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EARTH RISES

A NEWSLETTER FROM LAKESHORE ECO-NETWORK

Tree People Project Successfully Launched

On a sunny, warm October 3, , Lakeshore Eco-Network officially launched its Tree People project, which will see some 12,000 trees planted on public lands in Lambton Shores over the next four years.

The project has been dubbed Tree People because the goal is to plant one tree for every resident of Lambton Shores. It is funded by generous grants from the Lambton Shores Vibrancy Fund, the Ontario Community Environment Fund, the Rotary Club of Grand Bend, and the Sunset Community Foundation. Community partners include Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, the Municipality of Lambton Shores, and Lambton Shores Nature Trails.

"As we see the impact of climate change in our own communities – everything from drought and record high temperatures to wildfire smoke and flooding – it's more urgent than ever to plant trees," says LEN Chair Pat Morden. Trees absorb carbon and give off oxygen. They clean and cool the air, prevent erosion, absorb excess water, reduce noise pollution, and provide shelter and food for wildlife. Research shows that they're good for the physical and mental health of people, too.







LEN's tree experts are working with staff at the Municipality of Lambton Shores and others to identify planting sites and select the appropriate native tree species. Plantings will include seedlings, saplings, and larger trees depending on the needs of the site.

Planting will continue through spring 2030. On October 3, volunteers planted the first "Tree People" trees at the Museum site. Two special "Husband and Wife" trees were planted in front of the Canatara Cabin. This is an old tradition that couples once used to celebrate their love and the completion of a new house. The trees are Sugar Maples grown locally from locally harvested seed.

Two more plantings were held in October. At Coultis Park in Forest on October 22 a white cedar windbreak was created around the Forest Cenotaph. At Relouw Park in Grand Bend on October 23, students from Grand Bend Public School planted flowering shrubs.

Planting will begin again in April 2027—watch our website and Facebook page *for details.*



Footprints in the Sand. A Message from the Chair

I recently learned that the concept of the individual “Carbon Footprint” was created by an advertising company for BP Oil.

I know what you’re thinking – conspiracy theory. But no, it’s true. Like all the big oil companies, BP wanted to duck responsibility for the climate crisis, a problem primarily caused by the use of the fossil fuels it promoted and sold. They turned to Ogilvy Mathers, a big ad agency, to help them “rebrand.”

The firm took a concept used in science and turned it into the most nefarious of ideas—that the climate was changing disastrously because of the way we live our lives.

You fly to visit family?—you’re destroying the planet.

You drive to work? Ditto.

You eat meat? Also ditto.

With luck, you’d be so busy trying to figure out how to reduce your footprint that you’d forget about the true culprits, big oil.

Years ago, I was really into carbon footprint calculators. But no matter what I did—drive a hybrid, purchase green energy, fly every two years, eat vegetarian – I couldn’t get my score down much. I suspect that was part of the strategy. My guilt made me feel awkward about advocating for climate action where it belonged, at the national and international level.

Even today, I find many people are convinced that if we all make small changes in our lives it will add up to a solution for the climate crisis. Sadly, that’s simply not true. Sure, it may help to build political will, but it’s not enough and time is running out.

The 15 brave students who are currently suing the federal government have the right idea. Their case is based on the concept that the federal government's inaction and weak greenhouse gas policies violate their rights to life, liberty, and security of the person. Let’s be as bold and clear-eyed as they are.



The Old Ausable Channel Needs Our Help

by Carolyn Young



On October 23 the Environmental Stewardship Committee of Southcott Pines hosted three leading experts, who shared their expertise about the Old Ausable Channel (OAC). During the presentation, 42 residents from Southcott Pines, Beach of Pines, Huron Woods and Pinedale learned about the OAC's significance as an ecosystem, critical ecological threats, and potential solutions to preserve and protect it.

During the presentation Dr. Nick Mandrak, professor and research scientist in fish ecology, conservation and biodiversity, explained how the OAC is home to one of the rarest ecosystems in the world. In addition to the diverse wildlife in the channel, the OAC provides habitat to four endangered species: Lake Chubsucker, Pugnose Shiner, Grass Pickerel and Northern Sunfish. While there are small populations in the OAC along the Pinery, Huron Woods and Beach of Pines, none of these endangered species have been found in the Southcott area. The combination of invasive Eurasian Water-Milfoil and seasonal algae die-offs pose a critical ecological threat to these fish and the OAC's ecosystem health.

In an effort to reduce the impact of Eurasian Milfoil on the ecosystem, Jennifer Powell, PhD Student, presented "the good, bad and weird results" of a research project using burlap mats to prevent its growth on four sites in the Southcott range of the OAC. Ms. Powell explained that while the burlap mats were effective in controlling Eurasian Milfoil, Coontail, which is native, invasive and thrives with high nutrient levels, grew over the burlap mats on Site 4. The encroachment of Coontail and algal growth are all signs of nutrient issues.

Ms. Powell discussed a few ways that residents of Southcott Pines can reduce nutrients in the water and help restore the OAC:
Maintain septic systems to prevent leachate containing E. coli from contaminating the OAC.
Eliminate fertilizer usage on our properties.
Plant native species.

Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Manager, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) emphasized the OAC's significance as an ecosystem and that it is "a priority for ABCA." To preserve and protect the OAC now and in the future, she offered additional options for Southcott Pines to consider:

- A demonstration study in collaboration with Lakewater Nutrient Capture, which does phosphorus removal.
- Installation of a solar pump to create flow.
- For funding, apply to the Great Lakes Council.

To learn more about the OAC, visit https://oldausablechannel.ca/

Preparing for Climate Change Starts with People

by Janet Kurasz

Climate change is bringing more severe wildfires, heat events, floods, and droughts to Canada. Helping communities prepare requires more than scientific information; it requires building trust, fostering relationships, and empowering people to take action.

Re.Climate, in partnership with ClimateWest and SevGen Consulting Inc., developed the PREPARE Framework through the Climate Ready Prairies project. It provides practical guidance for communicating about climate adaptation and preparedness across Canada. Its central message is that successful climate action depends on three key conditions: agency, care and trust.Communities need to understand why adaptation matters, to feel that their voices and choices influence their future, and to trust the people and institutions guiding the process. Indigenous knowledge and leadership are particularly important because Indigenous communities have deep relationships with the land, animals, and ecosystems. Governments and agencies must recognize communities as partners and build relationships that support long-term resilience.

Effective climate communication requires engagement, transparency, coordination between institutions, and an understanding of citizenry knowledge, concerns, and lived experiences. Rather than imposing solutions or creating polarization, communicators should listen, validate experiences, and connect climate adaptation to tangible local concerns, such as water security, flooding, drought, and extreme weather. Sharing local stories and encouraging conversations can make climate impacts more relatable and build confidence in practical solutions.

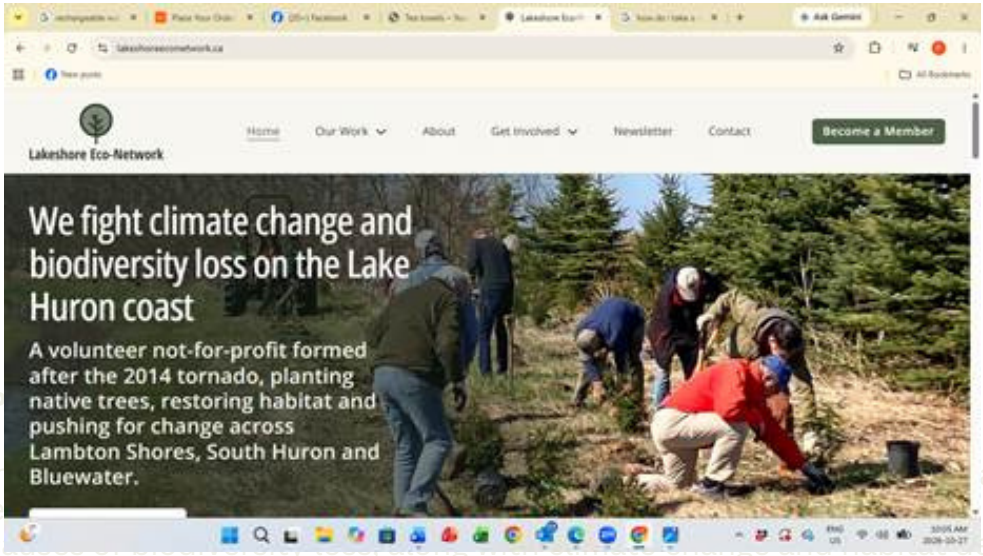
Speakers emphasized that trust takes time, particularly in rural, agricultural, conservative, and Indigenous communities. Community champions, informal gatherings such as Climate Cafés, and open dialogue can help people express their fears, identify barriers, and explore solutions together. Governments must integrate climate adaptation into their regular responsibilities and work collaboratively across departments and with external organizations.



Finally, climate communication must recognize the emotional and psychological effects of climate change. Climate emergencies can create fear, grief, and feelings of helplessness. Listening without making assumptions, acknowledging these emotions, and supporting mental well-being can help people move toward constructive action. Incorporating art into the climate action process helps with mental wellness and mindfulness. Ultimately, the PREPARE Framework offers a roadmap for turning climate concern into community action. By prioritizing relationships, meaningful participation, collaboration, and realistic expectations, communicators can help communities prepare for climate impacts and protect people, places, and future generations..

New Website Launched

With thanks to the hard work of our vice chair Carolyn Young and Dennis Pal of Contiigo Studio, we are delighted to introduce our handsome new website which highlights our goals and work. Check out the new look at lakeshoreeconetwork.ca



LEN Co-hosts All Candidates Meeting

On October 17, LEN partnered with the Rotary Club of Grand Bend to host an All Candidates meeting in the lead-up to the municipal election of October 26. A crowd of some 200 attended. Most of the discussion related to emergency services and the potential location of the Grand Bend Community and there was no opportunity to ask about environmental issues. Here's hoping our new council will be open to constructive discussions for preserving and restoring our natural environment.

Tree Sale Continues to Grow

It seems that more and more people are waking up to the advantages of using native plants and trees, for the planet, wildlife, and ease of care. Although our fall sale is never as well attended as the spring event, this year's brought a steady stream of gardeners, eager to buy and learn from our wonderful vendors. Thanks to all our vendors and a special shout-out to Little Otter Tree Farm and Stardust Gardens, who attended for the first time.





A Letter in Response to Proposed Amendments to the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, prepared by Janet Kurasz and James Corcoran

On behalf of the Lakeshore Eco-Network (LEN), we are writing to provide our formal comments regarding the proposed amendments to expand Ontario's Protected Areas Network. Born as a direct grassroots response to the devastating 2014 tornado that stripped thousands of trees from the Grand Bend area, LEN has evolved from the 5000 Trees Project into a passionate advocate for biodiversity restoration and climate resilience. We work closely within the municipalities of Lambton Shores, South Huron, and Bluewater, and it is on behalf of these communities—and the ecosystems that sustain them—that we urge the Ministry to act with bolder vision and deeper urgency.

When reviewing the current proposal, there is a conspicuous and deeply concerning absence of expansion of protected areas in our region. Our local ecosystems are under unprecedented stress. The Pinery Provincial Park, a crown jewel of Ontario's natural heritage, services not only our local municipalities but the rapidly expanding London and Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo regions. It is no longer adequate to meet the sheer volume of demand for campers and day visitors. The London region is growing at an incredible 3% per year, tracking toward a population of 880,000 by 2051. Simultaneously, Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo stands as the third fastest-growing region in the entire country, projected to reach nearly 1 million residents by 2051. Our people need nature, yet our protected areas are stagnant.

Worse still, our region holds the tragic distinction of hosting the largest number of listed endangered species in Ontario. If any region warrants an aggressive expansion of protected spaces, it is ours. We have an ecologically transformative opportunity right before us: the Ministry must step in to purchase and restore a portion of the 17,000 acres of wetlands adjacent to the Pinery Park. Drained between the late 1800s and 1955 for a ruinous agricultural system, these soils are now deeply depleted. Every year, the wind literally blows this topsoil away into residential areas, exposing local citizens to toxic, pesticide-laden airborne particulate matter. While some specialty crops remain, this former ecological wonderland is mostly used for feed corn and soybeans.

Reinstating even a tiny portion of those 17,000 acres back into thriving wetlands with viewing platforms and boardwalks would be a boon for tourism and give the Tundra Swans and Whooping Cranes vital habitat to rest and feed.

Expanding the Pinery is just the beginning. True ecological resilience requires connectivity. We must connect our fragmented, small patches of forest; a strategy ecologists have long championed. We strongly advocate for the establishment of protected buffer zones along our waterways, rivers, and creeks, which would simultaneously mitigate agricultural runoff and prevent persistent beach closures.

To achieve a legacy of true conservation, we urge the Ministry to adopt the following progressive strategies:

1. Create Green Corridors and Systematic Connectivity

· Ecological Corridors: Protected spaces must not exist as isolated islands. We urge you to work directly with Parks Canada to develop a comprehensive system of Ecological Corridors that allow wildlife to safely migrate and natural habitats to reconnect.

· Annual Reviews: Include strict provisions and mechanisms to review and expand protected areas on an annual basis rather than waiting decades between updates.

· Urban Greenspace Buffers: Look to international success stories like Natural Resources Wales' "Greenspace Toolkit". We need an Ontario-wide initiative to implement structured layers of nature—Pocket Parks, Municipal Parks, District Parks, and Regional/Suburban Forests—around our growing urban centres.

2. Incentivize Private Land Stewardship

· Conservation Easements: Expand on existing easement frameworks. Promote the benefits to landowners to participate in woodland and greenspace protection.

· Payments for Environmental Services (PES): Look to Costa Rica, a pioneer in environmental economics, which utilizes a highly successful PES program funded primarily by fossil fuel taxes to compensate landowners for preserving ecosystems.

· Ecological Gifts Program: Actively promote and expand Canada's own Ecological Gifts Program. The Province must coordinate with landowners and the Federal government to maximize corporate tax deductions and non-refundable individual tax credits for those donating lands.

3. Implement Strict Regulatory Frameworks in Urban Planning

· Soil Protection & Green Roofs: Partner with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to recommend strict zoning by-laws similar to Germany, where non-soil gardens are banned and mandated to be converted back to natural soil, and green roofs are legally required on all new flat-roof buildings over 50 square meters.

· Private Tree Protection: While the Ontario Municipal Act, 2001 empowers local municipalities to pass tree-cutting and private tree protection by-laws, the province must establish baseline, government-imposed restrictions to stop the unchecked leveling of mature trees in private yards.

We fully realize that some of these inter-departmental suggestions do not fall directly or traditionally under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. However, this Act falls squarely under the mandate of the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—the clear provincial lead on greenspace and conservation efforts

