

C O N S E R V A T I O N

BAIE MISSISQUOI



EDITORIAL

Conservation Baie Missisquoi is starting its 17th year of environmental involvement to work with citizens, government and the farming community to help reduce the pollution in Missisquoi Bay. A colossal task in itself, accomplished by volunteers full of determination and perseverance, who believe that every bit helps to clean up of the bay.

The efforts of Conservation Baie Missisquoi were recognized this summer by the bestowing of the prestigious Teddy Roosevelt Award (see the article by Yvan Sinotte "Friends of Missisquoi Bay and CBM receive the Teddy Roosevelt Award"). A prestigious prize which dearly touched us all, and that has given us the courage and the energy to continue our journey towards the goals set forth by our charter.

During the fall of 2005, we received good news and also news that is generating some concern. In the farming community the protection of the waterways seem to have become a major strategic issue with "l'Union des producteurs agricoles" (UPA). Two important projects have been announced.

The Fondation de la Faune du Québec in collaboration with the Financière agricole du Québec has put in place a compensation program targeting the agricultural practitioners to encourage good agroenvironmental practices and the protection of wildlife. The Financière will contribute \$600 per hectare per year for 5 years, to compensate for losses incurred by farmers who will, on a volunteer basis, begin the restoration of buffer zones surrounding 10 important rivers in the province of Quebec. The Richelieu River in the Richelieu basin area is one of the rivers targeted in this program. We hope that the program will also compensate farmers who have already started to restore their buffer zones over the past few years. These farmers should be recognized for their valiant efforts and determination to contribute towards the sustainable development of their land even prior to the launch of compensation programs.



The second project called "Solution at the Source" was announced by the St-Hyacinthe branch of the UPA and will target three watersheds: Yamaska, Richelieu and Missisquoi basins. This project will try to group the agricultural practitioners in these regions and incite them to work in a concerted effort to protect the waterways crossing their lands. We are looking forward with great anticipation to the kick-off of these two avant-garde projects.

On the other hand, the ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs (MDDEP) has announced plans that make us uneasy. The proposed changes announced last July by the Minister concerning the regulations for agricultural exploitation, has left us confused. This communiqué is a total reversal of the December 2004 moratorium on the implementation of pig farms in degraded basins. We will be closely following the discussions around this topic.

There is still a lot of work to be done to convince our leaders to adopt measures that harmonize the laws and regulations of agricultural activities, the National Water policy and the Shoreline protection policy. Water management requires great visionary insight to ensure the preservation and protection our natural resources. The action plans must include global and long term strategies to achieve true sustainable development. Teddy Roosevelt was a visionary... He was the first American president to take concrete measures to protect the environment. We sincerely hope that the Teddy Award will inspire our leaders, the agricultural practitioners and all of you.

Nathalie Fortin
President

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI BAY AND CBM
RECEIVE THE TEDDY ROOSEVELT AWARD

by Yvan Sinotte

The mood was festive on Isle La Motte last September 17, 2005 when the Lake Champlain Island Chamber of Commerce awarded the fifth Teddy Roosevelt Award to Friends of Missisquoi Bay and Conservation Baie Missisquoi to highlight the work and efforts for the clean up of Lake Champlain and Missisquoi Bay. Teddy Roosevelt, who was the president of the USA in the early 20th century, was known for the nature preservation programs he initiated. Under his administration, 84,000 acres of virgin forest escaped industrialized development each day. In 1901 Teddy Roosevelt visited with the governor of Vermont for his annual banquet of the hunting and fishing club at Isle La Motte. This is why the Lake Champlain Island Chamber of Commerce gave his name to the annual award, honouring persons and organizations involved in respecting ecological principles that were started by Teddy Roosevelt. Pixley Tyler Hill, a founding member of Friends of Missisquoi Bay, and Pierre Leduc of Conservation Baie Missisquoi were presented the 5th Teddy Roosevelt Award. Most of the council members of



From left to right : Yvan Sinotte, Nathalie Fortin, Pierre Leduc, Louis Hak and Alain Lemieux

Conservation Baie Missisquoi participated in the presentation ceremony accompanied by the Honourable Denis Paradis, member of Parliament for the riding of Brome-Missisquoi. The Lake Champlain Island Chamber of Commerce presented the distinctive award to the two organizations because of what the Heritage of Teddy

Roosevelt represents, an inspiration for the nation and for everybody that enjoys the beauty and benefits of natural treasures like Lake Champlain. The previous winners of the award have been three members of the US senate and the executive director of the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.



DOBA CARACOLE : One of the highlights of la Fête de l'Eau.

FÊTE DE L'EAU:
A SUCCESS DESPITE THE RAIN

by Martin Landreville

All indicators suggest that last July 9th, Fête de L'Eau, held in Venise-en-Quebec, was a great success considering that torrential rain fell for nearly 24 hours. The festivities were moved indoors at the last minute, thanks to the willingness and collaboration of the organizers. Even after the show had started, ticket vendors were still actively selling last minute seats to sell out the event. In the end, there was a full house and many people had to be turned away. Despite the rain, they stayed outdoors under the canopy to enjoy the music and ambience.

We must send our thanks and gratitude to all the political and business people who helped in the organization of this event with their generous contributions. Special thanks goes to the town of Venise-en-Quebec, and its priest for opening the doors of his church at the last minute. The success is due to the many hundreds of supporters who

bought and sold the tickets, as well as the professionalism and determination of the technical team for their part in making the show a success. Thanks to the many artists, such as Richard Séguin, Doba Caracole and Raoul Duguay, who helped make this event important and bring media attention to our cause. Thanks again for their dedication and the many hours invested in the event.

The presence of these artists was possible because of the devotion and determination of the Eau Secours organization. André Bouthillier and Caroline Perron attended all of our meetings. They are responsible to finding ways to finance the brochure that was prepared for the event. This brochure was very informative and we had the opportunity to see it in many places around lake Champlain during the summer.

The commercial benefits were not as

great as expected, because Mother Nature did not cooperate. "We were expecting more people that weekend" explains Johanne Pratt from la SITE. "Many outdoor activities had been planned for both Saturday and Sunday, had the weather permitted." But because of the rain, only people holding tickets for the concert showed up. Most of the activities had been planned by Chantal d'Auteuil and Johanne Bérubé from la Corporation Bassin Versant Baie Missisquoi. No need to tell you how disappointed they were. We still want to thank you both for your ideas and your excellent work!

Without the involvement and direction of Johanne Pratt and her extraordinary organizational skills, the financing and scheduling of this event would have been hard to achieve. Imagine! The event was supposed to take place in the open air, on the federal wharf ...

C O N S E R V A T I O N

BAIE MISSISQUOI

Happy New Year !

CITIZENS PLANTING TREES

BRISE-VENT PROJECT -2000 TREES CONTINUE TO FLOURISH

Last May 21st, volunteers from Conservation Baie Missisquoi, once again rolled up their sleeves and went to plant trees with Richard Lauzier from the ministry of Agriculture (MAPAQ). Eight hundred more trees were planted at the Lareau Creek on the lands of Sylvain Duquette, Roger Santerre and the Gastier farm of Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge, completing the project that had started the previous year. Additional tree plantings were performed, when time allowed, on the Farm of the Colombette family. Richard Lauzier commented that a total of 76,000 trees were planted this year in the Monteregie by conscien-

tious farmers. We take this opportunity to thank all the agricultural practitioners that participated in this project.

LAROCHE RIVER PROJECT

Another restoration project was conducted on May 28th, on both banks of the Laroche River on the property of Claude and Charles Benoit, planting 300 trees by some 15 Conservation Baie Missisquoi members. This project was a great success thanks to the help of Jean-Pierre Bonin from the MAPAQ as well as Alain Lemieux and Martin Landreville of CBM. The planted varieties were Pennsylvania

ash, fruit oak and a species of hickory. Claude was also able to fulfill a long time dream by incorporating black walnut in the buffer zone, an indigenous tree of this region. In late October of this year, a few brave Conservation Baie Missisquoi members went back to check and winterize the planted trees. They installed scented fabric softener sheets on the tender shoots to prevent the foraging deer from snacking on the young saplings. Here is a picture of a magnificent 200-year-old oak tree that is watching over the young seedlings planted along the banks on the Benoit land.



A mighty Oak Tree watches over one of CBM's tree plantation projects at the Benoit Farm in St-Armand

THE IMPACT

OF THE HYDRO-PLANE REGATTA par Martin Landreville

Venise-en-Quebec held an hydro plane regatta last August, a month after the Fête de l'Eau. This event caused a lot of commotion between local groups. The town council was divided on whether the event should be held. The topic was brought up on numerous occasions during the municipal elections because the leaders had to take positions on whether such activities are indeed good for the local economy. The local business community was hoping to attract a very large audience with this event, while citizens who agree with the objective of generating revenues, were also considering the environmental impact on the water quality of the lake.

The event promoters' position was based on the premise that regattas do not pollute the water and such events are self financed, requiring little public assistance. One of the event promoters, Kathleen Berry said, "Regattas do not pollute the water. We tested the water before and after the event and the quality was better because the boats oxygenated the water". She expects the event to return next year and continued to say, "This is a pro-environmental concept. All the boats recuperate the oils after each race...."

Conservation Baie Missisquoi has a different opinion. We therefore clearly stated our discontent in many of the local newspapers. We feel that such an event sends the wrong message to the public and to politicians. We can not help but question the validity of such an event, when on the one hand, waterfront residents are asking the population of both Quebec and Vermont to control all pollution sources entering the bay, while, on the other hand, the municipality that suffers the greatest consequences of the pollution helps to organize and sponsor such an event.

It is also important to consider the scientific aspects when evaluating the impact of such events. Certain types of toxic cyanobacteria, which are present in the lake, have the ability to adjust their depth in the water column. This is possible because of a gas-filled chamber found inside the cyanobacteria, especially in the *Microcystis*. These flotation aids give *Microcystis* the capacity to travel and locate the best luminosity as well as the ability to retrieve phosphorus and nitrogen, which are required for their growth. The turbulence caused by the fast turning propellers of thirty or more speed boats in the confined area, disturb the water and could give *Mirocystis* the advantage to reproduce faster than competing cyanobacteria because they can migrate up the water column to capture light. Finally, a lot of the phosphorus and nitrogen in the lake is stored or accumulated in the sediment. The turbulence caused by so many high speed boats, in our shallow bay, is likely to cause the release of phosphorus and nitrogen from the sediments. These newly available nutrients could facilitate the growth of cyanobacteria.

Many business owners were furious with the Société d'initiatives touristiques et économiques (SITE) who took part in organizing the Fête de l'Eau, then publicly opposed the holding of the regatta. The SITE stated that it needed to maintain its credibility with regards to the Fête de l'Eau and the underlying importance of the environmental health of our water, which is a limited resource. Notably many residents also expressed their concerns about the noise pollution caused by the boats racing in front of their property.

All indicators show that the economic well being of Venise-en-Quebec has not been improving over the last few years. Will the new municipal leaders be able to satisfy both people

that believe that the resurgence of Venise will come from a cleaner lake, as well as people that believe that Venise's success will come from an economic vitality that will attract more tourists? Some business owners, to whom we spoke anonymously, said that they have their minds made up and will not elaborate further. All they know is that they are tired of the media showing up every time something comes up about the pollution of the lake. The question remains, are the economic problems of Venise-en-Quebec caused by a biased media image, or are the problems related directly to the poor water quality of the lake?...

Recently elected mayor of Venise, Mr. Jacques Landry admitted that he will not standby and watch Venise sink into non-existence. He says that many negative statements have been made about his community. A few kind words would certainly be better but he would not want the tourists to be disappointed upon their visit.

"I had to concede on the regatta issue, because it has been an important topic during the electoral campaign. These boat races represent increased revenues for business owners who have already suffered poor tourist seasons for several years in a row. We are very sympathetic to their situation but we also keep in mind that events should be in line with the environmental plan of the region. We want our environment to be attractive because the sector that is closest to us is tourism." Jacques Landry invites the community to support the local businesses as another long winter season approaches. "We will see whether it is possible to organize events this winter to attract tourists and help the business owners. It is important, it's the heart of our economy."

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GOOD TIMING FOR THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS!

HIGHWAY 35, ALBURG-SWANTON BRIDGE, THE YAMASKA RIVER, KYOTO par Martin Landreville

The municipal elections are over and the various councils are now formed for the next 4 years. This new start means that citizens won't have to vote again until November 2009. A lot will be happening until then. By the year 2009 we are promised the completion of Highway 35 and a cleaner bay!

In a context where the environment is the number one issue, internationally, nationally and provincially, it will be very important that our leaders be motivated towards concrete action that will ultimately be brought forward by the leaders of our region, our municipalities as well as us all. We can not just sit and watch the world go by! We have to act now to fulfill our 2009 deadline. We need results, not a bridge to another deadline!

It is the responsibility of regional organizations and communities to get together and establish a common vision that focuses on the environment and the state of the land that we will leave our children.

We have to act now. We must share our vision and express our wishes concerning several important issues. The routing of the proposed Highway 35, the Alburg-Swanton causeway, the management of our land, the installation of proper water treatment facilities, the collection and treatment of wastewater, the conformity of septic systems as well as better management of commercial and agricultural activities are all topics that must be discussed to reach a common agreement. This collective effort has to ultimately provide a common objective towards the sustainable development of our region. The environment must be at the heart of our plan. Such a strategy will inevitably increase tourism, which is vital to our economy.

EASTERN SPINY SOFTSHELL TURTLES

HIBERNATION: In the fall of 2004, the spiny softshell turtles changed their hibernation plan, because their favorite site was adjacent to the construction zone of the new Alburg-Swanton bridge. They adapted well to their new hibernation sites and came back last spring in good health. We are curious to know where the turtles are hibernating this year as the construction is still in progress...

REPRODUCTION: The water level was too high this fall to verify for the presence of egg shells in the sand. Teams from Conservation de la Nature and Conservation Baie Missisquoi (SOS Turtles) will have to wait for more favourable conditions to make any quantitative evaluations of the eggshell debris at the various nesting sites.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Conservation Baie Missisquoi has more than 215 members now.

Your support increases our clout and is essential to achieve our goals.

By becoming a member, you state that you agree with the ideas and actions put forward and allow us to be more effective in our interactions with the government.

Send your check to the order of
Conservation Baie Missisquoi B.P. 337 Philipsburg, Qc J0J 1N0

☐ Individual \$10 ☐ Family Membership \$20 • Number of people _____

Name : _____ First Name : _____

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REMINDER



Did you renew your membership?

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