



Embargoed until Thursday, February 2, 2012

Celebrate World Wetlands Day 2012

Ontario Wetlands Conference highlights southern Ontario eco-treasures

(Toronto, ON) – Ontario Nature, along with partner conservation organizations, is celebrating World Wetlands Day on February 2, 2012, by bringing together 11 leading experts on wetland conservation and wildlife. Nearly 200 people are expected to attend the sold-out Ontario Wetlands Conference, devoted to the natural history and preservation of these increasingly rare ecosystems, held at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

The conference will feature keynote presentations from Ron Reid, founding president of the Couchiching Conservancy and recipient of numerous, prestigious conservation awards, and Dr. Paul Keddy, professor of ecology and recipient of the Merit Award from the Society of Wetland Scientists and the National Wetland Award for Science Research from the Environmental Law Institute. Panel sessions will focus on the latest ideas in wetland science, policy and stewardship and encourage active participation from the diverse range of experts within the group of attendees.

More than 70% of southern Ontario's wetlands have been lost over the past 200 years, with heavily urbanized areas, like the GTA, having lost up to 90%. "Given the immense benefits provided by wetlands, we can't afford any more losses," says Joshua Wise of Ontario Nature and conference organizer. "We're hoping that this conference will kick start new ways of appreciating and protecting an ecosystem that's now become endangered."

Wetlands are remarkable and vital ecosystems that produce benefits for people, plants and animals. Because wetlands act as carbon sinks they help regulate the global climate. These unique habitats also act as a mechanism for flood control, help prevent soil erosion, and support diverse communities of wildlife, including many of Ontario's species at risk. Based on these benefits, it has been estimated that wetlands provide \$1.3-billion in economic value to the province every year.

World Wetlands Day has been recognized in more than 120 countries since the signing of the Wetlands Convention in Ramsar, Iran on February 2, 1971.

For more information and to arrange interview opportunities with speakers, please contact:
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You can also visit: www.ontarionature.org/wetlands

Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. It connects thousands of individuals and communities with nature through conservation groups across the province (charitable registration #10737 8952 RR0001). For more information, visit www.ontarionature.org.