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Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority Cleans Up with Unsmoke Canada Cleanups

July 8, 2021, Oshawa, ON – [Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority \(CLOCA\)](#) would like to acknowledge a recent boost to its [Conservation Area Trail Stewardship \(CATS\)](#) program from Unsmoke Canada and The Great Outdoors Fund. Thanks to a generous donation from the Unsmoke Canada Cleanups program, CLOCA can re-start their community effort to address the littering within their eight Conservation Areas. During the COVID pandemic people took to natural areas to spend time and explore. Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority realized a 50 per cent increase in visitors to their Conservation Areas over the past 18 months and is now challenged by a significant increase in litter left behind by visitors to these natural spaces. Visitors will not find garbage receptacles in CLOCA's Conservation Areas as they are an attractant for wildlife. Raccoons, skunks, and flying insects are all drawn to the garbage, creating a public safety issue with garbage being spread over a large area. The challenge is approximately six tons of garbage requires monthly removal by CLOCA staff from across the 2,700 hectares of lands managed.

Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's CATS program was originally launched in the fall of 2019 with 12 volunteers at Lynde Shores Conservation Area in the Town of Whitby. With the support of Unsmoke Canada Cleanups grant, CLOCA's CATS Cleanup will provide an expanded trained volunteer resource. They will assist CLOCA's core staff in maintaining 45 kilometres of trails throughout Conservation Areas in their jurisdiction across the Region of Durham and engage a minimum of 50 volunteers to visit the trails within six Conservation Areas including Lynde Shores Stephen's Gulch, Heber Down, Long Sault, Bowmanville Westside Marshes, and Enniskillen Conservation Areas. These volunteers have committed to spending at least two to three hours each month performing basic trail maintenance (clearing debris and litter cleanup). "A primary area of focus until the end of September will be on the collection of cigarette butts even though smoking of any kind is prohibited in Conservation Areas, the butts are a problem," says Yvonne Storm, who coordinates the CATS program for CLOCA.

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As with the increase in the amount of dog waste being left behind in CLOCA's Conservation Areas, there has also been a significant increase in cigarette butts, littering trails, beaches, waterways, wetlands, and parking lots. Cigarette butts or filters are the [most littered](#) item on the planet. An estimated 4.5 trillion butts each year. Since the 1980s, cigarette butts have accounted for 30 to 40 per cent of all litter found in coastal and urban litter [clean-ups](#).

Cigarette butts are composed of thousands of cellulose acetate fibres and, [although biodegradable](#), take [years to disappear](#) from the environment. Discarded cigarette butts may significantly damage surrounding plant growth, as [new research suggests](#). Used filters also contain [thousands of chemicals](#) that can kill plants, insects, rodents, fungus and other lifeforms, and some of which are known carcinogens. Cigarette butts have even been found in wild animals such as [seabirds](#) and turtles.

With the help of the dedicated volunteers of CLOCA's CATS program and Unsmoke Canada Cleanups program, together we can keep our natural spaces pristine—for visitors and wildlife alike. Conservation Area Trail Stewardship volunteers can be recognized by their bright yellow t-shirts and safety vests. They will be difficult to miss, so please be sure to give them a nod and a thank you for making a difference in conservation, one piece of litter at a time.

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About the Funders

Unsmoke Canada Cleanups is a grant-giving program established in 2020 through a partnership between The Great Outdoors Fund and Unsmoke Canada.

The Great Outdoors Fund is a non-profit dedicated to generating voluntary funding from the private sector to assist public agencies like Central Lake Ontario Conservation and their non-profit partners in keeping the great outdoors healthy and open for the benefit and enjoyment of people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Unsmoke Canada is an initiative of Rothmans, Benson & Hedges (RBH) to help rid Canada of cigarettes by 2035. Rothmans, Benson & Hedges recognizes its responsibility to be stewards of its products and is committed to encouraging and enabling society to reduce litter globally. This is the second year of giving for the Unsmoke Canada Cleanup sponsored by Philip Morris International Sustainability and Community Lead at Phillip Morris International.

Unsmoke Canada Cleanups program is considered an overwhelming success with more than 1,000,000 pounds of trash removed from Canada's outdoor spaces in 2020, the program's inaugural year. In 2021, they have awarded \$75,000 to organizations across Canada to take on the task of tackling litter, literally in our backyards. This collaborative is teaming up with TerraCycle to establish the Unsmoke Cigarette Recycling Program so the cigarette butts collected can be recycled into something more useful such as park benches.

For more information, visit thegreatoutdoorsfund.org or unsmoke.ca.

About Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority

Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA) is a local, community-based, environmental organization and one of 36 Conservation Authorities responsible for managing watershed resources across Ontario. Established in 1958, CLOCA's jurisdiction is based on the watershed boundaries of four major watercourses and 18 minor watercourses draining an area of over 639 square kilometres. Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's watershed stretches from the municipal boundaries of Ajax/Pickering to Clarington, and north from Lake Ontario to the crest of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority provides a wide variety of science-based watershed management programs and services, delivered in partnership with their municipal partners, local landowners, environmental agencies, and all levels of government. Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's municipal partners include the Region of Durham, the cities of Oshawa and Pickering, the towns of Ajax and Whitby, the Municipality of Clarington, and the townships of Scugog and Uxbridge.

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