



Small stream becomes wider, with the help of the volunteer workers of Action Saint-François

Action Saint-François is already in its twelfth year of activity! Thanks to financial aid provided by Environment Canada and to the energy of volunteer workers, we have once more been able to continue our mission of cleaning up waterways in the catchment area of the St. Francis River. We have been active since the beginning of May, and the clean-up of streams and rivers is going well. We have already carried out clean-up activities on four waterways, as the table below shows.

Robert Léo Gendron

A work bee gathered waste along the **ruisseau Veillette** in Compton, but we haven't yet removed the materials from the site. As for the **ruisseau Vaillancourt**, also in Compton, it is one of the biggest sites we have so far had to deal with. We will probably not finish it this year, because a crane will

Veillette, and work there still continues. To return to the **ruisseau Vaillancourt**, we were astonished to learn that this site is still being used to dump waste. Neighbours caught a farmer disposing of pig carcasses on a part of this site. We in-



Canotage réserve du Rapide-Blanc

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be required for some of the waste removal and we have already exhausted this year's budget for crane rentals (even the best intentions do not always succeed in the face of budgetary constraints). This will not be the first waterway to take more than a year to clean. We have been working for four years on the above mentioned **ruisseau**

formed the municipality, and since it is collaborating with Action Saint-François to clean up the site, it took steps to enforce the law. Moreover, to show their support for the clean-up, several Compton councillors, the mayor and the town's director took part in a Saturday morning's activities and some of these persons came more than once, ➔

➡ so strong was their motivation. Nonetheless, tons of various waste materials (kitchen appliances, cars, tires, etc.) remain to be gathered on this site, whose steep slopes make the work much harder and require lots of rope to be uncoiled.

Early in the season, we also worked on the **ruisseau Rodrigue** in Marbleton. In this case, it was the land-owner who asked Action Saint-François to help clean up his land and make his streams healthier. We naturally replied that we would be pleased to lend a hand (or several) and how happy we were that a farmer was requesting our aid to improve his property. We don't encounter "dark green" farmers too often! This request for our collaboration is a good example of the open attitude of certain farmers in the region and bodes well for the partnership we hope to establish with owners and managers of land in the Townships region.

Action Saint Francois is looking for volunteers to participate on the Board of Directors. There are two positions available for individuals and two for corporations. If Board meetings are not your interest, consider volunteering to do the Saturday morning clean-up operations that will continue until the beginning of November. We also welcome the talents of volunteers who would like to write, edit or translate articles or other items for the newsletter. If you would like to support Action Saint Francois in any of these ways please give us a call at 563-5362.

Last year, we began clean-up operations on a river which is of major importance to the population of Sherbrooke : the **St. Francis River**. You might be surprised to note that we have only just begun cleaning up the St. Francis, although we continually repeat that we are looking after the waterways in its catchment basin. Nonetheless, last year was the first time that we organised a work bee directly on the banks of the St. Francis. This year we continued to gather and remove waste from a site only five minutes from downtown Sherbrooke.

In ending, we invite you to lend us a hand in our clean-up activities, which will continue on Saturday mornings until the month of November. We hope that as many volunteers will turn out as did in May, June and July.

For information, call: **563-5362** or write: **asf@asf-estrie.org**

Clean-up Operations Report From May the 14 th 2005 to August the 11 2005							
Water course	Municipality	Volunteers	Metal (Kg)	Glass and plastic (Kg)	Tires (Kg)	Waste (Kg)	Total (Kg)
Ruisseau Veillette	Compton	12	0	0	0	0	0
Ruisseau Vaillancourt	Compton	83	3 217	0	4 608	1 222	9 047
Rivière Saint-François	Sherbrooke	5	554	100	0	300	954
Ruisseau Rodrigue	Marbleton	21	3 708	0	0	412	4 120
Total		121	7 479	100	4 608	1934	14 121



A CLEAN-UP SUMMER

Since the return of the nice weather, I've been working on the Action Saint-François team as assistant coordinator. I've always been interested in nature and have studied in the environment field. This job gives me a chance to do some fieldwork, so it's an interesting challenge. What's more, as someone who uses garbage cans (moderately) and recycling bins (a lot), I find it hard to believe that people can dispose of things by just dumping them in the wild. So imagine my surprise at the amount of clean-up that needs to be done along the banks of streams!

Marie-Chantal Roy

It's really incredible all the things that end up in the natural environment, legislation

even decades; others seem to have been dumped yesterday. The sites we discover are often on slopes and cov-



Marie-Chantal Roy assistant-coordinator.

notwithstanding. Nature gets turned into a veritable open-air dump. Tires, metal, bottles, bags of household garbage, cars, appliances – to name just a few – mar the landscape with unwelcome reminders of humans' presence. Many of the objects

ered over with vegetation, so unless they know they're there, people out walking don't notice anything. It's when you go into the underbrush that the damage is revealed in its full glory. You can't help deploring the lack of respect humans have often shown for their environment.

Even so, I don't feel hopeless about the situation. Indeed, that's the reason an organization like ours exists.

It's always impressive to see the amount of garbage piled up at the end of a clean-up operation. And when we look at the site, we're proud of what we've accomplished! Everything that's been removed from the stream is then sent to the appropriate place: the sorting centre, the metal recycling centre, or the landfill run by the City of Sherbrooke. It is also great to see how much work a small team of volunteers can do by themselves. So when it's a big group, the results are even better.

In closing, I can say without a doubt that when my time with Action Saint-François comes to an end, I will have grown. This is an environmental group that really works to improve the condition of the natural environment. I can also add that this job lets me do something truly concrete in the way of environmental protection. It's a change from office work. And there's still enough stuff out there for years of clean-up operations, so I can only say: Long live Action Saint-François!



Discouraged by the complexity of environmental problems?

In our determination to master nature, humans have profoundly changed the environment. We have thrown ecosystems into severe imbalance, endangering living species. These days, there are so many environmental problems it seems almost impossible to solve them. But we have no choice: either we roll up our sleeves and act with courage and determination or we throw up our hands and become engulfed in innumerable problems.

Robert Léo Gendron

Solving today's environmental problems is really complex. On the one hand, humans are disrupting the environment at dizzying speed, destroying ecosystems, endangering species or causing their extinction, exploiting resources to the point of total depletion, releasing materials that are incompatible with life (pollutants of various kinds) into the environment, and so on. On the other, solving environmental problems is a slow process. The complexity of human social structures (laws, interests, etc.) makes concerted, effective management of environmental problems difficult. Achievement of positive results is slowed by short-term vision and the tendency (in individuals and groups) to put things off until later.

Wherever they can, human societies exploit re-



Inspecting a crop of oats, 1951.

sources relentlessly, with little concern for the environmental consequences. At the individual level, many people are genuinely unaware of the problems that result from exploiting nature, while others stick their heads in the sand and pretend not to know. Still others figure it doesn't matter what happens as long as it's not in their lifetime, and some say they don't have time to devote to these concerns. And then there are all those who see the state the planet is in but get discouraged and can't find the energy to act. There are people who have the desire and the energy, but don't know what to do. And finally, there are those who understand the problems but feel too isolated to act. All of these patterns of lack of awareness, denial of re-

sponsibility, and discouragement hamper the efforts of the environmentalists, ecologists, governments, and individual citizens who continue to strive for our common survival.

If you are among those who are eager to do something but don't really know what; if you feel too small to start something, or are discouraged by the size of the challenge, you should know this: there are things you can do in your everyday life; and you are not alone. There are thousands of associations of all kinds around the world that devote time to protecting the environment—so many that it's easy to feel swamped by the sheer quantity of information. In fact, a common trend these days is often to dis-

perse our energies, so that nothing concrete gets done overall.

Do what you can in your own life

You eat, live in housing, use transportation; you are a consumer of all kinds of products (not all necessary), energy, and so on. These are the areas where you have the most control and room for action. Where you can be most effective is in your own life. You are a unit of consumption and your impact on the environment is very important. The way you can make positive change is through your individual choices. Multiply these positive choices by six or seven billion and new hope begins to dawn for the future of the planet. Really act on your choices and you make life better, ➤



Wagonload of grain bagged for market, 1924.

➤ for yourself and the Earth.

Suggested areas for action

Food:

Like all living beings, you spend a good part of your time supplying yourself with food. Food can be acquired directly through gathering or agriculture (this is less and less frequent in modern-day North America) or indirectly by buying food at the grocery store and paying for it with money earned working (this is the case for most of us). Either way, you expend energy to get energy in the form of food, not to mention all the energy used to transport, process, and market the food. Many occupations are connected with food and a large part of our economy is tied to it. Successful sale of a product depends on the dietary fashions of the day, and on agricultural practices' capacity to ensure abundance of the re-

source. We are the key factor in that success, and our consumer choices can have an impact on the health of the planet.

The link between what we choose to eat and the state of the environment becomes obvious when we look at how agriculture has evolved around the globe. Since the early 1960s, there has been agricultural intensification and specialization in Quebec and throughout the Western world. In particular, this trend has brought more intensive crop practices, increased use of pesticides, and expansion and concentration of livestock operations, resulting in various problems including the generation of excess solid and liquid manure which poses storage and spreading difficulties. We also note the drainage of more and more land, the use of heavier agricultural machinery, and reliance on large amounts of energy from multiple sources to support production.

An inventory of problems affecting Quebec's agricultural soils revealed degradation of one kind or another on 90% of our farmland. The main problems encountered are deterioration in soil structure, overfertilization, reduced levels of organic matter, compacting, acidification, and water or wind erosion. This degradation, which exists in all regions of Quebec but is especially severe on the Montreal plain, is closely linked to the deterioration of water resources. When soil particles, fertilizers (nitrogen and phosphorus), pesticides and other pollutants such as micro-organisms and heavy metals are swept into ground water or streams, they cause sedimentation and pollution problems. Pollution from the agricultural sector is primarily diffuse, appearing in surface runoff or underground flows following precipitation. The severity of water erosion is influenced by such factors as

precipitation intensity, the slope of the land, vegetation cover, and soil type and condition. Irrigation schemes that involve laying subsurface ducts and digging or straightening watercourses (in Quebec, approximately 20% of agricultural land is drained) aggravate the phenomenon by promoting shoreline erosion and increased penetration of contaminants into watersheds.

Considering all the problems that come with modern agriculture, it would be wise to opt for an approach that treats the environment with more respect, such as organic agriculture. Here is a summary of its main principles:

A product is considered organic in Quebec if its producer has used no chemical herbicides, pesticides, or synthetic fertilizers. Instead, organic farmers use natural fertilizers and breeder's seed, and cultivate the land using time-tested methods such as crop rotation. The soil must have been free of chemical inputs for three years to obtain organic certification. At present, producers are not required to use organic seed, which is still rare and can be complicated to obtain, but with time, as the seed becomes available, they will have to use it. Even now, the seed they use must not be treated or genetically manipulated. For livestock operations, the use of antibiotics, growth hormones, or meat meal in the animals' diet is forbidden. Livestock overpopulation in farm buildings is not tolerated. Decent living conditions are favoured, with room to move and fresh air. Finally, processed organic foods contain no artificial ingredients, synthetic

additives, or preservatives. Obviously, organic food is not irradiated.

Organic agriculture is good for health and the environment. True, organic food is a bit more expensive now, but the more consumers there are buying organic, the cheaper these products will be.

Transportation:

Human beings had to be nomadic to survive, until the day they invented agriculture and became sedentary. As nomads, they travelled on foot for thousands of years. Then

of the train changed this tendency to follow waterways in moving individuals to resources slated for exploitation, or linking the towns that were steadily developing. As for the airplane, it completely shattered all geographical barriers.

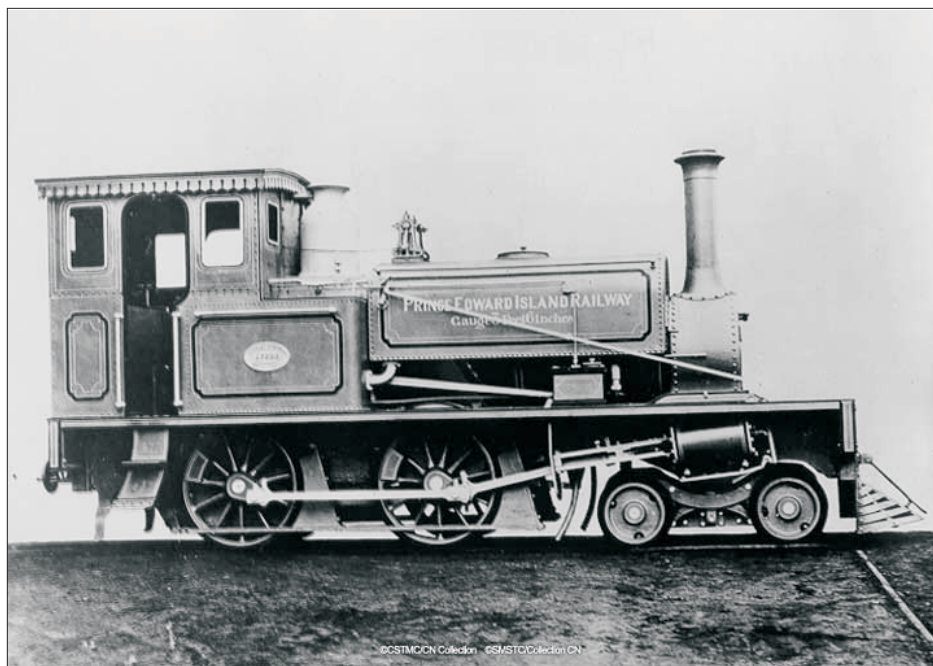
In terms of land transportation, in the early 20th century we went from horse- or ox-drawn carts to

be developed. The growth of Western societies has followed the development of transportation, and vice versa. We have settled and spread out into nature as we see fit, without much concern for the changes we're producing. We thoroughly enjoy our new version of the nomad's life on horseback (with mechanical horses),

and living without our inventions is now nearly unthinkable. Remember what humorist Yvon Deschamps said: the dream of every good Quebecker is to have a car! It might be a good idea to ask ourselves why we worship the automobile the way we do. Above all, we should remember what it's for. Right now, we urgently need to start thinking about changing our ways: instead of behaving like insatiable, mindless consumers (who hasn't gone into debt to buy a car?), let's adopt a sharing attitude and promote public transportation. We have to stop making individual ownership of transportation into a religion and ask ourselves the point of this huge investment in consciousness-dazzling (more than half the commercials on TV are car ads).

For those who want to adopt a more ecoresponsible approach to transportation, I strongly recommend a visit to the Équiterre website; and while you're there, check out the section on agriculture.

In our next newsletter, I'll address other aspects of individual life where you can choose to act in a more environmentally friendly way, such as energy use (for heating and electricity), housing, clothing, and so on.



Prince Edward Island Railway steam locomotive no. 1.

certain animals were domesticated, allowing humans to travel greater distances and exploit resources within larger areas. The use of waterways also allowed them to explore new territories and transport merchandise. In Quebec, the earliest roads were along streams, and the King's road (Chemin du Roi) ran parallel to the St. Lawrence River. To some degree, the advent

cars propelled by the internal combustion engine. Towns and cities were transformed to accommodate these machines, and humans became their drivers, and their slaves.

These transportation advances truly changed human destiny. The evolving means of transportation allowed commodities and goods of all kinds to travel around the world, and markets could

Équiterre :

- <http://www.equiterre.org/>

Addresses of some sites that deal with organic agriculture:

- <http://www.inti.be/ecotopie/bio.html> [French only]
- <http://www.fao.org/organicag/frame1-f.htm>
- <http://www.intelligenceverte.org/asp/Agribio.asp> [French only]
- http://www.organicag-centre.ca/DOCs/OrgStds_Jan05_Principles.pdf
- <http://www.ifoam.org>, particularly the "organic facts" section.
- <http://www.attra.org/attrapub/organiccrop.html>



Revegetation of banks and shorelines with native plants

In the springtime bulletin of 2004, we wrote of the importance of buffer zones between farm land and the edge of streams, rivers and lakes, to reduce erosion problems. The same holds true for many land-owners, who should also revegetate their banks and shorelines for the same reason. To accomplish this, why not use indigenous varieties of plant to create a very natural riparian zone, in keeping with horticultural trends in recent years.

France Bourgouin

What is an indigenous plant? It's a plant which grows in a given habitat without having been imported. When imported from another region or country, we normally refer to a plant as being "naturalised". In Canada, we can find over 3000 species of native plants, several of which are currently under threat of extinction. Various benefits can be derived from their use for restoring banks and shorelines.

There are various environmental benefits associated with planting species which are perfectly adapted to their milieu. There should be no problems of survival; if native plants are placed in the same environmental conditions as those in which they normally grow, maintenance work should be minimised, as will the need for fertilisers and watering. These plants will have natural resistance to cold, to drought, to disease and to insect attack. Moreover,

you will be encouraging bio-diversity and, according to your choice, you could be increasing the chances of survival of certain threatened species.

On the monetary side, you will also be reducing the time, effort and costs of maintenance, applying fertilisers or watering. Nor will winter protection be necessary, as long as your choice of plants is appropriate for the climatic zone in which you live..

Indigenous plants are increasingly available in garden centres. However, you should enquire how the plant was produced. Rules for native plant production stipulate that they be grown from seed or from cuttings. It is illegal to remove them from a natural milieu. The principal supplier of native plants in Quebec is Indigo. This wholesaler specialises in the production of perennials, annuals and grass type plants. They also produce certain varieties of fern, bushes and climbing plants. Their plants are available at Home Depot centres and other garden centres. Indigo also offers a range of seed mixes suited to various milieus. Visit their web-site at www.horticulture-indigo.com for more information on these products.



Part of car, fridge and box-spring, River Vaillancourt, Compton.

Save our Seine

Here is a series of articles introducing environmental groups elsewhere in Canada and in other countries who have similar goals to Action Saint-François.

France Bourgouin

The first such group began as a small number of citizens of Manitoba who became aware in 1990 of the deteriorating state of the Seine River. They decided to meet and to recruit new members, and to begin cleaning up operations and restoring the banks. By 2001, their association "Save our Seine" counted 600 members. Each year, with the help of young and not-so-young citizens, they organise clean-up activities, as well as replanting and other projects such as protection of large trees from beavers and creation of fast flow channels. They have also created walking trails along the riverside and organised guided canoe excursions.

The group has been very active in seeking the support of the population and of politicians, and to collect sufficient funds to pursue

chase a historic piece of woodland which was under threat of development. Since then, the Manitoban government has announced it will protect this area from development: another success story which shows that by joining forces, people can change things. "Save our Seine" presents on its web site (saveourseine.com) all the actions which it has completed in the last twelve years. This year, the group remains active and continues with its goal of bringing life back to this river.

If you are interested in organising other activities than bank clean-ups, we welcome your initiatives. We believe that Action Saint-François is now ready to become involved in other types of river improvement projects.



River Vaillancourt, Compton.

The Annual General Meeting for 2005

Alana Russell

Action Saint-François is managed by a small group of volunteers that make up the Board of Directors. These decision-makers meet monthly to maintain

the smooth running of the organization. The Annual General Meeting of Action Saint-François is a chance for members and interested people to get a first hand look at what Action Saint-François has accomplished over the year. This assembly was held on April 30 this year at the Museum of Science and Nature. A conference by Maribel Hernandez-Montesinos preceded the business meeting.

The members of the Board of Directors took turns presenting aspects of the report on activities and the budget.

Obviously the On-site operations are the real hands-on work of Action Saint-François, including the weekly clean-up operations, the search for new sites to be cleaned and the renewal of vegetation. Our coordina-

tor Robert Léo Gendron presents an article on this topic elsewhere in this newsletter. After five years in the position of Coordinator of Clean-up Operations, an evaluation of Robert Léo's performance was completed. The Board of Directors are very pleased with the work that he has done for the organization and have unanimously agreed to hire him for another season.

As you are likely aware the membership fees and donations that support the organization come largely from our door to door recruiters. For the year 2004 the amount of money obtained in this manner was well below projected sums. Retaining recruiters over the summer months continued to be a problem even though a person had been hired through a Hire-a-student grant to oversee this work. These hard working recruiters also had the task of educating the public through their contacts with local citizens.

To further inform the public Action Saint-François creates a newsletter and participates in kiosks, conferences and environmental discussions. In the

year 2004, Action Saint-François produced one newsletter and participated in seven events. Our environmental organization maintained memberships and alliances with a variety of other organizations including RAPPEL, CREE and COGESAF.

Even though there were reduced revenues for the year a balanced budget was maintained mainly by a reduction in salaries due to lack of recruiters, and by spending less than expected on equipment rentals and transportation fees.

Plans for 2005

Once again this ambitious crew of volunteers wishes to enhance the work of Action Saint-François by creating a three year plan, by hiring a part time worker in the winter months, by looking for more stable financing through donations from Foundations and of course, cleaning river banks! We always welcome assistance from you the members! If you have suggestions for any of these projected tasks, would like to work on the newsletter or would like to be part of the decision-making through the Board of Directors meetings please let us know! We

The new members of Action Saint-François

from May the 6th to September the 20th 2005

FLEURIMONT

Monique Bourque
Nathalie Bocquet
Pierre Gagnon
Serge Douville

LENNOXVILLE

Caroline Grégoire
Daniel Rouleau
Fraser Adams
Geneviève Petit
George Rideout
Géraldine McGurk
Harriet Erskine
Doheny
Irène Carbonneau
Juby Fletcher
Kelley Patrick
Linda Marier
Michael Medland
Pierre Croteau
Sandra Gilliam

ROCK FOREST

Robert Latraverse

SHERBROOKE

Alain Desharnais
André Côté
André Gilles Brodeur
Annie Bineau
Benoît Bacon
Brenda Mercier-Roy
Brigitte Bouchard
Bruno Lecorff
Carole Roy
Chantal Dorais
Daniel Forges
Danielle Lauzier
Denis Fauteux
Denis Robert
Dominic Poirier

Les sœurs du Sacré-cœur de Jésus - Les filles de la charité
Gaétan Collard
George Savoie
Ghislain Houde
Heidinga Marjan
Hélène
Deslauriers
Hugo
Parent-Roberge
Hugues
Vincelette
Isabelle
MacArthur
Jonathan
Vincent
Lise Dionne
Lorette Brunelle
Louissette
Saint-Laurent
Luc Bureau
Lucie Gagné
Marcel Mathieu
Marie-Claire
Pelletier
Marie-Flavie
Aucclair-Fortier
Michel Vallée
Nadine Sarrazin
Nicole Jolicoeur
Normand Gilbert
Patrick
Desmarais
Pierre Noël
Réjean Fontaine
Steve Daigle
Sylvain Grondin
Valérie Fayolle
Vija Ierumanis

315 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/asf/>



**ACTION
SAINT-FRANÇOIS**

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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. CLEANUP, 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.