the person on the cash, but if you have a large load, please proceed to the back to the opening in the fence in front of our green dome. There are usually two staff out there to assist you.

### **Membership Survey**

Thanks to everyone who participated in our phone membership survey that took place over the last few months. The membership committee reached out to members to find out what people knew and thought of REAL, and whether they had any time to help with future projects. Mercedes Steedman and Katie Hoffman managed to connect with 67 members, most of whom had been members for over 10 years. All were aware of REAL activities, read our Update, have attended REAL events and donate to or shop at the REAL Deal Store. But only about 20% were volunteering for REAL, and most of those surveyed felt they did not have the time or energy to volunteer. If you were one of those willing to help out on occasion, please keep in touch!

We have recently gained several new REAL members through the Sustainability Committee, which is great news. The group is actively planning additional community presentations and pursuing funding for the workshop series.

### **Lanark County Moves Forward on Climate Action**

Council has approved a number of activities from the draft work plan outline for a "Lanark County Climate Action Plan" presented by CAO Kurt Greaves at the Corporate Services Committee meeting in early January.

Initial goals in the work plan include moving forward with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Partners for Climate Protection Program, researching best practices, implementing programs to make immediate positive impacts and establishing long-term goals and program initiatives. Initial projects will be funded under the Municipal Modernization Fund. The county's Climate Action Plan would be inclusive of current local-tier plans and would cover those municipalities without a plan.

The approved report includes hiring a summer student dedicated to moving forward with the Partners for Climate Protection Program, \$25,000 for an "Insulate Lanark" program to help people insulate their homes, \$2,500 for funding tree-planting programs in coordination with the local conservation authorities, and authorizing a new position (Climate/Environmental Services Coordinator) to begin this autumn. Greaves added these initiatives are "designed to help build momentum on moving climate action projects forward." For more information, contact Kurt Greaves, CAO, at 1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1101.



*Climate change protesters in Smiths Falls March 15, 2019.  
Photo by Emilie Must.*



*In REAL Life*

**Membership Renewal.** February is membership renewal time for REAL. This year we are aiming to send the reminder notices via email (from Katie Hoffman) or Mail-Chimp to save paper and postage. You will be provided a link to the annual report. Memberships can be paid by cheque, e-transfer, PayPal (if you want to use a credit card), or by cash if you want to come in person to the REAL Deal.

**Community Garden.** We are accepting applications for community garden plots, and have already had a new gardener come forward in mid-January! Each plot is \$20. Please note those L shaped boxes are two plots. Please contact Katie Hoffman (613) 983-3360 or [kthoffman@cogeco.ca](mailto:kthoffman@cogeco.ca) if you are interested. Save a step and fill out an [application form](#), available on our website, or ask at the cash.

**Local Foods Dinner.** Mark your calendars for this year's Local Foods Dinner! We have booked both Joanne Edwards and the Smiths Falls Legion for Sat. October 17. Last year's dinner, which also celebrated our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, raised \$8681, our biggest total ever. The board has voted to direct \$1500 of that total to improving REAL Deal signage, particularly at the road. A significant proportion of the silent auction items sold that evening had been donated to the REAL Deal.

**Shift Happens.** The "Shift Happens" Perth environmental film series organized by [Biosphere Environmental Education](#) continues. The remaining films are "The Last Ocean" for March 14, Racing Extinction for April 4 and A Plastic Ocean for May 9. Tickets are \$15 and are available at the Studio Theatre office or at [ticketsplease.ca](http://ticketsplease.ca). REAL sponsored the film "Chasing Ice" on Feb. 1.

**Pitch-In Smiths Falls.** REAL is looking for another organization that would be willing to take over organizing Pitch In. We have already had discussions with two other organizations that want to see the annual cleanup continue and will be willing to provide volunteers but can't take over. The local campaign would be Sat. April 18 to Sun May 3. If you could commit to this, we want to hear from you! Maybe even a group of new REAL members would like to take it on – a fresh outlook is needed!

**Clean Water Program.** REAL member Simon Lunn suggests that rural dwellers needing technical or financial assistance with a water project look in the [Rideau Valley Clean Water Program \(RVCWP\)](#). Simon, who lives on Golf Club Road, received \$1,000 from the conservation authority when he needed to drill a new well and decommission his old one. You must apply to [derek.matheson@rvca.ca](mailto:derek.matheson@rvca.ca) before doing the work! Simon's story was noted in the new [RVCA blog "The River Reed"](#) as well as mentioned in the bi-monthly [Around the Rideau newsletter](#).

**REAL on Social Media.** Be sure to check out REAL on social media. Find us on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter. Even if you are not a Facebook user, you can see our posts on pages: "REAL Deal Store", "REAL – Rideau Environmental Action League" or the group "Journey to Sustainable Living". If you are interested in gardening, consider the group "Smiths Falls, REAL Community Garden." Note that we are phasing out the Facebook Group "Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)." We generally have news on REAL activities as well as other environmental news, so please join the discussion.

**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**

Store open Wednesdays,  
Thursdays, Fridays and  
Saturdays 10 – 5.  
Closed Sundays.

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

**REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment**

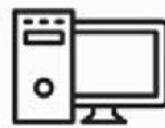
**Materials Accepted at REAL's  
Waste Electronics Recycling Depot**



Display Devices



Non-Cellular  
Telephones



Desktop  
Computers



Portable  
Computers



Computer



Desktop  
Printers



Personal/Portable  
AV Systems



Home Audio/Video  
Systems



Home Theatre  
In a Box (HTB)  
Systems



Freestanding  
Photocopiers



Vehicle A/V  
Systems



Cellular  
Devices

**Leave materials by the black bin at the REAL Deal Store  
during store hours Wednesday to Saturday 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

**Come ask for help if it is heavy!**

**If it is a working item you would prefer we sell, bring it inside.**

**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](http://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

**Join our Email List**

Use the green signup button on the  
bottom of our homepage.

**Contact Information**

Name .....

Street/RR Address .....

Town, Province .....

Postal Code .....

Home Phone .....

Work Phone .....

Best time to reach me .....

Email address .....