



Conservancy NEWS

Protecting the special natural features of the Couchiching region for future generations.

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

NOVEMBER 2007

Scout Valley to be forever green



Amid a flurry of last-minute controversy, Orillia City Council last month approved a conservation easement agreement with The Couchiching Conservancy to protect the Scout Valley forest from development for the next century and beyond. This is the first conservation easement of its kind in Ontario and, as far as we know, only the second in Canada. (The town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia, approved a conservation easement only a few weeks earlier.)

During Council deliberations, very little debate focussed on the easement itself – there appeared to be widespread support for ruling out future development on this 228-acre property along the west side of Highway 11. A group of influential Orillians, however, led by Chamber of Commerce president Angelo Orsi, wanted further review and re-consideration of a Council decision not to run a sewer line through Scout Valley.

In the end, City Council approved a series of motions that closed the door on further consideration of the sewer-line issue, approved signing of the conservation easement, and approved a one-time \$25,000 grant to the Conservancy to support some of our costs in registering and monitoring the easement to ensure it is upheld in future.

Since The Couchiching Conservancy normally works quietly and privately with landowners to negotiate conservation agreements, and deliberately stays away from advocacy activities, this close-up view of the democratic

process in action was a novel experience. It is a credit to Orillia City Council, and to Mayor Ron Stevens who first proposed the conservation easement, that they chose to put the natural environment first in this instance.

Details of the easement provisions were negotiated by city manager Ian Brown and legal advisor Doug Downey, with Executive Director Ron Reid, Board member Bob Sullivan and lawyer Bruce Waite representing the Conservancy. While most terms of the easement are standard, such as no future subdivisions or utilities being allowed, the nature of Scout Valley required some site-specific provisions as well.

Within two years, the City will produce both a Trails Plan and a Forest Management Plan for Scout Valley, which will be reviewed and approved by the Conservancy. Since members of the public use the property for walking and cycling, we have to be sure the easement does not result in unsafe conditions for them. A nature-interpretation centre was flagged as a future possibility, and already-disturbed areas, such as parking lots, were excluded.

The final steps toward completing and registering the conservation easement are now underway, and we expect that everything will be in place by the end of the year. ♡

Corporate Member list tops 80

More than 80 local businesses and service providers elected to join the Conservancy in 2007 as Corporate Members. About half of those members contribute funds to support our programs at various levels; the other half has donated goods and services for Conservancy projects.

On October 26, a reception at Grant's Woods recognized the companies involved in this remarkable partnership. A special guest that afternoon was Walter Schmoranz, the president of **Pelee Island Winery**, which has produced a special set of Couchiching Conservancy labels for five popular brands of its VQA wines. Each case ordered through the Conservancy brings us a \$24 donation from the company. If you are interested in being included in our pre-Christmas order, please contact us at 326-1620.

Other businesses that received special recognition include **Casino Rama**, which has been a generous financial supporter, **RBC Dominion Securities** for setting a new level of corporate support this year, **Meridian Credit Union** for their help with Mother Earth Day, and four local law firms for their generous donation of legal services. We also paid special tribute to our

media partners the *Orillia Packet & Times*, *Orillia Today* and *JackFM*.

Conservancy President Jane Ball presented flowers to Outreach Coordinator **Rosalie Pratt**, who left for another position at the end of October. She led a range of projects over the past three years, and was the driving force in developing our corporate-membership program. ∞



Planned Giving Idea #3 — by Paul Russell, Treasurer

Each issue of *The Conservancy News* profiles various ways you can help preserve green spaces in your community through planned giving. As a registered charity, certified under the Ecological Gifts program, The Couchiching Conservancy is well positioned to maximize the effectiveness of your gift of nature.

Giftng Idea #3: Name your favourite charity as the beneficiary of your insurance policy.

In the last issue we looked at naming The Couchiching Conservancy as owner of your life insurance policy, giving you a donation receipt today that's equal to the cash value of the policy, and future receipts each year equal to your premium payments.

A second insurance option is to remain the owner of a policy but name the Conservancy as the beneficia-

ry. This offers you the satisfaction of making a substantial future gift to your charity of choice while retaining full control of the policy should your wishes change in the future. This planned-giving strategy also provides your estate with a tax receipt equal to the full value of the death benefit. This could be very useful in helping your estate preserve value, as it may have taxes due that are associated with collapsing your RRIF, or the triggering of capital gains on investments or property.

We would be pleased to sit down with you and your advisors to explore your options for this gifting idea and others. Simply contact us at 326-1620 to arrange a personal appointment. Since everyone's tax situation is unique, it is important for you to obtain independent advice before deciding on any planned gift. ∞

UPDATES **from the Conservation front**



Kristen Field has joined the Conservancy staff for the winter as a Conservation Intern thanks to funding provided by the Science Horizons Youth Intern Program. Originally from Magnetewan, Ont., Kristen has training from Malaspina University College and the Sir Sanford Fleming Ecosystem Management program. She will be assisting in management planning for our properties, the Carden conservation strategy, the Carden Nature Festival and many other activities.

Please set aside the afternoon of **Saturday, January 26** for the Conservancy's annual meeting, to be held again at the Mariposa Inn. Everyone with an interest in conserving the natural environment is welcome. Firsthand reports on our activities, a special guest speaker and lots of opportunity to connect with others make these annual meetings a lively and interesting experience. ∞

On November 3, the Conservancy Board and Past Presidents took part in an **organizational assessment process** delivered by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance. This process evaluates how well we meet a comprehensive set of Standards and Practices for Canadian land trusts. We came through with flying colours in all categories, but with work still to do in documenting some of our policies in areas such as records management.

*The Couchiching
Conservancy* 

Looking ahead for Carden conservation



Over the past five years we have been privileged to work with other conservation partners and local landowners to protect over 5,000 acres of the Carden Alvar. While acquisition activities are ongoing, managing this land base has become a larger responsibility. At the same time, an active program of re-introducing and monitoring Loggerhead Shrikes is taking place here.

Clearly, there are advantages to making sure these three conservation programs – acquisition, stewardship and recovery – fit together and assist each other. At the same time, the organizations involved are keenly aware of the need to see that the local community benefits from our work on the Carden Alvar.

To meet these objectives, a process of discussion and consultation has been put in place this fall, sponsored by The Couchiching Conservancy, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Wildlife Preservation Canada. An initial forum brought together a cross-section of interested parties – local landowners, quarry operators, government officials and conservationists – to identify issues and potential actions. Between now and January, five working groups will examine these areas in more detail and make recommendations.

While this process has shown that many current initiatives offer benefits, such as the economic boost to the community from the Carden Nature Festival, there is scope for new approaches to make conservation more effective in the coming years. ∞



Protect an Acre for Christmas!

Do you have trouble reconciling the commercialism of the Christmas season with your desire to be more environmentally responsible? The Conservancy is once again offering a solution to that dilemma through our Protect an Acre program.

The concept is simple. For each \$25 donation to our land-protection program, you receive a special Protect an Acre gift card, along with a gorgeous picture note-card of the habitat you select. You can choose from six natural habitats, all of them features of the local landscape we are helping to protect: grasslands, wetlands, ancient forests, alvars, granite barrens and The Land Between.

There's a special bonus for you, as well – you get a charitable-donation receipt for the full amount of your Protect an Acre contribution.

Use the form below to make your Christmas gifting easy on you and easy on the environment, or call us at 326-1620 to order Protect an Acre gifts with your VISA card.

Protect an Acre: Order Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone No: () _____

Number of Acres @ \$25: _____

Habitat: Grassland: _____

Wetland: _____

Ancient Forest: _____

Alvar: _____

Granite Barren: _____

Land Between: _____

Send to:

The Couchiching Conservancy,
Box 704, Orillia, Ontario, L3V 6K7

*Please make cheques payable to:
The Couchiching Conservancy*

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