

Dal professor tries to make a difference

BY PHIL E. LEWIS

Dollar Lake, outside the city of Halifax, has toxic levels of acid pollution. Paul Mandell, limnology professor at Dalhousie University, says that at least half of the lakes in Nova Scotia are toxic to the fish that inhabit them.

Mandell is trying to restore Dollar Lake to a healthy ecological state.

Mandell has received \$10,000 from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to do a year long study into the water quality of the lake. He is trying to find out if liming the lake will eliminate some of the acid pollution in the lake.

The lime is also supposed to create a necessary buffer that will absorb and dilute the acid from the rain before it reaches the water. He says that the lakes in Nova Scotia are in particularly bad shape because half of the province has a neguma foundation. Neguma contains no buffering unlike other

bedrock.

Mandell says liming is like trying to recreate the state the lakes were in before humans acidified the rain.

"It's (liming) like when someone loses a leg and you give them an artificial one," says Mandell. "They can walk and have a life but it is not the same as you're own leg."

Mandell has done approximately 23,000 water samples over his career and says Dollar Lake is a perfect candidate for a liming project.

Mandell wrote an initial proposal to the DFO but it was rejected. The DFO requested another proposal with more data. The Department approved the second proposal last Thursday, after he had already looked into alternate sources of funding.

Mandell sent proposals to the Sierra club, the Body Shop, and about twenty other organizations for any financial help. The grant

from the DFO came as a surprise to Mandell.

"I was shocked... when I heard I got the funding," says Mandell.

Mandell's project has generated some interest from the community.

Friends of Dollar Lake is a group of mostly biology students that supports Mandell's work. Mandell says the group works towards education, fund raising, public awareness, and building a facility at the site. Friends of Dollar Lake has raised \$37,000 in kind for the project in equipment and facilities.

Mandell says he is frustrated from the lack of support from his peers.

"They have no interest," says Mandell. "They do not feel they have a social responsibility to do anything except write papers and teach. That's the job. The fact that the world is going to hell in front of them doesn't seem to bother them. I really have no use for them."

A spokesperson for the financing department of the DFO says they approved the grant through a program started in 1994. The program is aimed at community based organizations. The spokesperson says there are approximately 6 lakes currently undergoing the liming process through the program.

The program funds 50 per cent of the costs for the first three years with a maximum of \$10,000 per year. The spokesperson says to successfully lime a lake it takes approximately 10 years but, they only fund past the first three years in rare cases.

Anita Hamilton, habitat division of the DFO, says that the only negative side effects of the lime could be in its application. She says in the application they may have to dig up some of the soil around the lake with the equipment they use.

Mandell says that there are is no down-side to liming.

"Some people say you lime 30

per cent in the first year. We did it for 11 years and the fish population increased every year."

Mandell has selected Dollar Lake as his new project because it is a provincial park. He says this offers him a research site with protection from industry.

In the future Mandell plans to use the site to develop a school of applied ecology. He says the school would also involve a summer program for families to take their kids to collect water samples, and look at them through a telescope.

Mandell says that the public needs to inform themselves about their environment rather than living in the paranoia the media and government creates.

"We want to use it as a demonstration project for other groups in Nova Scotia for the educational component," says Mandell. "People feel impotent. Unfortunately most of the media is lying because the government lying to them. They should see what they really can do."

McNab's Island cleaner

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community. Despite the unfortunate weather, which hindered and eventually stopped the garbage collection so that the volunteers could seek cover, spirits of the

participants were high. The only disappointing aspect of the trip was seeing all the waste resulting from consumers' negligence to educate themselves on the environmental effects of the products they endorse.

Most Common Garbage Found in McNab's Island Beach Sweep:

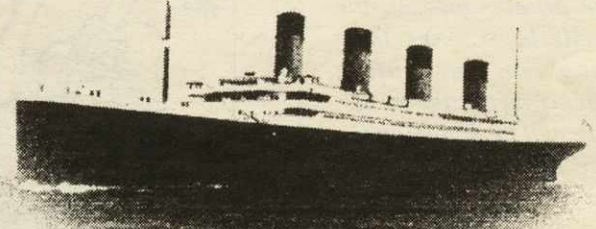
1. Plastics, including tampon applicators. Plastic applicators are still widely popular even though biodegradable cardboard applicators are available.
2. Styrofoam, including coffee cups and fast-food packaging.
3. Glass, most originating from the sewer networks.

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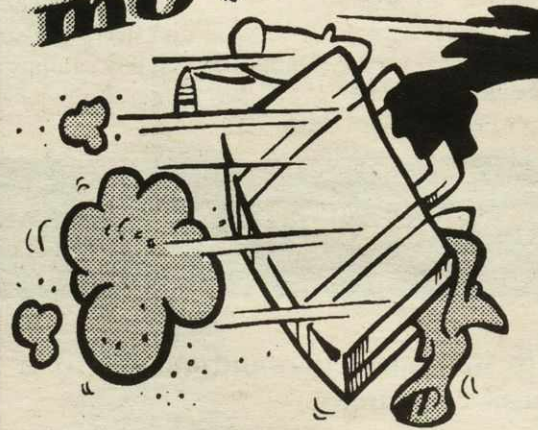
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