



## Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan – Ten Years Later

April, 2012 marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). Hailed as one of Ontario's most successful and innovative "environment-first" pieces of legislation, the ORMCP has provided a pathway to better planning on the Oak Ridges Moraine. It has been a major catalyst for protecting the drinking water of more than 250,000 people on the Moraine and millions more in the Greater Toronto Area.

With growing concerns over the piecemeal and expanding development on the Moraine, the ORMCP was created to provide land-use and resource management direction for the 190,000 hectares of land and water within the Moraine.

At the regulatory level, the Province instructed municipalities to amend their official plans to conform to the ORMCP, as well as create watershed plans and water budgets. At the non-regulatory level, the Province allocated \$15 million for the creation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF), a not-for-profit charitable organization whose mandate was to preserve, protect and restore the ecological and hydrological integrity of the Moraine.

There have been impressive accomplishments over the last decade. This has resulted in a high level of awareness and support for the ORMCP, which:

- Served as a landmark document that sets the environmental standard for the rest of Ontario
- Established a high level of environmental protection
- Provided a strong level of consistency and certainty across the sensitive Moraine landscape
- Formalized and promoted watershed planning

The ORMF leveraged an initial \$15 million in funding into \$50 million worth of work accomplished on the Moraine, including:

- 289 hectares reforested with 430,000 trees
- 5,000 acres of significant land secured
- 310 hectares of prairie restored
- 18 kilometres of streams restored
- 2,259 hectares of new conservation lands secured
- 104 kilometres of trail added to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail

Yet, despite these impressive accomplishments, there are still considerable gaps and deficiencies in the ORMCP that threaten the future of the Moraine's ecological and hydrological integrity:

- Building and infrastructure construction continue, even in core natural areas
- Every day, millions of litres of water are drained off the Moraine, and runoff contaminates ground and surface water
- Thousands of truckloads of fill, some of it contaminated, are dumped onto the Moraine every day

Tragically, the organization best suited to be the voice of the Moraine (the ORMF) is facing closure. With no funding for the ORMF in the Province's 2012 budget, the ORMCP is headed towards a provincial review in 2015 without the support of its chief advocate. Any loss of momentum, weakening of new planning rules, or backsliding of achievements, could threaten the Moraine's delicate ecology and hydrology anew, and put a decade's worth of protection work in jeopardy.

The work on the Moraine is far from complete. Now is the time to take stock of what we have – share our successes, learn from our failures and set ambitious agendas for the future. We need to encourage the Province to keep its promise to protect and restore this vital landscape!

The fight to protect the Ontario's ran barrel is still on!

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

*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 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.*