

An inter-continental trip all in the space of this newsletter !

From Central America to the shores of the Lac des Nations here in Sherbrooke, the same question is being asked. What is happening to our environment and what can we do? Many people are starting to take a closer look at what is going on in their backyards and how to improve the conditions they find there.

The Environmental Exhibition of last November was a marvelous way to gather information about how to be part of the environmental solution rather than adding to the problem. An article by Robert Leo Gendron the initiator of this environmental show, offers you a summary of the event. I am sure you will not want to miss the second edition!

Whether it be the Vaillancourt River in Compton or along other river banks, the weekly clean up activities are the backbone of the local action of Action Saint Francois. Read about our successes!

Obviously our local work needs support from others with more provincial influence. You will be interested to learn more about the organizations Cogesaf and the Cree.

Undaunted we go further afield. Amélie Lafrance offers us a reflection of her implication in the environmental work happening in Ecuador.

May this newsletter inspire you into taking action, locally, provincially or abroad!



River Vaillancourt, Compton.

SUMMARY

Overview of the year 2005	1
Water management	3
Pursuing a common planetary goal	4
Garbage out of thin air! ...	5
An environmental exhibition	6-7



Overview of the year 2005

Between May 14 and October 29, 2005, Action Saint-François carried out 27 cleanup operations on six creeks in the Rivière Saint-François watershed. Approximately 22 metric tonnes of garbage was removed from the watercourses, of which 79% was recycled. A total of 271 volunteers took part in these operations, which amounts to an awesome amount of work. All of this watercourse cleanup and garbage recycling work was done in municipalities in the Estrie region: Compton, Marbleton, Sainte-Catherine de Hatley and Sherbrooke. (See table below.)

Robert Léo Gendron

Details on the cleanup activities

For a third consecutive year, Action Saint-François organized cleanup operations with divers. The first of these was on the Magog River where it runs through Sainte-Catherine de Hatley. A number of people from the Association pour la préservation du Lac Magog (APLM) participated in the activity, as well as some ten divers from the Nord-Sud diving school. The site of the second cleanup was the Lac

des Nations in Sherbrooke. Some forty divers from various parts of Estrie donated their valuable time, while about twenty volunteers picked up the garbage along the shores of the Lac des Nations. This activity was organized jointly with CHARMES (Sherbrooke's municipal management corporation for aquatic environments) and the Nord-Sud diving school. While we're on the topic of partnerships, students from Collège Mont Notre-Dame were again involved in two cleanup operations this year. Some students in the environmental master's degree

program at Université de Sherbrooke dropped by, and we also had help from campaign volunteers for three of the major candidates in Sherbrooke's 2005 mayoral election: Jean Perrault, Hélène Gravel and Hubert Richard. Volunteers from regional environmental groups and young people from Canada World Youth were also very helpful.

Many other volunteers took part in our activities to clean up the shorelines of the region's watercourses. Our very warm thanks to all of them and we invite them to donate their time again next year if the spirit moves them. We also thank Environment Canada for funding our riverbank cleanup activities; without their assistance we would not have been able to continue our beneficial work. Finally, thanks to the City of Sherbrooke for allowing us free access to the landfill site, and to Olympique Métal for lending us containers and always giving us a good price for the metal we recover.

Final summary 2005 Watercourses cleaned up between May 14 and October 29, 2005										
Watercourse	Municipality	No. of visits	No. of volunteers	Time (x5hrs)	Volunteer wages (x\$9/hr)	Metal (kg)	Glass and plastic (kg)	Tires (kg)	Trash (kg)	Total
Lac des Nations *	Sherbrooke	1	49	245	2205	309	0	0	140	449
Ruisseau Côté	Bromptonville	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ruisseau Dorman	Sherbrooke	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ruisseau Doughty	Richmond	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ruisseau du lac Adolphe *	Marbleton	4	25	125	1125	3708	0	0	824	4532
Ruisseau Vailancourt*	Compton	17	151	755	6795	5434	60	6150	3129	14773
Ruisseau Veillette	Compton	1	12	60	540	0	0	0	0	0
Rivière Massawippi	Canton de Hatley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rivière Magog	Sainte-Catherine de Hatley	1	20	100	900	554	0	0	0	554
Rivière Saint-François	Sherbrooke	3	14	70	630	881	100	0	495	1476
Tributary of Ruisseau Soucy-Roy	Bromptonville	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		27	271	1355	12195	10886	160	6150	4588	21784
* Required a container		Materials recycled : 79 %			Materials sent to landfill : 21 %					



A priority for all of us

In recent years, Québécois have come to realize the value of our watercourses. In order to preserve them, make them more readily accessible and enable everyone to use them harmoniously, Québec has adopted a new governance approach: management at the watershed level.

Stéphanie Martel

Overview of the Rivière Saint-François watershed

A watershed is the territory within which an entire network of streams flows towards one main watercourse. For instance, the Rivière Saint-François watershed covers an area of 10,230 square kilometers and includes over a hundred municipalities from Lac Saint-François to the St. Lawrence River at Lac Saint-Pierre. Numerous Magog and Eaton rivers, the three Rivières aux Saumons, the Massawippi and many others flow into the Saint-François along its route to the St. Lawrence. The watershed also includes a number of lakes.

Working together to better protect and develop our watercourses

To implement watershed-based management, organizations such as the Comité de gestion du bassin versant de la

Rivière Saint-François (COGESAF; the Rivière Saint-François watershed management committee) have been

work with users and the general population to produce a water management plan. Moreover, citizens will be invited to take part



River Magog, autumn 2005.

created. COGESAF brings together water users and managers from the entire watershed. Delegates from the agricultural, forestry, tourism, municipal, cultural, educational, environmental and government sectors sit on the committee, working together to preserve and develop our resources, particularly water. What COGESAF advocates is a holistic approach, a vision for the future based on collaboration between local players.

Citizens also have their say

Together, users (including the general population) will prioritize the issues that must be dealt with to ensure sound, harmonious management of the watercourses in the Rivière Saint-François watershed. To achieve this, COGESAF must

in public consultations to be held in spring of 2006 (the dates of these consultations are posted on our website at www.cogesaf.qc.ca). By then, COGESAF will have completed the first phase of its water management plan, which is to write a detailed description of the territory and a diagnosis identifying the principal problems within the Rivière Saint-François watershed. Then, after getting input from users and the general population, COGESAF can develop an action plan that will generate concrete initiatives for watercourse preservation and development.

For more information on watershed-based management and COGESAF, visit our website at www.cogesaf.qc.ca



A healthy environment through solidarity!!

Amélie Lafrance

Streams, brooks and rivers have sculpted the earth since always. They have guided nomad tribes and have also been a place where others became sedentary. But today, mankind is modifying in its own way, which is not always the right one, the paths of the watercourses and the landscapes thereby affecting the natural processes of water management. That is, water retention by trees, water filtration by plants, floodable plains.

In Québec, many jointed efforts between governments, non-profit organizations, commercial enterprises and citizens are made to correct errors from the past, to use natural resources in a more responsible manner and to sensitize citizens to the necessity of preserving clean watercourses with rich biodiversity. On the other hand, many developing countries are stuck with huge debts preventing them from investing as much money in environmental projects as rich countries. Many non-profit organizations devoted to international development exist in Québec to lend a helping hand to those developing countries struggling with many different problems. One of these organizations is the "Centre de solidarité internationale du Saguenay - Lac Saint-Jean à Alma (CSI)". It organizes sensitisation activities with the people of Saguenay and Lac St-Jean and supports international cooperation programs. These programs enable southern countries to obtain the technical means, the material and the human expertise to realize projects and take charge of their own development. International solidarity internship projects are set up to enable people from Québec to create bonds with people from southern communities. These internships are made possible by organizations such as Québec Without Borders from the Ministère des Relations internationales du Québec.

Last summer, I took part in one of these internships in Ecuador with nine other people from Québec. It was a very enriching experience that took place in the village of Guano in the Andean cordillera. We were bound to the Cooperativa Agrovida. A cooperative formed by 25 young volunteering adults who clearly see that the Guano River is crying for help!! The township of Guano has a population of approximately 20 000 inhabitants, 80 % of which are farmers. There are two very important environmental issues: the drying up of the farmlands and the river caused by deforestation (the trees are no longer absorbing the fine water droplets from the clouds), and the contamination of water supplies by industries and domestic usage.

The main project of the cooperative is to put in place a water management plan for the catchment area of the Guano River in concert with all the township players. The water management plan will include: natural resources preservation projects (reduction of the contaminants' levels, reforestation of the river banks, and planting of windbreak hedges on farmlands), sensitisation and population education projects, as well as ecotourism and equitable arts and craft projects to encourage a more diversified and sustainable economy. Throughout the summer, with members of the cooperative, we took part in setting up communal tree nurseries to produce trees for reforestation. We carried out cleaning chores on the municipal hill and in the river where a lot of garbage was abandoned. We should specify that the garbage collection service is not regular. The municipal bud-



Bare fields, Equator, 2004.



River Guano, Equator 2004.



Equator 2004.

get is rather limited and sometimes there are other priorities. Art workshops were carried out with children to help us perceive what their vision of the river and the environment was and what they observed there. We also questioned people from the lower zone of the catchment area about their worries concerning water salubrity, water shortage, and the means they think are important to straighten the situation.

Garbage out of thin air!

Could someone please tell me the source of all the garbage cluttering up the beautiful countryside around Compton?

**By Monique Clément
Conseil régional de
l'environnement de l'Estrie**

The wind? The wind that snatches a plastic bag. The wind that blows so hard it steals your MacDonald's wrapper and whips your cup of pop or can of beer right out of your hand - but only when they're empty. A wind that goes so wild it even grabs your mattress and all the shingles off your roof, and places it all in a neat pile!

Last week, I picked up more garbage off the side of the road than I myself generate in a week, and I never even looked in the ditch. So maybe it's time to tame that wind!

Did you know that when the

wind dumps a can in the environment:

1. you just lost 5 cents;
2. that can will take more than 200 years to break down;
3. recycling just that one can would have saved enough

butts make their way into the global environment every day. Those tiny amounts of pollutants add up!

We tend to think that if things are biodegradable, it's okay to throw them on the



River Vaillancourt, Compton 2005.

energy to light a 100 W bulb for two hours!

As well as being an eyesore, much of the garbage found in the environment is hazardous to wildlife. This is particularly true of plastic bags and cigarette butts. Animals often mistake these materials for food, choke on them and die.

Cigarette filters also release the toxins from the filtered smoke. But the amounts of pollutants are tiny, you may say. True, but cigarette butts are the most common form of garbage thrown on the ground worldwide. Billions of

ground. But do you know how long it will take these materials to decompose completely? Even something as innocuous as a paper tissue will take three months to disappear (see table below). In the meantime, it's offending the eyes of passersby and detracting from the landscape.

If you know any victims of violent winds that carry off wrappers, cans and butts, you might want to invite them to an Action St-François cleanup (call 563-5362). These expeditions, which remove tons of garbage from the vicinity of streams every year, have a very calming effect on the wind...

Decomposition times of various materials	
Paper tissue	3 months
Peel	3-6 months
Newspaper	3-12 months
Woolen sock	1 year
Cigarette filter	1-2 years
Chewing gum	5 years
Leather shoe	45 years
Can	90 years
Aluminum drink can	200-500 years
Disposable diaper	550 years
Styrofoam container	1 million years
Glass bottle	1 million years
Plastic bottle	1 million years
Ref.: Recyc-Québec and Minnesota Department of Transportation	

An environmental exhibition

About fifteen years ago, I thought about organizing an environmental exhibition with the students of Applied Ecology from the CEGEG de Sherbrooke but the project was dropped on account of the students not being available to participate in it. This idea remained in the back of my mind until I decided, in 2004, that it was time for me to go through with it believing that it had value and that it was the right time to do so. Hence, I started to revamp the idea, to actualize it a little bit and to discuss it with several of my friends.



Robert Léo Gendron

The basic idea was to present to the general public concrete examples of a way of life more respectful of the environment and applicable to every day living. Above all, it was important not to repeat the tendency of similar activities that present exclusively grand theories aimed at the scientific and intellectual elite.

The organizing committee

Many of the friends that I visited were part of environmental associations or linked to some type of effort towards social change. This group of friends transformed itself into representatives of various organizations and was baptized the organizing committee. The latter was composed of the following associations: Action Saint-François (protection of the watercourses), Archibio (development of the ecological habitat), Les AmiEs de la Terre de l'Estrie (sensitization and environmental popular education, especially in regards to responsible

consumption and proximity agriculture), Environnement Jeunesse Estrie (environment by and for youth), Conseil régional de l'environnement de l'Estrie (concerted action, information and environmental sensitization), the Comité du

Bassin Versant de la Rivière Saint-François (COGESAF), the Association coopérative d'économie familiale de l'Estrie (ACEF-Estrie), as well as the Centre universitaire de formation en environnement (CUFE) and the Association des étudiants de la Maîtrise en Environnement de l'Université de Sherbrooke (AMEUS).

The "Salon de l'environnement: Daily ecological choices" hence took place on the 26th and the 27th of November 2005 at the Centre sportif de l'Université de Sherbrooke; a first in Québec.

Diversified approaches throughout a single exhibition

In order to represent these activities the best way possible, the organizing committee strove to diversify the products offered during the exhibition by touching themes as varied as the home and garden, water and energy

savings, renewable energies, local consumption, clothing, transportation, recuperation and recycling, house cleaning products, health and personal care, the forest, agriculture, and leisure activities. Thus, more than 80 exhibitors were present at the show and offered numerous ecological solutions ranging from household cleaning products to renewable energies (solar and wind), from cotton diapers to the tasting of succulent organic meals made in the region. Note that the offered products had to preferably be made in Québec, come from the Eastern Townships or nearby regions, and be available immediately to the general public, that is to say, they had to already be on the market and not at the research or development stage (prototype).

In addition to the booths, the organizing committee multiplied the approaches to reach and sensitize the citizens. Thus, the exhibition proposed to the visitors a series of testimonial conferences (e.g.: building ecologically) and practical and varied workshops (e.g.: making our own compost) aiming to inform and sensitize people to existing ecological solutions to various problems (alternatives to pesticides, responsible consumption, environmental health, etc.). Visitors were also able to road test different hybrid and low energy consumption vehicles during the whole time of the exhibition. A fashion show of recycled cloths and cloths made of organic fabrics realized by Quebec designers was presented twice during the event. A day care center, offered graciously by a Centre de la Petite Enfance (CPE) de Sherbrooke with very ecological values, was setup on site to keep the little ones busy while their parents were visiting the exhibition. Even the decoration of the halls and the corridors was done by a local group of artists with an environmental

fibre (AIRE) in order to provide the most pleasant and natural mood.

With this exhibition, the committee wanted to demonstrate that it is possible, without too much effort, to come up with concrete actions every day to preserve the environment. For example, it is easy to use ecological cleaning products that are not harmful to aquatic ecosystems or to consume local and organic products. The exhibition is therefore unique because it provides citizens with numerous ecological solutions that can correct a multitude of



environmental problems. It distinguishes itself also by its simplicity and by the tools offered, concrete, practical and immediately usable in most spheres of daily activities of the visitors.

Finally, to make sure that the effects on the motivation and the willingness to act of the public last, a directory

of exhibitors, describing the products, the services and the activities of each as well as their coordinates, was offered to each visitor. This tool will enable them to quickly find new resources in order to pursue their environmental turn after the exhibition.

An astonishing success

The event aroused a great enthusiasm as much with the visitors as with the exhibitors, the sponsors, and the media. Indeed, the interest demonstrated by the media, both local and national, clearly shows the general interest caused by the project. The exhibition was a great success, approximately 4 000 people came by to participate in it. These visitors from all ages and from diverse professional backgrounds came essentially from the region, but a non-negligible proportion came from outside the Eastern Townships (from Gatineau to Québec, from Trois-Rivières) to attend the event. This shows that people are very interested and have a need for concrete tools, easy to use, available and having measurable effects in the short term.



Nations Lake, october 2005, Hubert Richard .

All this was confirmed by the many very positive comments picked up from the visitors using a written evaluation. The majority of the responders incidentally wish that the project be renewed and come back annually. Concerning the conferences and the workshops presented all during the exhibition, the performances were almost always fully booked, so much that one conference had to be presented again in order to satisfy public demand. Finally, many visitors came back on the following day to really see everything.

A bright future

Taking into account the excitement and interest shown by people, from all backgrounds and all ages, it is safe to claim that this project is viable in the long term and that its effects will be durable as long as the exhibition comes back regularly and innovates with new themes at each edition. Carried by an extraordinary momentum and a real enthusiasm from everyone, the organizing committee, still recuperating from its emotions, is already dreaming about the second edition. It is actually foreseen to repeat such an exhibition each year and a half (alternating fall and spring), in order to let plenty of time to the committee to organize the event in such a way as to exploit a new theme each time, something few exhibitions are presently doing. Moreover, alternating the seasons will facilitate the exploitation of various themes, from Christmas to landscaping. It is also foreseen to increase the number of booths and conferences to offer even more solutions and practical products to participants.

I am really proud to have gone all the way with my idea that I had put away during all these years. If you have one that is trying to express itself, do not hesitate to make it known, it could change your life and the lives of other people as well.

The CREE: Estrie's regional environment council



The Conseil régional de l'environnement de l'Estrie (CREE) is a consensus-building organization that unites and represents environmental groups and public and private agencies, businesses, associations and individuals interested in environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development for the region.

Jacinthe Caron

The CREE represents these players to all of the authorities concerned and the general population, pursuing purely social, community-oriented ends, without seeking monetary gain for its members.

The purpose of the CREE is also to foster co-operation and exchange between organizations



*Fernand Provencher
et David Perkins.*

and to promote joint action strategies aimed at solving the region's environmental problems.

By mutual agreement, the CREE collaborates on pro-

jects already being run by the community and carries out projects arising from its action plan.

The CREE's current projects are centred around the following themes:

- Sustainable transport management
- Waste management
- Economizing drinking water
- Environmental management in businesses
- Perspectives on climate change

Here's how to reach us:

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The new members of Action Saint-François

from September the 21st 2005
to March the 17th 2006

Compton
Michèle Lavoie

Longueuil
Amélie Lafrance

Lennoxville
Diane Gameau
Kristine Corbeil

Sherbrooke
Micheline Larouche

401 people have joined Action Saint-François.

You may send us your email address at asf@asf-estrie.org.

Visit our web site at <http://www.asf-estrie.org/>



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ACTION SAINT-FRANÇOIS A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN AUGUST 1992 BRINGS TOGETHER CITIZENS CONVINCED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT. THE GROUP IS INTERESTED IN THE RESTORATION AND PRESERVATION OF AQUATIC MILIEUS OF THE SAINT-FRANÇOIS RIVER WATERSHED. CLEAN UP, EROSION CONTROL AND REPLANTING PROJECTS ALONG WATERWAYS AND FLOOD PLAINS ARE ORGANIZED BY ACTION SAINT-FRANÇOIS. WE WANT TO HEIGHTEN AWARENESS OF THE POPULATION TO THE NECESSITY TO ACT IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE HYDROLOGICAL NETWORK OF OUR TERRITORY. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE 25\$. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL US AT (819) 563-5362.