

# TREK

Trails, Recreation,  
Environment Knews

## The Torbay Environment & Trails Committee Newsletter

Vol. 3 Issue 1 (May 2001)

### *In this issue:*

- Community Calendar
- Trail's End Property
- Spring Clean-up
- Backyard Habitat Workshop
- Lawncare Tips
- Wetlands and The Gully Habitat
- Pesticide Use
- Oil Storage Tanks
- Future Plans

### *Mission Statement*

Formed in 1990, the Environment and Trails Committee (ETC) is a volunteer committee of the Torbay Town Council whose mission is to address environmental issues that impact our community and to support the development and maintenance of trails in the town, in particular, the Father Troy Trail. The ETC is a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Environment Network and the Stewardship Association of Municipalities of Newfoundland and Labrador; the ETC is represented on the Capital Coast Development Alliance, the East Coast Trail Association and the Torbay Heritage Committee. The ETC has a modest budget provided by the Town Council supplemented by grant applications, donations, and at times by fundraising.

The Executive of the ETC, newly elected in March 2001, is:

Chair:	Colleen Tapper	437-5715
Vice-Chair:	Shirley Thorne	437-6358
Treasurer:	Mike Wawrskow	437-5616
Secretary:	Madeline Florent	437-6439
Council Reps:	Bob Codner and Gerry Hayes	

Correspondence, including Letters to the Editor, should be forwarded to the ETC c/o Torbay Town Council, Box 1160, Torbay, NF A1K 1K4 or e-mail [shirleymthorne@roadrunner.nf.net](mailto:shirleymthorne@roadrunner.nf.net).

The ETC meets on the last Wednesday of each month (except July and December) at 8 PM at the Town Hall.



### *Community Calendar:*

May 6	Public meeting to discuss enhancement and preservation opportunities for the Gully area. 2-4 PM at the Kinsmen Community Centre
May 22 <sup>nd</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup>	Community Cleanup, debris boxes in town yard (except Sunday) 8 AM to 8 PM
May 26 <sup>th</sup>	Neighbourhood Cleanup, 11 AM to 4 PM (see article, page 2)
May 30 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of Environment & Trails Committee, Town Hall at 8 PM
June 27 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly meeting of Environment & Trails Committee, Town Hall at 8 PM
July 1 <sup>st</sup>	Mayor's Walk- along Fr. Troy Trail, after Memorial Day Service
July 13 <sup>th</sup>	Last date for nominations for Traverse Garden's Property Beautification Awards
July 29 <sup>th</sup>	Preliminary judging for property beautification awards
Aug 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Award night for best properties, Kinsmen Centre 7:30 PM

### *Help Stop the Re-zoning of Trail's End!*

As part of Torbay's 5-year review of the Town Plan, it has been proposed that the 47-acre site known as "Trail's End," the former Scouts Canada camp off Indian Meal Line, be rezoned from 'Recreational Open Space' to 'Residential Large Lot' (with a mere 10% retained as recreational). If this proposed change goes ahead, there will likely be 45-50 houses built at that site, much of the land's natural setting will be lost forever, and access to the site by the public will be greatly restricted.

As it exists now, Trail's End is a beautiful location on Western Island Pond and includes a camp lodge with a kitchen, an in-ground pool, campsites with fire pits and hiking trails. There have been 70 years of labour-intensive camp and trail making and hundreds of Scouts have spent time there enjoying and helping to improve the site. It would be a shame to lose such a long-established recreational retreat to another housing development.

A few years ago Torbay made an offer to purchase the property from Scouts Canada, which no longer uses the area, but the offer was not accepted. According to a Scouts Canada representative, they have a developer lined up to buy the property if it is re-zoned. It is clear that some land development will occur in this area given that tracts of land on either side of Trail's End are being re-zoned to residential. Nonetheless, the Environment and Trails Committee strongly believes that a proper balance is needed between development and conservation, and that it is important to preserve a reasonable amount of natural habitat for the benefit of wildlife and humans alike. Western Island Pond and a buffer around it has been identified in Torbay's Habitat Management Plan as one of only two '**Critical Wetlands Habitat Management Units**' in Torbay and would be gravely endangered by this rezoning. This area

needs to be preserved for the benefit of all of us and for future generations.

The public hearing on the proposed changes was held April 24<sup>th</sup> and the Commissioner will submit his report to the Town Council in 30 days. The Council has already tentatively approved the changes, subject to modifications following the Commissioner's recommendations and final approval by Council. **It's not too late to be heard on this issue!**

### ***Sign our Petition!***

The Torbay Environment and Trails Committee is organising to protest this re-zoning. Our petition will be available to sign until May 16<sup>th</sup> at local stores. Please stop by and sign the petition to make your voice heard!

### ***Spring Clean-up***

This year's Spring Clean-up is especially important after our long winter. Debris boxes will be available in the town yard from May 22<sup>nd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> between 8 am and 8 pm (except Sunday). So clean-up your yard and bring anything except hazardous materials to the debris boxes.

The Neighbourhood Clean-up will be held on Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, so take pride in your neighbourhood and help pick-up the trash in your area. Garbage bags will be available at the town hall during the week or on Saturday from 11 am - 4 pm. Participants will receive a Spruce Seedling Starter Kit (while supplies last) for each bag of trash they bring in!

#### ***Top 10 Reasons You Should Join the Neighbourhood Clean-up (Sat., May 26<sup>th</sup>)***

10. Get some fresh air after the long winter.
9. Make a fortune with the new 5¢ recyclable refund.
8. Get the kids out of the house.
7. Find that left glove you lost in December.
6. Find that car you haven't used since January.
5. Rediscover your hibernating neighbours.
4. There's 6 month's worth of grocery bags out there.
3. You might find a winning RRRoll-up-the-Rim-to-Win cup!
2. Help clean up the friggin' beer bottles.
1. Get a prize when you turn in the trash you've collected!

### ***Backyard Habitat Workshop***

An entertaining and successful Backyard Habitat Workshop was held on Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at Holy Trinity Elementary School. Jointly sponsored by the ETC and Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures, the workshop allowed 25 participants to learn the fundamentals of how to attract wildlife to their properties (and how to keep the unwanted ones away). The workshop began with the hands-on 'moose habitat' exercise outside the school designed to help participants identify the four

basics of a wildlife habitat: food, shelter, water and space. (Anyone driving by and seeing a bunch of adults making funny gestures and running all over the place surely must have wondered just what was going on at the school...).

Some very interesting facts came out at the workshop: did you know, for example, that it is quite possible to get pink flamingos in your backyard – not the plastic variety but the real thing? However, don't hold your breath.

Our heartfelt thanks to Ralph Jarvis, wildlife biologist and manager of the Salmonier Nature Park, for giving up his Saturday to impart his knowledge of wildlife habitat, to Nancy Elkins and Holy Trinity Elementary for providing space and the amenities, and to Gerry Yetman and the Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures for donating the workbooks for everybody, thereby helping raise money for the committee (\$170).

### ***\$1000 for Wetland Project***

The Environment & Trails Committee would like to thank Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures for donating \$1000 to undertake a wetland habitat project in our community this summer. The committee will be brainstorming with the two schools for ideas on a suitable project.

### ***Tips from Traverse***

Now that the winter is over (we hope), Ross offers us the following tips on how to get our lawns beautiful and healthy again after the ill effects of the long winter:

- Lime every year at the rate of 10 lbs. per 100 sq. ft.
- Fertilize in the spring, again midsummer and in September with a 15-5-15 fertilizer at the rate of 3 lbs. per 100 sq. ft.
- Mow the grass as high as possible, at least 2 inches of grass left after mowing
- Mow often so that only the top 1/3 of the grass plants is removed
- Moss should be raked out; reseed if necessary, following instructions for seeding
- A wet area must be drained to get grass to grow properly
- To control weeds, pull weeds by hand or use alternative ground cover such as clover or heather

### ***ATV Update***

At this time of the year, the soft, wet ground of our backroads and bogs are particularly susceptible to damage from ATVs. Just a reminder that recreational use of ATVs has been banned in our town. The RNC regularly monitors ATV usage in our town and continues to enforce their policy of zero tolerance.

### ***Wetlands***

*Excerpt from "Hinterlands Who's Who: Wetlands" published by the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada. Used by permission of the Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada.*

It's easy to regard wetlands as mere wastelands, of little or no value. We don't build houses or factories in swamps, bogs or marshes, and we don't plant wheat or many other crops on land submerged in water. Wetlands are generally unsuitable for boating, swimming- in fact most human activities. So it's not surprising that many people 'reclaim' our wetlands, by draining them or filling them in. To do so is a serious mistake.

Wetlands act like giant sponges, soaking up rain and snowmelt and slowly releasing water in drier seasons. Thus, they help to reduce floods and to ease the worst effects of droughts. Draining ponds, sloughs and marshes often lowers the water table and dries up wells. Wetlands also reduce soil erosion by checking or slowing the runoff from storms and thaws.

### **Wha's Da Good a Bogs Anyway?**

#### **10 Reasons to Preserve Wetlands (ponds, streams, marshes, & bogs)**

1. They are natural reservoirs capable of conserving, purifying, and renewing precious water supplies.
2. They are some of the most biologically diverse and productive ecosystems.
3. They provide:
  - \* recreation
  - \* canoeing
  - \* hiking
  - \* fishing
  - \* photography
  - \* bird watching and meditation
4. They provide nature education opportunities & conservation ethic for young people.
5. They produce volumes of food for insects, fish, plants and algae.
6. They can be compared to tropical rain forests and coral reefs in the diversity of species they support.
7. An estimated 50 million people spend approximately \$10 billion each year observing and photographing wetland-dependent birds.
8. Almost 50 % of the threatened and endangered species rely on wetlands for their survival.
9. They are crucial for the well being of our planet.
10. They are far more beautiful than any piece of boring lawn (personal observation).



*In a green place lanced through  
With amber and gold and blue  
A place of water and weeds,  
And roses pinker than dawn  
And ranks of lush young reeds  
And grasses straightly withdrawn  
From graven ripples of sands  
The still blue heron stands*

"The Blue Heron" by Theodore Goodridge Roberts

### ***Habitat Management Plan***

A Municipal Stewardship Agreement was signed by the Town of Torbay and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador on March 26, 1997. The Town has agreed to manage those specified wetland habitats within its municipal boundaries with technical advice from the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV), which includes Federal, Provincial and non-profit organizations.

#### **What is a Habitat Management Plan?**

Along with providing the town with an inventory of wildlife species and habitat types present in our wetlands, the plan provides the Town with recommendations for **conservation, restoration, enhancement, and educational techniques** for the stewardship zone and associated management units. A total of 14 municipalities have designated wetland management plans.

#### **The Gully: A Critical Wetland Area**

The Gully is a section of Island Brook in the area of Lynch's Lane and Mahon's Lane located between the High School and the Elementary School and highly accessible to the public. If developed with the proper safeguards it could become the jewel in the center of Torbay and an invaluable educational and public awareness tool for wetland conservation. The area has an abundance of wildlife including black ducks, swallows, snowshoe hare, squirrels, and muskrat, as well as an abundance of plant life. If we don't start to protect this area we may lose this natural area for future generations. Please attend the public meeting on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2-4 PM at the Kinsmen Centre.

## ***Pesticide Use: to spray or not to spray?***

by Madeline Florent

On April 1, 2001, the city of Halifax became the 1<sup>st</sup> major municipality in North America to restrict the use of several pesticides and herbicides from residential and municipal properties. The new rules govern where and what kind of lawn chemicals can be used. By 2003 the city plans to impose a general ban of pesticides on all residential properties.

I would love to see a ban imposed here in Torbay like the one in Halifax. When a neighbour five houses down the road sprays his property, the wind carries the chemicals down the road to my home. Are you concerned about an invasion of your biological privacy? So many pesticides are used where good watering, cutting and fertilizing practices would get rid of most pests anyway. There is a health cost to using pesticides. Why not look at options for lawn care without pesticides?

## ***Do You Have an Oil Storage Tank?***

If so, then maybe all the recent media coverage about spills has you a bit spooked. With the risk of being forced to spend anywhere from \$3,000 to over \$100,000 to clean up a seemingly small spill next to your home, the thought of an accidental leak can indeed be a frightening one.

So what do you do, go out and get a new electric heating system? Give up the oil and burn wood instead? Well, you can do that. But instead, why not consider things you can do to reduce the risk of major problems and give you peace of mind. Here are some suggestions:

- Check to see that you have adequate insurance coverage that protects both you as well as your neighbours in case of a spill from your tank system. Check the fine print, as many policies cover only damage to third parties (i.e. your neighbours' properties) and not your own.
- Inspect and maintain your system regularly! It sounds simple enough, but poor maintenance probably accounts for the majority of spills. If you don't feel capable to do this, ask an expert, or your oil supplier, for help.
- Given that typical 200 gallon above-ground tanks are relatively cheap, consider replacing them every few years if you cannot properly control the rust. Beware that tanks do rust from the inside as well, so a tank that looks to be in perfectly good shape may nevertheless be on its last legs. As for tanks that are buried, prudent homeowners should consider removing them if possible, especially if they are more than 10 to 15 years old, and (if possible) replacing them with above-ground ones which can be more easily inspected.
- Have a good, thorough look at your "tank system" (i.e. tank and all fuel lines linking it to your furnace) to see how you might reduce the risk of accidental spills from any point. For example, leaks often result from fuel lines that become accidentally ruptured: either someone trips over an exposed line and breaks it, or couplings and fittings become loose

and break because of the force of snow and ice.

Sometimes moving the tank to a better spot, limiting access to the area around the tank and lines, and physically protecting it from the elements can help.

- Consider more expensive tank systems, if your budget allows, that offer more protection against spills (such as double walled tanks and lines, better rust corrosion coatings, etc).

## ***Future Plans of the ETC***

In addition to our regular annual activities like the Neighbourhood Clean-up and the Property Beautification Awards, the priorities of the Environment and Trails Committee for the coming year include:

- Developing a strategic plan for the Gully Wetlands and preparing an application for funding
- Upgrading the Father Troy Trail with the assistance of the East Coast Trail Association
- Working with the Heritage Committee to enhance Woodfine's Falls
- Pursuing the development of a senior's trail
- Developing a web site for the ETC
- Encouraging planting of trees around the community
- Initiating an annual "Mayor's Walk" along the Fr. Troy Trail, possibly on Canada Day

Many other issues are being discussed and worked on by the ETC including the water supply, waste management and recycling, domestic pesticide use and community composting.

If any or all of these issues are of interest to you and your family, please call or come to our meetings.

### ***Disclaimer***

*The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individual authors as indicated and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Town Council of Torbay.*

