



The editor's look

This fresh off the press newsletter of the Regroupement pour la Protection de l'eau, called **Les Héros de l'eau**, will be published twice a year online, on our website and Facebook.

Our new publication is intended to be informative and educational, reporting on various initiatives undertaken to protect our waters while emphasizing collaboration between actors at different levels. We believe we can achieve our goal of protecting and improving water quality by engaging Gatineau Valley citizens, lake associations and municipalities. We hope to motivate you to become the next Water Heroes and to be a strong partner in our journey.

Winter is the ideal time to plan projects to improve water quality such as revitalizing the banks to return to a more natural state, researching environmental topics, ordering seeds, organizing sites, etc...

Danielle Morrison is at the origin of the conceptualization of the RPEVG website. We are very grateful to her for being willing to devote her talents and IT knowledge to developing the new site which will be launched in spring 2025.

Thank you to all the members of this great team who made this publication possible: Francis Leblanc, Gilles Richard, Dorothy St-Marseille, Lise Hardy, Ronald Cross, Barry Hardy, the content creators, Christine Ouellet and Manon Vincelette, and the media creator Danielle Morrison.

Christine Ouellet - Editor



The editor's look



Letter from the President



AGM Summary



The APLC and the Fyto firm fight against Eurasian watermifoil at Petit lac des Cèdres



Boat cleaning



Septic tank maintenance



Lac Heney wins the battle against phosphorus



Letter from the President

The rivers, lakes and streams that flow through and define the landscape of the Gatineau Valley are essential elements of our heritage and the economic, social and cultural life of our region.

It is crucial to preserve this wealth, even if it is sometimes taken for granted. Here, as elsewhere, it is threatened by human activities. It is up to community members to be aware of this and to take proactive measures to preserve it.

It is a wealth that cannot be taken for granted. Here, as elsewhere, they are threatened by human activities. It makes it difficult for community members to be aware of this and to take active steps to conserve it.

Founded in 2013, the mission of the Regroupement pour la protection de l'eau de la Vallée-de-la-Gatineau is to mobilize the efforts of local governments, the many lake associations active in the region, businesses that serve the residents and visitors of our bodies of water, and individuals who care about the health of our lakes and the protection of our local environment.

During its first ten years, the Regroupement supported the administration and vitality of the associations with tools such as the ROLRIV, which made it possible to obtain the names and addresses of citizens of the various municipalities and organized discussion forums on issues related to the protection of our lakes and waterways.

The Regroupement has also launched several awareness-raising initiatives related to the importance of shoreline revegetation, the risks and measures to be followed to avoid groundwater contamination, and the cleaning of boats to prevent the spread of invasive alien aquatic species.

After a pandemic-related downtime, the Regroupement is regaining its strength and redoubling its efforts to achieve its mission. Our recent annual general meeting was an opportunity to welcome representatives from municipalities and associations and demonstrate approaches and technology for washing boats and combating invasive species.

Protecting our bodies of water for future generations is a collective effort and we are looking for partners and allies among you, the readers of this newsletter.

Francis Leblanc - President

Summary of the 2024 AGM of the Regroupement pour la protection de la Vallée de la Gatineau

The Regroupement pour la protection de l'eau de la Vallée de la Gatineau held its annual general meeting on September 6 in Messines.

The public, as well as municipal representatives and members of other lake associations in the county were invited to participate. In addition to the official agenda and the holding of elections, the audience attended an excellent presentation by the APLC and the firm Fyto on the control of Eurasian watermilfoil at Petit lac des Cèdres and a demonstration of the operation of the cleaning station in Messines by Ozero Solutions.

Over the past year, the committee has worked to revitalize the Regroupement, which had slowed down during the pandemic. Founded in 2013 by Marc Grégoire, our founding president for the first five years, Mario Gaudette took over and held the helm for four years before handing it over to Francis LeBlanc. We thank them, as well as the members of their boards, for having inspired and built the Regroupement. In addition to highlighting the accomplishments of the first 10 years, the board presented its Strategic Plan and a Communications Plan that will be finalized by 2025.



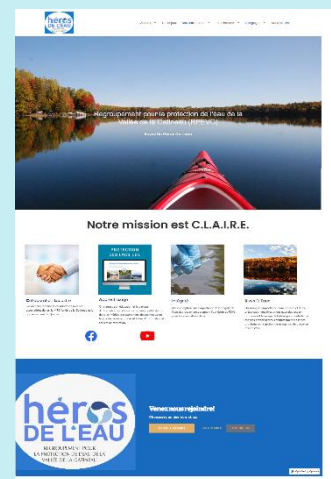
The designation of the theme, “Water Heroes” will be strengthened to identify all those who work to protect water quality.

The board elected a new member, Barry Ardis, and reappointed Francis LeBlanc. Gilles Richard is appointed vice-president, Dorothy St-Marseille, treasurer, Ronald Cross appointed by the MRC, Manon Vincelette, Lise Ardis, Danielle Morrison and Christine Ouellet as directors.

Danielle Morrison presented the new website which will be launched in Spring 2025 and it was very well received by an enthusiastic audience.

NEW WEBSITE IN THE SPRING!

Our website will be online in the spring! It will contain useful information such as articles, presentations and videos on all the current environmental threats facing our lakes and rivers, as well as strategies to combat them. Stay tuned!



The fight against Eurasian watermilfoil at Petit lac des Cèdres

At the 2024 Annual General Meeting, Manon Vincelette, president of the Association for the Protection of the Lakes des Cèdres (APLC), and Maude Keyser of Fyto provided an update on the ongoing battle against Eurasian watermilfoil at Petit lac des Cèdres, which began in 2022.

The combination of two treatments recognized as the most effective to date by the scientific community is used and consists of spreading synthetic canvases on the bottom of the lake on the densest seagrass beds (more than 80%) in order to deprive the watermilfoil of oxygen and light. The canvases are removed 10 weeks later. Divers intervene throughout the process to spread the canvases and also to manually pull out the plants and roots on the seagrass beds with a density of less than 80%. They use vacuum cleaners to collect all this removed biomass.

The Fyto firm predicts that by the end of 2025, a target of 90% of the sites will be under control. The maintenance fight can then begin with minimal annual maintenance to prevent the return of the seagrass beds.



« In 2024, more than 9,000 m² of surface area were covered with tarpaulins and 13 tons of watermilfoil were removed. »

Each year, a new characterization and mapping is carried out at the end of the season to plan the work for the following year. To date, no stems of spiked watermilfoil have been detected in the Grand Lac des Cèdres, which is a great relief. The municipality of Messines and the APLC are working together to strengthen control measures for cleaning boats and to continuously improve awareness among users of our two lakes.

Author: Manon Vincelette

ASSOCIATION POUR LA PROTECTION DES LACS DES CÈDRES (APLC) AND FYTO

For more information on the Cedar Lakes Watermilfoil Control Project, please visit the link below:

[Battle for control of Eurasian watermilfoil in the Cedar lakes](#)

For more information about Fyto and their services, please visit this link:

[Fyto - Experts en gestion écologique](#)



Cleaning boats to dislodge unwanted invasive species

Cleaning boats is becoming essential and is gaining ground in people's minds as one of the most important measures to prevent the introduction of new unwanted species into our lakes.

The municipality of Messines has understood the importance of this effort and is putting in place modern cleaning station with the support of the Ozero firm, which has become a leader in this type of work. It should be noted that the municipality of Messines requires by law to decontaminate your boat before entering a lake in the municipality, otherwise a fine may be issued.

The equipment put in place allows the boat, the holds and the livewell to be washed with hot water thanks to nozzles and pumps specially designed for this purpose. Facilities operated by the RPEVG, lake associations and municipalities have been set up on the Gatineau Valley territory.

Author: *Christine Ouellet*



OZERO Director of technology, Maxime Guay, explains the operation of the installed unit

STATIONS DE LAVAGE de bateaux
VALLÉE-DE-LA-GATINEAU

STATIONS OPÉRÉES PAR LE RPEVG

- ▶ AUMOND au Dépanneur Aumond
- ▶ DÉLEAGE au garage municipal
- ▶ KAZABAZUA en bordure de la route 105 près du bureau municipal
- ▶ GRACEFIELD au Garage Boisvenue

STATIONS GRATUITES
STATIONS PAYANTES (\$)

STATIONS DU RPEVG OPÉRÉES PAR LES ASSOCIATIONS DES LACS

- ▶ LAC QUINN
- ▶ LAC SINCLAIR

STATIONS DE LAVAGES OPÉRÉES PAR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

- ▶ MUNICIPALITÉ DE BLUE SEA (lavage obligatoire par règlement)
- ▶ MUNICIPALITÉ DE MESSINES (lavage obligatoire par règlement)
- ▶ MUNICIPALITÉ DE CAYAMANT
- ▶ MUNICIPALITÉ DE BOUCHETTE
- ▶ MUNICIPALITÉ DE LAC-STE-MARIE
- ▶ MUNICIPALITÉ DE GRAND-REMOUS
- ▶ VILLE DE MANIWAKI (lavage obligatoire par règlement)
- ▶ VILLE DE GRACEFIELD

Pour l'amour de nos plans d'eau, lavons nos bateaux ! Merci pour votre collaboration !

Logos: RPEVG, Desjardins, Maniwaki, etc.

CLICK ON THE LINK TO WATCH THE VIDEO!

[RPEVG and Ozero -Demonstration of the boat washing station at Messines \(English subtitles\)](#)



Maintenance of septic tanks

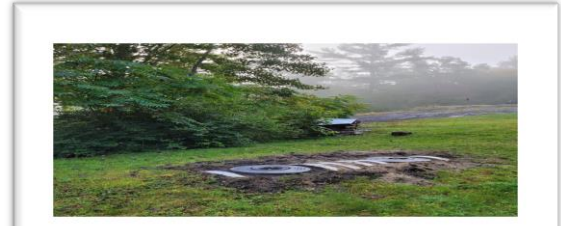
Municipalities enforce the By-law that requires that a septic tank used seasonally be emptied at least once every four years and that a tank used year-round be emptied at least once every two years.

Compliant septic systems are necessary to maintain the water quality of our lakes and rivers. Water from non-compliant and poorly maintained septic tanks ends up in lakes and groundwater used for human consumption, releasing an excessive amount of phosphorus and nitrogen.

Excessive phosphorus in the lakes contribute to the growth of algae and aquatic plants and accelerate the normal process of eutrophication (or aging of the lake).

For the past twenty years, Lynn Robitaille, who is responsible for septic tank maintenance for the Municipality of Gracefield, has been driving a large red tanker truck nicknamed a "honey cart" to empty septic tanks for the Municipality of Gracefield. At first, she made the trip on her own, but for the past three years, she has had an assistant.

She is quite the woman, who enjoys chatting with her customers and, she admits, that is the best part of the job. We asked her what the biggest problems she encounters are.



"When people don't clear the openings around the tank enough, I have difficulty handling the hose. Also, sometimes people don't realize that the tank is high enough, I have a hard time getting through because of the debris and low branches that are a problem for the tanker."

She adds: *"There is another important element that many people don't know: on new septic tanks, there is a filter located under the 2nd cover. It collects the debris that is not soluble and the filter must be cleaned every year. When the filter is clogged, it no longer prevents the solids from passing into the drain field. And when that happens, it all goes back up into the cottage plumbing. You can tell if the septic field is not working properly when it emits odors and when the soil becomes spongy."*

Taking good care of our septic system is the key to saving on expenses, the inspector's visit and a good \$10,000 for a new tank, not to mention a new drain field to build. Good maintenance and prevention will help you avoid problems, costly repairs and replacements.

Author : Christine Ouellet

How do you know if your septic tank is defective?

Certain signs can warn you that your septic system is defective. If you notice one or more of the following signs, contact a professional whose order governs the exercise of activities covered by the Regulation, so that he can determine the source of the problem and plan the required repair work:

- *Bad odors are noticeable near your septic system (sewer odor)*
- *The evacuation of domestic wastewater from the residence is slow*
- *Near your septic system, the grass is much thicker, greener or longer than on the rest of the land, or the grass is spongy even in periods of drought*
- *Water resurgences occur near your septic system*
- *The presence of bacterial contamination or nitrates is noted during the analysis of the water from your well or that of your neighbor*



Lake Heney wins the battle against phosphorus

The history of Heney Lake is a testament to the perverse effect of what happens when the delicate balance of a lake is disrupted: in 1991, a fish farm was established on Heney Lake. In 1993, it produced 80 tons of trout per year and in 1994, it increased to 250 tons. Phosphorus levels recorded an instantaneous massive gain and increased by 20ug/l. The lake went from being oligotrophic before the arrival of the fish farm, to the eutrophic zone, with the sudden addition of 893 kilos and 1300 kilos of phosphorus in the sediments. While the lake can only absorb 500 kilos from all sources.

After several years of struggle, it was a movement of committed citizens, led by Pierre Calvé and Jennifer Stuart, who filed and won a \$4,940,000 lawsuit against the government in 2004. This money was used to cover the costs of decontaminating the lake and to set up a monitoring program as part of scientific research.

“Following the application of 1,800 tons of ferrous chloride in 2007, the health of the lake was restored.”



The phosphorus level had dropped to 15ug/l after the treatment was applied.

Regular water tests reveal that the clarity of the water and the presence of phosphorus remain at acceptable levels. The last tests carried out in 2023 revealed a phosphorus level of 9ug/l and water transparency at 5 meters.

All residents living around the lakes, like those of Heney Lake at that time, must remain vigilant to limit as much as possible any new addition of phosphorus to the lakes. The balance remains fragile despite this first battle won. Hence the importance of taking good care of your septic tank, by eliminating the use of harmful products.

Source: Pierre Calvé & Jennifer Stewart
<https://bvlacheney.ca/history/articles/beginnings/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONSULT:

The Document intended for owners of a residence connected to a septic system.
 Guide to good practices: signs of a defect.

https://www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/Eau/eaux-usees/residences_isolees/Guide-bonnes-pratiques-proprio-dispositifs.pdf

www.environnement.gouv.qc.ca/eau/eaux-usees/residences-isolees.htm



Tom McKenna, President of Lake Heney Foundation of Lake Heney watershed Association, utilizes a Secchi disk to carry out water quality monitoring.

Photo by : Christine Ouellet