



Major project launched on the Oak Ridges Moraine to encourage landowner participation in conservation efforts

(King City, April 3, 2006) A major new landowner information project, created by 23 conservation and environmental organizations working together to provide co-coordinated conservation services, has been launched in selected areas of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The 'Caring for the Moraine' Project (CMP) has been made possible with a grant of \$230,000 from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. Contributions in staff and technical services from the project partners total \$460,000.

This is the first time that major conservation and environmental protection agencies and organizations on the Moraine have come together to develop a strategic plan and provide comprehensive, coordinated conservation services for landowners living in particularly important areas of the Moraine.

The CMP is strictly a voluntary program. It has been designed to be a user friendly, one-stop starting point for people who own land on the Oak Ridges Moraine and are seeking advice on land management and stewardship, on protecting their drinking water sources, and on how to continually improve their property value while helping to protect its natural features.

The Oak Ridges Moraine is one of Ontario's most prominent ecosystems. Its rolling hills, unique kettle lakes, hiking trails and vistas stretch across the top of the Greater Toronto Area. It is a big area – more than 160 kilometers in length. Stretching from the Niagara Escarpment in Caledon to east of Rice Lake, it is the starting point of the 65 rivers flowing into Lake Ontario, Lake Simcoe and the Kawartha Lakes, and is the source of drinking water for over 250,000 people. It is important that Moraine landowners get good advice and support to help them protect these vital areas.

"More than 90% of the Moraine is privately owned. If we are going to protect this vital area, we need to make it easier for landowners to find the right information and the best people to talk with about their properties," explained Michael Scott, Executive Director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. "This project is a portal, through which Moraine landowners can access the resources, experience and expertise of almost two dozen organizations, ranging from Conservation Authorities, Trout Unlimited, Stewardship Councils, the Wetland Habitat Fund, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, or the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust."

Since the Moraine is large, the Caring for the Moraine program is initially focused on three areas which have sensitive natural features, such as forest tracts and wetlands, and are located in the headwaters of important water sources.

The three areas are: (1) The *Humber Nottawasaga Headwaters* area (located in the far western end of the ORM, overlapping the Simcoe and Peel County boundaries); (2) The *Durham Headwater* area (located toward the centre of the Moraine, primarily in Durham Region) and (3) The *Ganaraska Hills Project* area (encompassing the Ganaraska Forest, just south-west of Rice Lake). Detailed maps of the project areas can be found at www.ormf.com

The partners in the 'Caring for the Moraine' project have launched an extensive outreach program this week. The first step is distributing the *Caring for the Moraine* tabloid through community papers. The tabloid contains maps of the three zones and describes the program. Project representatives will then be directly contacting owners of properties in priority areas, to ensure they know about the available conservation services. Program area landowners can also contact Kate Potter at 905-579-0411x106 or kpotter@cloca.com.

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For more information contact:

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The ORMF website is www.ormf.com.

For high resolution area maps for print reproduction - contact Jason@dakisdna.com or 416-516-7335 x 4.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation was created in 2002 to help protect, preserve and restore the Oak Ridges Moraine, one of Ontario's most prominent geological landforms, extending 160 kilometers across southern Ontario, from the Trent River to the Niagara Escarpment.