



# TRAIL TALK

Oak Ridges Trail Association Quarterly

ISSN 1481-5982



## President's Message: Strengthening the Trail We Love — ORTA and the Moraine Strategy

Dear ORTA Members,

This fall, I'd like to extend heartfelt thanks to the [Greenbelt Foundation](#) for their generous support through recent grants — helping ORTA grow stronger in our mission to steward and promote the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail.

The grant projects made for a busy summer filled with collaboration and progress. We welcomed Michael Goodyear, our new project manager to lead the [Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Strategy](#), acquired essential trail maintenance equipment, and [launched digital trail maps on the Ondago app](#).



Possibility grows here.

What does it mean for ORTA to have our own trail maintenance equipment? Many of our volunteers have been using their own tools or traveling long distances to borrow equipment. Our goal is to have gear available in the east, west, and central regions for easy access by our trail teams.

Thanks to the grant, we purchased three chainsaws, two string trimmers, and various pruners — all battery-powered and lighter to carry on the trail. These tools are essential during humid months when vegetation grows rapidly.

A big thank you to Bob Comfort for sourcing and assisting with these purchases!

We're also working on expanding our chainsaw team. These volunteers take on significant cleanup efforts after wind and ice storms, and we'd love to welcome more trained and experienced members to join them.

One of the [Greenbelt Foundation](#) grant funding streams is 'Accessible Greenbelt' in the sense of recreation and tourism. Digitizing the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail map allows everyone free access to

explore the trail. The map is now available via the [Ondago app](#) — search for 'Oak Ridges Moraine Trail' to find the east, west, and central trail sections.

Hikers can follow the trail in real time. If you notice any discrepancies while using the maps, please send feedback to [trails@oakridgestrail.org](mailto:trails@oakridgestrail.org).

Special thanks to Bob Comfort and David Atkins for their work on the digital map project!

Thank you to Megan Sipos, Senior Manager, Research & Policy at the Greenbelt Foundation, for her ongoing support and in particular, as we recruited our project manager to lead the [Oak Ridges Moraine Trail Strategy](#).

As fall arrives, many of our volunteers are out inspecting and maintaining the trail before winter sets in. On behalf of the Board and ORTA membership, thank you for your dedication and hard work. Your efforts keep the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail safe and beautiful.

Best regards,

Karen Graham

---

## **Oak Ridges Trail Strategy Launches with Community Input on the Horizon**

**By Michael Goodyear**

The Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA) has officially begun implementing the Oak Ridges Trail Strategy, an ambitious plan to shape the future of this iconic 260-kilometre trail across the Moraine.

Supported by funding from the Greenbelt Foundation, the strategy will focus on strengthening ORTA's governance, updating the connected trail plan, creating a new amenities plan, and developing a long-term land securement strategy.

Work is already underway, with ORTA's Project Manager collecting data and compiling historical information to create a clear baseline picture of the trail as it exists today. This foundation will guide upcoming workshops in Spring 2026, where ORTA members and the public will be invited to share their ideas and recommendations for the trail's future.

The outcome will be a User Experience and Amenities Plan, alongside a Land Securement Strategy—key tools to ensure the Oak Ridges Trail remains a vital recreational, ecological, and cultural resource for generations to come.

Watch for future updates on when and where consultation sessions will take place. In the meantime, anyone with questions is encouraged to contact [info@oakridgestrail.org](mailto:info@oakridgestrail.org)

## Hike News and Information by Derek Cowbourne

### Hikes

2025 has seen 191 hikes scheduled to the end of September. Last year the number was 218. My thanks to our hike leaders for making this happen and to all of you who are enjoying the range of locations, speeds, and distances that are on offer.

### New Hike Leaders

Leading hikes is very rewarding, a lot of fun, and expands the hiking experience. ORTA can always benefit from having more active hike leaders, which enables us to offer hikes with a wider variety of locations, speeds, distances and difficulties. While this applies year-round, it is especially so in the busy vacation times when leaders, like everyone else, tend to be travelling elsewhere.

Please let me know if you are interested in taking the certified hike leader course or would like more information.

### Winter Hiking Tips

With Fall upon us, winter is not far away. It is a time to enjoy the trails when they are generally quieter, the bugs have gone, and it is easier to spot the deer and other wildlife. While for experienced hikers preparing and dressing for winter has become second nature, for those less experienced here are a few easy to remember suggestions to help you make the most of the season.

1. Always wear appropriate foot-wear! Hiking boots, good icers, and hiking poles will help to keep you safe during chilly and icy hikes.
2. Dress in layers, but start cool! Don't wear everything at the start, or you'll be taking off a layer after the first hill. It's surprising how warm you can be after a short time, especially when using snow-shoes. You can always put on a layer if you don't warm up.



Icers make all the difference for perfect grip on frozen sections of trail. Paired with hiking poles this makes for steady winter hiking.

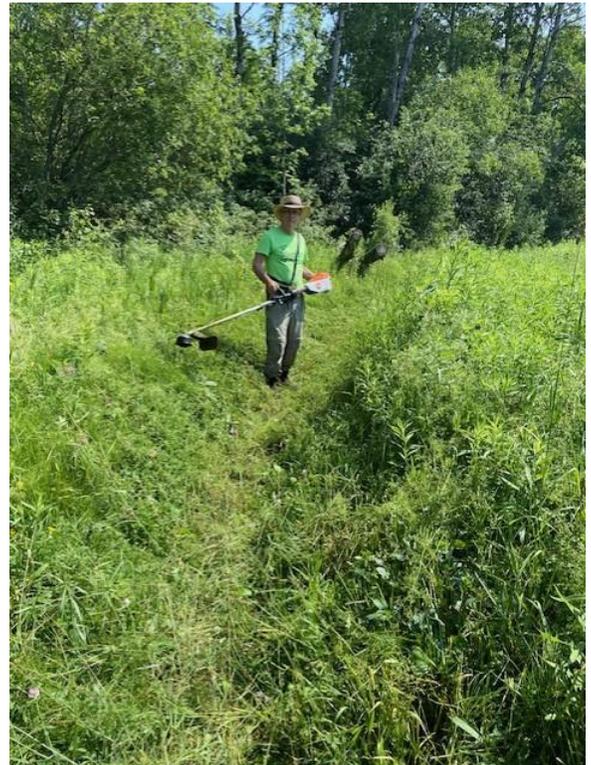
3. Pack some snacks and be sure to bring water and perhaps a warm drink as well.
4. Enjoy yourself! Breathe in nature, enjoy the gorgeous scenery of our trails.
5. Have questions or in doubt, just ask. Hike leaders and fellow hikers are always happy to share their experiences and ideas: but don't be surprised if there's no single right answer!

---

## "Uxbridge News and Trails" by Brian Millage

### Volunteers Keeping Our Spaces Accessible to Hikers

Yes, it was a hot and steamy summer, but at least Uxbridge was mostly spared major tree damage this year. The result of this summer's semi-tropical climate was rapid plant growth on all trails and that has kept our trail crews busy. With string trimmers and mowers we strive to keep the trails cleared widely enough to limit the possibility of contact with ticks. A number of active volunteers trim meadows about three to four times per spring and summer, in addition to spring and fall monitoring for fallen branches or trees and refreshing blazes. The result- enjoyable outings with friends through flower filled meadows and along shady forest trails- often followed by a group lunch in a local cafe.



### Exclusive Member Benefit: Save at SAIL!

We're excited to share a new perk for ORTA members! Thanks to our partnership with SAIL, one of Canada's leading outdoor retailers, ORTA members now receive exclusive discounts on a wide



range of outdoor gear and apparel. Whether you're gearing up for a hike on the Oak Ridges Moraine or planning your next adventure, this is a great opportunity to save. [Click here](#) to learn more and access your discount.

## End of the Trail

For over a decade Bill McCullough and I have teamed up to clear forest trails and mow grassy meadows across the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail. We aren't done yet but our vehicles - Bill's trusty pickup truck and my Impala ( both with over 390,000km ) - have driven their last routes for ORTA maintenance. Bill and his pickup truck have transported our gas powered mower wherever needed and have been two core elements in keeping our trails clear and safe. He is now opting for a different vehicle.



Now the search is on for another volunteer with pickup or trailer who will join us as part of the ORTA maintenance team. Thanks Bill and to all the volunteers who trim, clear and blaze our trails.

## Getting Out to the New Uxbridge Provincial Park

One of the most important trail events in Uxbridge this year was the official opening of the Uxbridge Provincial Urban Park- the first of its kind. Brian Buckles and Liz Calvin of Green Durham worked tirelessly with provincial and regional groups to make this happen.

The core of the new park is the former Tannenbaum property on the Old Stouffville





Road, where several trails are colour-coded following inter-lock paved routes through the forest. This property is augmented by many other tracts of land which will be designated as recreational or forest reserve in future. Several ORTA hikes have already introduced walkers to the property. So far, parking is limited to roadside at the two park gateways. Plan to take a walk there and explore.

### **Digital Trail Maps Now Available – Thanks to the Greenbelt Foundation!**

We're excited to announce that [free digital maps](#) of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail are now available through the Ondago app! These interactive maps cover the West, Centre, and East sections of the trail and are designed to help

hikers navigate safely and confidently. This project was made possible through a generous grant from the [Greenbelt Foundation](#), allowing us to offer these maps at no cost to the public.

Additionally, big thank you to volunteers Bob Comfort and David Atkins for their many hours of work on this project.

Each map link is “smart”—automatically detecting your device type and language, and guiding you to download Ondago if needed. Once installed, you'll have access to official trail maps right at your fingertips.

Here are the direct download links:

- [West Map](#)
- [Centre Map](#)
- [East Map](#)

We continue to offer our printed guidebook in the ORTA Store—a great companion for those who love a tangible trail experience and want to support our work.

### **Save-the-Date:**

Sunday, December 7th, 2025  
ORTA Holiday Party and hikes



## Save the Date! 2026 Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay- June 13!



The Oak Ridges Moraine Adventure Relay will return on June 13th, 2026- mark your calendars now! We are launching into preliminary planning now- thanks to everyone involved in the 2025 race who provided feedback as we look ahead to 2026. Stay tuned in the months ahead for details on how you can get involved. There will be plenty of opportunities to volunteer (or race! Or both!) and help make next year's relay another unforgettable event.



Photo: Robert Alsop



Photo: Robert Alsop

Looking back, 2025 was an incredible year- the energy of our racers, volunteers, and community made the relay's return truly special. Let's build on that momentum and make 2026 even better!

We are taking pre-registrations from interested teams [here](#)- please pass along to anyone you think may be interested!

*See you on the course in 2026!*

## A Summer Hike Through Joker's Hill and Thornton Bales Conservation Area in Newmarket!

Thank you to Martin Roy for leading a great hike on July 31<sup>st</sup> in a unique and wonderful "gem" in the Newmarket area. The Oak Ridges Moraine is a true gift to millions of people living in the GTA.



**Eastern Newt:** The Eastern Newt is a common salamander found in eastern North America, known for its complex life cycle that includes an aquatic larval stage, a terrestrial red eft stage, and an aquatic adult stage.



# How Well Do You Know the Greenbelt?



Possibility grows here.

- 1. Ontario's greenbelt ranks as the:**
  - a. Largest greenbelt in the world.
  - b. Second largest greenbelt in the world.
  - c. Fifth largest greenbelt in the world.
  
- 2. Ontario's greenbelt protects a total of:**
  - a. 5 million acres of green space.
  - b. 2 million acres of green space.
  - c. Half a million acres of green space.
  
- 3. The economic impact of the Greenbelt each year is:**
  - a. \$150 million
  - b. \$800 million
  - c. \$9.6 billion
  
- 4. The Greenbelt includes how many urban river valleys:**
  - a. 12 urban river valleys
  - b. 15 urban river valleys
  - c. 21 urban river valleys
  
- 5. The Greenbelt offsets how much carbon every year:**
  - a. 71 million tonnes of carbon
  - b. 100 million tonnes of carbon
  - c. 250 million tonnes of carbon
  
- 6. How much of the Greenbelt is comprised of farmland:**
  - a. 25%
  - b. 35%
  - c. 40%
  
- 7. There are 750,000 acres of productive farmland in the Greenbelt.**
  - a. True
  - b. False

## How Well Do You Know the Greenbelt?

The Greenbelt includes the Oak Ridges Moraine system as well as the Niagara Escarpment. The Oak Ridges Trail is nestled within this larger protected area known as “The Greenbelt”. **Ontario’s Greenbelt ranks as the largest protected greenbelt in the world!** The United Kingdom has a number of different greenbelt areas but none of them as large as the one that surrounds the Greater Toronto Area. Our Greenbelt protects crucial farmland, wetlands, and forest areas.

**Ontario’s Greenbelt protects a total of 2 million acres of greenspace.** The Greenbelt helps to protect vital farmland located close to major urban areas helping to ensure nutritious food products for millions of Ontarians. It also acts to prevent urban sprawl, encouraging higher density housing in existing cities and towns.



**Map above does not show the green “ribbon” of the Bruce Trail and farthest eastern end.**

The Greenbelt is an economic engine for the province. **The economic impact of the Greenbelt is \$9.6 billion each year for Ontario.** This includes agricultural output, tourism opportunities and the impact of climate change mitigation.

**The Greenbelt includes 21 urban river valleys.** The most well-known urban river valley systems include the Humber, Credit, Duffins Creek and the Rouge. All of these systems include diverse ecosystems and contribute toward clean drinking water for people in the GTA.

The environmental impact of the Greenbelt is significant. **The Greenbelt offsets 71 million tonnes of carbon every year.** This is equivalent to 56.5 million car trips each year!

The Greenbelt includes coastal wetlands, grasslands, forests, and of course, farmland. **40% of the Greenbelt is farmland. In total, there are 750,000 acres of productive farmland in the Greenbelt.**