

# The Couchiching Conservancy



**2013 Annual General Meeting  
January 26, 2013**

## **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m. at Hawk Ridge Golf Club, Orillia with the attendance of around 170 members and guests. Executive Director Mark Bisset welcomed special guests Simcoe North MP Bruce Stanton, Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop, Oro-Medonte Councillor Marty Lancaster, and guest speaker Dr. Brock Fenton. Ramara Township Mayor Mike Duffy was also welcomed upon his arrival.

## **2. Minutes and highlights of 2012 annual meeting**

President Jamie Powell reviewed the minutes of 2012, highlighting the Copeland Forest initiative, launching of the new website, Bluebird Ranch and North Bear acquisitions, community involvement and stewardship of over 10,000 acres, as well as CC's financial stability. The minutes were available for review by the members. There were no comments or questions. Moved by Rosemary Dunsmore that the minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting be adopted. Seconded by Robbie Preston. Carried.

## **3. President's remarks**

Jamie Powell highlighted the following:

- new and recent participation in the Canadian Land Trust Alliance's LEED program whereby companies can purchase carbon offsets that count toward LEED certification. CC has already received \$2000 for Grant's Woods. The potential for future revenue from this program is significant.
- Estimated \$700,000 in pledges for the Heartwood Fund
- the need for further emphasis on sustainable fundraising due to the economic downturn, new government regulations and climate change
- a more strategic approach to land acquisition. He cited two of CC's most recent acquisitions: the Kris Starr Sanctuary and the Russell Easement
- CC's re-defining of itself in new ways such as the Trillium Grant-supported Copeland Forest stewardship initiative. The 4500 acres of this resource management area include the headwaters of three major watersheds and an extensive trail system on the Oro-Moraine. The project has engendered much community interest and involvement.
- assistance to The Land Between and fledgling Huronia Land Trust

Jamie thanked all of the board members especially Doug Christie and Margaret Pomeroy who are updating CC policies in light of the new Canada Not-for-Profit Corporation Act, and David Homer, who is spearheading the updating of CC's five-year strategic plan. He applauded CC staff and the hard work of Executive Director Mark Bisset in managing all of this and further, achieving a surplus in the operating account and a substantial increase in reserves.

Jamie also thanked outgoing board member Peggy Foley who, as Treasurer, assisted in moving CC forward in new investment strategies, and Past-President Isabelle Theiss who has assisted the board and staff for many years making herself available whenever needed.

#### **4. Treasurer's report**

Treasurer Peggy Foley presented the audited financial statements for the period ending October 31, 2012. Peggy made special reference to the following:

- breakdown of investments (Page 13)
- mortgage donation of \$70,000 in the President's Reserve Fund (Page 15)
- unique way of increasing assets by way of a life insurance policy
- that there was no significant change in grants but overall revenues are up and there is a healthy balance in the operating account

Moved by Sandy Agnew that the Financial Statements for the year ended October 31, 2012 be approved. Seconded by Ken Thompson. Carried.

Motion to appoint Hehn Trickey Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants as auditor for the year ending October 31, 2013. Moved by Jane Ball, seconded by Adam Thompson. Carried.

#### **5. Past Presidents Council report**

In the absence of Nathalie Rockhill, Ron Reid gave an update of the council which is comprised of all of the past Presidents and past Treasurers since 1993. The vision at that time was to build the Conservancy as a force for nature and in this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, the vision is strong and those individuals are all still with us and all still active. The experience and perspective of the council members provides wisdom for the Conservancy to continue the long-term goal of protecting acres for future generations with a solemn promise to take care of the land forever. The council's purpose is to ensure that through times of change in government policy and the economy that that commitment can still be fulfilled by encouraging donors to leave something significant behind for the generation to come. Ron gave the example of Don Elliott who left to the Conservancy the property known as Elliott Woods and Judy Probst who bought 200 acres in memory of her parents and gave us Prospect Marsh. Recently, Bill and Molly Starr dedicated their donated land to their late son Kris, creating the Kris Starr Sanctuary.

On behalf of the Past Presidents Council Ron gave thanks to all of the people who have donated, with pledges approaching \$700,000. With the Heartwood Fund as a powerful tool to keep the promise of land protection, Ron advised that in this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Conservancy, the target is to get 20 new pledges.

#### **6. Executive Director's report**

Mark began by saying that the Couchiching Conservancy was the envy of other land trusts because of the Past Presidents Council. He thanked his staff for all of their hard work: Kyra Howes, Dorthea Hangaard, Dave Hawke, Gayle Carlyle, Ron Reid and Ginny Moore out in Carden, Tanya Clark and Kathy Connor. He also thanked the Board, particularly outgoing President Jamie Powell.

#### Acquisitions

Twenty years after the founding of the Conservancy in 1993, we now have 11,441 acres protected for future generations. This year the following properties were added:

- Kris Starr Sanctuary – Bill and Molly Starr
- Prospect Marsh – Judy Probst. As well Judy and Lou have put an easement their home property

- Russell Easement – 85 acres – Lynn Russell
- easement on Dr. Nancy Ironside's 300-acre property in Severn Township. Dr. Ironside then sold the property and donated the mortgage she held on it to the Conservancy. These funds will help fund operations for the next four years.

Judy and Lou Probst were honoured with the Pioneering Leader Award at the 2012 Ontario Land Trust meeting. Ron Reid was also recognized with the same prestigious award.

#### Stewardship: Recognition of Volunteers

- CC's dependence on its volunteers was highlighted. In 2012, invasive species was our biggest threat, especially dog-strangling vine in Carden and garlic mustard on other properties. A new plan was formulated in the fall to train property teams in the management of invasive species. Funding was acquired through the Invasive Species Centre and Tides Canada. Teams are being trained to monitor efforts to control invasive species on their properties.
- Jane Ball was recognized for her major role in establishing a volunteer network for the Conservancy. Jane will be stepping down from this position in the spring.
- a thank you was extended to all CC volunteers with special note to those involved in the Carden Nature Festival, the turtle habitat project on the Berndt property, CC ambassadors and property management teams
- volunteers taking part in the Copeland initiative were also recognized. There has been substantial gathering of information from the initial public meeting in Craighurst and from the open-space meeting at Horseshoe where the different user groups had the opportunity to communicate with each other and provide input. Members of the Stewardship Committee are invested for the long haul.

#### Further updates:

Mark made mention of the following:

- changes are occurring due to the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporation Act. CC by-laws are being reviewed and a draft of the amended by-laws will be presented to the membership at a public meeting later this year. Ratification will take place at the 2014 AGM.
- the Act also affects how membership is handled. A new development strategy was created in 2012 to raise the bar on community support (see article on website for details). Tanya will help implement the strategy this year with interesting new events and activities. Mark then made a plug for monthly giving, preferred as an automatic bank account deduction. As an enticement, the first 20 members to sign up will receive a free ticket for the draw of David Homer's beautiful evening grosbeak carving, and a CC tuque.

#### Comments from the floor:

Valerie Powell mentioned that TVO was presenting a three-part series on The Land Between featuring the Conservancy. Robbie Preston advised that the Carden Nature Festival was offering new and exciting programs for 2013. He thanked attendees and all participants.

#### **7. Presentation of gold and silver pins**

Jamie Powell and David Homer presented gold pins to:

Ingrid VanderMarel – board member since 2008, member of property management teams, picker of garlic mustard, and active participant in Copeland Forest stewardship initiative

Mark Powell – long-term corporate sponsor as owner of Davey Tree Expert Co. of Canada. Mark is always providing his company's services to keep trails at Grant's Woods safe  
Ron and Sharon Hancock – committed volunteers with the Conservancy for many years, assisting at Mother Earth Day events, property management at Grant's Woods and school tour visits

## **8. Election of new board**

Jamie Powell presented the slate of nominees for 2013-2014: David Homer, Bob Sullivan, Ingrid VanderMarel, Doug Christie, Margaret Pomeroy, Gord Michener, Liz Ross and Kailin Gratrix and himself as past president. He introduced Gord, Liz and Kailin with short biographies. Jamie then asked three times for further nominations from the floor. There were none.

Moved by Janet Grand that the slate of candidates for the 2013-2014 Board of Directors of the Couchiching Conservancy as recommended by the Nominations Committee be elected. Seconded by Herb Furniss. Carried.

## **9. Incoming President's remarks**

David Homer said that he was honoured and humbled to serve as the new President of the Board. He said CC was blessed with its staff and thanked them, as well as all of the volunteers. He acknowledged that the next few years would be challenging. With traditional funding drying up, new sources will have to be tracked down. CC is in the final year of its present strategic plan and a new one will be presented at the 2014 AGM after further meetings with the public, both partners and members.

David stated the need to increase CC membership and requested that members take pamphlets home and circulate them among neighbours and friends.

## **10. Guest speaker**

Bob Sullivan introduced Dr. Brock Fenton who, through his expertise and ongoing research in the ecology and behaviour of bats, especially echolocation, provided us with a most interesting and enlightening presentation on these unique mammals. Many questions followed.

## **11. Wrap-up and adjournment**

Jamie presented Peggy and Isabelle with framed photos by Arnie Stinsson. As outgoing president Jamie said that CC is one of the most meaningful organizations he has worked for. He would now become one of its "elders". He invited members to visit the tables of information around the room before leaving.

Moved by David Kennedy that the meeting be adjourned. Second by Herb Furniss. Carried.

Prepared February 4, 2013 by Ingrid VanderMarel