



# A COMMUNITY OF ACTION



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**A Community of Action: Creating Volunteer Opportunities in the Greater Saint John Region**  
**ETF Project number: 220176**

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2023

Published by:  
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## Acknowledgements

This project was made possible through the generous financial contribution of the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund and Environment and Climate Change Canada's Eco Action Program, and through the ongoing logistical support provided by the City of Saint John Department of Municipal Operations. We would especially like to acknowledge the dedicated services provided by Thomas McGrath for enabling the Saint John community to conduct cleanups with the knowledge that city staff would collect and properly dispose of the litter and debris.

We would like to personally thank Marguerite Burns from In Step Adventures and Jim Donahue from River Bay Adventures for leading us via kayak to clean up local islands. We would also like to thank Derek Chaisson from the Dominion Park Community Association who helped organize a cleanup throughout Randolph Island.

*A Community of Action* is a true grassroots project that only exists through the selfless efforts of thousands of community volunteers, and through the organizations, community groups, and businesses that contribute to its success. We are proud to say that the list of dedicated contributors is large and ever-growing, and we sincerely appreciate the contribution of every individual, in making Saint John a more restorative environmental city.



### Your Environmental Trust Fund at Work

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada



SAINT JOHN

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## Executive Summary

For 30 years, ACAP Saint John has been a leader in environmental stewardship throughout the Greater Saint John area, conducting successful community-based environmental initiatives that have engaged thousands of citizens and organizations over the years. Through funding from the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund, ACAP Saint John's *A Community of Action* project has been able to organize countless cleanup events removing litter, debris and illegally dumped materials from green spaces, critical habitats and waterways. This year, our efforts leaned towards the cleanup of local islands that were in need of attention, where volunteers removed over 1,500 kg of trash from these isolated areas (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Islands where community cleanups were completed (2022). From left to right: Randolph Island, Partridge Island and Long Island

ACAP Saint John expanded environmental awareness and education initiatives to residents of all ages and demographics including decision makers, city staff, developers, community members, and students through educational outreach activities. These ambitious initiatives have advanced environmental awareness and action in the region and will continue to protect our environment by improving our watercourses, wildlife habitat and urban green spaces.

## Introduction

ACAP Saint John's *A Community of Action* project aimed to continue our essential role as environmental stewardship leaders throughout the Greater Saint John region by building on the success of past projects while incorporating emerging environmental issues and interests.

The goal of this project was to increase environmental awareness and actions by engaging with our network of volunteers, recruiting new volunteers, and promoting and providing environmental education events/initiatives with the general public, students and youth, and other organizations across the city.

With support from the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund (ETF), ACAP Saint John staff were able to continue to coordinate initiatives to fulfill two ETF priority areas: managing our waste and protecting our environment. Through hands-on learning, large scale cleanups and being present in the community, ACAP Saint John has increased environmental awareness for residents of all ages and demographics including decision makers, city staff, developers, community members, and students.

The efficiency of this project lies in its ability to maintain a strong partnership with the City of Saint John for logistical support, the New Brunswick ETF for financial support, and in ACAP Saint John's ability to maintain an established, growing, and dedicated network of volunteers. Through direct engagement, in-field and in-class education programs, community cleanups and outdoor activities, citizens develop a sense of understanding and ownership of their environment and are more likely to support other initiatives that promote good stewardship and sustainable development.

## Priority Area Measures

Through the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund, ACAP Saint John was able to meet both the priority area measures that were outlined in the application: Protecting Our Environment and Managing Our Waste.

*Protecting Our Environment* - Through this category, ACAP Saint John was able to visit classrooms, youth groups and local farmers markets to engage with students and citizens across the city to increase environmental awareness in Saint John. Hands-on field tours, the distribution of educational materials, and through various social media outlets, ACAP Saint John was able to reach over 1,000 active learning participants and 30,000 observing participants.

*Managing Our Waste* - ACAP Saint John, along with more than one thousand volunteers, removed ten tons of trash, marine debris, and metal from our green spaces, neighbourhoods, coastlines, and isolated islands. Although waste removed was not necessarily diverted from our landfill, it was properly disposed of and no longer occupies the natural environment. Specific items

including metal and tires were recycled accordingly, redirecting them away from the environment and our landfill.

## Volunteer Engagement

### Community Cleanups

For three decades, ACAP Saint John has helped community stakeholders organize cleanups throughout Greater Saint John and is recognized as a credible and trusted environmental champion. ACAP staff have proved successful in their effort to develop a strong volunteer base and educate the public on the extent of littering and illegal dumping in the region. These actions are maintained through a trusted partnership with the City of Saint John for logistical support, the New Brunswick ETF for financial support, and in ACAP Saint John's ability to maintain an established and dedicated network of volunteers.

To support volunteers who are interested in organizing a neighbourhood cleanup, ACAP Saint John provided essential items, such as gloves, garbage bags, safety tips, garbage disposal (via the City of Saint John or a rented dumpster), and a cleanup site if necessary. This helped volunteers to be prepared and ensured they had all the materials to complete a fun, safe, and successful cleanup.

Each cleanup was unique, and the coordinator's duties depended on each group's needs. Some groups conducted cleanups on their own and only required supplies and garbage disposal, while other groups needed ACAP Saint John to oversee most of the necessary cleanup logistics. Cleanup sheets were filled out after each cleanup recording specific details including number of bags (or weight if known) collected, number of volunteers, and the duration and location of the cleanup. Each garbage bag collected has been assumed to weigh 3.5 kg for consistency in recording.

Through a wide array of media channels including social media, ACAP Saint John's webpage, local media outlets, as well as community outreach events, ACAP Saint John was able to engage more than 1,200 volunteers to remove over 9,000 kg (20,000 lbs.) of debris from the environment and our waterways in 2022. ACAP Saint John provided supplies for a total of 36 cleanups throughout Greater Saint John contributing to over 3,000 volunteer hours.

### Marsh Creek Cleanup

ACAP Saint John's Marsh Creek Cleanup is a renowned, annual event that brings together various volunteers within Greater Saint John to pick up tonnes of debris in and around the watershed, specifically the Majors Brook and Cold Brook tributary. The Marsh Creek Cleanup event has been on hiatus for the last couple of years due to the global pandemic. With health restrictions lifted, ACAP Saint John was able to bring back the anticipated volunteer event to clean up trash and debris around the Marsh Creek watershed. Through additional financial aid from a

corporate sponsor, J. D. Irving, Limited, this event was able to flourish and meet the expectations of staff and volunteers.

On May 7th, 2022, 74 volunteers met outside the Irving Oil Field House (headquarters) before being separated into 9 different teams. Each team was assigned a team leader and a location around the commercial district (Figure 2).

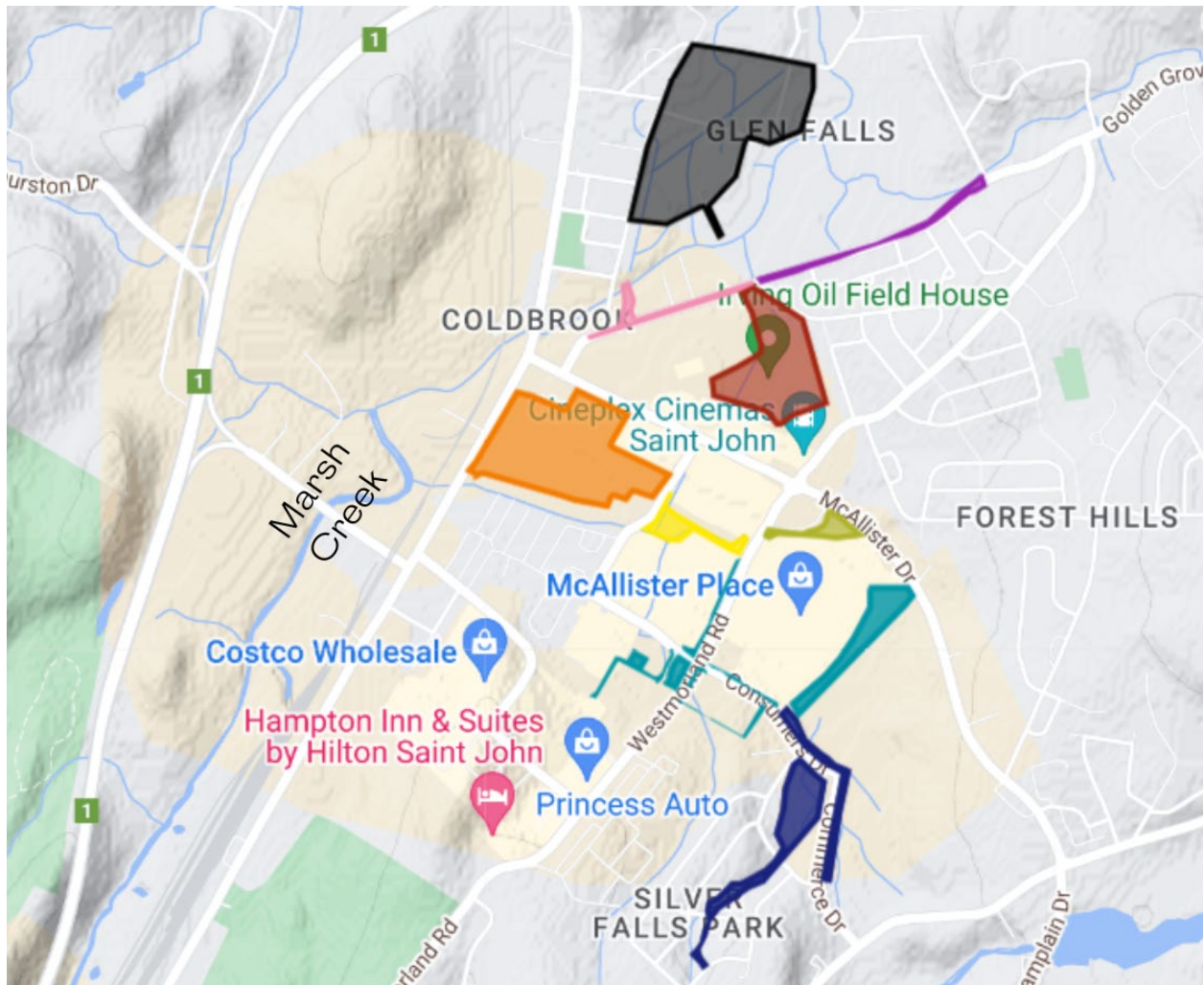


Figure 2. Map of cleanup locations located on the East Side shopping district during the 2022 Marsh Creek Cleanup.

For approximately three hours, each team picked up garbage around their assigned location. Both small and large items were removed including shopping carts, a hockey net, couch, mattress, lumber and bags of Styrofoam (Figure 3). Prizes were donated from local businesses (i.e., River and Trail, Timber Top, Bubbles and Balms, etc.) and were awarded to teams who collected the most unique item. Over the course of the event, 1,730 kg of trash was picked up by the volunteers, placed into rented dumpsters and brought to the landfill.





*Figure 3. Volunteers participating in the annual Marsh Creek Cleanup (2022).*

New this year, was having experienced kayakers from River Bay Adventures kayak along the main stem of Marsh Creek (adjacent to Rothesay Ave.) to remove debris found on the bank and within the creek (Figure 4). ACAP Saint John is ecstatic to partner with such an amazing local company that is willing to volunteer their time to help keep our watersheds clean.



*Figure 4. Steve and Jim (River Bay Adventures) posing next to their muddy kayaks after paddling along Marsh Creek during the Marsh Creek Cleanup.*

This annual event is crucial to host in our community as the commercial district and the neighbourhood nearby accumulate so much debris and trash in just one year. Our volunteers are always so excited to be a part of this event, and our team hopes to continue this annual cleanup for years to come.

## Island Cleanups

On top of the regular neighbourhood, greenspaces and beach cleans, ACAP Saint John focused on cleanups around local islands. Due to their isolation, islands do not see cleanup events as often, and garbage has been accumulating over time. These types of events give opportunities for volunteers to take action in their community and remove tonnes of garbage from these islands, improving our coastal environment and benefiting all wildlife. These isolated islands provide vital habitat and act as a refuge for wildlife from human interaction. As plastic pollution is a growing concern globally, and our community members have a significant tie to our waterways, it is anticipated that a vast number of community members and outdoor enthusiasts will take an interest in this project and be keen to participate in cleanups. Engaging with the removal of plastic in our environment will demonstrate how the breakdown of plastic can lead to microplastic pollution while emphasizing the frequency of plastic pollution in natural spaces.

In a coastal city like Saint John, it is increasingly important to clean up shorelines in an effort to reduce waste from flowing into our freshwater streams and our oceans before it breaks down into microplastics. Islands and beach cleanups will bring attention to the amount of litter that is dropped or washed up in these settings.

## Partridge Island

ACAP Saint John teamed up with River Bay Adventures (RBA), an adventure kayaking tour group, to clean up Partridge Island located within the City of Saint John's Inner Harbour. The island is a National Historic Site of Canada where it was once used as a quarantine station in the early 1800s. Currently, the island is not easily accessible for tourists but has been accessed in the past by trespassers who tend to leave trash behind.

On June 6, 2022, RBA guided ACAP Saint John staff and board members to the island via tandem kayaks to remove as much trash and marine debris as possible around the site (Figure 5). Participants worked for three hours collecting over 80 kg of garbage. The bags of trash were transported back to the mainland through in-kind support from DMK Marine Services Ltd.



Figure 5. ACAP Saint John staff and board members conducting a cleanup on Partridge Island on June 6, 2022.

## Long Island

Located in the middle of the Kennebecasis Bay, Long Island is home to little cottages, sheer rock faces, beaches and private coves. As part of The Nature Trust of New Brunswick's annual Great Fundy Coast Cleanup event, ACAP Saint John partnered with In Step Adventures to pick up litter and marine debris on Rayworth Beach Nature Preserve, a parcel of land owned by the NB Nature Trust.

On August 20th, 2022, nine volunteers kayaked to the island and participated in an hour-long cleanup around the preserve. Although frequently visited by boaters and cottage owners, the island was fairly clean with only two bags of trash collected (Figure 6).

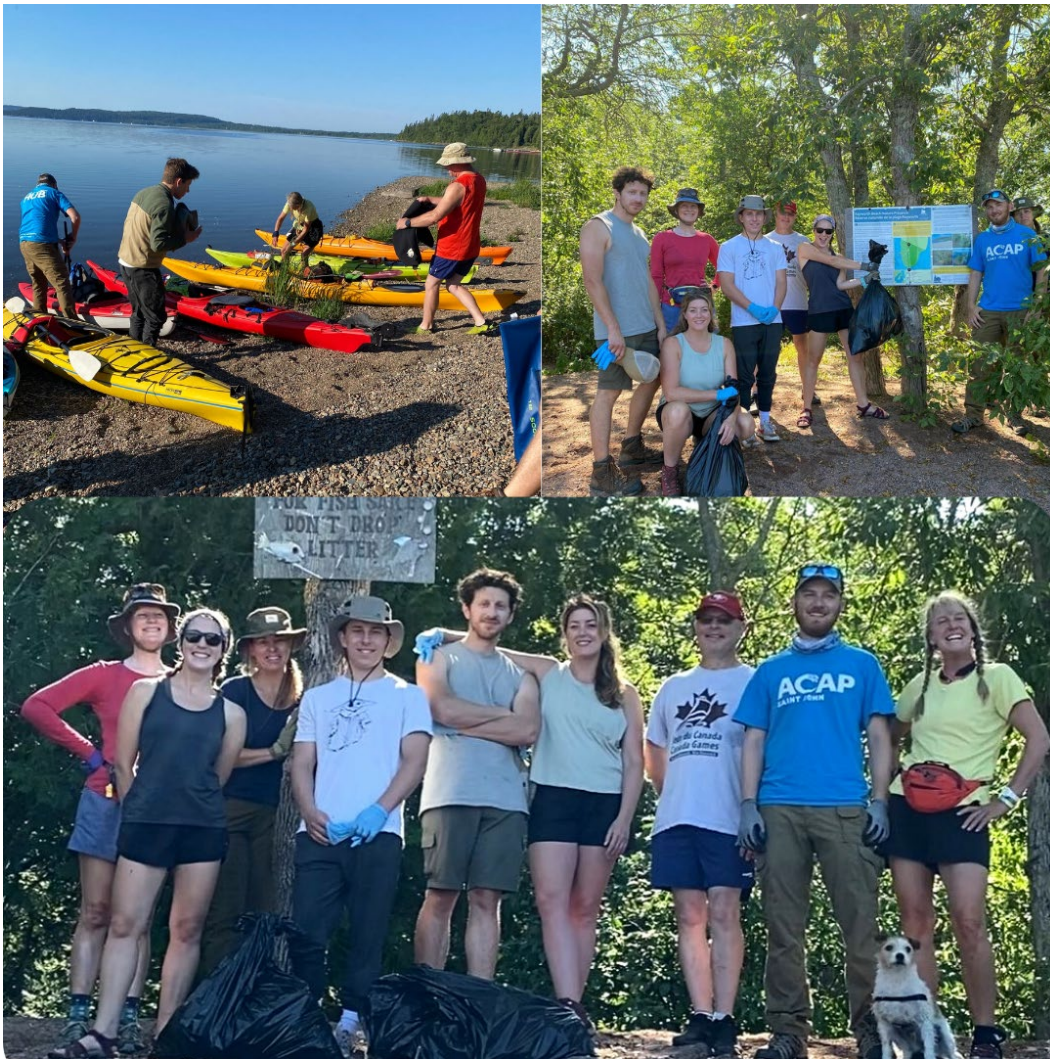


Figure 6. In Step Adventure and volunteers conducting a cleanup on Long Island on August 20, 2022.

Despite the small amount of trash picked up from the island, it was nevertheless a successful cleanup event. Volunteers had the opportunity to learn about nature preserves in their own backyard and the importance of keeping them clean.

## Randolph Island

Randolph Island, located on the City's west side, is home to a widely used municipal park and countless trails that are exposed to shoreline debris, everyday trash (i.e., food wrappers and cans) and decades old metal waste (i.e., cars). The quarries around the island were once a dumping ground for unused vehicles and appliances that pose a threat to hikers and the environment.

On October 16, 2022, ACAP Saint John partnered with the Dominion Park Community Association to plan a community cleanup around the island with a focus on sections with large piles of metal. On a beautiful Sunday morning, 46 dedicated volunteers came out to the public event. For 2.5 hours, volunteers were able to pick up over 500 kg trash and approximately 1,000 kg of metal (Figure 7).



*Figure 7. Volunteers cleaning up debris around Randolph Island on October 16, 2022.*

This public cleanup event was unique for ACAP Saint John due to the vast amounts of metal that has been sitting in the trails for decades. Safety of all volunteers was a top priority during this event. Volunteers were encouraged to only remove what they felt comfortable with and to leave

any larger, and more haphazard metal pieces to the experienced personnel to be remove. Community members volunteered their time and equipment (i.e., ATVs and trailers) to help haul large pieces of metal to be recycled at the local metal recycling facility (AIM Recycling). Volunteers from In Step Adventures also donated their time by kayaking around the entire island to remove shoreline trash in the coves and beaches (Figure 8).



*Figure 8. Volunteers from In Step Adventures who kayaked around Randolph Island removing debris along the shoreline.*

This cleanup was well received by all participants and community members of Randolph Island. Although a lot of debris and metal was removed from the island during the cleanup, there is still a great deal of trash and metal that inhabit the island that could be removed and properly disposed of.

## In-Person Engagement

### Schools

ACAP Saint John staff had the privilege of visiting different schools to engage with students about ongoing projects being conducted at ACAP, play environmental educational games, or attend outdoor field trips that align with the school curriculum. Activities were selected for each class based on the age of students and topics of interest. These ranged from scavenger hunts, tag-like games or mock field work. Each session encouraged hands-on learning where youth had the opportunity to get outdoors and experience nature as a part of their education (Figure 9).



*Figure 9. Students from various schools participating in outdoor activities with ACAP Saint John staff.*

This year, ACAP Saint John visited ten schools, engaging with over 550 students. ACAP Saint John has been able to build long lasting relationships with teachers allowing our staff to visit the same schools year after year.

### Summer Camp & Youth/Community groups

ACAP Saint John visited various community groups in 2022 including Girl Guides of Canada, YMCA of Greater Saint John (Newcomers Connection), and the Saint John Learning Exchange (Women's Empowerment Group). Each year ACAP staff are delighted to visit with local groups to provide hands-on educational activities. Activities included: fishing demonstrations, seal spotting, scavenger hunts, and other educational games (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Community groups engaging in educational activities led by ACAP Saint John staff.

## Local Farmers Markets

ACAP Saint John staff visited five farmers markets in 2022 to display current research being conducted throughout the city. Staff were able to chat with interested community members about our ongoing projects and to share any results we may have. Displays included topics on fish in the harbour, our water quality monitoring program, microplastics and cyanobacteria (Figure 11). Through these events, ACAP Saint John was able to engage with 200 community members.





*Figure 11. Shayelin set up at the AREA 506 Container Village displaying ACAP Saint John's microplastics project.*

## Social Media

During the global pandemic, society has increased the amount of time spent on social media. ACAP Saint John utilized this opportunity to keep followers connected and informed through educational posts, public event announcements, and virtual engagement, encouraging a connection between community members and nature like never before. ACAP Saint John found that engagement through social media was most effective, where posts are easily and quickly distributed through wide networks.

Throughout the *A Community of Action* project, ACAP made 30 social media posts focusing on various environmental awareness topics in the City of Saint John, reaching over 30,000 people. This form of communication allows for educational content to be shared easily and directly to people who are interested in helping our environment.

By the end of February 2023, ACAP Saint John had 4,300 followers on the organization's Twitter account, 1,400 followers on Instagram, 2,600 followers on Facebook, and 240 followers on LinkedIn. ACAP Saint John's webpage also remains a vital component for sharing information. The website was visited by an audience of 12,000 visitors with over 21,000 page views this past year.

## Conclusion

Throughout the successful *A Community of Action* project, ACAP Saint John was able to connect with a large number of community members through volunteer and outreach activities. With the return of in-person events after a two-year hiatus, ACAP Saint John facilitated a total of 36 community cleanups removing over 9,000 kg of waste from our environment. Through our educational outreach activities, we were able to connect with an additional 550 students providing them with both environmental education opportunities and the opportunity to learn in a hands-on setting out in nature. This project's success demonstrates not only ACAP Saint John's ability and passion to improve the environment in our region, but also the power of our volunteers and community connections to participate in our programming, and to help complete the hands-on work needed to better the environment.