



The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail – From Dream to Reality

“Once Around the Ridge” ribbon cutting ceremony to be held in Mono Mills

(KING CITY, ON, April 20, 2012) On Saturday, April 21st, 2012, the Oak Ridges Trail will celebrate the opening of its western gateway in Mono Mills, thus realizing a dream that started almost 40 years ago. The Oak Ridges Trail Association (ORTA) is quick to clarify, however, the difference between the dream of a “fully connected” trail and the dream of a “fully completed” trail. While it’s true that one can now walk the entire length of the Moraine, there is much more work to do in getting the trail off of public roads and unopened road allowances. Currently 42% of the trail is still on public roads and 20% is still on unopened road allowances. Considerably more time, money and effort will be needed to achieve the ultimate dream.

Nonetheless, it’s time to celebrate this significant milestone. This Saturday (see bottom of Release for directions), folks will be congregating at the western terminus of the Oak Ridges Trail where it meets the Bruce Trail in Mono Mills to celebrate the opening of the new gateway, the 10th anniversary of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the 20th anniversary for the Oak Ridges Trail Association. Efforts to establish a trail along the Oak Ridges Moraine first began in 1973 when the Ontario Trail Riders’ Association founded the Great Pine Equestrian Trail, which was located primarily along existing roads and road allowances.

In 1991, a cooperative effort among Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM), the Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Hike Ontario gave rise to a group of volunteers who developed the idea of a public recreational trail system running the full length of the Moraine, from Albion Hills in the west to the Northumberland Forest in the east.

This group of volunteers formed the Oak Ridges Trail Steering Committee. Following a series of meetings, a public gathering held at Albion Hills in May 1992 inaugurated the process to incorporation as ORTA with Registered Charity status. The first sections of the Trail were established on private land and along unopened road allowances in the Townships of King and Uxbridge. Within five years the route had been extended through forests and conservation areas in Whitchurch-Stouffville and Scugog; in several instances rural roads facilitated the links between off-road trails.

In 2002, the significance of the trail and the role of ORTA were raised substantially when the Province of Ontario created the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). The purpose of the ORMCP was to halt the continued urban sprawl on the Moraine and protect its most important features – greenspace and water. Section 39 of the ORMCP called for a recreational trail system that would provide continuous access and travel along the entire plan area, accessible to all including persons with disabilities. At that time, the total length of the trail was approximately 198 km.

With funding from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF), ORTA set out with a new strategic plan to expand, develop, manage and maintain the trail and have since increased the length of the trail to 273 km. In addition to the main trail, ORTA was also successful in creating additional side trails, disabled access trails, parking lots, boardwalks, stiles, interpretive signage and gateways on both the eastern and western ends of the Moraine.

In many areas, the trail crosses lands that are owned by conservation authorities or municipalities. In others, ORTA must work with private landowners who generously agree through hand-shake

agreements to allow access across their properties. Given that the Moraine is 90% privately owned landowner participation is crucial.

In addition to the physical and mental health benefits of hiking, the existence of the Trail allows users to gain a stronger appreciation and respect for the Moraine's ecological, cultural and scenic integrity. It is often referred to as the spine of the Oak Ridges Moraine linking together not only significant natural areas but communities both on and adjacent to the Moraine.

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For more information, contact: Kim Gavine, Executive Director, at kim.gavine@ormf.com or 905-833-5733.

<http://moraineforlife.org/living/documents/ORMFactSheet.pdf>

Photos are available of both the ceremony and the Oak Ridges Trail.

Event information:

Saturday April 21, 2012

Look for **"Once Around the Ridge"** signs directing you to the site.

Directions:

From Hwy 9 turn north on Hwy 18 (Airport Rd.)

Follow Airport Rd. approximately 3 km to Sideroad 5.

Turn right (East) on Sideroad 5 (past the Taoist Tai Chi Centre 248305 Fifth Sideroad Mono)

Follow to roadside parking.

Please note:

Hiking boots and appropriate dress for the weather is advised.

Arrive early for the Guided Hike at 10:30 am

Ceremony at 11:30 am

BBQ lunch at 12 noon

*The **Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF)** is a non-profit organization mandated to preserve, protect and restore the ecological and hydrological health of the Oak Ridges Moraine (Moraine). Since 2002, the ORMF has allocated more than \$14.1 million and leveraged more than \$35.8 million to 177 projects in support of stewardship, education, research, trail and land securement projects.*

*The **Oak Ridges Trail Association** is a volunteer-run organization with charitable status, inaugurated in 1992. The Association has developed and secured the Oak Ridges Trail "thereby promoting an appreciation and respect for the Moraine's ecological, cultural and scenic integrity, with the aim of retaining the trail corridor in its natural state". A trail guidebook containing detailed maps and notes on points of interest can be purchased from the Association. Certified hike leaders also provide a year-round program of guided hikes.*

Oak Ridges Trail Association

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*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 supplies drinking water to more than 250,000 people.*