



Media Release

Biodiversity Decline on the Oak Ridges Moraine

(King City, January 15, 2012) More than 23 municipalities located on the Oak Ridges Moraine are calling on the Government of Ontario to continue funding the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, a non-profit agency that serves as the eyes and ears of the moraine, often described as the rain barrel for southern Ontario. Financial support for the Foundation runs out at the end of this fiscal year and its renewal is far from certain.

According to the Environmental Commissioner's special report on biodiversity, "A Nation's Commitment, an Obligation for Ontario," as well as other studies, biodiversity on the moraine – the collection of plants, animals and ecosystems – appears to be in severe decline.

In a series of reports that evaluated the ecological and hydrological health of the Oak Ridges Moraine over the past 10 years, the Foundation revealed a landscape under stress:

- Grassland birds are in decline
- Rare prairie and savannah habitats are threatened as is habitat for interior forest bird species and endangered wildlife.
- Only one-third of all streams on the moraine are functioning as healthy, natural ecosystems.

Dominant threats to the moraine include the dumping of contaminated fill, often from the Greater Toronto Area, into areas of high aquifer vulnerability on the moraine; draining aquifers for development off the moraine; and building infrastructure that traverses the moraine.

"It is virtually impossible to meaningfully protect or even improve biodiversity on the Oak Ridges Moraine without addressing the need to review the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act and Plan, and close the gaps and loopholes," said Kim Gavine, executive director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. "In addition to conserving an ecological treasure, we must restore and create habitat to support and enhance biodiversity on the Oak Ridges Moraine."

Working in collaboration with numerous partners such as Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and nine conservation authorities, to name a few, the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation has supported the protection of more than 5,500 acres (2,226 ha) through land acquisition and the restoration of more than 1,000 acres (405

ha) of significant habitat. Despite these impressive accomplishments, safeguarding the moraine will require ongoing monitoring and stewardship.

“Like the municipalities across the moraine, we are asking the provincial government to re-invest in our work. Without further restoration efforts, biodiversity will continue to decline on the Oak Ridges Moraine and the Province will fail to meet its goals and obligations under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan,” says Gavine.

It falls to municipalities to implement the regulatory policies of the Oak Ridges Moraine legislation. Their overwhelming demonstration of support shows the importance of the Foundation as the agency that implements the non-regulatory efforts required to preserve, protect and restore the ecological and hydrological integrity of the moraine.

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For more information, contact: Kim Gavine, Executive Director at 416-444-8419 (cell), support@ormf.com or visit www.ormf.com.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) is a non-profit organization mandated to preserve and enhance the Oak Ridges Moraine (Moraine). Originally established as a granting agency in 2002 following the implementation of the Provincial Government’s Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP), the ORMF has successfully provided funds to many different partners in support of stewardship, education, research, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail and land securement projects.

While the ORMF’s granting role is currently suspended, it still has a pivotal role to play if the Moraine is to remain protected in the future. While plenty of positive work has been done on the Moraine over the last eight years, there are still outstanding goals that need to be met.

The Oak Ridges Moraine is a prominent geological landform located just north of Toronto and extends 160 km from the Trent River to the Niagara Escarpment. The Moraine’s rivers and streams drain south to Lake Ontario and north into Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe, and the Trent River. The Moraine supplies drinking water to more than 250,000 people living on the Moraine and millions more in the Greater Toronto Area.