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## Group's main goal remains waste reduction

By [Val Rossi - Trail Daily Times](#)

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### **Greener Footprints worked with local festivals, made a documentary and formed a society**

The organization known locally for its reusable bag campaign will slowly begin more community outreach work, after a quiet but prosperous couple of years.

Greener Footprints took some time off to form a society, but still managed to develop a film that highlights the push for a Rossland without plastic bags, and worked with West Kootenay festivals in an effort to reduce waste.

The documentary, which hasn't been released to the public yet, follows Greener Footprints co-founder Tracey Saxby through everyday life showing decision-making – like choosing to put produce straight into a cart and from the till into a cloth bag – can have a lasting impact on the environment.

“It follows the story of what happened in the community and how other communities can do the same thing,” said society board member Jen Reilly, who lives in Squamish, another community that has gone through the Greener Footprint process.

Saxby's mission to free Canada of plastic bags started in the Golden City, where a unique cloth bag touting a Rossland-specific design was made available at stores.

Giving shoppers the option to purchase a reusable bag caught on quickly, after the Grind was the first business to bite the bullet in 2008.

A year later, the community was considered 75 per cent plastic-bag free, according to a count completed by Ferraro Foods.

“Five years ago we’d buy four loads of plastic bags per year for the Trail and Rossland store – that’s 12 pallets in each load,” explained David Ferraro from Ferraro Foods. “Now we order about one-and-a-half.”

Though a program was in the works for Trail, Whistler and Revelstoke, they were put on hold as the organization wasn’t working at full capacity without Saxby.

Now with a diverse board and formal society status, the group is ready to take on new initiatives.

“We want to be sure that the projects we take on help us achieve the goals set out by our organization,” said Reilly.

“B.C. can’t ban plastic bags outright, this is an area we need to work on,” she said. “But what we can do, is help people make good choices from the grassroots perspective.”

Reilly laughs when she thinks of the many times she’s forgotten her cloth bags at home and has either juggled her groceries to her vehicle, or loaded them straight into her trunk and bagged the goods after pulling into her driveway in order to carry them inside.

“I grew up with a garbage bag in my garbage pail, that’s what I’ve known my whole life,” said the 35-year-old.

“But do I really need that garbage bag?”

The “three Rs,” reduce, reuse and recycle, are often viewed as a continuum, but really there is a sort-of hierarchy, she said, noting that reduction is the most important message.

Working with West Kootenay festivals this summer, including Shambhala, the Nakusp Music Fest, Kaslo Jazz Etc. Summer Music Festival and the Hills Garlic Festival, the organization explored different ways of reducing waste.

Though it was discovered that compost would be the most adequate way to cut waste, it was also realized that in order to implement such a program, the Kootenays would need a site to dump the decomposed matter.

“The project originated out of a desire to invest some time into exploring alternative ways to dealing with the volume of waste, predominantly related to our food vendors,” said Ellen Kinsel, coordinator for the Hills Garlic Festival, which received funding through Columbia Basin Trust to contract Greener Footprints to collect data on waste and come up with some recommendations.

Though ideas like a washing station came up, so did the limitations of being a smaller festival without the proper infrastructure.

Along with the proper data though is an opportunity to work toward reducing waste, which often begins with convincing stakeholders, she said.

Greener Footprints will continue to explore other ideas like a reusable coffee mug program, the development of outreach curriculum and working to eliminate unnecessary packaging, an interest of board member Amanda Wells of Tails Pet Supplies and Services in Rossland.

For more information on Greener Footprints, visit [www.greenerfootprints.com](http://www.greenerfootprints.com)

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