

ORMLT Future

Protecting and restoring the natural environment
of the Oak Ridges Moraine for future generations

Winter, 2001/02

Sauriol dinner a splendid success

A capacity crowd of 1,200 turned out for the 8th Annual Charles Sauriol Environmental Dinner on November 1st.

"Our keynote speaker, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was undoubtedly a great draw" said Don Prince, chair of the organising committee, "but I think that this also underlines the tremendous support of the community when it comes to the moraine."

Enthusiastic applause greeted Kennedy when he said that the original focus of his talk—The Oak Ridges Moraine, a Watershed in Crisis—was tempered by the government's announcement earlier that day of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

According to Prince, the dinner brought together many groups, individuals, and representatives from all levels of government and significantly raised the profile of our conservation efforts "I've been receiving calls from land owners interested in their conservation options ever since the dinner."

The event, jointly organised by the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT) and the Conservation Foundation,



Helen and Charles Hicks, Robert F. Kennedy Jr, & Don Prince

which is the fund raising arm of the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), netted \$62,000. These funds will go directly towards preserving land on the moraine.

"None of this would have been possible without the hard work of our organisers, sponsors and silent auction donors," says Prince, "and of course, the support of everyone who attended. A heartfelt thank you to all!"

Land Update: two more properties about to close

Conservation Easement on 711 acres

Bill Wilder and his wife Billie have granted a conservation easement on their Pickering area farm to the ORMLT. The property, which actually comprises 7 parcels of land, is located at the headwaters of the Duffins Creek watershed, east of the hamlet of Claremont.

Mr. Wilder was motivated by a desire to ensure that the land remains free of the threat of development in perpetuity. The property affords a spectacular panoramic view from the southern slope of the moraine across Lake Ontario, and is



Pond and field, Wilder property

located between two provincially significant wetlands: Claremont and Glen Major.

10+ Acre Donation in King Township

Beth Harper's 18 acre property in King

Township is on beautiful rolling terrain that features a pristine kettle lake, and a large mature forested area with walking trails.

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Looking back on an eventful year

by Tom Atkins, President

As the year draws to a close, we all reflect on the events of the previous twelve months. For those of us working to conserve the Oak Ridges Moraine, the year has been especially eventful.

The land trust, in its first full year of operation, has acquired its first property and is about to complete the paperwork on two others. That means that almost 800 acres of the moraine are now permanently protected.

We have organised three highly successful fundraising events—the art auction last February, the Walk for the Moraine in October, and the Sauriol Dinner in November. And we have opened our headquarters in Aurora.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made this possible: Ken Purvis, Bill and Billie Wilder

and Beth Harper were the first land owners to offer up their properties for permanent protection. They have paved the way for others to do the same.

The Oak Ridges Trail Association and the Conservation Foundation partnered with us and ensured the success of our fundraising events. The Trillium Foundation, the City of Toronto, and the Metcalfe, McLean and EJLB Foundations provided much needed funding. The support of land trust members and donors has also been essential, and very much appreciated.

And last but not least, the hardworking members of our volunteer board have logged thousands of hours in their tireless efforts. We anticipate that through the dedicated help of volunteers and partners, we will experience continued success in 2002.

Land update (continued from page 1)

The property has been in Ms Harper's family for over fifty years. Her goal in donating it is to ensure that it is permanently conserved.

The land is actually two parcels of 10 and 8 acres. The donation of the initial ten acres is in the works, with the ecological tax evaluation nearing completion.

The remaining eight acres, which



Looking southeast, Beth Harper property

include Ms Harper's home, will come to the trust as a bequestment. Ms Harper very kindly hosted a meeting of the Land Committee on a beautiful summer evening earlier this year, and has patiently worked with the ORMLT through each step of the process.

The ORMLT's Land Committee is presently working on a further 20 properties in communities across the moraine.

Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act

Bill 122 announced on November 1st

Many are hailing the November 1st announcement of Bill 122 and the draft Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan as the long-awaited blueprint for environmentally-based planning on the moraine. Indeed it has been called "a brilliant new law" that is "likely one of the strongest, most public-spirited conservation laws ever seen in North America."

The draft plan proposes four land use categories: Natural core areas, (38%), natural linkage areas (24%), countryside areas (30%) and settlement areas (8%). For details on the allowable land uses, refer to the Ministry's website at www.mah.gov.on.ca

Role of the ORMLT

The broad protection proposed in the plan has led some people to wonder about the role of the ORMLT. In fact, the ORMLT is seen as an integral part of the land securement work being proposed for the soon-to-be-formed Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation.

Despite progressive government policy and legislation, there are always areas that require greater protection. For example, the Niagara Escarpment is constantly under

development pressure and has an active trust - the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy.

The ORM legislation proposes a 10 year review that could see development increase in the intervening years. Land or conservation easements held by the land trust ensure permanent protection for potentially threatened land, regardless of government policy.

There are vital links and corridors between sensitive areas that may not be adequately protected by the legislation, but that are essential for conserving the ecological integrity of these sensitive areas. Again, the land trust can work to help conserve these links.

Some 91 percent of the moraine is in private ownership, and it is unrealistic to hope that government agencies can acquire and protect all of the land. The ORMLT can work to enhance the conservation efforts of both government and non-government agencies.

Lastly, there are concerns about the development and resource extraction pressures that could be encountered in the eastern portions of the moraine. The ORMLT can play an important role in conservations efforts in the area.

Fundraising appeal: Ingeborg Secord Property

The ORMLT and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) have entered into a conditional agreement for the purchase of the Ingeborg Secord property, an important and strategic parcel of environmentally sensitive land, just south of the hamlet of Goodwood.

The property is 48 acres and is situated in the headwaters of the West Duffins Creek. It is characterised by a high quality forest and wetland and contains a portion of the Goodwood/Glasgow wetlands complex.

In addition, the property is considered to be the optimum route for the Oak Ridges Trail, given that it is strategically located between the TRCA's Secord Tract and the TRCA's Goodwood Tract. The conservation land to the immediate east was acquired with the assistance of a

\$500,000 donation from the late Ingeborg Secord prior to her untimely passing. The securement of these 48 acres will ensure long term protection for this environmentally sensitive area.

The proposed purchase price is \$280,000, with the agreement conditional upon our success in raising the required funding. We are therefore looking to individuals and donor organisations to help us raise the necessary funds. If you are interested in making a donation, please contact the ORMLT office at (905) 841-3678, email: landtrust@look.ca. If you would like more information or a tour of the property, please contact Don Prince, chair of the Land Committee at (905) 677-6090, or email: djprince1@rogers.com.

Walk for the Moraine raises over \$15,000

Our first annual walk for the moraine on October 13th was graced by perfect weather—the fall colours were breathtaking, and the trails at Seneca lived up to their billing.

Oak Ridges Trail Association's fantastic volunteer effort

With Robert Ellison at the helm, all the hard work and careful planning paid off. From Sylvia Gilchrist's highly organised registrars to Jill Doble's hike co-ordination, Peter Attfield's trail layouts, Harold Sellers' logistics expertise and Marilyn's refreshments, we got rave reviews from participants.



The first 5 km hikers pause for a photo-op

The 307 hikers brought in 450 pledges, with donations still coming in as a result of the publicity spear-headed by Wilma Backus and Ildi Connor.

The board of directors of the Oak

Ridges Moraine Land Trust would like to thank the wonderful ORTA

members who worked so hard to make this event such a success.

Thanks also go to Seneca College for donating its facilities for the day, and to all those who provided entertainment for the hale and hearty hikers: Hiker Mike, Mary Dubé, & Magic, the Raging Grannies and Benny the Bee.

The funds raised have been earmarked to secure a 48 acre portion of the Secord property, enhancing an ORTA linkage between the existing Secord Tract and the Goodwood Tract in Uxbridge.

Resale fashions event raises \$2,000

Congratulations and thank you to Cathy Wellesley who raised \$2,000 for the land trust by hosting a resale fashion event.

Cathy had been considering such an event for a while and decided that the land trust was a worthy cause for her efforts. She used word of mouth and local newspaper ads to solicit donations of gently used consignment quality clothing and opened her home over two days in October for the event.

In addition to the \$2,000 raised, Cathy has provided information on how we can get the donation matched through IBM's Matching Grants Program. Cathy has very kindly agreed to be a resource for others looking to help the land trust through a similar event. Contact the land trust office at 905 841-3678 and we will put you in touch with her.

Our new Administrative Manager

The ORMLT board is pleased to announce that Mary Louise Colantonio has been hired as our new administrative manager. Mary Louise comes to us with an extensive background in working for environmental NGOs such as the Clean Air Alliance and Pollution Probe, and, as we have all been thrilled to learn, she is a tireless and enthusiastic supporter of the land trust. Welcome Mary Louise!

Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 9 to 1:30, and Thursday from 9 to noon. The office phone number is: (905) 841-3678, fax: 841-3271, and the email address is: landtrust@look.ca

ORMLT Life Members

Donors who give \$500 or more become life members. Welcome and thank you for your generous support: West Humber Naturalists, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, Oak Ridges Trail Association, the Royal Bank, Cathy Wellesley, Robert Wiens, & Yehan Wong.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust is a non-profit registered charity dedicated to protecting and restoring the natural environment. *ORMLT Future* is the official newsletter of the Land Trust and is published quarterly. If you would like information on membership, donation opportunities or would like to volunteer, call: (905) 841-3678, fax: 841-3271 or visit our website at: www.oakridgesmoraine.org. Our mailing address is: 15150 Yonge St. Ste 2A, Aurora, ON, L4G 1M2.

ORMLT office now open

Official ribbon cutting ceremony on Sept. 10

The ORMLT officially opened its new headquarters at 15150 Yonge St. in Aurora on September 10th, with a ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration attended by some 30 land trust members and dignitaries.

The move was made possible by our Trillium funding—a significant grant of \$119,000 over two years—earmarked for establishing headquarters and organisation-building.

“This is a big step for the land trust,” said Tom Atkins, president of the ORMLT, “and we are proud of the support

shown in our activities by such agencies as Trillium.”

The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario’s charity casino initiative. The Foundation allocates grants in the arts, culture, sports, recreation, environment and social services.



Pauline Browes, Cynthia Hyland, Tom Atkins, Frank Klees, Ann Pegg and Gloria Marsh

The Moraine’s Once Vast Tall-grass Prairies, Savannahs & Sands Barrens

By Steve Varga

The Moraine is famous for its large forests, kettle lakes and bogs. It is less well known for its tall-grass prairies, savannahs and sand barrens. These open communities covered about 18% of the Moraine and were maintained by droughty conditions and by ground fires.

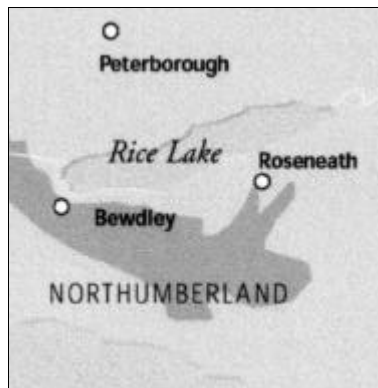
Today, the Moraine’s once vast plains have been reduced to about 80 remnants with the largest and best example at the Alderville First Nations (near Roseneath) where it is maintained by the age-old practice of controlled ground fires.

Other remnants are found at Red Cloud Cemetery Prairie (restored and open to the public), Ganaraska Forest and Northumberland County Forests and on private lands. Most of the remnants occur in the eastern portion of the Moraine where plains vegetation originally covered around 37,000 hectares and stretched for 60 km from Pontypool, south of Rice Lake to the eastern terminus of the Moraine.

The extent of these plains is based on historical land surveys and the early accounts of John Macoun and Catharine Parr Traill. For an excellent article on the Rice Lake Plains, see the Canadian Field Naturalists 1992 Vol.106 pages 73-86 by Paul Catling, Vivian Catling and Sheila McKay-Kuja.

These plains supported a spectacular diversity of flora and fauna, which still

largely survive in the remnants. The early writers marveled at the sea of open prairies on the Moraine covered in tall grasses of Indian Grass, Little Bluestem and Big Bluestem interspersed with showy wildflowers such as Butterfly-weed, Prairie Buttercup, Wild Lupine and Cylindric Blazing Star. Open-grown trees or scrubby areas of Black, White and Red Oak, White and Red



Pine and Trembling Aspen dominated large expanses of savannahs. In the under-storey, there were scattered low shrubs and an abundance of grasses, sedges and wildflowers. Elsewhere, blow sands were home to barrens plants such as Hay Sedge, Sand Drop-

seed, Bracken Fern, reindeer lichen and dry-ground mosses.

Prairie and savannah ecosystems are among the most globally endangered ecosystems, with only 0.02% of their original extent still remaining in Ontario. Sand barrens and oak/pine woodlands are also considered rare in southern Ontario. These ecosystems are noteworthy for their concentration of rare plants and animals supporting 50% of the Moraine’s provincially rare plant species as well as such provincially rare butterflies as Edward’s Hairstreak, Sleepy Duskywing and Olympia Marble, the Little White Tiger Beetle and the Eastern Hognose Snake.

Over 99% of the Moraine’s original plains vegetation has been converted to agriculture or have been lost when they were shaded out by planted pines or native regeneration. A comprehensive approach of public-private partnerships and volunteer efforts should be encouraged to restore the wild prairie and savannah landscapes that so impressed the early European settlers and was home to our First Nations.

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