



vol. 25:2 summer/fall 2007

B E T W E E N T H E  
**i s s u e s**

**BETWEEN THE COVERS:**  
**A Life in Plastic - It's Fantastic**  
**Steps to Sustainability**





# B E T W E E N T H E i s s u e s

an ecology action centre publication

VOL. 25 NO. 2

## Features

### A Life in Plastic - It's Fantastic / 14



### Steps to Sustainable Prosperity / 24



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# editorial

This issue of *Between the Issues* is a veritable bumper crop of articles, just in time for the beginning of the harvest season. Like a garden, *BTT* changes and grows. The magazine is a “living document” in that we are always seeking ways to improve, to better achieve the balance of informing our members and engaging and educating the general public on environmental issues in Nova Scotia and beyond. A constant identity crisis, but always an interesting ride, and in many ways a mirror of the EAC itself.

As part of *BTT*'s evolution, we've preyed upon the good graces of a few of Nova Scotia's best writers and editors to help us out along the way, and will be implementing their recommendations over the next year. As *BTT* is a labour of love, we greatly appreciate the time people have taken to provide us with feedback and become engaged in this publication.

In this issue, we focus on people and initiatives who are leading the way in moving Nova Scotia towards sustainable prosperity, a place that respects both the environment and the people who live here. Ultimately, achieving sustainable prosperity will be something we will have to choose to do. Many of the articles in this issue are about those who have made their choice.

Andy Pederson profiles two fundamentally human projects in the Maritimes. The first, on page 9, is the concept behind the new farmers market in Halifax, which gives architectural meaning to all the things we hold dear about markets and farm gate purchasing, from meeting friends to developing relationships with those who produce our food. The second article on page 20 brings us to the seaside, with a profile of Bryan Boatbuilding where Harry Bryan and Wyatt Lawrence build boats – wooden boats, and things of great beauty, in Harry's off grid boat shop in Charlotte County, New Brunswick. Catherine Joudrey reminds us how to get closer to our food, particularly through the abundant options for U-Picks, from blueberries, to peaches, to pumpkins. EAC's seven issue committees have all submitted their “Steps to Sustainable Prosperity”, policy recommendations, and ideas for action that can help steer the good ship Nova Scotia towards a brighter future. On page 27, Ian Rowberry gives us the low down on Atlantica, and why it is a good idea to ask questions.

When it comes to the sea, it seems we've all but given up on a sustainable and

prosperous future for both the renewable resources therein, and the people who live on our coasts. However, there are examples in Nova Scotia to celebrate – from hook and line groundfish from Georges Bank, to harpoon caught swordfish, trap caught shrimp and responsibly farmed shellfish. These industries, reviewed by Sadie Beaton on page 19, are part and parcel of a future for Nova Scotia in providing sustainably harvested seafood options.

The sea, and the seacoast are in every Nova Scotian's blood, as Jennifer Graham so eloquently notes in her call for a coastal planning strategy. Now. Before we lose coastal access, before more wetlands succumb to irresponsible construction practices, and before our coasts become home to LNG plants and rock quarries feeding the monster to the south. This summer, I noticed the great change our coasts are facing, as I went down to the beach near my parents house for my usual skinny dip to find it had been posted with Private Property and No Trespassing signs by a new resident in the community. Centuries of public access threatened by a hammer, a nail and a few signs.

A second focus of this issue is plastic, which is also, to some degree about choice. Elizabeth Pierce recounts her trip down the Shubenacadie in the spring where plastic is more plentiful than wildlife. Sadie Beaton reviews plastic recycling, showing that our waste is not just a problem for Nova Scotian communities like Lincolnville, but also for poor communities in China where much of our plastic gets sent for supposed reuse. Ruth Gamberg brings this home again, through her tales of recent travels in China and the growing gap between the rich and poor, all driven by a sense that North American consumption patterns are the goal (rather than learning from our mistakes). As Nova Scotia rolls out an electronics recycling program, we should be mindful (preferably before we buy them) of where those electronics might end up.

We have a choice to create a Nova Scotia that is truly a model for other regions in the world. We have a choice to take cloth bags to the grocery store. We have a choice to create community. We've added to many of the articles a TAKE ACTION section, to enable our readers to easily become involved in this process of change.

*Susanna Fuller is still the content editor for Between the Issues.*

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# actionisourmiddlename

## changing climate, changing coasts

June 6th, 2007, 55 participants took part in a learning circle discussing how coastal planning can be an effective climate change adaptation strategy. The full report is available on the Coastal Issues Website at [www.ecologyaction.ca/coastal](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/coastal). Our website also features works by CIC's amazing volunteers, including, but not limited to: Alexi Baccardax, Yukari Hori, Karen Traversy, Kip Gasse, Amber Nicol (who organized the excellent Climate Change Learning Circle), Debby George, Anna Cross, Heather Avery, Colleen Thompson, Anna Macarron, and Rocky Yao. Thank you for standing up for the coast! Meanwhile, CIC enjoys its days at the beach, with recent and planned visits to groups and sites around the province. See you at the beach (or a nearby town hall meeting) and keep those letters and photos about coastal damage along Nova Scotia coming in. We are making a difference!

## commuters rise to challenge!

The 2007 Commuter Challenge, organized provincially by the Transportation Issues Committee and the TRAX Project, was held from June 3 – 9. Close to 100 organizations and hundreds of participants carpooled, bussed, cycled, walked and teleworked their way to one of HRM's most successful Commuter Challenge weeks yet. Together we travelled over 100,000 km the green and healthy way and saved more than 25 tonnes of climate changing emissions from entering our atmosphere. In related news Steer Clean, the EAC's vehicle retirement and scrappage program, retired its 215th car and gave away its 100th mountain bike during this summer and the bus pass incentive is also returning after a year's absence – hooray! Coordinator Ian Rowberry will leave us in September to further his studies in renewable energy. We wish him the best and hope that he returns to EAC!



## promoting small woodlot owners

BTI readers will remember the long battle waged by the Standing Tall campaign, the Wilderness Committee and EAC members for an objective, comprehensive public process to develop the new 10-year provincial natural resources strategy. We won! Voluntary Planning will carry out a year of public consultations, followed by an expert 3-person panel with representatives from the environmental and industry sectors. Now we need to gear up for the almost three-year process and play a lead role in mobilizing allies to speak out for our forests. On another note, EAC and the Association for Sustainable Forestry are partnering to deliver a dedicated pot of funds (\$570,000) for landowners to carry out uneven-aged management. Special Thanks to intern Hana Hermanek working on the upcoming Acadian Forest Science Conference as well as promoting Forest Stewardship Council-certified woodlot owners.

## on the path to sustainable energy

The Energy Issues Committee (EIC) recently released a policy document titled "Pathways to Sustainable Energy Prosperity in Nova Scotia", which has been praised by the likes of columnist Ralph Surette as "documentation of what has to be done and the (mainly political) hurdles to be overcome" in order to meet economic development and environmental objectives of the province's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. Contact Brendan at [energy@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:energy@ecologyaction.ca) for a copy of the report. The Atlantic Canada Sustainable Energy Coalition has joined environmental organizations in Quebec and New England in calling for provinces to introduce meaningful carbon pollution regulations on industries. We've hired Dave Lovekin to help expand our Solar Gain Project, summer student Phil Mackenzie's research ways to monitor the performance of solar energy systems, and intern Janice Ashworth will start the Solar Greenhouse Study to help develop renewable energy technology for local food production in greenhouses. Check out [www.solargain.ca](http://www.solargain.ca) for more information.

## start saving your quarters...

International Walk to School Week, coordinated annually by the Active and Safe Routes to School Program, will run from October 1-5, 2007, while the "Walk for Clean Air and the Climate" campaign continues through the entire month of October. Included in the events is a fundraising challenge called "Quarters for the Climate". Students at participating schools will collect quarters with proceeds benefiting Active & Safe Routes to School to help more students walk and wheel safely to school. Register at [www.asrts.ca](http://www.asrts.ca) or contact us at [asrts@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:asrts@ecologyaction.ca) or (902) 442-5055. In other news, the Pace Car program continues to roll out across the province. Contact Cheyenne Dickinson at 442-5055 if you are interested in helping to slow traffic in your community. Pace Cars can effectively calm traffic throughout your neighbourhood. The more people who join, the better it works!



## events

### **"Quarters for the Climate" Walk to School Week**

October 1-5  
Register at [www.asrts.ca](http://www.asrts.ca)  
Contact Janet:  
[asrts@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:asrts@ecologyaction.ca)  
902-442-5055

### **HelioTrust's Open Farm Days**

Throughout the summer and fall, HelioTrust is holding activities and is open for visits.

To find out more, visit:  
[www.heliotrust.ca](http://www.heliotrust.ca) and  
[www.heliotrust.squarespace.com](http://www.heliotrust.squarespace.com)

### **Acadian Forest Science Conference**

October. 10-13, 2007  
Fredericton, N.B.  
To find out more, visit:  
[www.acadianforestsience.dal.ca](http://www.acadianforestsience.dal.ca)

### **Ecologic-**

Sustainable Lifestyle Trade Show  
Sept 7-9 ExhibitionPark

### **EAC Open House**

December 10th 4-7pm

### **EAC Chemical Free Christmas Trees**

Order your Christmas Tree starting in November. Call the EAC at 429-2202

## internship action

A big thank you to all the interns who have given their time and energy to the EAC this summer! And thanks to the programs who supported their time at EAC.

**Green Building** - Trisha Dempsey & Claire Simmons (NS Youth Conservation Corps), Jessica Gilbert (Patagonia)

**Membership and Outreach** - Niina Luus (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada)

**Solar Gain** - Janice Ashworth (Science Horizons) & Phil Mackenzie (Human Resources and Skills DevelopmentCanada)

**Standing Tall** - Hana Hermanek & Tiffanie Rainville (Atlantic Council for International Cooperation with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency)

**Steer Clean** - Andrew Martin (NS Youth Conservation Corps)

**TRAX** - Jesse Joice (NS Youth Conservation Corps)

**Urban Garden Project** - Garity Chapman (Human Resources and Skills DevelopmentCanada)

**Urban Planning** - Alan Howell (Concordia University, Urban Studies Program)

## give me an F, give me an S, give me a C

EAC's Standing Tall and Public Lands campaigns participated in the recent Forest Stewardship Certification auditing process undertaken by Stora Enso in Cape Breton and eastern mainland Nova Scotia. Stora would be the first large industrial forestry company to achieve certification in the Maritimes. The FSC maritime standard includes environmental provisions that, if met, would require Stora to significantly improve its environmental performance. Standing Tall campaign members Joanne Cook and Minga O'Brien are working with Stora and the FSC auditors to ensure improved forestry practices on the rest of the so-called "working landscape". Public Lands Coalition members have worked closely with Stora, CPAWS, WWF, Dalhousie University scientists and government officials on a committee designed to identify High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) on Stora's operational lands. Areas identified will then receive either full protection or special management considerations to preserve their identified conservation values. A decision is expected this fall. In other news, Wilderness coordinator Raymond Plourde has been appointed to the Nova Scotia Government's Off-Highway Vehicle Ministerial Advisory Committee. Conservation Planner Kermit deGooyer has also been appointed to the Trails sub-committee.

## an octopus's garden in the sea

Can you hear mermaids singing? Perhaps that is because they're welcoming two new staff to the EAC's Marine Issues Committee, as Anna Magera and Sadie Beaton join the marine team to work on expanding our SeaChoice Sustainable Seafood Program. Go to [www.seachoice.org](http://www.seachoice.org) and view the profiles of many local fish suppliers and retailers and to learn more about sustainable fisheries. We're working to ensure sustainable fishing methods are celebrated and that Nova Scotians have better access to local fish. The EAC remains an active stakeholder in the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management planning process and will work in partnership with other stakeholders to develop conservation framework in hopes of increasing "on the water" conservation of our marine environment. Jen Ford and Susanna Fuller traveled to the west coast to work with the Living Oceans Society and the Marine Conservation Biology Institute on our collaborative project "How We Fish: Ecological Impacts of Fishing Gears in Canadian Waters". EAC will also attend the annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization in Lisbon, Portugal in September in hopes that our presence will increase conservation of the high seas - perhaps even a few areas closed to bottom trawling on the high seas.

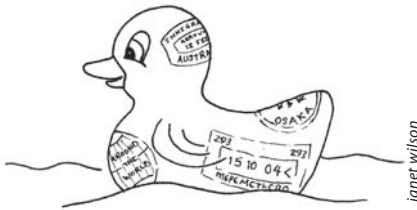
## u bring the space...we bring the garden

Now in its third year, the Urban Garden Project of the Food Action Committee (FAC), is doing everything it can to make planting your own garden accessible, intriguing and bountiful. FAC currently coordinates three urban garden sites, home to exciting workshops, community events and most importantly, local, organic vegetables. With its focus on schools and community centres, the project works to make growing food commonplace for youth and the communities in which they live. Contact Garity at [urbangarden@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:urbangarden@ecologyaction.ca) for more information or to get involved. When FAC members aren't in the garden, we have our noses in the books. The research phase of the Food Miles Project is well underway. We're researching how to promote locally produced food, and to find out more about our food consumption patterns. Contact Marla McLeod: [foodaction@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:foodaction@ecologyaction.ca) for more information about this project.

Don't forget to ring the EAC in early November  
to order your **Chemical Free Christmas Tree.**  
429-2202



By June Hall



## Save our rocks!

Spare a thought for rocks. Not just for those huge gashes in Earth's surface that constitute mines and quarries, but for rare and endangered varieties. Think British limestone, of which only a tiny fraction remains untouched, with the rest gracing gardens across the country or damaged by nearby activities such as agriculture.

Geoconservation is a growing movement that wants us to give rocks the same respect we give endangered plants and animals. The threats are many: urban development, coastal barriers, collecting (especially of fossils), and outright criminal activities (again, fossil hunters). Of recent concern in Canada is the Oak Ridges Moraine, an ecologically significant ridge of mostly sand and gravel north of Toronto that is under threat from developers.

In the UK, "geological jewels" are given special protection, even if they're on private land. In the United States, only government-owned sites such as Yellowstone can be legally protected. Thinking internationally, UNESCO can confer Geopark or World Heritage Site status. Trouble is, little will stop a determined thief or vandal if a site is remote enough. Put that pebble down! (*New Scientist*, 23 June '07)

## Quack, quack

Remember those rubber duckies, the ones that fell off the back of a boat 15 years ago? Now, after a circuitous voyage, the bleached remnants of the flotilla appear to be heading for the British Isles. Three 40-ft containers washed into the Pacific during a storm in January 1992 and two-thirds of the 30,000 dumped ducks drifted south, landing months later on the shores of Indonesia, Australia and South America. The rest? North to Alaska, a three-year circle to Japan, "then back to Alaska on a current known as the North Pacific Gyre." Ducks not stranded along the way passed through the Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska. They've since traversed the Northwest Passage and been spotted in the North Atlantic, which they've almost finished circling. With sightings now rare, the original owners, First Years Inc., are offering a reward of \$100 per duck.

How do we know all this? Curtis C. Ebbesmeyer, a Seattle-based scientist, has developed a model to track such flotsam and jetsam. (*Times Online*, 28 June '07)

## Worse than we thought

Appears we the public were wearing rose-coloured spectacles in assuming climate change would turn out to be at the low end of the predicted range. But there's a welter of signs that we could be warming even faster than the models predict. A 60-year study of sea-ice data from the National Snow and Ice Data Center reveals that Arctic ice has shrunk by 7.8 percent per decade instead of the 2.5 percent of computer simulations. Further, scientists seem to have overestimated the amount of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed by the Southern Ocean, a process that damps down global warming. They hadn't factored in increased winds, which stir up the water, retrieve CO<sub>2</sub> from the deeps and allow it to percolate into the air.

Another report notes that actual sea level rise is closer to the uppermost limits of projections in the 2001 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report. Unexpected amounts of melting in Greenland and Antarctica, revealed last year, may be fueling the rise. As one scientist puts it: "I wouldn't advise people...to assume the upper end [of sea level rise] reported...is really the upper limit." He advises us not to overreact, rather to "ask a lot of questions." (*Env Sci & Tech online*, 30 May '07)

## Evaporation

"What the hell is going on here?" is a relevant question when "here" refers to the millions of ponds that form each summer across the Canadian Arctic. Ranging in size from "several football fields to a small living room," the ponds are less than two metres deep. Queen's University professor John Smol is among those asking the above question. Smol has been studying the ponds since 1983 with his University of Alberta colleague Marianne Douglas. They published a 1994 paper warning that these fragile environments were in trouble,

a conclusion they reached after looking at sediment cores going back millennia. Already, they said, significant ecological changes were evident, a controversial observation at the time.

The scientists have noted lower water levels and changing chemistry in recent years. In early July 2006, seven of the 40 ponds they monitor on Ellesmere Island disappeared completely, victims of evaporation. Worryingly, some of the ponds in question were of considerable size. "I think we are at a tipping point," Douglas says. "We never expected to see these ponds dry up so soon." When combined with research from the 1970s, their studies comprise "the longest record of systematic limnological monitoring from the high Arctic," the region expected to suffer the most from global climate change. (*PNAS*, 2 July; *Globe & Mail*, 3 July '07)

## Ouch!

As CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere continue their seemingly inexorable rise, will the dire effects of global warming be offset to some extent by increased plant growth? Will there be, as some have predicted, "a new golden age" of food production?

There's no doubt that CO<sub>2</sub> has a fertilizing effect on plants and that higher levels of it can lead to bigger plants. But when you factor in the combined impacts of higher temperatures (and especially more heat waves), higher ground-level ozone levels, more drought (as predicted for many of the world's major crop areas), and perhaps more insect pests it becomes apparent that the overall picture is far from good.

One North American plant, however, appears happy. Two recent field studies on poison ivy have shown that higher CO<sub>2</sub> levels result in faster growth, larger leaves, hardier plants and – alas for us – a more potent form of urisol, "the oil that triggers an itchy rash in 70 percent of people exposed to it." At current CO<sub>2</sub> levels, say researchers, poison ivy is both more abundant and more allergenic than it was in 1950. Susceptible readers should check out [www.poison-ivy.org](http://www.poison-ivy.org) for tips. (*New Scientist*, 16 May; *Wall Street Journal*, 26 June '07)

# askecohead



By EcoHead

## Dear EcoHead,

I've heard that there are ways you can make your car use less gas. Is this true? Gas prices are killing me!

-Too Much Gas.

## Dear TMG,

Have you considered walking or biking on your daily commute? It's free, and with the regular exercise, you might save yourself the cost of a gym membership, too! If you have kids, you might be interested in working with our Active and Safe Routes to School program to start a Walking School Bus at their school.

But to answer your question: yes, if you must drive sometimes, Clean Nova Scotia's DriveWiser program has several tips for making your car more fuel efficient. For example, most cars are designed for 90km/hour to be the most efficient speed to travel. At 110km/hour, 21% more gas is used per kilometre than at 100km/hour, and at 120km/hour, 44% more fuel is used. (They'll even explain the physics in easy to understand terms.) Extra weight in the car, underinflated tires, dirty air filters and worn spark plugs all increase the amount of gas your car uses, too. There are a lot more tips at [www.drivewiser.ca](http://www.drivewiser.ca) on how you can save gas through proper maintenance, sensible driving, and planning ahead. Call Gina at 902-420-8802 with any questions, or to ask DriveWiser to run a workshop for your workplace or community group.

## Dear Ecohead,

I'm single, and feel real rotten about the environment. Are single people bad for the environment? I have a computer, fridge, toaster oven, spatula... all this stuff, just for me. Should I get hitched to use less earth?

## Dear Singles,

Isn't that just what single people need: even more pressure from society to find "the one"! Single people aren't inherently bad for the environment. I know of married couples who have more than one spatula between them. Stephen Harper, George Bush and the people who brought Paris Hilton into the world are all married.

That said, sharing your space and your resources is always better for the environment than going things alone. If no one eligible happens to be in the picture, you could always get a roommate to share your stuff with. Get a smaller fridge. Turn off that computer from the power bar when you are not using it. You could also invite friends over regularly to share your meals or get a group of single friends together and take turns cooking (sustainably harvested, local organic meals) for each other once a week.

If that all sounds well and good, but what you really want is a lover, then there's a website (<http://www.greensingles.com>) that might be helpful in your quest. It's devoted to helping environmentalists and activists like you find someone who shares your values, that special person who will understand why it is so important that you not own more cheese graters than you really need.

henry mac

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## citizenschoice

### Produce: Why not pick your own?

By Catherine R. Joudrey



Local food just tastes better! Maritime produce can ripen naturally and make its way to you sooner than other supermarket foods. Fewer nutrients are lost in transportation, allowing for more delicious and nutritious fruits and vegetables. Today's supermarkets often feature foods from far away places. This food travels 2,000 km on average, contributing to increased carbon emissions and climate change. Consumers have choices, especially in the summertime when Maritime-grown food is at our fingertips. Local produce can be purchased from a farmers market and better yet, fruits and vegetables can be picked directly from the farm.

#### U-picking Options:

Apples, blueberries and pumpkins are three of numerous fruits available to u-pick in the mid-to-late summer months. U-picking is a fun way to experience the harvest while enjoying fresh air and great scenery.

#### Apples:

Berwick is Nova Scotia's apple capital. Apples have been growing in the Annapolis Valley for nearly 400 years and the community celebrates the beautiful apple blooms with the Apple Blossom Festival each spring. A wide variety of apples are grown throughout the province. Apples are ready in late August or early September and are a great fruit to harvest because they are big and easy to pick. Best of all, freshly picked fruit makes the best apple pies. Yum!

More information:  
[www.appleblossom.com](http://www.appleblossom.com)  
and [www.pickyourrown.org/apples.htm](http://www.pickyourrown.org/apples.htm)

#### Blueberries:

Blueberries pack a healthy punch because they're low in fat and calories and high in antioxidant power. Thirty million pounds of blueberries are produced each year in Nova Scotia. This fruit flourishes in Oxford, a town titled The Wild Blueberry Capital of Canada. Blueberry picking occurs across the province in August and September and both high and low bush berries are available at u-picks. When high bush blueberry picking, expect to spend half an hour to pick ten pounds.

More information: [www.gove.ns.ca/agri/marketing/contact/landsea/upicko.pd](http://www.gove.ns.ca/agri/marketing/contact/landsea/upicko.pd)

#### Pumpkins:

Carving a jack-o-lantern has become a tradition at Halloween. Why not choose your favourite pumpkin directly from a farmer's field? Available in mid-September, many farms across the province open their fields to pumpkin u-pickers. Save the pumpkin seeds to roast or bake for a great treat.

More information:  
<http://novascotia.com/halloween/en/home/Pumpkins/Upicks.aspx>

#### "Agritainment":

Farmers have developed tourism or 'agritainment' opportunities on their properties in recent years, where in addition to picking produce, farms offer the chance to stroll through a scenic trail, pet a farm animal, or enjoy a relaxing seat in a picnic park. Several Nova Scotian farms offer challenging corn mazes which are in operation by late August.

#### U-picks:

A fun day trip: Savouring vine-ripened fruit is a delightful treat in the summer. U-picks offer an unforgettable day trip, especially for children or those of us young at heart. Best of all, the produce can be taken home to enjoy when picking is complete. Local produce can be purchased at your local farmers market when visiting a u-pick isn't an option. Good news for local food lovers - the province will place logos on local supermarket foods in the near future. Look for "Select Nova Scotia" logos at a store near you.

*Catherine Joudrey can be seen in fields around Nova Scotia picking her favorite fruit.*

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# Building a Revolution

## Changing the way we build in Atlantic Canada?

By *Andy Pedersen*



*Renderings of new Seaport Farmers Market: Lead Designer Keith Tufts, Principal, Lydon Lynch Architects.*

With nine power-generating windmills on the roof, 15 geothermal wells drilled 500 feet into the bedrock below, and massive floor-to-ceiling windows all around, the new farmers' market in Halifax will be among the greenest buildings in North America.

"This is will put us right on the cutting edge," says Keith Tufts, the facility's enthusiastic and ambitious designer.

Tufts believes the project will make Nova Scotia a leader in the design and construction of energy efficient buildings.

"An incredible amount of knowledge is flowing into the environmental consultancies here in Halifax," he says, "and that knowledge will flow right on down into the trades."

The 45-year-old also hopes the market's dramatic new home will spark a fundamental shift in how Nova Scotians and all Canadians think about building new buildings, as well as renovating old ones.

"This will change many of people's perceptions of what can be done, and for how much," Tufts says. "It will be revolutionary. Period."

When it's finished, perhaps as early as next year, he says the 60,000-square foot space on the Halifax waterfront will require 80 percent less power than if it was simply designed to R2000 specifications. With a price tag of just under \$10 million, he says the building will achieve its efficiency without breaking the bank.

"We're doing it all for about \$165 a

square foot," says Tufts, Senior Environmental Designer at architectural firm Lydon Lynch. "General estimates for standard construction are \$150 to \$200 a square foot."

Called The Seaport Farmers' Market, the redesign of what is now an old, dank warehouse has been guided by two principles: use as little energy as possible, and what energy you do use, generate it yourself. Although the building won't be off the grid, it won't draw any power much of the time, either. On most nights, in fact, the building will provide power to the grid.

The market will derive most of its power from the nine windmills on the roof. Each of them up to five metres in diameter, they're expected to generate between 40,000 and 80,000 kWh per year. For comparison, my detached home in the north end used about 4,500 kWh last year and the Ecology Action Centre building on Fern Lane used 31,000 kWh in its first year following a green renovation.

The windmills will generate power to run the lights, but with four massive, floor-to-ceiling windows – Tufts calls them "solar lanterns" – the building will only need a fraction of the lightbulbs needed to simply light box stores like Wal-Mart or Home Depot.

The electricity not sapped by the lights will be used to heat glycol, the lifeblood of the building's heating and cooling systems. Flowing through an intricate network of pipes laid into the double-layer

concrete floor ("There's nowhere for the heat to go but up," says Tufts) the syrupy liquid will also pick up heat as it runs through the thousand square feet of solar collectors on the roof. Excess heat will be dumped into the geothermal wells to be drawn upon again when needed, a technology that still leaves Tufts a little breathless. "It just blows my mind thinking about it," he says, grinning.

He's equally enthusiastic about the building's green roof: half an acre of vegetable gardens and beds of a hearty succulent called sedum that will not only insulate the building, but collect and clean all of its non-potable water as well.

Recently returned from a green-roof conference in the States, Tufts hopes they'll someday be mandatory for new construction in Nova Scotia and around the world. "It's a sin that we don't force green-roof construction now," he says.

But that's his ultimate ambition for the Seaport Farmers' Market: to show Nova Scotians that when it comes to building environmentally-friendly buildings, the status quo leaves much to be desired. The market is already raising eyebrows.

"In the two weeks since we announced the building, the response has been just incredible," Tufts says. "With a couple of drawings, we're opening people's eyes to what's possible. Imagine the impact once it's actually built and standing there."

*Andy Pedersen is a Halifax-based journalist and filmmaker.*





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## To Be a Bee

*By Elizabeth Pierce*

A low humming fills the air as a small swarm of honey bees hovers over my overgrown comfrey bush, ready to attack its tempting violet flowers. Being a somewhat laissez-faire gardener, I have always admired these insect pollinator's industrious and efficient nature, and like many gardeners and farmers, have undoubtedly taken bees for granted.

Yet, troubling news from south of the border has made many of us aware of how hard it is to be a bee in a large-scale agricultural enterprise where the hard-working insects are often moved four or five times a year for the crucial pollinating work they do. According to the Canadian Honey Council's website, in 2006, large commercial migratory beekeepers in the US suffered colony losses (bee deaths) of 40%; those colonies that survived were often too weak to pollinate crops. A new and frightening term entered the beekeepers' lexicon: Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD).

Many theories have been advanced in the past year to account for the bees' death. Some blame a resurgence of the noxious mite *Varroa* destructor, long known as a colony foe, and its increasing resistance to the pesticides that once controlled it. Others say a warmer fall and winter may not have been able to kill off the parasites that normally affect a bee colony, while a fairly cold, wet spring reduced the bees' ability to forage for natural food sources and increasing their dependence on the extra food provided by beekeepers. Still others believe that the stress placed on colonies during long and frequent moves from state to state could be the culprit.

In a June 19 CBC radio broadcast on the subject of CCD in Canada, a Manitoba beekeeper named Phil Velthaus and a Simon Fraser University professor, Mark Winston—both passionate about bees—discussed the issues facing Canadian beekeepers. They lamented the huge “agro-ecosystem” being propagated in the US, the overmanaging of bees, and the fact that we are losing touch with their natural cycles. In a story that is all-too-

familiar to other small-scale farmers, Velthaus noted that amateur beekeepers who produce small amounts of honey for sale are shutting down their operations faced with competition from “big business” with its heavy reliance on chemicals and antibiotics.

Here in Nova Scotia, bees have had it easier than in the US, with only 20% colony losses, a figure that according to the Canadian Association of Professional Apiculturists (CAPA) is within the normal range. It seems that Canadian bees have not suffered the same signs of colony collapse as their American counterparts. Debert, NS beekeeper Tony Phillips



janet wilson

would agree with this finding. He is one of the province's 300 beekeepers, 90% of whom are hobbyists. Phillips has over one hundred hives at thirteen different locations (or beeyards) scattered from Debert to Five Islands. A honey and blueberry producer since about 1974, he appreciates beekeeping as agriculture without the land requirement, and likes the low capital cost involved.

Phillips says Canadian apiculturists can expect a 15% winter colony loss, and believes a cold wet spring could account for the higher losses overall when the bees are in their active brood-rearing stage. “In a bad spring, bees won't raise their brood. They're housebound and need to be fed—they're weather-dependent.” Phillips also believes that the effects of *Varroa* mites on bees have been underestimated and that we have not profited from data on “bad bee years”, kept since 1896, which might shed light on the current situation.

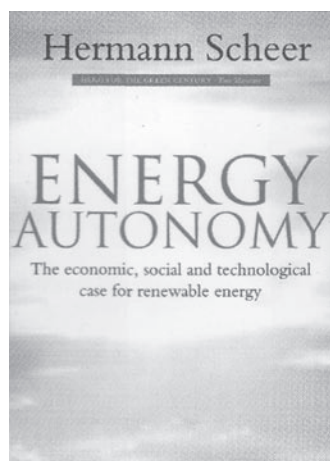
Whether CCD is caused by stress, pesticides, mites, weather or a combination of these factors, we can only wait and see if bees are able to recover from this setback or if apiculturists need to change the way they treat their bees.

*Elizabeth Pierce is a writer, editor and part-time English instructor.*



# Green Books

By Peggy Cameron



REVIEWED:

*Energy Autonomy*

By Hermann Scheer

Earthscan, 310 pages

Dr. Hermann Scheer is an economist with over thirty years experience in renewable energy. He is a member of the German Parliament, President of EURO-SOLAR, the European Association for Renewable Energy, and General Chairman of the World Council for Renewable Energy. Scheer has received numerous awards for his work, including the World Solar Prize and the Alternative Nobel Prize, and Time Magazine named him one of five Heroes for the Green Century in 2002. He is the principal behind the Renewable Energy Sources Act creating Feed-laws for renewable electric input at guaranteed prices.

Scheer methodically explains in his most recent book *Energy Autonomy* that while green is the colour of the month and climate change is a hot topic, sympathy for renewable energy by institutions and political systems responsible for traditional energy supplies is largely a matter of good form. Traditional energy remains the world economy's most influential sector and its resistance to renewable energy growth is compensatory with renewable energy growth.

Scheer exposes as false some familiar technological and economic assumptions about renewables:

- Insufficient usable potential (accept the dangers of fossil and nuclear, there'll never be enough renewable energy);

- Lengthy time requirement (transition is slow, keep those massive investments in conventional energy coming);
- Necessity of big power plants (forget decentralization, efficiency advantages or speed of small-scale);
- Practicality of energy efficiency (improving traditional technology saves money, why spend money getting rid of it?);
- Existing energy supply structures are sacred (not much renewable energy can be tolerated, let's set a low target, aim and miss);
- Protect economic resources (the interests of the economy are the interests of the energy business); and
- Introducing renewable energy is expensive (ignore the economic, employment or environmental benefits).

Readers will also recognize the false political assumptions about renewable energy:

- Depends on subsidies (not so with fossil fuel or nuclear);
- Needs consensus with the conventional energy business (monopolies know best);
- Must be competitive (probably against a 30-year old thermal generator);
- Global treaty commitments are indispensable (surely we all agree?);
- Yuk, it's visible, takes up space, moves and makes noise (yes, even smoke stacks, transmission grid, irreversible environmental pollution, dwindling resources, global stability and terminal climate disruption can be obscured by a minor disturbance); and
- Small political steps are realistic (let's wait and see).

Each of the book's three sections is comprehensive and convincing.

I. 'Sun or Atom' reveals the imperatives for and opportunities from energy independence through a complete transformation to renewables. It highlights deceptions played out by traditional energy sectors and refutes the technological, economic and political assumptions noted above.

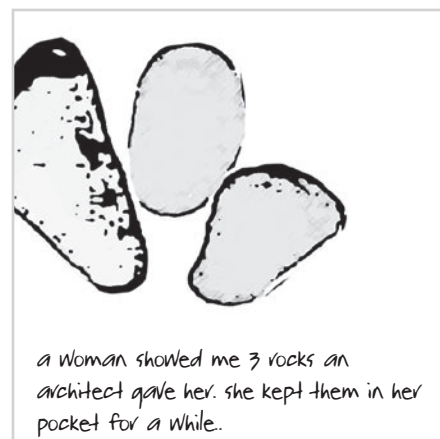
II. 'Blockades to Action' describes the political hegemony of the traditional energy sector and its actions to discredit, marginalize, postpone or own renewable

energy. Scheer identifies with many examples and notes the need for political inventiveness to break up the consensus between the energy business and policy makers. So far this cozy relationship has led to the continued militarization of energy security, the privatization of political responsibility through liberalization of electricity markets and the resolute reliance on inadequate global environmental policy and climate protection strategies, i.e. Kyoto. Scheer doesn't cut the renewable or environmental communities any slack either.

III. 'Energy Autonomy' suggests how to get to there from here with maxims for taking on conventional energy's greater strength in the public's mind. Ending the self-deception that the traditional way of supplying energy has any kind of a sustainable future is a starting point. Scheer also cites energy autonomy successes such as the 2005 Indian government decision to have a Decentralized Energy System rather than connecting 250 million inhabitants in 84,000 villages to an electricity network.

Read this book if you are in any way interested in or concerned about renewable energy policy within the context of the global or local sector. Ask for it at your local library and buy a copy for your favourite MP or MLA. It is fascinating, relevant and accessible.

*Peggy Cameron has an M.E.S. and is a long time EAC volunteer and has been working on energy issues since the early 90s. She is currently interested in wind energy and the NS renewable sector.*



# Trash-Hounding on the Shubenacadie River

By Elizabeth Pierce

I had my first taste of waterborne trash collecting on an eight-kilometre stretch of the Shubenacadie River between Enfield and Lantz, NS on a spring Saturday not long ago.



My paddling companion, a civil engineer with a pick-up truck—surely the most practical of combinations!—drives us to the Enfield Irving Big Stop where truckers and a few early birds are still working on their first cups of coffee of the morning. On the far side of the pumps, we meet with six other paddling enthusiasts from Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia, ready to do battle with even the foulest river trash, and armed with garbage bags left over from past beach sweeps on McNab's Island.

At the put-in near the remains of Lock 6 of the old Shubenacadie Canal, I distinguish myself by locking the keys into the cab of the truck. Not for the first time in my life, I thank God for cell phones and parents with spare sets!

The wind picks up as we glide away from shore, keeping the blackflies at bay. We are surprised by the large piles of empty mussel shells we see everywhere along the riverbank and wonder who is eating them.

We hit the first real trash of the day on the far side of the Highway 102 overpass near Elmsdale where green Keith's beer cans glint like emeralds among the reeds and the usual assortment of cardboard featuring the stamp of those twin demons Tim Horton and Ronald McDonald rear their ugly heads. Here I find the first of the day's three mismatched flipflops and ponder its provenance: could it have been kicked off in the throes of some ecstatic nighttime ritual beneath the overpass, or was it used to swat mosquitoes?

Further downstream, we find still more cans and a partially-submerged patio um-

brella that reveals its true grotesqueness only after being lifted from the mud and into the canoe, sloughing off large, smelly globs every time it is disturbed.

"Can I give you this?" shouts one of our number ensconced in a spiffy yellow sea kayak, his clothing still immaculate, waving a small bundle in our direction. It seems our canoe will play the role of mobile dumpster for the sporty yakkers, but we are happy to co-operate.

We stop for lunch opposite a field of sheep and its guardian donkey, whose owner, a farmer wearing blue coveralls, beckons us over. He's had his eye on the large piece of dock that has washed up on the other side and wonders if we could tow it over to him. We lash the dock to our three canoes and with some effort, manage to ferry it to his side of the river. Both farmer and donkey look pleased with this large piece of reclaimed trash.

The gaspereau are running this weekend, their abundant presence in the Shubenacadie made evident by the weirs we see at regular intervals along the river. I thrill with excitement when a supple dozen or so



Photos: D. Soudet and I. Guppy.

of these fish swim directly beneath our canoe as though challenging us to a race. The fine weather has also brought forth a good crop of fishermen, out chasing trout and shad, we imagine. They shake their heads in disbelief when they see the amount of trash in our boats; we nod ours in reply to the redundant question, "You got all that stuff out of the river?" "You should see the stuff we had to leave behind!" my partner fires back.

The river seems to narrow a bit toward the end of our journey, near Lantz. We've used up the last of our garbage bags and our canoes are riding low in the water. I have mud in my boots from a spill earlier in the day and my feet are cold and wet.



Undaunted, I am scooping up bagfuls of refundable cans and bottles along one particularly fruitful stretch of waterfront when I hear my partner's loud whoop. "It's a good one!" he shouts, waving a red wallet in the air. Excitedly, we look through it: yes, there are ID cards inside, still legible through the mudstains. Later, we find seventy dollars in wet cash folded carefully inside: we spread it out to dry along with our wet clothes at home before calling the disbelieving owner, who had given up hope of a reunion after losing the wallet on his own canoeing trip nearly a year ago.

When we finally drag our boats out of the Shubenacadie, I count twenty bulging garbage bags, six of them full of returnables. And although a hundred canoes could be filled with the amount of garbage still in the river, our "drop in the bucket" still has me looking forward to our next adventure in paddle-propelled trash-hounding!

*Elizabeth Pierce is a Halifax writer. Her poetry chapbook, drift, was published by Gaspereau Press in 2002. Her second novel, about Ned Jordan, an early 19th Century pirate, is due out later this year.*



Teacher: Where does milk come from?  
Kid: the stove

nature illustrations in the city / aaron harpell



# People or Cars: Will HRM Make the Right Choice?

By *Kevin Moynihan*



When Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) began to implement an old 1970s plan to widen a few blocks of Chebucto Road, little did they know that they'd awaken a group of citizens who have become champions of ecologically responsible urban transportation.

## FOR THE PEOPLE?

About a dozen homeowners in the 6000- block of Chebucto Road received registered letters from HRM's Real Estate in November 2005, announcing a plan to widen the street and make a third reversing lane and that HRM wanted chunks of their front lawns. One family of four was even advised that its house was to be demolished and that a "fair market value" would be offered. This was devastating news as they lived two doors away from the children's grandparents and the money for their modest three-bedroom wouldn't be nearly enough to keep them in the neighbourhood.

## COMING TOGETHER

These dozen neighbours started gathering in each others' homes by Christmas of that same year to discuss the HRM offers to buy portions of their front lawns and the impact of more and faster car traffic on their street. They formed the Chebucto Neighbourhood Association (CNA, see the website at [www.keepitlivable.org](http://www.keepitlivable.org)), among whose goals is to provide elected representatives and HRM staff with feedback regarding planning and development for the neighbourhood that reflects residents' needs and values.

The issue quickly moved from money for front lawns to a commitment to stop HRM from implementing a traffic solution out of tune with other progressive cities, one that would increase the speed and

number of cars on Chebucto Road and into the downtown. To that end, the CNA strongly opposed the Chebucto Road widening which HRM was actually calling the Chebucto Road "Improvement Project" and offered alternative transportation scenarios to reduce, not increase, the number of cars on Chebucto Road. The whole idea of making city roads wider for more and faster vehicular traffic was a bad one and the CNA said so.

## SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Members of the CNA counted cars that left the Armdale Rotary and entered Chebucto Road in the morning. They also noted the number of single occupancy vehicles and reported to the city that over 75 percent of the cars entering Chebucto Road from the Rotary during morning rush hour had a single occupant. The CNA consequently recommended that instead of widening the road to accommodate more cars, the city should introduce HOV or High Occupancy Vehicle legislation. Such measures have been famously successful elsewhere and would encourage suburban commuters to car-pool and reduce the number of cars using Chebucto Road. This low-cost, environmentally

friendly proposal, however, was dismissed by the independent study initiated in October, 2005 to review the whole botched HRM / neighbourhood consultation process. The review by Paradigm Consulting of Ontario suggested that HOV would not be a feasible alternative to widening the street. The CNA disagrees.

The Association has argued from the beginning that HRM should consider mass-transit and HOV alternatives instead of driving a reversing lane through a neighbourhood to accommodate suburban commuters. The increase in traffic will make the street an arterial highway resulting in more emissions, and less safety. Halifax is building a sewage treatment plant to deal with its waste so widening city streets and sending more waste water into storm sewers seems to lack foresight as well.

The CNA argues that HRM should read its own recently-approved development plan calling for more mass transit and less single car traffic. The CNA has pointed out that there is a huge dissonance between the approved plan and the proposed Chebucto road widening.

In the end it is a struggle between people who live on the Halifax peninsula and the cars carrying suburban commuters to and from work, Monday to Friday. This conflict between cars and people has found expression in the CNA's latest campaign featuring lawn signs that resemble a ballot and ask for voters to support people over cars.

*Kevin Moynihan lives on Chebucto Road and has made his choice – people come first. He is the Secretary and Treasurer of the Chebucto Neighbourhood Association.*

## Take Action

HRM may reconsider the wisdom of widening Chebucto Road with reasonable alternatives suggested by over one thousand on-line petitioners on the [www.keepitlivable.org](http://www.keepitlivable.org) website. Sign the Petition!

Readers who agree with the Neighbourhood Association can write the mayor of Halifax Regional Municipality, Peter Kelly at [kellyp@halifax.ca](mailto:kellyp@halifax.ca) and encourage him to bring this project back for sober second thought.

# The Ups and Downs of Plastic Recycling

By Sadie Beaton

“It’s hard to visit a landfill site without being struck by the craziness of taking very valuable minerals and resources out of the ground, using a lot of energy, turning them into short- life products and then just dumping them back into the ground. It’s an absolutely monumental waste of energy and resources and. A as someone from the fashion industry might say, its just so last century.”

(Michael Pawlyn, *The Guardian*, November 21, 2005)

I kind of zone out while I sort recyclables. In a world of bewildering decisions (Is that seafood sustainably caught? Is that coffee fairly traded? Is that condom vegan?), recycling feels straightforward. In the blue bag, it’s everything in its right place, and the carrot baggies and jam jars are rescued from the landfill along with my conscience.

But it’s not just me. Recycling has become a feel-good activity in the Halifax Regional Municipality and we’re proud of our ambitious solid waste strategy. Nova Scotia’s bold 50 percent landfill diversion rate, reached briefly in 2000, was even featured on CNN. The province has been recognized as a world leader in waste management, and waste officials from around the globe have flocked to our humble province to learn how we do it. Nova Scotia is, after all, “too good to waste” As the tag line goes.

So why is our diligently-sorted plastic crap ending up dumped in China?

## HISTORY LESSON

The huge and festering Sackville dump was filling to the brim. In the early nineties. With the City of Halifax alone producing 730 tonnes of garbage every day, and similar loads coming in from Dartmouth, Bedford and Halifax County, the municipality needed to find a new place to stash our trash. But, understandably, no one wanted another leaky, stinky seagull-magnet in their backyard and large-scale opposition thwarted new site proposals. Some of you may recall an incredibly unpopular incineration plan.

Halifax’s mayor at the time, Randy Ball, surprised many by grabbing the reins of a faltering planning process and creating a Community Stakeholders Committee. He actually asked city residents what they wanted! In the end, vigorous citizen input fueled an ambitious solid waste strategy. The consensus-based process helped shape an impressive plan that aimed to divert half of our waste from landfills by 2000



while creating local economic opportunities. It is a plan that has been lauded around the world.

Much of the attention garnered by the strategy focuses on the economics. While the infrastructure required to collect and

sort our recycling and organics cost millions, the savings have been significant in the form of employment opportunities, improved quality of life and landfills with nearly double their normal lifespan. A full cost-benefit analysis from GPI Atlantic says the new waste management scheme saves the province a minimum of \$31 million annually.

Indeed, the provincial strategy that emerged from this municipal process was based on a re-conception of waste as a resource. Trash is cash, as they say. Or as the Resource Recovery Fund Board (RRFB) has phrased it, “Solid waste is Nova Scotia’s newest resource and has begun to supplement traditional industries such as fishing, mining and forestry.”

RRFB Nova Scotia is a non-profit corporation managed by a board of directors with representatives from the private sector and government. It funds waste diversion programs across the province by collecting and distributing the fees from the bottle-deposit refunds. Regions receive funds based on their rates of successful landfill diversion: the higher the ratio of diversion, the more funds a region receives.

RRFB’s Board also has a mandate to promote the conversion of waste resources into business opportunities. In 1998, for example, RRFB acquired controlling interest in NovaPet, a post-consumer plastic recycling facility in Amherst, Nova Scotia. NovaPet melts down and pelletizes the polyethylene terephthalate (PET) pop bottles we leave by the roadside and employs 22 locals. The pellets are shipped elsewhere to be made into various products like rugs and fleeces. In 2005, NovaPet was sold to a New York-based company.

## THE LOWDOWN

For the longest time I believed that the little triangle of arrows on things like the bottom of my cookie tray or plastic lawn chair indicated that it could be recycled. I used to throw them all into my blue bag (sorry!). But with time I learned to look at the numbers inside the arrows to see which items can be collected here in the Supercity.



HRM began to accept two types of plastic for recycling in 1996. PET (resin code 1), is most often made into pop bottles. HDPE, or high-density polyethylene (resin code 2), is commonly made into thicker containers like yogurt and margarine tubs., LDPE, or low-density polyethylene (resin code 4), often seen in the form of shopping bags, was added to the roster in 1998.

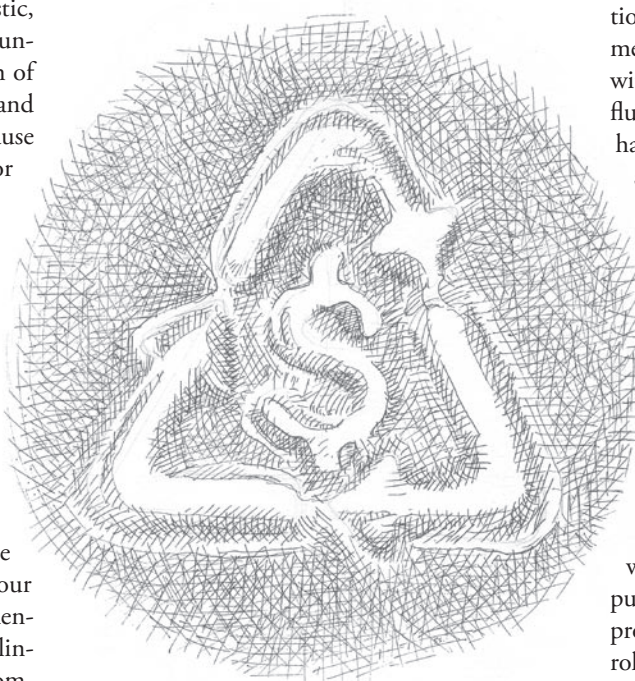
Other municipalities accept even more types of plastic. Guysborough County, for example, collects all categories of plastic, resin codes 1 - 7, (7 being other or unknown and the number on the bottom of household favorites like baby bottles and Nalgene water bottles). I know this because I had been collecting a separate pile for the occasional trip home, feeling fuzzy about going above and beyond my regular civic recycling responsibility. Perhaps the have-not counties want to reach higher diversion rates, to become eligible for more RRFB funds? Or perhaps they're making a bit of profit selling it to brokers?

While the RRFB funds collections, a private recycling contractor is paid to deal with our blue bags. Miller Waste Systems sorts, bales and sells most our plastic waste. While proprietary confidentiality prevents the contractor from outlining what happens to their bales, the company admits that after the PET is sorted and sold to NovaPet, the rest is sold to brokers and often shipped internationally. These brokers are middlemen and motivated only to sell to the best markets.

Inevitably, bales of our plastic are sold to China. After all, there's plenty of room in those container ships that bring us many of our throwaway plastic products in the first place. Baled plastic waste also ends up in developing countries throughout South Asia and Africa. But China commands the lion's share, importing over 200,000 tonnes every year.

City and provincial officials admit that they don't know where the plastic we sort and leave on the curb ends up. Because plastic isn't categorized as a hazardous

waste there's no reason for the province to keep tabs on its exportation, as will be the case with electronic waste (Nova Scotians can look forward to a new electronic recycling program in 2007/ 2008). The Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour is aware that our plastics are often shipped to Asian markets, but given that the commodity changes hands so many times, it would be very expensive to regulate and monitor.



sydney smith

## PLASTIC IN CHINA

Of course, it makes no environmental sense to burn fuel sending our waste for recycling halfway around the world. But more shockingly, much of the plastic imported by China isn't recycled at all. Most of it actually ends up dumped into the countryside, contaminating local water tables with poisonous effluent. That which is 'recycled' is often manually sorted by migrant families. It is then melted down in crude workshops, exposing workers to toxic fumes, heavy metals, and deadly fire hazards.

Your Herbal Essences Shampoo bottle might be handpicked from a pile to be

melted down or thrown into an acid bath by a worker living on a pittance and wearing no safety equipment. A child sorting through mounds of plastic might grab your disposable razor for the pink pile. An old Sobey's bag or Memories of Butter margarine tub may be deemed unmarketable and simply be thrown into a pit fire just outside a town living under the black haze of burning plastics.

The Chinese village of Lianjiao, for example, has become a destination for international plastic waste. Greenpeace has documented that a nearby river is ribboned with black and red poisonous chemical effluents and acid rain falls from a lingering haze. The local population suffers with a staggering array of health complaints, debilitating burns and worse.

And as if our plastic detritus isn't enough, marginalized communities also receive shipments of contaminated industrial plastics, hospital waste, and tonnes of our electronic waste. Brick-sized 'car-phones' and Pentium 3s have been piling up in our basements and closets over the past number of years while electronic waste in the form of cell phones, computers, and laptops has been banned from provincial landfills. Nova Scotia recently rolled out its new electronic waste regulations, outlining a collections program and even a computer recycling plant to be built in the next few years.

In the interim, a number of local businesses are happy to help you unload, even going so far as to come pick it up at your house and 'recycle' it for you. These entrepreneurs make a small profit selling it to waste traders and as many exposés have shown, much of it ends up dumped in China where it poisons land and people with lead, cadmium, mercury and brominated fire retardants, among other things.

It's still questionable whether Nova Scotia's new electronic waste legislation adequately addresses international waste issues. Canada is signatory to the Basel Convention, which bans trade in hazardous wastes including many forms of electronics. While

many computer and electronics components lie safely under this definition, there's no provision barring us from shirking our toxic plastic garbage into China.

## TRASH IS CASH

While often unlawful, the trade in global toxic waste is huge and largely unregulated. International conventions are difficult to enforce and the free market tends to funnel the costs of decadent western lifestyles on those less fortunate. As Larry Summers, the then-Vice President of the World Bank mused in a leaked 1991 internal memo:

*"I've always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly UNDER-polluted, their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City. Only the lamentable facts that so much pollution is generated by non-tradable industries (transport, electrical generation) and that the unit transport costs of solid waste are so high prevent world welfare enhancing trade in air pollution and waste."*

The memo became public in February 1992, prompting Brazil's then-Secretary of the Environment Jose Lutzenburger to retort:

*"Your reasoning is perfectly logical but totally insane... Your thoughts [provide] a concrete example of the unbelievable alienation, reductionist thinking, social ruthlessness and the arrogant ignorance of many conventional 'economists' concerning the nature of the world we live in."*

Lutzenburger was fired shortly after his retort. Summers was not and was, in fact, later appointed the U.S. Treasury Secretary and was named president of Harvard University in 2001.

So why does our plastic waste end up in China? As with many questions, the short answer is money. Nova Scotia's waste management strategy functions by conceiving of waste as an economic resource. And the simple fact is while PET plastic fetches an acceptable domestic price, there is no competitive market for recycling all those shopping bags and salad containers on the continent.

China, on the other hand, has become the manufacturing centre of the world

and is incessantly hungry for cheap resources. While some social and environmental regulations exist, local officials often look the other way when ship containers of contaminated waste flow into the country. Our only local recycler, NovaPet, has struggled in the face of staggering competition from China, requiring subsidies from RRFB (and other sources) to remain viable.

## Take Action

Go Plastic Free!  
Check out:  
[plasticfree.blogspot.com](http://plasticfree.blogspot.com)  
or [www.changeeverything.ca](http://www.changeeverything.ca) for tips on how to reduce and maybe eliminate plastic in your life.

Write a letter to your MLA asking that plastic bags be banned – if a small town in Manitoba and the entire country of Ireland can do it, so can Nova Scotia.

Become involved in the Save Lincolnville Campaign and environmental racism issues surrounding landfill locations in Nova Scotia.  
<http://savelincolnville.nspirg.org/>

## LIFE IN PLASTIC, IT'S FANTASTIC?

Try to imagine a day without plastics. Over the last four decades, plastic has become a pervasive part of nearly every part of our lives. From your morning shave to that individually-wrapped bed snack, plastic makes life easier. It is truly the Plastic Age.

Plastics represent one of the fastest growing material commodity markets. During the past twenty years, the sale of virgin plastic in Canada has tripled. Policies and programs, however, haven't developed at an equal pace. It follows, then, that plastic is also the fastest growing segment of the municipal solid waste stream.

It is estimated that 79,000 tonnes of plastic waste is generated in Nova Scotia every year. We know that if we landfill it, it won't biodegrade for hundreds of years. We also know that burning it releases toxic fumes. Luckily, then, rather than question the place of plastic in our life, we've been encouraged to collect it into blue bags and leave it by the curb every week to be recycled.

"Plastics Make it Possible!" sang a \$150 million public relations campaign funded by plastics manufacturers. They'd become concerned about the "reduce and reuse" part of the new environmental mantra that accompanied Earth Day in the early nineties. Forget the first two R's, they coaxed the public, because plastic is a friend of the environment and can be recycled again and again!

Despite aggressive industry-funded claims, however, plastic isn't recyclable in the perpetual loop sense like glass and aluminum. Rather, plastic must be "down-cycled" into a limited category of non-recyclable products such as sleeping bag filler or plastic lumber. The plastic's useful life will be extended for a short time, then it is eventually discarded.

Plastic engineering and polymer science research continue to invent novel products but they've also increased the difficulty of recycling these materials. The increasing variety of recipes and its complex molecular properties makes melting plastic down for re-use expensive and often unfeasible. This costly recovery process, along with subsidization of petroleum industries, makes the domestic market for plastic recycling dubious at best.

Joann Gutin wrote:

*"Plastics recycling bears as much resemblance to traditional recycling as RV camping bears to backpacking. It might be a good idea if there was some sort of linguistic flag for the difference, the way "Kampground has come to mean RV site. RecyKling maybe."*

## WASTE NOT, WANT NOT.

Most legislation dealing with discarded containers has focused on ways to divert municipal plastic waste from incinerators or landfills. Although important, these



measures don't solve the stickier problem of over-packaging or work to reduce the production of plastic packaging. Many environmental groups even rally against municipal plastic recycling, arguing that it only encourages hapless consumption and is so costly that it often jeopardizes the more sustainable parts of local recycling programs.

The three R's of waste management were, after all, set up as a hierarchy. The mantra states that if you can't reduce, reuse. If you can't reuse, recycle. Recycling may be sexier but it is unable, by itself, to address why and how plastic products are produced in the first place.

Some of the most successful source reduction programs have been pretty straightforward. When the Republic of Ireland introduced a 15 cent tax on plastic shopping bags in 2002, for example, residents largely abandoned their use and there was a 90 percent reduction in their use after just three months. Re-useable canvas bags became the status quo, with little complaint, and the number of HDPE bags used by shoppers fell to as low 21 per head each year, compared to 328 before the levy.

Municipal governments have traditionally shouldered the burden of waste collection and disposal programs. Manufacturers haven't been held accountable for the financial or physical aspects of solid waste management, so they've had no impetus to reduce the amount and type of waste generated by their products. As the National Resource Defense Council describes, "As long as non-competitive government agencies use tax dollars to finance the disposal and recycling of garbage, consumer-product companies can choose to market a diamond ring in a refrigerator box and not worry about the consequences."

Policies and programs of "extended producer stewardship and responsibility", in their earliest stages with electronic waste, lift the waste management burden from municipalities and residents. By making companies responsible for the trash they make, producer stewardship programs encourage manufacturers to consider the life-cycle impact of products during the product and packaging design process. Germany adopted a law in 1991, for example, making

producers responsible for product packaging after consumers discard it. Bins are left at the checkout and consumers leave the product packaging behind for the producers, inspiring startling changes - and reduction- in packaging waste.

### TOO GOOD TO WASTE

When our citizens were demanding an ambitious a waste diversion plan, surely they didn't intend to have our trash shipped somewhere else. We were happy to solve our landfill dilemma without compromising our lifestyles beyond a bit of sorting and bagging. Somewhere along the line we stopped asking difficult questions like "divert to where?" This has become an issue even within our own province, as towns like Lincolnville fight to keep garbage produced in Nova Scotia out of their backyard.

The fact is that we are shipping our dirty secrets halfway around the world where we allow marginalized people to suffer the consequences. Our province may be "too good to waste," as the Clean Nova Scotia tagline goes, but simply diverting our decadent garbage into cargo ships suggests that less fortunate nations aren't. This is an unacceptable message.

A rate of fifty percent solid waste diversion is a laudable goal and our provincial waste management strategy makes a difference in how we think about our garbage. But we can't rest on our laurels now. We have to keep asking difficult questions.

We need to ask the province why our legislation doesn't adequately address the global trade in toxic waste. We need to ask why producers aren't held responsible for the impacts of their products and packaging, whether it is a cellophane bag or a CPU. We need to ask whether treating our waste as an economic resource is a sustainable solution. And perhaps most importantly, we need to ask ourselves just how much plastic or other junk we really need in our lives.

*Sadie Beaton can be seen singing "it's fantastic, it's not made of plastic" in various locations, including the EAC office where she works as a Sustainable Seafood Program Coordinator.*



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Sunday 1:00pm-7:00pm  
E-mail: [bikeagain@hotmail.com](mailto:bikeagain@hotmail.com)



Ecology Action Centre

# One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Green Fish

By Sadie Beaton



Geordie Ochterloney of Home Grown Organics displays hook and line fish. Photo: Anna Magera

## Canso Trap-Caught Shrimp

A small group of fishers in Canso, Nova Scotia, hope to introduce you to a new sustainable seafood delicacy this fall - local trap-caught shrimp. This Chedabucto Bay fishery uses baited mesh traps similar to the lobster pot, and harvest their valuable catch less than a mile from shore. The resource is quick-growing, short-lived, and has a high reproductive capacity, and the fishery operates with relatively low by-catch and minimal habitat damage. These traps tend to capture a larger shrimp than its farmed or trawled equivalent, perfect for skewering on the barbecue. As well, because the seafood is landed live, it can be delivered to restaurants and retailers much fresher. Chefs and consumers alike are recognizing that these Canso-trap caught shrimp are absolutely top-quality. Start asking for these juicy shrimp starting in the late summer or early fall. Besides being delectable and environmentally sound, your trap-caught shrimp skewer help support sustainable livelihoods in fishing communities like Canso, which has been struggling to prosper since the

town was devastated by the groundfish collapse in the early 1990s. The trap shrimp season runs from September to April, so it's a great winter treat!

## George's Bank Hook and Line Groundfish

Consumers hungry for a consistent source of local, sustainable groundfish have been rejoicing since in early August. This is because Alyssa Foods of Lower East Pubnico has recently started a regular seasonal delivery of bottom hook and line caught haddock, pollock, and hake to Halifax-based retailer Home Grown Organic Foods. These fish are being caught on George's bank, using a selective fishing gear that allows for superior quality product, and doesn't negatively impact groundfish habitat. Bottom hook and line is a sustainable alternative to groundfish caught with mobile dragger gear, a method of fishing that drags huge, heavily weighted nets across the ocean floor, sweeping up everything in its path. Currently, most of the bottom hook and line fish caught

by Nova Scotian fishermen is exported to the United States, where savvy chefs and consumers are increasingly demanding sustainable, high-quality seafood. However, with the help of SeaChoice and marine conservation science increasingly in the news, Nova Scotians are beginning to want a share of their own sustainably-caught groundfish. After all, its not only delicious baked with a bit of lemon and pepper in the oven, it is an important part of our heritage.

The groundfish fishery is active on Georges Bank from August through to November. -- Harpooned Swordfish Next time you see swordfish on a local menu, be sure to ask your server how it was caught. It is worth the effort. Because while most Canadian swordfish is currently caught unsustainably on non-selective long-lines, every summer a group of local harpooners off Southwest Nova Scotia catch some of the most tantalizing sustainable seafood around. These fishers are the last of their kind, carrying on the rich cultural tradition of a unique hunt-like fishery. Mature swordfish are targeted by small boats on calm, clear afternoons. Fish are sighted at the surface, where adults bask in warmer surface waters after a night of feeding. When one is spotted, the harpooner attempts to spear it with a harpoon attached to a line. There is virtually no habitat damage or by-catch, as mature swordfish are targeted on the surface, one at a time. As well, because harpooning requires a calm day on the water, and the time to wait for a large fish to bask at the surface, there are natural limits to exploitation. The individual handling of harpooned fish also allows for superior texture and taste, resulting in a sophisticated, meaty steak. Dining on harpooned swordfish is a delicious way to show your support for a fascinating local fishery and also helps ensure there will be marine life left in the ocean for future generations to enjoy. Swordfish are in the waters of the Northwest Atlantic primarily during the summer months – harpooners are out on the water after the lobster season, from mid July to mid September.

## Indian Point Mussels

Located on the cold, clear waters just outside of Mahone Bay, Indian Point Ma-



rine Farms Limited have an impressive commitment to sustainable mussel cultivation. For example, six years ago the farm switched from disposable polypropylene to a biodegradable cotton socking to help bind young mussels to the reusable ropes. They also replaced their styrofoam buoys, which can break up in the ocean, to pressurized hard plastic floats, which are easily reusable by other fishers if they come adrift and wash up on beaches.

While mussels are generally a sustainable seafood choice, not all harvesting methods are equal. Internationally, mussels are sometimes dredged, causing significant impacts to the surrounding ecosystems. Even among cultivated mussels, the technologies and scale of production vary widely, and as operations become more intensive, the integrity of the operation may be jeopardized. Indian Point Marine Farm's focus on sustainability is paying off, with consumers asking for Indian Point mussels

### Take Action

Check out:  
[www.seachoice.org](http://www.seachoice.org)  
for sustainable  
seafood options.

Send us your favorite  
sustainable seafood  
recipe at  
[seachoiceatlantic@gmail.com](mailto:seachoiceatlantic@gmail.com)

Ask, ask and ask again at  
your grocery store how the  
fish was caught and where it  
came from.

by name. Currently, Indian Point mussels are available year round at most restaurants and supermarkets in Hubbards, Chester, Western Shore, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, Bridgewater and points in between. Don't despair if you live outside of the region - there are a number of other exceptional mussel suppliers worth recommending, including Aquaprime Mussel Ranch in Ship Harbour, and Country Harbour Sea Farm in Guysborough County. Ask your local seafood provider where and how their mussels were sourced. With sufficient local demand, consumers can help make local, sustainable seafood products like Indian Point mussels more readily available. Farmed mussels are available year round, but they are best in the spring, before spawning season - that is when you will get fat and juicy mussels!

*Sadie Beaton is eatin' sustainable seafood!*



## Dragging Bottom

By Harry Thurston

A chain link hand, a titanic dustpan  
stirs a turmoil of sediment in its wake,  
furrows the seafloor. A ploughshare  
that keeps on going beyond land's end  
over endless wet horizons, leaving  
the sea bottom cross-hatched as a griststone.  
A horn blows, the captain sings, a maul is swung,  
the drag belches the benthos unto the deck.  
Life so lowly, it most resembles globs of oil  
but for the holes at either end, mouth or anus  
(who knows?) that filters water endlessly as thoughts.  
Eels excitable as neon, animals turned inside out,  
with skin as rough as stucco.  
And this magnificent fish, big and flat as a coffee table,  
wide wings spread for undersea flight – landed here.  
A man, sore and numbed, hefts the biggest stone he can  
to crush the skull of this monarch of the deep,  
then kicks the brained fish through the scuppers  
to sink. This is our shame, repeated again and again.  
What we cannot sell, we kill or leave to die.

It is only these, a treasure chest  
of calcium dollars, we stoop to gather.  
Curved knives flash between hard halves, lift,  
the top springing open like a locket  
to reveal a cameo of viscera.  
A flick of the wrist feeds the ever-vigilant hags  
that plane and parry, shearing water.  
The horn blows, men take cover, the deck  
raises like a drawbridge, dumps everything,  
half-alive or dead, back into the sea.  
This is our shame, repeated again and again,  
until there is nothing but stones and broken shells to spend.

*From If Men Lived on Earth. Gaspereau Press, 2000.  
The poem appears on page 120*

## Tried and True:

# Proof that you don't need the power company to live or work

By *Andy Pedersen*



*Wyatt Lawrence and Bryan Boatbuildings latest wooden boat project. Photo: Andy Pedersen*

There's a only small sign up in the trees -- Bryan Boatbuilding and Top Sail Canvas-- and it's easy to miss as you drive through the woods in southwest New Brunswick towards Passamaquoddy Bay. Turn into the narrow, twisting driveway, and it's crowded with long-hanging spruce and cedar branches. Overhead, there is no power line spliced off from the road. On this piece of land are a home and a two thriving business, but since Harry Bryan and his wife Martha settled here in 1972, it has never been connected to the grid.

Over the past four decades, the Bryans have perfected the art of living without the power company's help. And in their success lies a simple lesson: you don't actually need very much electricity to live your life. "Harry and Martha don't like using any more than they need," says Wyatt Lawrence, riding up on his bike. "They have the courage to stick to what they believe."

Wyatt's known the Bryans since he was a kid, and now works with Harry in the boatshop. Since the Bryans are away at a boatshow, he's offered to show me around, and leads me down the driveway as it snakes a bit deeper into the woods.

The drive opens into a small turnaround, blocked off by a large woodpile. Hanging from a tree just to the side is an old basketball hoop. Just inside the

treeline, dozens of tall, fresh-hewn planks are propped up against a lean-to. It is the raw material for the boats that Harry and Wyatt specialize in: small wooden sailing boats and pleasurecraft, many of them which look like they're straight out of an F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Harry's boats are much sought after, and his essays are featured regularly in *Wooden Boat* magazine.

"Sometimes I can't believe that I've come back home," says, Wyatt shaking his head and chuckling as he looks around. A native of this part of New Brunswick, Wyatt moved to Halifax during the 90s to study boatbuilding and design. After, he could have gone off in search of work at the kind of place that uses computers for hull design, and fiberglass for everything else. Instead, as he says, he's come back home.

"I've always admired Harry and Martha," he says. "They have an appreciation of simple things done right, by hand if possible, and in balance with their surroundings."

He leads me down the rest of the driveway and a clearing opens up. There are three buildings, all of them connected by lean-tos or passageways. The biggest building, the new boatshop, is a familiar-looking structure on this coast: solid, cedar-shingled, and a generous bank of

windows facing south. On top of it is a small solar array. The other two buildings, the original boatshop and the house, look straight out of the English countryside: high-peaked roofs and stone facades. There's a large garden, surrounded by a fence to keep the deer out. A small windmill pokes up from inside the treeline. Beyond it all is a small cove that opens to the dramatic tides of the Passamaquoddy. "They came here in the 70s," says Wyatt, "looking for a place that they could really set up the way they wanted."

These days, the area thrums with New Brunswick's booming energy economy, which is feeding the massive demand of the American eastern Seaboard. Point Lepreau, the Irving refinery, and two major proposals for LNG plants and pipelines are all within 100 kilometres. But in their shadows, the Bryans remain faithful to the time-set freedom of old methods and old tools.

Wyatt takes me into the shop. One corner is dominated by a metal lathe that's driven by a bench-length pedal crank. They use it often, to make tools, or while crafting a boat's propeller and driveshaft. Hanging on the wall just above is a framed photograph, black and white, that shows a man dressed like the turn of the 19th century, working at a similar metal lathe. "I think that's Wilbur Wright in that picture," Wyatt says. "Harry's pretty sure he's working at the same kind of lathe as this one. Sure looks the same."

But time stands still for no person, and no technology, and Harry is always looking for opportunities to improve his tools. "He's a tinkerer," says Wyatt, grabbing a small piece of wood and slicing it with a power planer. "As far as I know, this is the only solar-powered planer in the world." He lifts up a trap door in the floor to reveal a car engine -- the diesel from a 1980s Jetta -- that's mounted on blocks. Driven largely by biodiesel that Harry cooks up, the engine charges a bank of deep-cell batteries that light the buildings, and drive the few powertools that they use. Electricity has its uses, but when you've got to make your own, you quickly figure ways to get by with less.

And with less, Wyatt, Harry, and Martha all make a living wage between them.

Like the shop, the Bryans' house is

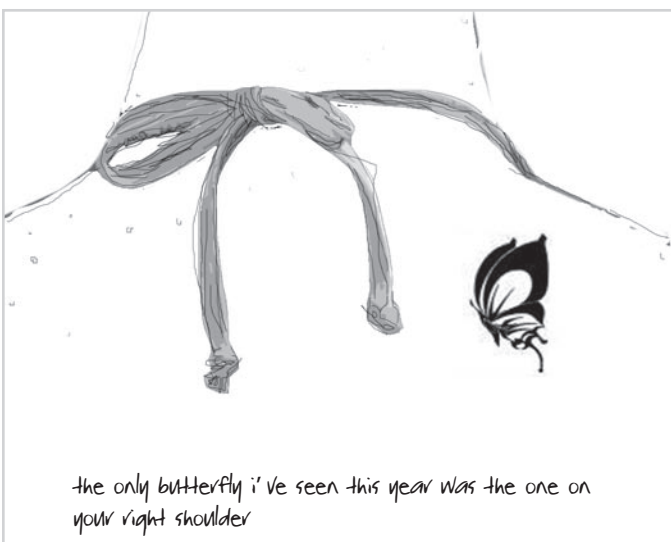




Bryan Boatbuilding is housed in a building with lots of natural light, solar panels and built of local and sustainably harvested wood.  
Photo: Andy Pedersen

heated by woodstove and lit largely by sunlight. There's water in the kitchen and bathroom, but it's drawn straight from the well by iron handpumps. Martha sews her canvas bags using a foot-powered Singer. They have an email address, but their website warns they check it only once a month. Harry works on his latest hull designs using pencil and paper and, later, models carved by hand. Just down the road is the house that Wyatt bought when he moved back here. It wasn't built off the grid, but slowly, Wyatt is taking what he's learning from the Bryans and applying those principles to his own home. "I burn less than three cords of firewood for heating," he says. "I try to keep my footprint as small as possible, thinking about how much I use and how much I really need."

Andy Pedersen is a Halifax based film maker and journalist.



the only butterfly i've seen this year was the one on your right shoulder

nature illustrations in the city / aaron harpell

Ecology Action Centre

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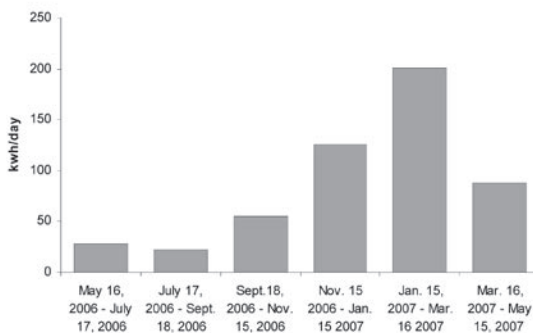
# Carbon Counting at Fern Lane

Compiled by Susanna Fuller

It's been a year in the Ecology Action Centre's new home on Fern Lane. And, as we moved into our own home and did an extensive green renovation, specifically so that we could walk the talk, we thought it would be a good idea to see just how we did when it came to energy and water consumption. When we started, our EnerGuide rating was 16/100. After the first round of renovations, we increased to 49/100. Since then, we have further insulated the basement and sealed many of our leaky areas. We aim to have the building retested in the summer of 2008 to see where we are then.

Fern Lane is heated and powered solely by electricity, so this makes total building energy consumption relatively easy to track. The graph below shows, that as expected, we use most electricity in the winter to augment our solar heating system.

EAC Fern Lane Energy Consumption Tracking 2006-2007



## Take Action

- Replace your light bulbs if you haven't done so already
- Install insulators in your outlets and switches
- Turn down your heat by two degrees.
- Install a low flush or dual flush toilet (or put a brick or dam in your toilet to reduce water used)
- Wash your clothes in cold water
- Hang your clothes out to dry!

## Energy Consumption

The table below shows our total kilowatts / hour used for the year, and breaks down our consumption by use and per area.

Total energy consumption	31194kwh
Annual Energy Consumption by Area	10.3 kwh/ ft <sup>2</sup> /yr
Baseline Energy Consumption (computers, lights, fridge, hot water)	25kwh/day
Annual Baseline Energy Consumption by Area	3.0 kwh/ ft <sup>2</sup> /yr
Annual Energy Consumption due to Heating by Area	7.3 kwh/ ft <sup>2</sup> /yr
Max Energy Consumption	206 kwh/day
Average Daily Energy Consumption	85 kwh/day
Average Daily Energy Consumption (Heating)	60 kwh/day
Average Cost / Day	\$9.16
Total Annual Cost	\$3345.02
Annual CO <sup>2</sup> Emissions	13 MT

## Comparative Use

We are committed to further reducing our emissions and energy use – in the meantime, it is interesting to see how Fern Lane measures up. We use approximately half of the electricity of other office buildings ...and just 14% of the electricity used in Al Gore's home!

Average Office Building Consumption	23.23 kwh/ ft <sup>2</sup> /yr
Annual CO <sup>2</sup> Emissions from an Average office Building of similar size	29MT
Annual CO <sup>2</sup> Emissions from an average Canadian Household	19MT
Fern Lane Use as Percent of Average Commercial Building	44%
Fern Lane Use as a Percent of Al Gore's Home	14%

## Areas for Improvement

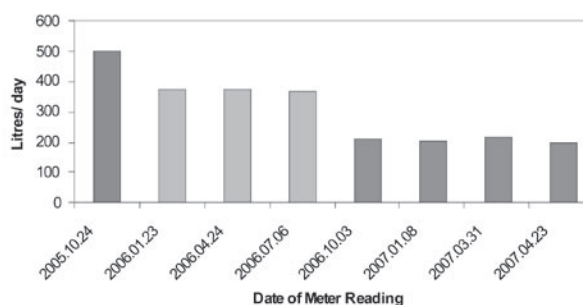
We can, and will get better! This analysis is a step in understanding our consumption and in learning about how we can improve. For 2007 – 2008, here are a few things we have planned:

- Recycle remaining large computer monitors and replace with flat screens or laptops.
- Revamp the solar heating system so that all excess capacity is used for building heat, and not domestic hot water.
- Install programmable thermostats to reduce heat fluctuations.
- Seal basement and increase our Energuide Rating.

## Water Consumption

As part of our renovation, we installed a low flush toilet (6 L instead of 13L) and a dual flush toilet (3L or 3L) as well as a water less urinal. Because we had water bills from before we moved in, we know how much we have saved through water use reduction. Our consumption, with 25+ employees is 41% of that used by the previous tenants where four to eight employees occupied the first floor. The previous tenants also didn't make use of kitchen facilities, so we have actually increased our range of water use and decreased the litres consumed at the same time!

EAC Fern Lane Water Consumption Tracking



## Areas for Improvement

Our water harvesting system, which will collect and filter rain water off our roof and supply all our water needs for the building, will be in operation in the fall of 2007. With the exception of sewage, we expect this will keep us off the water grid!



ecosnark



By Aaron Harpell

From: The Premier  
Date: June 19th  
To: Minister of the Environmentalists  
CC: Brooke  
Subject: Sustainability

Reverend! Look, I was thinking about the Lafarge tire burning thing out there in Colchester County, and how it all fits into this term you use, 'environmental sustainability', and how upset the people are over there, and with the strip mining in Cape Breton County, and the pesticides and coal plants, and the New Jersey gravel pit down in Digby County. And I think, if we think on it, we can really make this environmentalism thing sustainable. There's lots of people wanting to make a difference. I hear that. I hear all about that. I think we could have a real friggin' gold mine of environmental activism here if we come up with a few more hot button eco-disasters. If the environment movement is going to provide a sustainable economy, it might need a few more pushes.

From: Minister of the Environmentalists  
Date: June 19th  
To: The Premier  
Subject: Auto-Reply: Sustainability

Thanks for your email! Please be advised that I am on vacation until September 6th.

From: Ernie  
Date: July 8th  
To: The Premier  
Subject: Re: Sustainability

Roddie my boy! Brooke passed along your email to me. This is a friggin' gold mine! I'm losing all kinds of environmentalists here in Amherst; they're all going across the border to New Brunswick. Here's the idea. We got those windmills going up in cottage country near the golf course. Maybe we suggest cottage country isn't the best place for a windfarm! Oh my god! Maybe we ask Anne Murray to represent the NIMBY p.o.v. I'm LOVING this! Will any environmentalists go against Anne Murray, though? She has that nice song with the bears and the picnic.

From: The Dook  
Date: July 23  
To: The Premier  
CC: Brooke, Ernie, Hurley  
Subject: Re: Sustainability

OMG!!!1!! Re-open the friggin' Moose River Gold Mine!

From: Steve  
Date: Aug 31  
To: The Premier, Brooke, Ernie, The Dook, Hurley  
Subject: Re: Sustainability

Hey fellas. Nice to see you've lost that culture of defeat. Might HQ suggest you concentrate some effort in the HRM? They need green jobs too. And you don't want all your urban ecologists moving out to Alberta for work, do ya? Halifax could be a national leader in this industry. You need something to rally the city. I heard about those wild horses out there on that Sable Island. What are they doing there? Running back and forth, doing nothin'. Move 'em to Truro. We'll race 'em. Proceeds could go to local environmental organizations. Gambling with the environment, for the environment!

**Congratulations to Kevin and Susan Veinotte  
of Bridgewater for being the  
2007 Department of Natural Resources Provincial  
Woodlot Owners of the Year!**

We are delighted that the Veinotte family's thoughtful stewardship of the Acadian Forest has been recognized.



Thank you to the Veinotte family for their support of the EAC. Their beautiful FSC-certified hemlock is part of EAC's accessible deck and ramp.

Kevin & Susan Veinotte - (902) 543-1271



The EAC would like to thank CUC for choosing us to be the designated charity for their 2006 green event. Congratulations on a successful championship!

The Canadian Ultimate Championships have helped make the EAC more sustainable and Nova Scotia's athletic community greener and healthier!



canadianultimate.com/cuc/2006/

# Steps to Sustainable Prosperity: A Recipe for Success

EAC's staff and volunteers got together and thought of a few things that either individuals, government or the private sector could do to move Nova Scotia towards fulfilling its goal of sustainable prosperity.

## Marine Issues:



### Individual Steps

- Educate chefs and grocery store fish counters about supply of sustainable seafood products: Ask where the fish came from, every time you buy it.
- Buy local seafood that is caught and processed in a sustainable manner (see some examples on page 18).
- Meet and talk to fishermen in your community and ask them about solutions to restoring our marine environment.

### Government Steps

- Manage our fisheries for fish habitat and juvenile fish protection, and make sure that every fish gets to spawn at least once.
- Implement integrated management so that all ocean activities are occurring in appropriate places and enough area is protected from human impacts.
- Maintain coastal infrastructure, such as living wharves and harbours.
- Include Nova Scotian (or Atlantic Canadian) fish products in local procurement policies.
- Support education initiatives on the marine environment, fisheries, and coastal heritage.

### Private Sector Steps

- Ensure fish caught in Nova Scotia are processed in Nova Scotia.
- Expand sustainable seafood marketing and work towards Marine Stewardship Certification of eligible fisheries.
- Fish with the least destructive gear possible.

## Energy Issues:



### Individual Steps

- Reduce your energy consumption – just think of how many ways there are to save energy and save money.
- Be heard: we need greater public participation and transparency in energy-related discussions at the municipal and provincial level.

### Government Steps

- Work with other Canadian provinces to introduce absolute, outcome-oriented greenhouse gas regulations on large industries to reduce GHG emissions 30% below 1990 levels by 2020.
- Commit, in legislation, to making all energy efficiency improvements that are cost-effectively achievable, for all fuel-types.
- Ensure accountability for achieving efficiency improvements by establishing clear objectives, targets and performance-based contracts.
- Require all new residential buildings to meet EnerGuide 80 efficiency levels within a year. Upgrade standards every 3 years and label the energy performance of all houses sold on market.
- Require all new commercial buildings to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold standards
- Require lighting and appliances to meet Energy Star standards.
- Harness the potential of our universities, in partnership with businesses, communities, unions and governments, to develop emerging sustainable energy technologies

### Private Sector Steps

- Recycle energy through Combined Heat and Power in power plants, institutions and industries by creating standard interconnection rules and incentives.
- Open renewable energy markets up to

rural communities and emerging technologies by implementing an electricity feed-in tariff.

- Work to include energy use and carbon emissions into financial bottom lines.

## Food Issues:



### Individual Steps

- Ask for local food at your grocery store and before ordering food at restaurants.
- Develop a local food procurement policy for your workplace or other spheres of influence (your family, your friends, your faith community etc.).
- Grow a garden or get involved with your community's gardens.
- Buy food as directly from producers as possible, e.g. farmers' markets, community supported agriculture organizations, buying groups, and community co-ops.

### Government Steps

- Implement a sustainable procurement policy for provincial expenditures by 2009 (the Nova Scotia government is in the process of doing this!).
- Provide resources to support the Atlantic Canada Organic Network (ACORN), the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC) and improved provincial extension services.
- Establish economic development programs for farmers markets through market managers, promotional materials and producer co-ops.
- Develop a "matchmaking" program to link producers with local markets and institutions.
- Give priority to sustainable land use over non-sustainable land uses when making development decisions.
- Develop Working Land Conservation Easements to protect farmland.
- Ensure that activities in rural areas protect watersheds.
- Support urban gardening on municipally owned land.



## Built Environment Issues:



### Individual Steps

- When renovating, reuse materials, source local materials and talk with carpenters and contractors about how to reduce material use.

### Government Steps

- Establish training programs in sustainable building technologies at Nova Scotia Community Colleges.
- Adapt building codes to foster innovation in design, construction and renovation of our homes and offices.
- Implement smart design principles to develop energy efficient, safe, healthy and vibrant communities.
- Provide tax incentives for refurbishing vacant and underused buildings.
- Plan communities and buildings with people (not cars) in mind.

### Private Sector Steps

- Build to LEED certified standards.
- Include carshare opportunities in high density housing developments.

## Wilderness Issues:



### Individual Steps

- Become engaged in forestry issues. To learn more about saving our Acadian forests, sign up to our Forest Alert! email list at <http://novascotiaforests.ca>.
- Visit Crown lands so that you know what is happening in publicly owned forests.
- Reduce paper use - and increase the amount of post consumer recycled products available.
- Ensure that our political leadership - particularly the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources are working to dramatically reduce the amount of clear cutting of Nova Scotia's forests.

### Government Steps

- Increase market support for and availability of local Nova Scotian forest products. Local and sustainably harvested (Forest Stewardship Certified) products should be available in building supply stores.
- Develop value added forest product industries - Nova Scotian made furniture, kitchen cabinets, flooring.
- Work together - small woodlot owners, economic development agencies, academia and conservation organizations need to work towards sustainable forestry practices.
- Ensure that all forestry operations on Public (i.e. Crown) land should be FSC certified.
- Legislate restrictions on the harvesting of forests and woody debris for bioenergy.

### Private Sector Steps

- Set aside conservation areas.
- Switch from clearcutting to selective forestry.

## Transportation Issues:



### Individual Steps

- Get active! Ride, walk, wheel yourself to work.
- Take the bus – learn the joys of finishing that novel on your way to work.
- Join or start a carshare – there will be one starting up in HRM in fall 2007 or sign up for HRM online ride matching service to launch in fall 2007.
- If buying a new vehicle, use the Energuide ratings to purchase for fuel efficiency.
- Follow the DriveWiser program steps (see Ask EcoHead on page 7).

### Government Steps

- Provide long term provincial funding for active and sustainable transportation.
- Implement increased Metro Link routes in HRM and increased public transit throughout the province.
- Implement a congestion charge on the Halifax peninsula.
- Implement California vehicle emission standards.
- Buy local, shift freight from trucks to rail.

### Private Sector Steps

- Implement pay as you drive insurance.
- Back to the future: reinvent train travel.
- Implement teleworking policies for at least once a week.

## Coastal Issues:



### Individual Steps

- Work to ensure open public access to our coasts.
- Keep you dog on a leash anywhere there are plover habitat signs.

### Government Steps

- Offer incentives for septic upgrades in order to re-open beaches and shellfish harvesting areas.
- Restrict building on or near salt marshes to preserve critical ecosystem services
- Develop a provincial coastal strategy with a zoning of and setbacks from sensitive areas.
- Establish a provincial coastal erosion monitoring program and link coastal building setbacks to erosion rates.
- Replace tidally restrictive culverts with bridges, so that fish will come back and quality of life will go up due to reduced mosquito populations.
- Develop a provincial coastal management strategy linked to minimizing our vulnerability to climate change impacts.
- Ban breakwaters and retaining walls around private coastal developments. Rely on setbacks, vegetated buffers and natural landscaping to minimize erosion and protect against floods.
- Establish a provincial buy-back program for property owners willing to sell coastal properties and lands in floodplains back to province which will then donate them to the land trusts.
- Establish a provincial protected beach network representing all remaining ecologically significant beaches in the province.

### Private Sector Steps

- Build responsibly. Refuse to fill in wetlands and tidal areas.

# A Matter of Opinion: Atlantica - Why All the Fuss?

By Ian Rowberry



I was talking to a friend not so long ago, just after the Atlantica conference left Halifax and the paint was being scrubbed off downtown businesses, and he was wondering what all the fuss was about. As far as he was concerned, from what he'd read in the papers, it was all about bringing more jobs to Nova Scotia, and that he was looking forward to seeing more transfers at the city's container ports.

Luckily for him (I thought), I'd been reading up on the background to Atlantica, and was one of many Ecology Action Centre staff members who'd recently met with John Jacobs of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), co-author with Scott Sinclair of a detailed study of the Atlantica proposals entitled *Atlantica – Myths and Reality*. I felt prepared to tell him what the fuss was all about.

## So what exactly is Atlantica anyway?

Atlantica is a program of corporate lobbying being carried out by the Atlantic Institute of Market Studies (AIMS). The goal is, at first glance, to create a more uniform set of trade regulations, standardized labour laws, relaxed border controls and 'improved' transport infrastructure in northeastern North America that should enable companies on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border to do more business with each other. Second glances at the puff pieces published on the AIMS website for Atlantica ([www.atlantica.org](http://www.atlantica.org)), however, suggest that the Atlantica program is primarily seeking to make our region the gateway for massively increased volumes

of imported goods made predominantly in central and eastern Asia.

In *Myths and Reality*, Sinclair and Jacobs' reasons for rejecting Atlantica centre around four main themes:

- Border security is highly unlikely to decrease in the foreseeable future, so those barriers will likely remain, regardless of the size of any new road network built either side of the border;
- It's a high-risk strategy that is likely following flawed or false economic modeling and forecasts that will deliver short-term benefits at best;
- It will continue to allow the misuse and misdirection of Nova Scotia's offshore oil and gas reserves and revenues, creating greater energy insecurity and slowing progress to a lower-carbon future; and
- It will erode public services, reduce expenditure on social programming, weaken unions and seek to undermine minimum-wage legislation.

Upon reading the above, or indeed the full report available on the CCPA website, it is clear that serious concerns remain about the impact such a program could have on the socio-economic fabric of Atlantic Canada. Some of you may have already taken part in the peaceful demonstrations in Halifax in June to register your rejection of the Atlantica concept. What follows is a discussion of the potential environmental impacts of pursuing such a strategy; a discussion that considers both the local and global repercussions, and questions the compatibility of Atlantica with both the

Nova Scotia government's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act and the North Eastern Governors-Eastern Canadian Premiers' (NEG-ECP) Climate Action Plan.

## What are the likely environmental impacts?

Atlantica proposes to make Halifax the main gateway for Asian-made goods and produce, carried on huge container ships, destined for the Eastern and Central US market. This approach relies on the increased consumption of fossil fuels for transportation and maintains production of goods in countries where environmental regulations are weakest. This will increase the province's share of associated greenhouse gas emissions and make it even harder to meet its legally-binding CO2 emissions target of 10% below 1990 levels by 2020.

Failure to meet this target, one that is already considered too low by some, will increase the likelihood of catastrophic climate change affecting Nova Scotia. Sea levels are likely to rise, leading to considerable loss of natural habitat, developed land and people's livelihoods along our shoreline. Weather systems will become increasingly unpredictable with greater extremes occurring more frequently, making agriculture a more challenging endeavour than it already is.

Unloading and trucking those extra thousands of containers of goods to the US heartland is not the economic boon proponents would have us believe. Hauling



container freight is a low-margin sector of the trucking business, and few Nova Scotians will secure jobs in this scenario. In an attempt to increase the profitability and efficiency of this haulage, Atlantica proponents want to see deregulation of the trucking industry to allow massive road-train truck-trailer combinations on Nova Scotia's roads and, ideally, the construction of a new mega-highway that will connect Halifax through to the US border in New Brunswick and beyond, through Maine and on to upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and all points west.

Without construction, Nova Scotians would face rapid deterioration of our current road infrastructure and serious implications as regards its safety for all users. With construction, we and our neighbouring provinces and states would face loss of considerable natural habitat and valuable agricultural land at a time when we can least afford it, and at a time when the Nova Scotia government is aiming to legally protect 12% of the total land mass of the province by 2015. Moreover, despite improvements in diesel engine technology, more trucks on the roads from our ports would badly pollute the air that we breathe, leading to deterioration in lung health that we can ill afford, both morally and economically. Rail transportation of container freight is twice as fuel-efficient as road haulage, and the network in Atlantic Canada is under-used at present, yet this option is given little coverage in the Atlantica agenda.

Atlantica also has significant implications for the flow of Canadian resources across the border, particularly in the energy sector. Atlantica's supporters would have the 'free market' continue to dictate where Nova Scotia's offshore oil and gas is transported or exported to, and to whom the profits accrue. By 2005, energy exports accounted for more than half of the Atlantic Provinces' total exports to the US, and this trend looks set to continue. The questions that Sinclair and Jacobs pose are: are the Atlantic Provinces getting a fair share of that revenue, one which could be used to jump-start then steer their economies toward a lower-carbon future?; and will Atlantica

make it even harder for the provincial governments to get our hands on that share, an experience recently highlighted by Premiers MacDonald and Williams over the Atlantic Accord? Their answers, unsurprisingly, are an emphatic no and yes respectively.

Nova Scotia in particular has an opportunity to use its offshore natural gas to address its carbon emissions problem and transition its economy towards a renewable energy future. This, however, has already been complicated by the corporate-profits-first agenda of the Atlantic Institute of Market Studies in New Brunswick, intervening in National Energy Board hearings to ensure that U.S. markets can continue to secure the lion's share of a locally-produced and relatively cleaner-burning fossil-fuel. In the meantime, to generate our own electricity, Nova Scotia Power continues to import coal from ethically questionable sources in Columbia to burn in plants that should have been retired or thoroughly refurbished years ago.

The issue of energy security further compounds the problems that we already face and that Atlantica would exacerbate. Much of Eastern Canada already imports most of its gasoline and electricity-generating fossil fuels and this situation creates a dangerous dependency. If the Atlantic Provinces don't start to prepare for the increase in prices and competition from a thirsty southern neighbour for access to fossil fuels as global reserves, including their own, move past peak production rates and start to decrease in output, they will be left shivering in winter and baking in summer while trying to find affordable alternatives.

### **So will it go ahead?**

Our provincial leaders cannot claim ignorance of the potential impacts of Atlantica going ahead. The transcript of Premier MacDonald's address to the Atlantica Conference in June tells us that "growth cannot come at the expense of the planet or its people" and that "Nova Scotia's Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act [...] recognizes that a healthy environment contributes to a healthy economy", so clearly he knows that adopt-

ing an Atlantica-style development strategy for Nova Scotia would have considerable negative environmental implications.

Moreover, as a recent signatory to the implementation of the NEG-ECP Climate Action Plan, from which the province's GHG emissions target is derived, Premier MacDonald should know that it contains several recommendations that speak to this situation: use renewables, lower-carbon fuels and distributed generation to lower emissions-intensity of electricity generation; encourage greater domestic and industrial energy efficiency; ensure that the energy efficiency of freight transport is maximized; calculate and disclose the GHG emissions impacts of publicly-funded transportation projects; and consider the energy impacts of infrastructure developments.

Considering this, then, it seems that Atlantica cannot be supported by the Nova Scotia government. Atlantica's supporters tell us that it cannot be denied, that it already exists 'as a region', and that the corporate lobbying, feasibility studies and public relations offensive will continue regardless. However, Scott Sinclair and John Jacobs end their report by suggesting that the forces that drive the Atlantica agenda – market forces – are just as likely to bring about its failure as its success.

So my friend asked again if the fuss is really necessary. I paused, and asked him if he thought the provincial government would make the correct, but perhaps tough, decision to say no to the big business lobby and push for the 'innovative solutions [that] are necessary to mutually reinforce the environment and the economy', as it states in the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. Did he think that more 'big-business-as-usual' was a particularly innovative solution?

I ask the same question of you.

My two cents? More fuss, please!

*Ian Rowberry is the outgoing coordinator of the Steer Clean Program at the Ecology Action Centre. His replacement, Scott Gillard, will be with you shortly!*

# Art and the Environment: New Canadian Pilgrimages

By Susanna Fuller



Artist Eryn Foster stands in a circular woodpile, one of the many parts of the landscape along her pilgrimage. Photo credits: Michael Waterman

The idea for a pilgrimage – a New Canadian Pilgrimage – struck artist Eryn Foster after a long day of arts administration, and hours in front of the computer. Eryn is the Director at the artist-run Eyelevel Gallery in Halifax. Rather than be satisfied with her walk home across the MacDonald Bridge, Eryn felt the urge to walk and walk for weeks. And then she realized that she could. This past July Eryn, accompanied by artist Michael Waterman and his 15 year old son Nick walked 300km from Halifax to Sackville New Brunswick arriving in time for the OK! Quoi Contemporary Arts Festival.

Walking, skateboarding and cycling have been used to raise awareness about numerous health and environmental related issues – from breast cancer, to Huntington's disease to climate change. As countless people head overseas to walk the spiritual path of the Crusades in the north of Spain, Eryn has chosen to walk close to home and has brought walking into the world of performance art.

The walking pilgrimage adds to other slow and artful movements, such as slow-food, which celebrates artisanal food production and preparation. Walking is the

simplest, oldest and arguably the easiest form of transportation-slowness down to a pace that effortlessly links body and mind. Walking allows for true exploration of the landscape and the people within that landscape.

Walking is akin to examining a leaf with a magnifying glass. The details of the road and its surrounding landscape, like the details of the leaf veins reveal themselves. The surprises along the way help make the process, rather than the endpoints, the most important part of the pilgrimage. Visiting with people lounging at the garage in South Hampton, listening to the predictions of Garfield the Psychic, drying clothes while walking, having the time to see the details like round, perfect woodpiles, houses with hockey nets inexplicably strapped to second floor windows, and experiencing the generosity that is inherent when people encounter others traveling slowly, are a few joys of the New Canadian Pilgrimage. It is the oddities found in yards, the spontaneous conversations held with passersby that form memories never to be found anywhere else, except that pinpoint in time and space.

In many ways, the pilgrimage project brings Eryn's previous art practice together into one grand performance. Her early projects experimenting with pin-hole cameras and creating diaramas inside small boxes that had to be viewed through a magnifying lens dealt with detail. More recently, through her MFA project she incorporated larger landscapes, continuous one-line drawings of cities like Brazilia, and urban landscapes penned on large walls. Her video work, completed at the Halifax based Centre for Art Tapes, consisted of Google Earth maps revamped in Photoshop and set to music, interpreting the 'ground truth' of satellite images as simply a pattern of lines and colours. Most recently, her pieces in the Reconstructures show at the Forest City Gallery in London, Ontario consisted of images of the same house, repeated again and again to form an infinite house. All of these projects, and their juxtaposition of the infinite and the minute details that surround us, were embodied in the long walk to Sackville.

Pilgrimages like this one show us that we can leave behind the pull of our computers and the hectic life that so many of us live, and teach us that appreciating detail is important in giving us a sense of place, and respect for the oddities that we will never have a chance to see if we go any faster than one foot in front of the other. Indeed, if we just slow down, we might actually get somewhere. Eryn intends to continue her New Canadian Pilgrimages throughout Canada in the coming years. To read more about her project, see [www.newcanadianpilgrimages.blogspot.com](http://www.newcanadianpilgrimages.blogspot.com). To experience your own pilgrimage, put on a pair of good shoes and start walking.



A walking laundry line.



## Green Grants: Choosing sustainable transportation

By Maggy Burns & Stephanie Sodero

The TRAX Project of the EAC, in partnership with Conserve Nova Scotia, is pleased to announce the recipients of the Green Mobility Capital Grants. This project to support communities and groups around the province with their sustainable infrastructure projects has demonstrated the real need and grassroots enthusiasm for improved transportation options in NS. Not only will these projects reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, support small town revitalization and begin to improve safety, affordability and access for rural residents but we hope this makes the beginning of greater provincial investment in sustainable transportation.

And the winners are (drum roll please):

**\*Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation:** \$5,532 to install eight bike racks and 21 "Share the Road" signs in Bridgewater as part of the Bridgewater Active Transportation Initiative.

**\*Halifax Regional Municipality:** \$22,000 to support the construction of 2.6 km of paved shoulder bike lane, and the installation of eight bike lockers and one bike rack in Tantallon. This infrastructure will connect area residents to the rural express transit service terminal scheduled to open in June 2008.

**\*Healthy Parrsboro and Area Committee:** \$22,000 towards the purchase of a 15 passenger van for the Cumberland County Not-for-Profit Transportation Society's planned non-profit bussing system to link communities in Cumberland County.

**\*Judique and Area Development Association:** \$1,828 to install 10 bike racks (for up to 40 bikes) and eight Share the Road signs in Judique. This infrastructure will compliment the 18 km of multi-use trail in the area and serve instead of additional vehicle parking spaces at their weekly Village Market.

**\*Pictou Regional Development Commission:** \$22,000 toward the Pictou County Bikeways Project. These funds will support painting 10km of the 26 km of bike lanes planned as urban commuter paths within the towns in the area. It will also support creating a bike-able trail link into the town of Pictou.

**\*Strait Area Transit Cooperative, serving Inverness, Richmond, Guysborough and Antigonish Counties:** \$25,000 to contribute to the purchase of two vans and one bus as part of their new community-based transportation service. The service is designed to be safe, affordable, accessible and environmentally friendly.

**\*Town of Pictou Recreation, Tourism and Culture department:** \$5,140 to complete construction of a 165m pedestrian link from a high-density residential area to the Pictou Elementary School.

**\*Town of Wolfville:** \$12,500 to construct a one kilometre crusher dust surfaced multi-use trail as part of a planned comprehensive walking trail network throughout the town. The long-term vision is to connect with the planned Kieran Pathway which will link Grand Pre-Coldbrook-Berwick Corridor in Kings County.

**\*Trans County Transportation Society serving Annapolis and Kings Counties:** \$22,000 towards the purchase an additional wheelchair accessible van to increase efficiency and availability of their community-based transportation services.

The projects are scheduled to be complete by March 31, 2008. Stay tuned for further details.



Consider your legacy an active part of Nova Scotia history.

For more information on bequests please contact Heather at the Ecology Action Centre: outreach@ecologyaction.ca or 442-0198. If you wish to remember the Ecology Action Centre in your will, we suggest the words, "I hereby bequest..."

Is this your idea of a dream house?

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# Protecting the Coasts: A Call for a Provincial Strategy

By Jennifer Graham



*Too close to the edge. A desire to live by the ocean leads to new housing development that are vulnerable to storm damage and climate change impacts. Photo: Jonathan Graham*

## Fighting for the coast

“There’s something wrong when you have to fight like this just to keep your friggin’ harbour.” These poignant words by fisherman Eugene Broome adorn the front of a postcard prepared by the Friends of Port Mouton Bay as part of their campaign against a 70 hectare salmon fish farm in Port Mouton Bay. Their struggle illustrates the tremendous need for Nova Scotia to develop and implement a provincial coastal strategy as a framework for decision making in coastal areas, such as Port Mouton Bay.

The recently proclaimed provincial Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act states that the health of the economy, the environment, and the health of the people of the province are interconnected. Why then does the government seemingly ignore citizens groups resisting environmentally destructive, unsustainable, and ultimately economically unviable projects in coastal areas?

Groups like the Friends of Port Mouton Bay embody the stated intent of the Sustainable Prosperity Act by fighting to protect the sensitive coastal and marine

environment that is the basis for the area’s economy. This is just one of the few coastal issues making headlines in Nova Scotia, and these local heroes but one example of how much people care about the coast.

## Loving the coasts

Our coasts inspire a range of feelings and perspectives. Some of us highlight the importance of coastal infrastructure such as wharves and shipping facilities to the province’s economy. Others marvel at the astounding biological productivity and the ecological services provided by coastal wetlands, barrier beaches, headlands, intertidal flats and coastal barrens. Few can deny the allure and mystique of undeveloped, wild coastlines. Some point out the rising value of coastal real estate and tourism to Nova Scotia’s economy; and still others sound the alarm that the most endangered species in the country are coastal dwellers.

Each of these perspectives is true. Nova Scotia’s coasts are our greatest asset. Yet like any undervalued and under-protected treasure, it is at risk of disappearing from right under our noses.

## Understanding the current reality

Nova Scotia is one of the few jurisdictions in North America without an overarching coastal management strategy. Consequently, there is no provincial policy or legislation that protects coastal areas from unwise development or that regulates the type of activities that can take place in

## Recommended Nova Scotia Coastal Strategy 101

- Coastal mapping: Detailed, up-to-date and easily accessible coastal maps that identify sensitive and/or significant coastal features are the basis for sound coastal management. Decision makers need information make informed choices about the wisdom of certain projects. Coastal mapping also includes coastal waters and aquatic assets
- Stepping back: Setbacks are essentially “no build zones” a certain distance from the water’s edge. Setbacks are important because ocean coasts shift over time due to natural processes like erosion and ac-

cretion. Setbacks give the coast room to move. They also protect developments from the impact of the sea, including storm surges and floods. A wide setback, especially when it includes a vegetated buffer zone, also protects coastal waters from the impacts of development including runoff from lawns and roads, and chemical or organic contamination. Many scientists agree that the width of coastal setbacks should depend on the type of coastlines and the annual rate of erosion.

- Public access: Nova Scotians and visitors alike feel a deep connection with the

ocean. Current patterns of intensifying coastal development frequently block access to traditional coastal access points. This has implication for local recreation and livelihood activities, as well as the tourism industry. Yet indiscriminate public access to the coast can have negative impacts on wildlife and their habitat. Dunes for example are prone to erosion and blowouts after being repeatedly trampled by beach goers. Appropriate public access to the coast is key. There are times of year when some species need peace and quiet to successfully reproduce.



THE COASTAL POLICY MAZE	
Government Department	Responsibility
<b>Federal</b> Department of Fisheries and Oceans  Environment Canada  Environmental Assessments Transport Canada	Integrated coastal management Water (from low water mark) Fish passage and habitat National Parks and Historic Sites Species at risk (migratory birds and marine species) Wildlife and their habitat Federal wetlands Fresh water resources and their management  Navigable waters
<b>Provincial</b> Dept. of Natural Resources  Dept. of Environment and Labour  Dept. of Agriculture and Fisheries  Tourism, Culture and Heritage Service NS and Municipal Relations  Dept. of Energy Transportation and Public Works Dept. of Education	Provincial parks and Protected beaches Shoreline alterations and infrastructure Species at risk (flora, fauna, nesting sites) Water, watersheds, and wastewater Wilderness protected areas Freshwater and coastal wetlands Off highway vehicle operations (ATV's) Inland fisheries and waters Aquaculture Fish habitat Marshland conservation Promotes coastal tourism products Manages coastal tourism assets Regulation of land use Implementing Municipal Government Act Climate change Tidal power and wind energy Public infrastructure Special Places
<b>Municipal</b> Individual Municipalities	Land use planning

- Working Waterfronts: Nova Scotia's coast is dotted with fishing and shipping infrastructure including harbour and wharves. These are integral to the economic survival of many coastal communities. New types of coastal activities like recreational boating sometimes conflict with traditional activities. A working waterfront policy, such as the one recently adopted in Maine allows for new tourism and recreational infrastructure, while continue to prioritize access and infrastructure for traditional users.
- Water quality. The cumulative impacts of urban and agricultural run off, untreated

sewage, malfunctioning septic systems, sedimentation, and other land based pollution is having serious consequences for water quality in coastal waters. Watershed management and land use are vital to protecting coastal waters, as is the clean up and re-opening contaminated shellfish harvesting areas in Chezzecook, the Annapolis Basin and St. Margaret's Bay through provincial, municipal, community partnerships.

coastal areas. As a result, the coasts are literally falling between the cracks.

Currently, all three levels of government - federal, provincial, and municipal - have some responsibility for an aspect of coastal management. There are a maze of regulations and policies that impact the coast, which are outlined in the accompanying table. Yet every analysis of Nova Scotia's coastal policy shows the need for a comprehensive coastal policy framework. The publications page of the Coastal Coalition of Nova Scotia website <http://ccns.chebucto.org/index.htm> features many reports and backgrounders on coastal issues in Nova Scotia.

### Suffering the consequences

Poorly regulated and largely unplanned development has resulted in the loss of coastal biodiversity and ecologically significant habitats, a sharp decline in coastal water quality as evidenced by growing number of beach closures and areas closed to shellfish harvesting, and a reduction in the overall stability and resiliency of the coast in certain parts of the province. It has also led to construction of homes, roads and other infrastructure that are extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as sea level rise, increased flooding, accelerated erosion and storm surges.

### The way forward

To prevent further destruction and mitigate the consequence of poor planning, the province needs to stand up and deliver a provincial coastal strategy that includes a package of measures to guide decision making on the coast.

Presently, much of the leadership on coastal issues in Nova Scotia is coming from the grassroots. They are sounding the alarm about unwise coastal development, researching issues and alternatives, and dedicating thousands of hours and oodles of money into protecting coastal areas. They do this in the vacuum caused by absence of a coherent coastal policy framework. When, as it inevitably must, Nova Scotia implements a coastal strategy and better municipal land use planning, local municipalities and communities must be involved in developing and implementing these plans.

*Jen Graham is Coastal Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre and has been sighted on beaches throughout the province.*

# China: Notes on the Environment

By Ruth Gamberg



*Busy rural marketplace with a variety of transport. Photo: Ruth and Herb Gamberg*

We've been to China a number of times - first as tourists in 1973, and then as teachers at the Beijing Foreign Studies University and have witnessed huge changes, especially during and since the mid-1980s. My partner and I spent several weeks last spring primarily in Beijing, but also several days in Shanghai and another few days in a village in Shandong Province, famous for Tsingtao beer.

Despite the rapid movement of rural people to the cities, a large majority still live in China's hundreds of thousands of small villages. We visited rural areas in China before, but never, until this trip, did we have the good fortune to stay in the home of villagers. We lived in Ma village with the mother and sister of a Chinese friend who had previously studied in Halifax. We were told that this village was rather typical of villages near the coast and that those further inland were less prosperous.

In Ma, water is pumped into people's houses from the single village well for about one hour a day...when possible. Our hosts get enough water during those times to fill their solar heated cistern, making

it possible to take a shower and still have enough water for cooking. Solar panels are not common in this village and not everyone has a shower. Many villagers drink boiled water from the village well but our friend's mother pushes her wheelbarrow and his sister rides her motorcycle to the mountain three kilometers away for cleaner drinking water.

While some villages have solar panels mounted on streetlights, Ma does not have them - but then, they don't have streetlights either. In fact, their streets are in very poor condition - mud roads with deep ruts, some bordering on impassable during rainy periods. Ma has had electricity for nearly two-and-a-half decades. Our friend said that many of the villagers have TV sets and perhaps an electrical appliance or two, but like so many others with limited means, the people in this village are frugal in their use of electricity. We saw compact fluorescent light bulbs for sale in the nearby town and used in the small village glove factory we visited, actually located in the owner's home.

The only source of heat in most houses in Ma comes from tiny fireplaces that heat

the large built-in wok(s) used for cooking. Dried cornstalks are used for fuel. Wood, in very short supply in China for a long time, is generally not used for burning. There is much talk about reforestation, in fact, to curb rapidly expanding deserts. Each fireplace has pipes that go under a concrete platform in the adjoining room. A couple of quilts on top to soften it, and a couple more for covers, and voila - a warm and comfy bed!

We came upon a store that was piled high with bags of chemical fertilizer and was heavily stocked with pesticides in the main town near Ma. According to our friend, little attention is given to organic farming. The land is relatively flat and although the plots are small, they appear to be fully cultivated. As almost everyone has access to a small plot of land, produce is plentiful. There is a huge outdoor market in the town every five days where people from the many surrounding villages sell any surplus they might have and buy whatever they might need - everything from produce, farm implements and kitchen utensils to clothing, quilts and magazines. Many things were locally produced, but some manufactured goods were from factories elsewhere and some of the fruit was imported from southern China.

We noticed that garbage disposal is a serious problem throughout our travels. Bags and bags of it are strewn along the roadside and in dried-up river beds. Unlike the early years of the Chinese Revolution, before plastic was in common usage and when virtually everything was reused or recycled, a lot more now seems to be considered trash. There is no provision for its disposal, at least not in Ma or the other nearby villages.

Nowhere are contrasts more apparent than between cities and villages. The urban skyline not only features a tremendous number of buildings over six stories high (and therefore equipped with elevators), but is dotted with dozens of cranes busy constructing more of the same. The cities - especially Shanghai, China's ultra-modern city - are ablaze at night with lights from the many skyscrapers. I couldn't help but think back to the old days when we used to ride our bikes at night through the dark



“ Wood, in very short supply in China for a long time, is generally not used for burning. There is much talk about reforestation, in fact, to curb rapidly expanding deserts. ”



Garbage in a dried-out riverbed in the countryside. Photo: Ruth and Herb Gamberg

city streets, squinting to see any potholes or obstructions in time to warn each other.


Actually, our favourite activity used to be cycling the streets and alleyways around the flat city of Beijing. In the 1970s and early 80s the city saw flotillas of pedestrians and cyclists, and some buses, side-by-side with donkey carts wending their

slow, quiet way. Bus traffic has increased since then, donkey carts have totally disappeared and fast, noisy motorcycles have entered the scene. Pedestrians and bikes are barred from many roads that have become multi-lane highways cutting this way and that through and above the city. People are being relocated from one-sto-

rey houses to high-rises to make way for more and wider roads to accommodate the tidal wave of private cars and taxis. We still sometimes ventured out on bikes, but our former enthusiasm had now turned to trepidation. One often feels choked by the pollution in Chinese cities and there were many days when we could simply stare at the sun without feeling uncomfortable.

China's thirst for rapid economic growth has brought a surge of spending and accumulating by the new middle, rich and super-rich classes. Given the country's recent history of poverty - which remains a reality for hundreds of millions - this is understandable. Rampant, limitless consumerism, however, appears to be the order of the day in the cities we visited. In an upscale Shanghai restaurant, my partner came running out of the washroom for the camera to take photos of the urinals: most of them had an ashtray perched on top and all of them had their own separate TV screens! Another washroom in an expensive apartment we visited had a toilet equipped with an impressive array of buttons to wash, dry and deodorize the user's underside. Our Chinese friends could not believe that we, from affluent Canada, had never even heard of such a contraption.

We arrived at a new shopping mall one evening in Beijing after driving on a new super-highway bordered by high rises




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for about three kilometers into what had been thriving farmland just a few years before. It's an eight-storey building taking up more than two football fields with an exterior entirely of glass. It seemed as if every internationally known, expensive retail clothing, furniture and department store is represented here. Luxury items from exotic perfumes to massage chairs could be found. Billboards and flashing neon signs are ubiquitous. TVs, found in all the buses we took and all the restaurants we visited, incessantly blare out commercials to convince the Chinese that you can never have too much stuff.

On a more hopeful note, Beijing boasts lots of green spaces. The parks are a sheer delight and are very well used by people eager to enjoy their beauty and cleaner air and to participate in a myriad of activities. Strolling along the paths on a Sunday afternoon, you come upon individuals and groups playing musical instruments of all kinds, artists painting pictures of the colourful flower gardens, couples of all ages dancing to the strains of a small live band, youth flying kites and playing traditional Chinese games, old men painting calligraphy on the ground with long-handled, thick brushes, children running through the grasses, lovers pining, groups of people playing cards or chess, families eating picnic lunches.

Coming from Canada and cognizant of the recent rise in public awareness about climate changes, I was eager to explore the global warming pulse in Chinese awareness. We had brought many copies of Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth* to

show to English students and university colleagues. None of the 75 or so students and teachers we showed or gave the film to had seen it and very few had even heard of it. Upon further checking, I found that they didn't know or care much about global warming. This is a concern as these people are among the country's most highly educated. They all watched the film with rapt attention and there was an audible collective intake of breath at the point where Beijing and Shanghai are shown partly under water.

I asked the students for their reactions after they viewed the film. One after another, they repeated, "Shock." One student, tears in her eyes, said, "I realize that we are all one family."

Students described their reactions in writing in another class. One wrote: "I'm totally shocked at the bare facts Al Gore presents....I never knew that we are actually living in such conditions on this planet. The hard figures, the sharp contrast between the glaciers some decades ago and now, the homeless refugees of catastrophes, and the vivid images of huge mountains of ice collapsing into the water all make me reconsider my way of looking at things around me. Global warming never occurred to me before...but now, it suddenly dawns on me that since our generation is going to live on this planet, if we do not do something about it, who else will be responsible for us?"

China clearly has a long way to go in raising awareness about global warming and doing something about it. Among those in the forefront is Friends of Nature,

an environmental non-governmental organization established in 1994 and based in Beijing with chapters in other cities. We met with the staff of 14 and in some ways it was like walking into the Ecology Action Centre. Staff members are mostly young, enthusiastic people educated in scientific and technological fields. In China, people with such backgrounds can usually get high-paying jobs. A tempting prospect, particularly in a developing country. The fact that they chose Friends of Nature instead is indicative of their dedication. Their work focuses mainly on education: visiting schools, working with teachers on curriculum, taking students on field trips, giving public lectures, holding conferences and exhibitions, preparing brochures, and putting out newsletters and other publications. Among other things, they plant trees, encourage cycling, energy conservation, green consumption and recycling. And, when given the chance, they also do a bit of government policy advising.

Developments like the publication of the Al Gore book in Chinese and the work of groups like Friends of Nature are encouraging. The crisis facing the planet, however, is unprecedented and overwhelming.

The primary responsibility for avoiding disaster unquestionably lies with the developed countries - those mainly responsible for global warming in the first place. Given the vastness of China and the speed of its development, however, China has no choice but to do its part...now.

*Ruth Gamberg, a retired teacher, is an active member of the Ecology Action Centre.*

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# Meet the Veinottes - Foresters in Balance With the Environment

By Hana Hermaneck

Clear, cold brooks trickle through shady forests. Tall hollow trees shelter flying squirrels, barred owls and osprey. Rare lady slipper orchids push through dark, rich soils. You might think I'm describing a protected wilderness area but surprisingly enough this is the working woodlot of Kevin and Susan Veinotte just outside of Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.

The Veinottes were awarded 2007 provincial Woodlot Owner of the Year for their working philosophy of healthy forestry. Their vibrant and sustainable woodlot provides them with abundant supplies of wood coupled with multiple benefits that overflow the boundary lines on a land grant. The 600 acres of land have been in the family since 1860. The lot has been sold and bought back into their family as recently as 40 years ago and has sustained the family for 7 generations.

Kevin Veinotte, husky and rosy-cheeked, shakes my hand when I arrive to witness first-hand his model wood lot. He had just finished maneuvering his haying tractor into the farmyard to gear up for a day of baling. Free range chickens scurry about, the organic garden bursts at its seams and a young calf and her mother take shade under a lush tree in the pasture. Kevin has a lot on the go, so I'm grateful for the time he takes from of his labours to lead me on a walk through his ecologically managed woodlot.

We duck into the cool shade of the long-lived hemlock and spruce woods to escape the heat. Intact forest canopies are impressive cooling agents - vital in mitigating the effects of our warming climate by blocking the sun and retaining moisture. There is little evidence of forestry at the Veinottes' woodlot, aside from a narrow road winding through the woods and a few stumps here and there, and scant resemblance to the commercial clear-cut operations that account for well over 90 percent of the logging in this province. Active members of Nagaya Forest Restoration, the Veinottes practice truly sustainable forest management. Their work is a breath of fresh air for the province and a story of prosperity that takes account of not just monetary values, but anything from carbon storage, wildlife habitat and clean water.

Clear-cuts, on the other hand, present no barriers to the sun's heat beating down on the soil and oxidizing stored carbon. The intricate root system of trees and

other plants function to retain moisture and prevent flooding and erosion. Rich fertile soils nourish mosses, lichen and other organisms. Cavities in large standing dead trees make excellent homes for woodpeckers, owls and other cavity nesters. Trees also shade brooks and regulate water temperatures so fragile salmon eggs can hatch. Clear-cuts strip trees from the land and the role they play in regulating ecosystem dynamics along with them.

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if you would like to join others  
in asking that Nova Scotia follow  
Quebec's example.

The Veinottes, in contrast, are careful to mimic the natural processes to complement the forest's integrity and health when removing trees. Kevin replicates small scale natural disturbances such as wind-throw to allow the multi-aged forest to receive enough light on the smaller trees. He also ensures that the basal area - a measure of standing timber - is high enough to fend against strong winds, even if this means going above and beyond standards under forest sustainability regulations that would have helped him cover his costs. Pruning the trees enhances the future value of his woodlot. Woody debris on the ground plays an important role in regulating soil moisture, nourishes the earth and provides shelter for wildlife.

Kevin is already Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified - the gold standard for forestry practices. The Veinottes, however, like other Nagaya members, go above and beyond this standard to do as much as they can to achieve sustainable forestry in Nova Scotia. Unlike most commercial forestry, Kevin harvests mainly in the winter when the ground is hardest and dragging trees on the earth is least likely to cause soil compaction. He also follows a no-logging policy in the springtime, a sensitive time for newly born wildlife.

As we walk through the shade of his forest canopy, Kevin tells me that the major barrier to pursuing sustainable forestry is that management is based on the volume of trees fed through the mills rather than the quality. Fewer trees cut for a better price would be a win-win situation for the forestry industry and the environment.

Kevin believes he could make a living from his forestry operations alone but enjoys the balance his other seasonal sources of income offer. He harvested 30,000 board-feet last year, half of his planned annual allowable cut, and still made a profit. He also harvested a few thousand certified organic Christmas trees. He gets four times the usual return per hectare on his Christmas trees because of his organic certification.

The Veinottes want to set a precedent for sound and responsible harvest methods for generations to come. Their closeness to the land and understanding of the forests is the key to maintaining a balance with nature and resource extraction. Their woodlot demonstrates just how progressive the Maritimes could be when we put our hearts and minds to it.

EAC is grateful for the Veinottes' donation of wood from their lot for the Fern Lane renovations in 2006. We're also delighted to promote their work and that of other Nagaya members and FSC-certified woodlots around the province. If you're planning a renovation, new deck, bookshelves, or any other projects, visit our website to be put in touch with other Nova Scotians working with our Acadian Forests for a sustainable forestry future.

*Hana Hermank is interning with the Standing Tall Campaign and recently returned from Ecuador where she worked on sustainable forestry practices.*

## Garden Party

*Photos by Katie Mahon*

In a year of record breaking at the EAC, this year's Garden Party was no exception, raising over \$22, 000.00 for the centre. It's our largest annual fundraiser, and we are ever thankful to the Organizing Committee, volunteers and all those who attended.



*Members of the GP committee celebrating another successful year.*



*John and Nancy hosting up a storm.*



*Happy garden party attendees scoping out the goods.*



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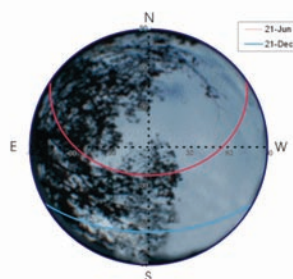
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# ecohoroscopes

By Suki Starfish

**VIRGO** (August 23-September 22): You'll feel particularly conservative with Saturn coming into your sign in early September, and you'll want to save money and energy. You've probably already replaced your lightbulbs with energy-efficient ones and replaced the ancient energy-sucking appliances with sleeker models. But even the most well-intentioned occasionally forget to turn off lights and electronics when not in use. When you're turning off the computer, for example, make sure you don't forget the monitor and printer!

**LIBRA** (September 23-October 22): Your birthday's coming up, so throw a fabulous bash for yourself! Serve some simple local, organic nibbles. Get creative and make decorations out of re-used materials! Ask your guests to send a donation to a charity in lieu of bringing a gift. After all, it's the company and not the gifts that'll make your celebration memorable for years to come. And as lovely as Great Aunt Ida's tchochkes are, does the collection in the back of your closet really need yet another addition?

**SCORPIO** (October 23-November 21): You have a natural knack for finding the beauty in things others might throw away. That old bent bike wheel, for example, could make a beautiful picture frame, don't you think? Keep things out of the waste stream and find new treasures by joining Freecycle. It's free to join this online group, where people post things they want to ditch, and the first person to contact them gets the goods. Go to [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org) to find the group nearest you.

**SAGITTARIUS** (November 22-December 21): Whee! Soon, all the gadgets you love will be able to go happily and sustainably to electronic heaven when that sad day comes and they can no longer be given away or sold for parts. Nova Scotia begins phase one of its electronics recycling program in February, 2008 with even more products to be collected in phase two, starting February 2009. Visit [www.rafb.com](http://www.rafb.com) for the details.

**CAPRICORN** (December 22-January 19): You'll be bursting with energy this October, when Mars is opposite your sign. Burn it off by going on a hike on your favourite trail and reconnecting with nature. New to hiking? Visit [www.novatrails.com](http://www.novatrails.com) for some excellent tips and a list of trails in your area.

**AQUARIUS** (January 20-February 18): Recycling is all well and good, but truly environmentally responsible citizens precycle first. What is that, you ask? It's keeping things out of the waste stream by making smart decisions and planning ahead. You may already be doing it if you take your own bags to the store for your groceries, carry your hot drinks in re-usable mugs, or donate your used clothes to charity. You're also doing it when you chose products with the least packaging and ones that will last the longest.

**PISCES** (February 19-March 20): Your nurturing side will be in full swing this fall, so it's the perfect time to help your favourite kids connect with the earth. Why not take some young friends on a hike or let them help you with some fall harvesting of your garden's goodies? Teach them about what they can do to help the environment. If you're stuck for suggestions, visit <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/kids/> for some great ones.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19): You're much too busy for a long, hot bath anyway, right? Your brief showers are much more water-efficient than baths, especially when you turn off the water while you soap up. Save even more water by installing a low-flow showerhead, which uses 60 percent of the water used by a regular showerhead. You can save 17,082 L of water a year for each person in your household!

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20): You, dear bull, have the dubious honour of sharing a sign with Stephen Harper, winner of EAC's 2007 Tarred Duck Award. But don't despair. There are plenty of environmentally responsible Taureans about. After all, you are an earth sign! But you good'uns must set an example for the, er, less aware. Write to Prime Minister Harper or your MP and let them know that the Harper government's failure to act on environmental issues is unacceptable. Visit <http://www.parl.gc.ca/> for the contact information.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21): You'll feel the need to flex your intellectual muscles this fall. Read a book for education and inspiration such as George Monbiot's *Heat*, or David Suzuki's *Sacred Balance*. Read the newspaper to stay current with environmental issues and write a letter to the editor about something that catches your eye. Your knowledge will make for some excellent conversation starters at parties.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22): Mars will be heating things up for you as the weather cools this October. You'll thrill that special someone when you treat them to a meal of local, organic deliciousness – perhaps using a recipe from the EAC's *Eating by the Seasons* cookbook (\$10, available at our office)! Afterwards, you may very well need the helpful tips in Greenpeace's guide, "Getting it on for the good of the planet," available online.

**LEO** (July 23-August 22): You'll get special enjoyment from sensual pleasures with Venus in your sign for most of September. Is there anything more soothing than sipping freshly-brewed coffee or tea on a crisp fall morning? It's even better when it's fair-trade and organic. One fair trade company, Laughing Whale, even has a blend, "Grounds for Action", of which 25 cents from each pound sold goes to the Ecology Action Centre! You can buy it from our office. Yum!

*Suki Starfish is a Northern Sea Star (Asterias vulgaris) living in the waters off Halifax. If you cut her in half (which she doesn't recommend), she'll grow back into two new sea stars.*





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*Chronicle Herald, July 3rd, 2007*

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