



RIPARIAN READS

Newsletter of the Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee

Winter 2022



Manager's Message

The Kennebecasis River and the communities that sit along its banks have played a big role in keeping people healthy through this pandemic. We are seeing more and more people paddling, hiking, fishing, and simply enjoying the river as they seek refuge from the pandemic. This newfound popularity is fantastic; however, it does come with an increase in threats to the watershed.

With more people out trying to catch fish our populations become strained. With more people hiking and moving about in our wilderness areas there is increased risk from invasive species. With more people seeking to move to our region, more development creates issues for storm water management. Don't get us wrong, we love that people are coming to our watershed and considering making it home, but as the group responsible for keeping the waterways healthy, we have to be aware of what future threats we might face.

One of the keys to mitigate these potential threats is through educating the public as to what the impacts

are and how they can change their actions to reduce the impacts. We also continue to monitor the natural conditions of many parts of our watershed and when something is off-balance, we take steps to restore it back to a more natural state.

In 2022 we will be continuing a project to help farmers reduce the impacts that agricultural plastics have on the watershed. Agricultural plastics refers to such things as silage wrap, row cover plastic, fertilizer bags, and more. We are now wrapping up a survey where we received input from farmers on what is needed to better handle such plastics. This coming year we hope to take those results and implement a pilot project that will allow farmers to more effectively get rid of that plastic and keep it from entering our waterways. This project has numerous partners, including the Agriculture Alliance of NB and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Those increasing numbers of hikers and anglers we are seeing are a possible vector as they can sometime un-

intentionally introduce invasive species into our watershed. The KWRC has been building capacity to help deal with invasive species. In 2022 we plan to continue work to mitigate Eurasian Water Milfoil, which we first documented in our watershed in 2019. This invasive aquatic plant is likely going to alter the ecosystem of Darlings Lake and the lower Kennebecasis River. It may also result in changes to the fish populations and biodiversity in the lower river. We will be working hard to inform anglers and boaters how they can help with this project through the "Clean Drain Dry Program." Others can also reduce the spread of other invasive species and we will be partnered with the NB Invasive Species Council to help spread the message about those programs.

Flooding and storm water management has been a long-standing issue within the Kennebecasis. In 2022 the KWRC will strive to work with farmers and land use planners to bring forward programs that will add value to green belts and storm water retention areas. This type of program will provide landowners with a tool to improve their shoreline to better accommodate floodwaters which in turn helps others living in flood prone areas.

This newsletter just doesn't provide enough space to highlight everything we have coming up but we encourage you to check out our website and follow us on Facebook and Instagram. If you have questions or concerns about the Kennebecasis, please feel free to reach out to us.

See you on the water!

~ Ben Whalen
Project Manager



The Polar Pop Problem

Polar Pops are a great concern here in the Kennebecasis Watershed. Over the fall, the KWRC staff found hundreds of these styrofoam cups in the rivers and along riverbanks. Styrofoam and other plastics will never break down entirely and will always be present in the environment. As the styrofoam breaks down, wildlife can mistake the material for food, which can cause choking, starvation, or poisoning in animals.

Styrofoam is also composed of various chemicals that can have significant impacts on the environment and human health. Styrene, a component of styrofoam, is considered a possible carcinogen. Styrene leaches into food and drinks served in styrofoam containers, therefore purchasing drinks in these cups should be avoided. As they disintegrate, toxic chemicals from the cups leach into the environment and degrade water quality. These impacts of styrofoam are a sad reality to think about here in our watershed.

Not only is styrofoam directly harmful to the environment, wildlife and humans, it also has negative impacts during the manufacturing process. During the manufacturing process hydrochlorofluorocarbons are released into the air. The consequence? Depletion of the ozone layer. Another by-product is ozone. Ozone causes environmental and respiratory issues. These are just two examples of chemicals that the manufacturing process produces but the list doesn't end there. Besides hydrochlorofluorocarbons and ozone, styrofoam production produces 50 chemical by-products that contaminate water, air and harm human health. Therefore, the area where styrofoam is manufactured can have detrimental effects on the surrounding community and environment.



A lone Polar Pop Styrofoam cup was one of many we found along Trout Creek in downtown Sussex.

During the fall, the KWRC conducted plastic assessments on streams throughout the watershed. KWRC staff found the styrofoam cups all throughout the watershed, but they were most prevalent in Trout Creek. The amount of styrofoam and garbage found in Trout Creek is concerning. Trout Creek is vulnerable to frequent flooding. When flooding occurs, litter and debris get washed into the river causing certain areas of the river and its flood plains to become full of a variety of trash.

Many of these Polar Pop cups were found downstream of Sussex caught in debris jams, rocks, along the banks and in the river itself. The Maple Avenue train bridge was identified as a hot spot for these cups. Our staff at the KWRC picked up trash multiple times in this area, and each time a large portion of the trash was, you guessed it- Polar Pops. It is so important to dispose of Polar Pops properly but, more importantly, to reduce the amount of styrofoam you use for the sake of your health and the environment.

So, what will you do to prevent plastics, garbage, and Polar Pops from entering our waterways?

~ Brooklynne King
Waste Diversion Coordinator



The Changing Reality of Education and Outreach

During the past two years, we have faced an unthinkable, global pandemic. Here at the KWRC, we have had to adapt our outreach and education plans and deliverables. Throughout the warmer months when restrictions were lenient, we held multiple events within our watershed. Outdoor events allowed for physical distancing while maintaining everyone's safety. This past summer and fall, we educated volunteers on the importance of a healthy riparian zone through volunteer tree planting events. We demonstrated how our restoration efforts reduce erosion, while improving freshwater habitat, stream bank stability and increasing biodiversity.

As we moved into the cold wintery months with more covid restrictions, we have had to adapt how we deliver educational material. Before we moved into Phase Two of the Winter Action Plan, we discussed hosting 2 – 3 open house events. These events will focus on invasive species awareness within the Kennebecasis watershed. With the recent restrictions we've decided to host these events online through video chat, presenting us with new challenges and opportunities. With an online open house, we are concerned with event attendance. Will this form of delivery get as much attention as an in-person event? This question can only be answered just prior to or after the event. Although attendance is a concern, the on-line format also provides an opportunity to reach a larger audience. Recording this event will allow us to post it to our YouTube channel, where we can continue to educate the public. There are both positives and negatives to this new unique situation, however, more than ever we must evolve our programs.



This fall with less restrictions in place due to the pandemic we could host tree planting events. With Phase 2 and 3 restrictions in place the KWRC must adapt our outreach activities.

During a normal school year, we often enjoy interacting and teaching the next generation about issues in the watershed. With covid and online learning, we cannot attend classes in person and perform hands-on activities with kids. In the future, we must create new online learning opportunities for classes. Whether this is an online presentation, pre-recorded videos, or online workshops we need to begin to transfer our energy into online learning just like teachers. This will provide us with new avenues that we can explore for education.

With our YouTube videos and school webinars, we have the potential of reaching schools throughout New Brunswick. As these new opportunities and challenges arrive, we are forced to evolve, adapt, and test our creativity. Follow us on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube to stay up to date on our educational material and upcoming virtual events!

~ Laura Lavigne
Invasive Species Coordinator



Winter Recreational Activities in our Watershed

Sometimes winter feels like a hard season to get through. With the cold weather and short days, it is easy to curl up on the couch under a cozy blanket and turn on Netflix. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and covid can also leave us feeling unmotivated to leave the house. Being outdoors in the fresh air and exercising can help boost your mood. What better way to get you excited to get outside than by exploring our beautiful watershed with some fun outdoor activities? Here are some recreational activities that can help you get outside and have fun with your friends and family.

#1 Cross Country Skiing/ Snow Shoeing

If you are someone who enjoys going for walks but hates trekking through deep snow, try cross-country skiing or snowshoeing.

Snowshoeing is a straightforward activity and is a sport that all ages can quickly learn and enjoy. Snowshoeing is excellent aerobic exercise and a great way to workout if the gym is not your thing. Cross-country skiing is another great recreational sport since you must use your own propulsion to move across the snow. This activity is enjoyable on groomed trails and unbroken trails.

The beauty of these two activities is that they are a fantastic alternative to walking. These activities are a new way to challenge yourself while exploring your favourite or new trails. Both exercises can be done in a backyard, field, or forest setting. If you are looking for other fun places to go, try the Reddin Brook Trail, the Sussex Bluff, O'Connell Park or one of the town trails to try them out.

#2 Skating

Skating is a favourite winter pastime amongst many Canadians. However, with covid, it is hard to maintain safe social distancing at indoor ice rinks. But with the colder weather, outdoor skating is a lot easier if you know where to look. Many of our ponds and rivers are freezing over with the cold snap. If these water bodies are available to you or your family's bubble, you can have your own private rink. If you choose to skate on a frozen river or pond, make sure you check the ice thickness. Ice should be 20-25cm thick for group skating. Avoid ponds or rivers with open patches and discolouration in ice. Remember that dark blue ice is safer to skate on than opaque,



Our watershed is home to many ice walls and waterfalls like this one in Parlee Brook.

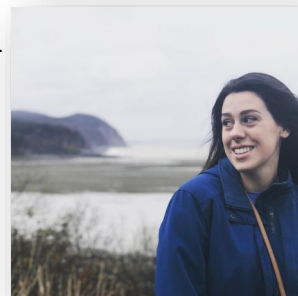
white, or grey ice. If you cannot find an ice pond, some local outdoor ice rinks in our watershed are free and open to the public. The Norton Outdoor Ice Rink and Kingswood Ice Pond are great options if you prefer large, maintained spaces.

#3 Hiking

Hiking is an extremely popular activity in the summer and fall, but hiking in the winter can be just as fun. Many areas have well-defined or groomed trails (depending on recent snowfall). Even if you do not want to explore a new path, try hiking one of your favorite trails. The snow, bare trees, and temperature can make even your favorite trails feel like the first time you are walking them. Try to use your senses to connect with nature, listen to the different forest sounds, look at how the sunlight falls through the trees, and think about how the snow and tree branches feel in your hands. You will be amazed at how different a hike feels when you see the trail from a new winter perspective. Fun trails to explore are trails with waterfalls, streams, or scenic views.

Popular trails to explore this winter season are Friars Nose, Parlee Brook Ice Amphitheater, the Midland Ice Caves and the Sussex Bluff. There are so many outdoor activities you can do in our local communities this winter. So, this season, take the time to explore our watershed to see what it has to offer!

~ Ashton Howe
Monitoring Coordinator



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