



S T E W A R D S H I P
S T R A T E G Y

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The Oak Ridges Moraine (ORM) is a prominent geological landform located just north of Toronto and extends 160 kilometres from the Niagara Escarpment to the Trent River. The unique concentration of environmental, geological and hydrological features makes the ecosystem of the ORM vital to Southern Ontario.

In the late 1990s and early 2000, Ontario's government recognized the ORM as one of the last green continuous corridors left in Southern Ontario. They also acknowledged that something had to be done to protect the ORM from development and continued urban sprawl.

In 2001, the Ontario government consulted widely on the future of the Moraine and the complex land use issues involved. The outcome was a package of strategies including:

- The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, passed in December 2001
- The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, released in April 2002
- Creation of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation in March 2002

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation (ORMF) was created to help preserve, protect and restore the environmental integrity of the ORM. The Foundation is a registered corporation with its own Charter and received an initial grant of \$15 million from the Province of Ontario to support its activities. It began distributing grants in 2003 and to date (March, 2005) has awarded almost \$4 million to 45 conservation projects across the Moraine.

Since its inception, the Foundation has worked with many ORM Stakeholders to facilitate and encourage sound stewardship programs on the Moraine. Although there are many organizations and agencies delivering such programs, there are gaps in delivery, no obvious coordination, and in some cases, overlap, duplication or competition.

In the winter of 2002, members of the stewardship community on the Moraine began discussing how to

address some of these issues. ORMSPA (The Oak Ridges Moraine Stewardship Partners Alliance) was formed shortly thereafter by Conservation Ontario, now represented by the Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition (CAMC), Ontario Stewardship, and the Wetland Habitat Fund (WHF).

Although an interim strategy did emerge from these discussions, the Foundation and ORMSPA felt it necessary to develop a longer-term stewardship program, which was science-based, stemmed from a shared vision and which would create a lasting impact on the Moraine.

As a result, a comprehensive stewardship program has been developed, in extensive consultations with ORM stakeholders over the past year, and based on a shared vision of what the Moraine should look like in 25 years.

This program is outlined in Chapter 3. It contains a summary of the current constraints to providing sustainable stewardship services to landowners on the Moraine, and an outline of how these challenges can be addressed with a range of new initiatives. A copy of the entire program, entitled Oak Ridges Moraine Stewardship Program, prepared by Suzanne Barrett and Ron Reid for the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation in November, 2004, is available from the Foundation.

Chapter 2 outlines how the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation believes it can best help the ORM stakeholders move forward with this program: by focusing its funding support over the next 5 years on those specific areas of the Moraine where the current science-based data, and the consensus from the workshops, have concluded that stewardship programs can achieve the most protection and preservation.

As we move towards realizing the vision we share for the Moraine, and the strategic focus of our stewardship efforts over the next few years, it is important to remember that practical, sustainable stewardship programs are just one of the tools available to help landowners and public agencies preserve and protect vital lands on the Moraine. There are other important tools as well: the ORM Conservation Plan, land securement, education, research, monitoring and capacity building within the many community-based groups on the Moraine. We must use all of them well if we are to protect this vital landscape.

GETTING STARTED: A STRATEGY FOR FOCUSING STEWARDSHIP FUNDING SUPPORT

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As a significant funding partner on the Moraine, the question before the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation is this: using its funding resources, how can the Foundation best help stakeholders move forward with a stewardship program over the next few years?

The Foundation believes that it can best support stakeholders, and make the maximum impact on the Moraine over the shortest possible timeframe, by strategically focusing its funding resources. In determining how to do this, consistent with the vision and objectives of the longer-term stewardship program, the Foundation has been guided by the following considerations:

- Funding should be focused where maximum environmental protection and preservation can be achieved on the Moraine with minimum financial investment,
- The focus should be driven by the Ministry of Natural Resource's science-based cover data and analysis, and by ORM stakeholder consensus,
- The delivery capability of ORM stakeholder agencies must be carefully considered,
- The focus should be on improving the 'best of the best', which means that funding will include restoration in core, linkage and some countryside areas.

Based on these considerations, the Foundation's primary strategic focus for its stewardship program funding over the next 5 years on the Moraine will be in the following three functional areas:

1) INCREASING THE MORAINE'S NATURAL LAND COVER

Over the next 5 years, ORMF stewardship funding will focus on increasing the amount of natural cover on the Moraine. The longer term objective will be to

increase natural cover in those core areas on the Moraine that currently do not have at least 70% natural cover (19 out of a total of 28 core areas, or a total of 4,200 hectares) and to increase the natural cover in those linkage areas on the Moraine that currently do not have at least 35% natural cover (50 out of a total of 109 linkage areas, or a total of 3,800 hectares).

To support this objective, the ORMF will focus its stewardship funding within the Conservation Priority Areas identified as part of the ORM Restoration Strategy (See attached map) and will fund three to five multi-partner projects per year within these areas over the next 5 years.

2) PROTECTING THE MORAINE'S WATER RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS

The objective over the next 3-5 years will be to show significant progress in restoring riparian corridors and in creating and/or restoring wetlands in core, linkage and countryside areas of the Moraine.

To support this objective, the ORMF will focus its funding support over the next 5 years on major riparian and wetland projects. ORMF will require these projects to be implemented on a subwatershed system scale, in areas identified as high priority.

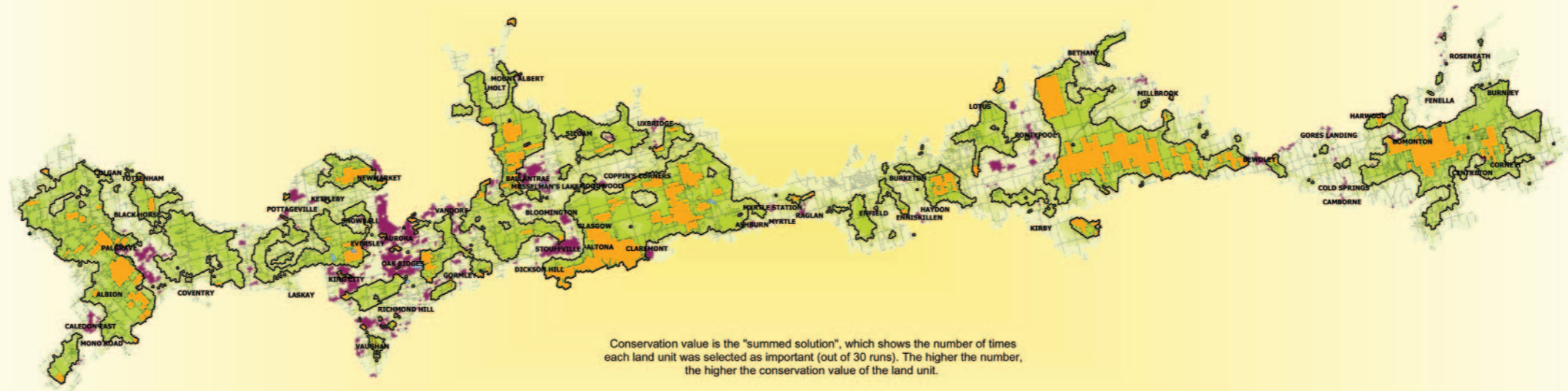
3) RAISING LANDOWNER AWARENESS AND RECOGNITION

By the end of three years, the Foundation, in partnership with the ORM stakeholders, will help to initiate a proactive landowner contact program, with an initial focus on landowners whose properties are in the most sensitive Conservation Priority Areas. To complement the Landowner Contact Program, the Foundation, in partnership with the ORM Stakeholders, will assist in the implementation of an ORM-wide recognition program to acknowledge stewardship activities.

While the Foundation will focus its stewardship funding in these three functional areas, this will not preclude its consideration of stewardship projects outside of these areas, in locations designated Settlement or Countryside in the ORM Conservation Plan that should be protected and preserved.

Oak Ridges Moraine

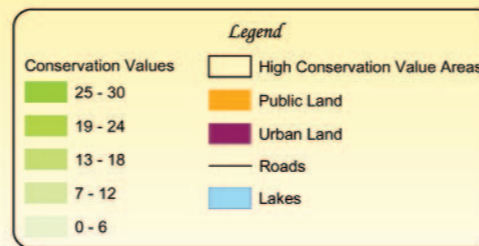
Conservation Priority Areas



Conservation value is the "summed solution", which shows the number of times each land unit was selected as important (out of 30 runs). The higher the number, the higher the conservation value of the land unit.

Area by Conservation Value

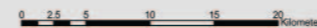
Conservation Values	Area (Hectares)
0 - 6	56,120
7 - 12	27,365
13 - 18	29,030
19 - 24	26,565
25 - 30	34,375



Total area identified as High Conservation Value Areas: 87,165 hectares (As outlined with black lines)



Ministry of Natural Resources



1:250,000

Notes:
Produced by: Ministry of Natural Resources
Southern Science and Information
This map is for illustrative purposes only. Do not consider it a precise indicator of routes, locations, nor as a guide to navigation. Data is from the NRVIS database as well as the results of spatial analysis. This map is for working purposes only and not intended for external distribution. This map may also contain errors or omissions.
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LOOKING AHEAD: THE LONGER TERM STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

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In 2004, the ORMF engaged the services of Suzanne Barrett and Ron Reid to prepare a long-term stewardship program based on a vision for the future of the Moraine. It is the Foundation's hope that this vision and program would be a resource guide for ORM stakeholders in helping to shape their own stewardship activities and partnerships. It is also designed to complement other work by ORMF and its partners on the Moraine, including land securement, the Trail System, research, education and natural heritage strategies.

A VISION FOR THE OAK RIDGES MORaine

The following vision for the Moraine was developed as part of a consultation process with ORM stakeholders. It is supported by the Oak Ridges Moraine Restoration Strategy prepared by a technical committee chaired by Silvia Strobl (Coordinator, Information Management and Spatial Analysis Unit, OMNR). The Restoration Strategy uses conservation science combined with an understanding of current and potential land uses to determine the types and amount of restoration needed in various locations to regain ecological integrity and increase the sustainability of human communities.

A generation from now the Oak Ridges Moraine will be recognized as a Southern Ontario region that has experienced a visible, marked improvement in its landscapes and waters, as a direct result of stewardship and protection of the Moraine.

The Oak Ridges Moraine will be widely regarded as a model, demonstrating leading-edge protection, stewardship and restoration of vital natural resources of importance to Ontario. The support and involvement of landowners, federal, provincial and municipal governments, first nations, Oak Ridges Moraine organizations, and other public and private organizations will be widely appreciated and celebrated.

Close to half the Moraine's cover will be in natural cover, up from about 37% today. The biodiversity of the Moraine, including its distinctive mix of northern and southern species, will be strengthened and more resilient to stresses such as climate change and invasive species.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The specific role of stewardship in implementing the vision is to encourage and assist both public and private landowners to care for land and water in ways that:

- protect, enhance or restore biodiversity,
- ensure sustainable use of natural resources, and
- maintain the ecosystem functions on which all life depends.

Therefore, the following guiding principles will guide stewardship programs on the ORM.

1. The ORM Foundation will support the implementation of stewardship principally through existing organizations and agencies.
2. The rights of landowners will be respected and stewardship initiatives will be undertaken with the cooperation of willing landowners.
3. The ORM Restoration Strategy and other applicable studies will guide Conservation Priority Areas.
4. Where possible, restoration initiatives will take advantage of the potential for natural regeneration over time, accompanied by strategic investments where required.
5. Stewardship initiatives will use only plant species that are native to the ORM and will include the removal/control of non-native, invasive plant species where possible.
6. Stewardship initiatives will respect and complement the land use designations and requirements of the ORM Conservation Plan.
7. Stewardship initiatives will seek a balance between ecological, economic, and social factors to contribute to sustainable communities.
8. The ORM Foundation will encourage projects that demonstrate leading edge and/or experimental approaches that will help implement the Stewardship Strategy.

CONSTRAINTS: WHAT ARE HOLDING STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMS BACK?

A number of constraints have been identified by the agencies and groups that currently provide stewardship services on the Moraine. They include:

- limited knowledge among landowners about the values of the Moraine and ways to protect or enhance them,
- many landowners do not distinguish between the regulatory nature of the ORM Conservation Plan and the voluntary work of organizations such as the ORM Foundation and ORM Land Trust,
- inadequate capacity of stewardship organizations in terms of staff and funding, especially in the Eastern Moraine,
- generally reactive approach to landowner contact based on inquiries from landowners,
- insufficient availability of ORM-specific technical advice for different types of landowners and land uses,
- insufficient incentives for landowners to practice stewardship,
- few tools for coordination among stewardship organizations,
- limited knowledge of potential and existing natural vegetation on which to base ecological restoration decisions, and
- limited availability of locally sourced native plant material.

SPECIFIC STEWARDSHIP ACTIONS

In order to address these constraints, increase the level of stewardship and produce visible and worthwhile results in the landscape, the Stewardship Program provides guidance for a range of activities:

- a) proactive landowner contact,
- b) widespread access to information,
- c) recognition for stewardship commitment and initiatives,
- d) availability of plant material,
- e) coordination of stewardship activities, and
- f) monitoring progress.

a) Landowner Contact Program and Access to Information

Over 90% or approximately 171,000 ha of the ORM is privately owned, and is home to more than 100,000 people. Approximately 15,000 ha of the ORM are owned by public agencies (municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial and federal government) and land trusts. Complementary approaches, tailored to meet the different needs of types and regional distribution of landowners on the ORM will need to be developed.

Many different existing organizations are involved in landowner contact on the ORM. Increased coordination among these organizations will provide efficient, streamlined landowner contact, which will reduce landowner confusion, ensure the provision of consistent and coordinated information, and facilitate partnerships.

Incentives and assistance to landowners will be essential to ensure that landowner contact results in a high level of participation in stewardship. This may include technical advice/consultations, plant materials, equipment, volunteer labour (for planting, removal of invasive plants etc.), recognition and award programs, and tax benefits such as CLTIP and MFTIP (conservation land and managed forest tax incentive programs).

A considerable amount of information and related activities already exist to support stewardship activities, but very little is focused on the ORM, and there is limited coordination to ensure that landowners and stakeholders have full access to the range of information available. The delivery of information to landowners must be consistent, accurate and easily accessible.

Different mechanisms for the delivery of ORM related information to the landowners by the stewardship agencies could include:

- publications (e.g. *Caring for Your Land: a Stewardship Handbook for Oak Ridges Moraine Landowners* and many others),
- information centres,
- a website or web portal,
- stewardship workshops,
- tours of demonstration projects, and
- technical advice provided by agency staff, consultants and trained volunteers.

b) Recognition Program

Public recognition is an important way to acknowledge good stewardship and motivate other landowners to get involved. A collaborative recognition program for the ORM will help to promote Moraine values, showcase innovation and success, acknowledge volunteer contributions and inspire further action. It could include awards for excellence, certification programs, ceremonies, scholarships/grants, other events, and recognition signage tailored to different group of landowners.

c) Native Plant Material Nursery

A major obstacle to implementing the Stewardship Program and the ORM Restoration Cover Strategy is the limited supply of locally grown native plants. A program is needed to increase the availability of seeds and source-identified seedling stock. The program could provide a "rolling loan" or tree stock production fund, which would direct money to nurseries to produce stock based on an analysis of target species for restoration on high priority areas and/or in advance of a contract to an ORMF-supported restoration project. When the trees are sold, the money could be reinvested in the fund to produce trees for another restoration project.

In addition, a program could be developed to enable land owners to participate in source-identified seed collection efforts by providing mechanisms for them to notify certified seed collectors that certain tree species have good seed crops on their properties.

d) Coordination Program/Position

The ORM, like other bioregional features in Southern Ontario including the Niagara Escarpment, Carolinian Canada and the Lake Ontario Waterfront, cuts across the geographical mandates of a number of organizations. The result is a patchwork of jurisdictional responsibilities fulfilled by conservation authorities, stewardship councils, municipalities, provincial and federal agencies, non-government organizations and foundations. These organizations provide a wide range of programs and products to encourage private landowner stewardship. However, there are gaps in delivery, little coordination, and in some cases overlap and duplication. In order for the Stewardship Program to be effective, it will be essential to ensure mechanisms for collaboration and coordination.

A collaborative approach could reduce individual partner costs and deliver long-term, ORM-wide services including:

- Website including directory of services and information; progress reports; event publicity etc.
- Development and distribution of ORM-specific stewardship materials.
- Monitoring of results to track progress with ecological restoration and other stewardship efforts.
- ORM-specific recognition program to acknowledge, inspire and motivate landowners.
- Cross-training and capacity building.

e) Monitoring Program

Several inter-related levels of monitoring are in place or will be undertaken to track progress, report results and provide feedback for stewardship initiatives. They include:

- I. Provincial monitoring of implementation of the ORM Conservation Plan.
 - The ORM Conservation Plan commits the Provincial government to establish a monitoring network and identify performance indicators to assess changes in the ecological integrity of the Moraine.
- II. Existing monitoring programs of the conservation authorities, MNR, NGOs and community groups.

- The results of the many existing monitoring programs of agencies and organizations can be incorporated into ORM-wide reporting. In some cases, data collection or recording systems may need to be modified to enable the extraction of ORM-specific information.

III. ORM stewardship partners' monitoring of overall ORM stewardship activities.

- ORM stewardship partners should develop a set of measures and a method for regular, public reporting on their collective progress with stewardship. This should provide an assessment of what is being accomplished to protect and improve the ORM, over and above the regulatory requirements of the ORM Conservation Plan. Methods could include:
 - A database to track stewardship projects and trends using a consistent set of measures of success.
 - Use of a web-based spatial application to record ecological restoration over time and update mapping of new natural areas as they are being restored.
 - Polling to identify progress with landowner awareness and participation in stewardship activities, using measures that can be compared with the baselines established by the National Surveys of Rural Landowners conducted by EnviroNics in Sept 2000 and June 2003.
 - Monitoring of projects with funding from the ORM Foundation.
 - Monitoring of individual restoration projects to assess success and the need for further interventions.

CORRELATION OF THE SPECIFIC STEWARDSHIP ACTIONS WITH SECUREMENT, EDUCATION, TRAILS AND RESEARCH

There are many opportunities to coordinate stewardship activities with other programs on the ORM. Examples include:

- Properties that are purchased by or donated to public agencies or NGOs provide an opportunity to undertake focused ecological restoration and demonstrate good environmental practices, providing models for the public and other stakeholders.
- Landowners with conservation easements on their properties are likely to be receptive to stewardship activities.
- Landowners who participate in stewardship may be willing to consider conservation easements or donations of their property.
- Education programs about the Moraine will increase public awareness of its values and encourage participation in stewardship.
- Communication initiatives can be used to celebrate and promote ongoing stewardship initiatives.
- Information provided to trail users could help to increase awareness of the values of the Moraine.
- Trail volunteers may be interested in participating in restoration activities.
- Private landowners who are willing to provide trail easements or license agreements may also be interested in stewardship and vice versa.
- Research activities (e.g. evaluating different restoration techniques, documenting the economic benefits of conservation and stewardship, assessing the implications of land use trends, surveying attitudes to stewardship, etc.) can be used to improved stewardship programs and leverage further funding.

For a copy of the Oak Ridges Moraine Stewardship Program, please contact The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation at (905) 833-5733 or info@ormf.com

For more information, please contact our Program Manager, Kim Gavine, at (905) 833-5733 ext.23 or kim.gavine@ormf.com



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