



Around the Rideau

Environmental Information For Municipalities In The Rideau Valley

January | February 2010



Baxter Grows By Seven Acres!

In October 2008, a significant event occurred at the Baxter Conservation Area that seems to have slipped under everyone's radar. . .Baxter grew by seven acres thanks to an excellent consortium of seven community-minded partners and the goodwill of Mr. Joseph Baxter who sold the last seven acres of his holdings in the area to RVCA.

The Baxter family owned this lengthy piece of Rideau River shoreline for many decades. It was used for haying, summer recreation and enjoyment of the river environment. In the early 1970s, Mr Baxter sold the bulk of his land to RVCA forming the core 150 acres of the Baxter Conservation Area and it quickly became one of southern Ottawa's busiest outdoor education centres. Over the past 40 years, there were other opportunities to consolidate the property for future conservation uses and with the help of our partners of the time, we added the Workshop property on the west side and a cottage lot along the river. The one anomaly that we had learned to live without was the seven-acre pie-shaped parcel right at the very entrance to Baxter.



In 2006, Mr Baxter informed us he no longer needed the property. He wanted it to become part of the Conservation Area and gave us the grace period needed to discuss the opportunity with our partners and come up with a community fund to purchase it. **We were successful thanks to the generosity and community-mindedness of Mr Baxter and our seven partners in conservation: TransCanada PipeLines, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, EJLB Foundation, the Helen McCrea Peacock Foundation at the Toronto Community Foundation, the City of Ottawa, the Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation and the member municipalities of the RVCA.**

This important acquisition of conservation land within the City of Ottawa is a rare and valuable piece of environmental land. . .one that will pay dividends to the people of the watershed as time goes by.

2010 Conservation Area Passes Available

It's a winter wonderland at all seven of the RVCA's developed Conservation Areas. The \$40 annual pass gives unlimited access — winter, spring, summer and fall. Now's the time to ski and snowshoe, but pond studies, picnics and beach basking are only months away. To get your annual pass, call us at 613-692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504, ext. 1100 or visit www.rvca.ca.

Leeds Legacy Trees

The Leeds County Stewardship Council is looking for assistance in locating exceptional trees from across the County to be honoured as "Legacy Trees." Residents are encouraged to nominate trees which are noteworthy for their age or size, their role as a treasured tree in the community, or for their unique cultural or heritage value. Trees already nominated include the large oak in the yard of the Anglican Church on Lower Oak Leaf Road, an elderly elm in Gananoque which survived the ravages of Dutch Elm disease, and a rare stand of Pitch Pine in a managed woodlot north of Elgin.

Nomination forms are available from the Leeds County Stewardship website link from www.ontariostewardship.org or by calling Martin Streit, Leeds Stewardship Coordinator at 613-342-8526.

Middle Rideau Subwatershed Report

As the first born publication in a new series of annual watershed reports, you should watch for the impending MIDDLE RIDEAU SUBWATERSHED REPORT 2009. The new report, due out on February 25, gives you lots of information about the forest cover, wetlands, water quality and more in the 10 sub-catchments within the Middle Rideau area between Smiths Falls and Burritts Rapids. This report is also your gateway to subcatchment data sheets and all RVCA monitoring data ever recorded in the Middle Rideau area! Martin Czarski has more information at ext 1163 or martin.czarski@rvca.ca.

Do you need a permit?

If you are planning work around a lake, river, stream or wetland, be sure to call an RVCA Resource Specialist for a quick and free review of your plans. They can let you know if any permits are required and if there are any grants available to help you pay for your project. Call Kellie (ext. 1128) or Megan (ext. 1132) for help. Calling ahead of time will save everyone time and money.



Flood Forecasting and Warning

Spring . . . it seems so far away and yet the RVCA is busy preparing for its arrival. Springtime brings with it the potential for flooding and the RVCA is committed to providing local agencies and the public advance notice and information so they can respond to potential flooding and flood emergencies. Like many watercourse in Ontario, the Rideau has its share of flood susceptible developments that were settled prior to more current planning standards. To keep everyone well informed and up-to-date, effective flood forecasting depends on reliable and timely data. The RVCA uses several tools to forecast floods:

To learn if you are in a flood vulnerable area contact an RVCA Resource Specialist at 613-692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504 — KELLIE at ext. 1128 or MEGAN at ext. 1132.

To have flood messages sent directly to your email account contact DIANE at diane.downey@rvca.ca to be added to our distribution list.

To see current streamflow conditions visit www.rvca.ca/flood/index.html.

- **Stream Gauges** — water levels and flows are continuously recorded at 15 monitoring stations on the Rideau and its tributaries (e.g. Jock River, Tay River, Kemptville Creek).
- **Snowpack Measurements** — the water content of the snowpack is measured twice a month at five locations by RVCA technicians. An additional six sites are monitored by Rideau Canal, Parks Canada staff.
- **Weather Forecasts** — information on expected temperatures and rainfall amounts is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and Environment Canada. OMNR's Streamflow Monitoring Centre tracks conditions across the Province and sends alerts to local Conservation Authorities when heavy rain or snowmelt is expected.
- **Numerical Models** — simple equations, charts and graphs as well as complex computer simulations are used by RVCA hydrologists to predict river flows, water levels and flood conditions to be expected in flood vulnerable communities.

When necessary, the RVCA will issue one of three flood forecasting and warning messages:

- **Watershed Condition Bulletins** — contain information about current conditions in the watershed that set the stage for the possibility of flooding (if the right weather patterns should develop). "Be informed and aware."
- **Flood Advisories** — when it is perceived that flooding could result from an approaching weather system which is expected to bring heavy rain or warm air causing a rapid snowmelt. "Be prepared to activate your flood response plans, if it becomes necessary."
- **Flood Warnings** — when it is perceived that flooding conditions definitely will be experienced. "Activate your flood response procedures now."

Municipalities are reviewing their flood emergency response plans, ensuring that all employees, equipment and communications are in place — just in case. Property owners should do the same. If you are in a flood vulnerable area, be prepared with a flood response plan that is specific to your property and your needs. Should a flood event occur, the first response is up to the individual homeowners. If the flood conditions develop to a point where homeowners or occupants require assistance, municipal Emergency Response Plans may need to be activated to help those in need.

Since you've asked . . .

Q. Why are the Rideau Canal locks not used to let the water get away?

A. The locks on the Rideau Canal would be ice-bound in the spring and it would take too many people and too much equipment to open all of the locks and also operate the dams. But, more importantly, the locks were not designed to accommodate through flows and would be at risk of collapsing.

Q. Why doesn't RVCA control flooding by adjusting the water levels at dams?

A. Parks Canada is the owner and operator of all of the structures on the Rideau except for the last one at Rideau Falls, which is owned and operated by Public Works and Government Services. The operation of all of the structures in the spring is done to get the water through the system as quickly as possible to minimize flooding as much as possible. Actually, flood control operations start in the fall at the end of the navigation season when the water levels throughout the system are lowered from the reservoir lakes in the upper part of the watershed to the Rideau River in downtown Ottawa. Those low levels are maintained through the winter which gives some extra room for the spring runoff. However, even with the drawdown there is not that much room and, if there is enough water in the spring, flooding will occur.

Q. Why don't they take more logs out at Rideau Falls and just zoom it all into the Ottawa River?

A. There is often strategic operation of some dams in attempts to reduce the impact at some locations but by the time the peak flow occurs, the dams throughout the system are usually all wide open.



Around the Rideau

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 692-3571 or 1-800-267-3504 www.rvca.ca

Around the Rideau circulation has risen to 3,800 Heads of Council, Councillors, senior municipal and provincial staff, interested persons and the media throughout the 18 municipalities in the Rideau Valley watershed courtesy of:



The Base Mapping Co. Ltd, Nepean (613) 723-8100
 Providing Conservation Authorities with digital topographic mapping for flood plain management.

Bell Baker, Barristers and Solicitors (613) 237-3444
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