



Saving the Oak Ridges Moraine Again

Environmental Groups Launch New Campaign to Protect the Rain Barrel of Southern Ontario

September 12, 2011 – On the 10-year anniversary of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine (STORM), Earthroots and Ontario Nature have joined forces to shine a spotlight on the most severe threats to the moraine, southern Ontario's rain barrel.

“We're pleased to announce the launch of our Moraine Can't Wait campaign, which will focus attention on a number of serious issues facing the moraine,” says Debbe Crandall, Executive Director of STORM. “We can't wait until the 2015 review of the Conservation Plan, during which time these problems will only get worse. We're asking Ontario residents to make the moraine a priority in this provincial election.”

The stunning Oak Ridges Moraine extends for 160 kilometres end to end, north of the Greater Toronto Area. This unique land formation possesses important prairie, forest and wetland habitats, many of which are a refuge for rare plants, birds and turtles. The moraine is likened to a rain barrel because it supplies drinking water to more than 250,000 people. But despite the legislation passed a decade ago, the ecological integrity of the moraine remains highly vulnerable to numerous environmental assaults.

“Unmonitored water taking is one of the most troubling concerns we have about the moraine,” says Josh Garfinkel, Senior Campaigner with Earthroots. “Millions of litres of water are pumped out of the aquifers every day and millions more leak into the sewage system.”

Additional threats to the moraine include ongoing development as a result of proposals that were approved before the Conservation Act was passed, dumping fill – in some cases contaminated with heavy metals – into abandoned aggregate pits, and infrastructure that continues to be built, even in core natural areas.

Says Caroline Schultz, Executive Director of Ontario Nature, “The Oak Ridges Moraine is an ecological treasure and critical natural area for nearly half of Ontario's species at risk. Right now, roads and transmission lines are fragmenting sensitive areas that harbour some of our most vulnerable wildlife.”

The groups are raising awareness about the deficiencies in the Conservation Act and Plan for the moraine in the weeks leading up to the provincial election. Says Debbe Crandall, “We need answers now. The Oak Ridges Moraine is one of the

most significant green landscapes left in southern Ontario. We cannot sit by and watch it lose any more of its natural values.”

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For further information and interviews please contact:
Josh Garfinkel, Senior Campaigner, Earthroots: 416-562-3894;
joshg@earthroots.org

For more information on the Moraine Can't wait campaign, visit
www.morainecantwait.ca. Visit us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing more than 30,000 members and supporters and 140 member groups across Ontario (charitable registration # 10737 8952 RR0001). For more information, visit www.ontarionature.org.

Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM) is focused on protecting the ecological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Since 1989, STORM has been working at the local and regional levels to ensure that municipalities make good planning decisions to protect its ecological and hydrological functions. For more information, visit www.stormcoalition.org.

Earthroots is a grassroots conservation organization that works aggressively to protect wilderness, wildlife and watersheds in Ontario through research, education and action. Our dedicated staff and focused campaigns have achieved effective protection of threatened ecosystems for over 20 years on behalf of our approximately 12,000 supporters in the province. We use many techniques to propel issues forward including public education, advocacy, primary and secondary research, media awareness and creative peaceful activism. For more information, visit www.earthroots.org.

Backgrounder

The Oak Ridges Moraine is one of Ontario's most prominent ecosystems. It is a geological ridge of land up to 300 meters high that runs parallel and about 60 km north of Lake Ontario. It extends 160 kilometres, from the Trent River in the east to the Niagara Escarpment in the west. More than thirty of the rivers that drain into Lake Simcoe and Lake Ontario have their headwaters in the moraine.

The moraine:

- * Covers 190,000 hectares and stretches 160 km from the Trent River to the Niagara Escarpment.
- * Forms the headwaters of 65 streams flowing south to Lake Ontario and north to Lake Simcoe, Lake Scugog, Rice Lake and Georgian Bay.
- * Provides drinking water to more than 250,000 people on the moraine and millions more in the Greater Toronto Area.
- * Supports the largest and most diverse breeding populations of birds in Southern Ontario
- * Is home to 32 kettle lakes – a very significant habitat.
- * Hosts the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail – a 273 km recreational trail that traverses the entire length of the Moraine.
- * Provides habitat for 40% of Ontario's species at risk including bobolinks, red-shouldered hawks, monarch butterflies and peregrine falcons.