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THE PROBLEM WITH PLASTICS

10,000 metric tonnes dumped
into Great Lakes annually, about
600 tonnes in Lake Huron

Ian Adams/Metroland

The Environment Network's Head of Business Development Narcis Bejtie holds a mix of the types of plastic pollution found in Simcoe County's waterways, such as cigarette butts and coffee cup lids.

IAN ADAMS
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Every year, about 40 dump trucks worth of plastic ends up in Lake Huron.

It comes in through wastewater treatment plants and run-off; microbeads from personal care products, fibres from synthetic clothing and trash washed into rivers and streams.

Former Toronto Brigantine program manager Kezia Weed was aboard last August when the crew took part in a one-day Great Lakes-wide microplastics sampling project, trawling the water

just off Collingwood.

Weed said she was surprised the group's trawling picked up evidence of plastic pollution.

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Microplastics still a serious threat to waterways

Continued from page 1

"People have an expectation of Georgian Bay as being an incredible, perfect body of water," she said. "To the naked eye, it appears far cleaner than Toronto Harbour, (but) there were a few things that we could spot.

"(The crew) had no idea there is pollution up there, which I think is indicative of people's learning of microplastics in general because the awareness around it is so new."

Most waterways in Simcoe County connect to Georgian Bay.

Microplastics, plastic particles smaller than five millimetres, come from a variety of sources, including cosmetics, clothing, and industrial processes. Microbeads, a type of microplastics, can be found in toothpaste, body scrubs and soaps.

But while governments on both sides of the border have enacted legislation to phase out the sale, manufacture and distribution of

microbeads by 2018, that still makes up only a small portion of the plastic ending up in the Great Lakes.

"When you think about the different things you use every day, so much of it is plastic, and so much of it is single-use plastic," said Rhiannon Moore, a coastal outreach specialist with the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation. "Eventually all those things amount to a whole bunch of plastic that you use yourself, and when you think about all the people around the lake, that really adds up."

A 2014 study found an average of 43,000 microplastic particles per square kilometre in the Great Lakes; the average jumped up to more the 466,000 close to urban centres. Another 2014 study of nearshore areas in lakes Erie and Ontario found 6.7 million pieces per square kilometre.

Last year, the Rochester Institute of Technology estimated about 10,000 metric tons of plastic ends up in the



Heather Sargeant photo

An example of the type of plastic pollution found along the shoreline of Lake Huron.

lakes on an annual basis, 600 metric tons into Lake Huron alone.

"We wash millions of minuscule bits of plastic down the drain every day," said Georgian Bay Forever execu-

tive director David Sweetnam. "While catching some, many water treatment plants simply are not equipped to catch all these microplastics."

Unlike the oceans,

where the plastic accumulates in giant gyres, plastics in the Great Lakes are caught by wind and currents and washed up onshore.

Larger pieces of plastic break down into smaller particles over time, and are ingested by marine life. While some plastics will pass through an organism, others - such as synthetic fibres - tend to get lodged in intestines.

Plastics also contain a variety of toxic or endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and act as sponges for chemical contaminants in the surrounding water.

Earlier this year, the International Joint Commission, a binational body responsible for shared waterways, including the Great Lakes, called on governments on both sides of the border for "essential action" on plastic pollution.

The IJC released recommendations to create a binational plan that develops policy, research and education to monitor and mea-

sure microplastics within the Great Lakes basin on an ongoing basis.

While microbeads are being eliminated, Sweetnam said consumers should check what's at home for products that may contain polyethylene.

Weed said taking part in the one-day sampling study drove home the issue to crew members.

"It's one thing to talk about it, it's another thing to see it and watch these collections take place and have that conversation about the use of plastics," Weed said.

Moore said consumers can opt for products with less packaging; she went "plastic-free" in January, just to see if it could be done.

"It is possible; plastic is a very useful material and I don't think it should be banned altogether.

"But the way we are using it is pretty irresponsible," she said. "Even simple things that people can do, reusing a lot of things, would make a big difference."

Legion provides JumpStart to kids' healthy activities

The Stayner branch of the Royal Canadian Legion is giving kids a JumpStart on active living.

Branch president Jim Seili recently presented a \$500 cheque to Wasaga Beach Canadian Tire store

owner Kenn Voss for the Canadian Tire JumpStart Foundation. The retailer's charity helps local children get into sports and other healthy activities.

"The generosity of the people in this area is in-

credible," Voss said. "It shows a great sense of community."

The store will match the donation, for a total of \$1,000. JumpStart supported 2,305 kids in the Simcoe County area in 2016.

Team Maizis competes in Kitchener

On Saturday, May 27, members of Team Maizis, representing Stayner's Maizis Martial Arts Academy, travelled to Kitchener to compete in the GMA Open Martial Arts Championships.

Emerson Hawboldt, in

his first tournament, placed fifth in the six-and-under novice boys kumite. Alexandros Maizis won second in the 13-to-14 advanced boys kumite. Tim Speyer placed third in the 15-to-17 novice boys kumite. Kevin Charles placed

fifth in the men's 35-and-over advanced kumite.

"It is great to see these athletes' hard work paying off," said coach Soke Michelle Maizis. "They are doing a fantastic job representing our school and our community."

Saturday Events: Kite Fest, Sand Castle Building Exhibits, MNRF Plover Palooza
 9am - 1pm: Beach Front Yoga By Wasaga Beach Yoga
 10am - 3pm: Hand Racing Remote Control Boats at Nancy Island
 12pm - 4:30pm: Georgian Triangle Music Fest, Battle of the Sands
 1pm - 3pm: Rock Solid Wrestling Wasaga Beach Brawl
 9am - 1pm: Family Sand Castle Building Competition (pre-register)

Sunday Events: Remote Control Car Demos by Hand Racing, Stand Up Paddle Boarding with BluWave SUP & Free Spirit Tours, Sand Castle Building Exhibits, Kite Fest
 8:30am - 11am: Nancy Island Lions Club Zumbathon (pre-register)
 11am: Nancy Island Lions Club Wacky Boat Regatta (pre-register)
 1pm - 3pm: Live Music by Sun K

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