



It may be wet, but don't
hang it out to dry just yet.



The Oak Ridges Moraine

By an overwhelming margin, Canadians consider fresh water to be the most important natural resource to Canada's future.

— Nik Nanos, Nanos Research



The Oak Ridges Moraine is wet.

For instance, it provides 600 Million Litres of Fresh Water to hundreds of thousands of Ontarians every month — and, free of charge!

Therefore the Province invested to protect it.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan 2002 recognized the Moraine's significant contribution to the water supply and ecology of southern Ontario.

And, created the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation.

The Foundation supports the Conservation Plan and other efforts to protect the Moraine — to make the Province's investment a success.

So far, the return on investment has been impressive.

The Foundation has leveraged \$15 Million into some \$50 Million of research, trails, education, land securements and restorations. This better assures that the Conservation Plan is accepted by municipalities, planners, landowners, recreational users, businesses and others alike.

And, this is important to Ontarians.

"By an overwhelming margin, Canadians consider fresh water to be the most important natural resource to Canada's future." — Nanos Research

The Oak Ridges Moraine is of utmost importance to us as apple growers in York Region. Our business supplies our community with quality apples and in turn provides employment for our youth. Without a good clean water source, this would be impossible.

— Pam Rolph-Romeril, Pine Farms Orchard, King City



However, the Foundation's funds have dried up.

With five years remaining until the Conservation Plan's legislative review in 2015, the Foundation is treading water because its funds have all but run dry.

To be as liquid as the Moraine, we need ongoing support.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation has been fortunate to be identified by stakeholders as key in helping the Province meet its objectives in the Conservation Plan.

But, the Foundation requires an ongoing flow of provincial investment to stay-afloat in order that these objectives can be successfully realized by 2015.

Briefly, here are some of our successes so far.

We turned \$15 Million into \$50 Million, so that some 86,000 landowners have been educated and given stewardship resources; some 6,000 school children have been educated on the importance of water and wildlife protection; and, some 7,000 acres have been protected and/or restored.

And, we've done the science.

We recently commissioned an unprecedented, eight-volume, Measuring Success/State of the Moraine study that assesses the effectiveness of the Conservation Plan and the Foundation in the following areas:

- Stakeholder Awareness, Support and Concerns
- Health of the Moraine within a Watershed Context
- Health of the Moraine in a Landscape and Municipal Context
- Improvements to the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail
- Achievements in Land Securement
- Achievements in Land Stewardship
- Achievements in Education and Research
- Compliance of Policy and Regulatory Agencies



Thanks to the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation grant my stream bank is now stabilized. The plantings will also be a beneficial addition to the local aquatic environment of the Cavan Creek. Without assistance from the Foundation it is doubtful this project could have taken place.

— Paul Anderson, Cavan Creek Landowner

The science tells us some significant things.

Based on feedback from stakeholders and the analyses in *Measuring Success/State of the Moraine*, four priority areas have been identified where new and ongoing Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation leadership proves pivotal in rectifying deficiencies, to better assure that the province's Conservation Plan is successfully kept on stream:

- Policy Development and Monitoring
- Land Restoration
- Land Securement
- Education and Outreach

And, the Foundation can respond effectively.

In each of foregoing greatest-need areas, the Foundation has developed the expertise and network necessary to achieve the tasks at hand. This is supported overwhelmingly by Moraine stakeholders who have asked us to further our leadership role in non-regulatory matters.

The Foundation's fortunate position as an in-the-community organization, complemented by a strong network of stakeholders, and a mandate to act, has made it uniquely effective.

But, we can only do so with ongoing investment.

Measuring Success/State of the Moraine shows that much has been done, and done well—however it also recognizes that there is much yet to do.

In the prioritized areas cited above, and outlined in the Appendix that follows, many surmountable challenges are identified.

In sum, with further investment by the Province we can build on our success by addressing these challenges with renewed vigour, in order that the Oak Ridges Moraine's value to Ontarians remains secure.

Measuring Success/State of the Moraine Study: Areas of Greatest Need

Policy Development and Monitoring

Lasting success for the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan hinges on data collection, auditing of results, and the addition of new and amended policies that will make the Plan stronger.

Yet in some of these areas progress is lagging. Where we have the ability to lead or lend a hand, we want to do so. For instance:

Monitoring. How effective is the Plan? There are still no agreed upon performance indicators and a lack of sufficient monitoring stations, standardized methodologies and committed funding. The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation has created an excellent platform that can be used in preparation for the 2015 Plan Review.

Policy. What changes are required to the Plan? Stakeholders identified areas where refinements or augmentations to the Plan would make it more effective and user-friendly. The Foundation can continue to work with stakeholders and the Province to identify further improvements.

Land Restoration and Stewardship

Today's watchword phrase on the Moraine is, *Do no harm*. But in some areas, that advice comes too late. That's where land restoration and stewardship come in.

Restoration remains essential to the Plan's success. Ecological assessments done for the Foundation flagged a number of categories in need, including: Interior Forest Cover; Stream Corridor Vegetation; Open Field and Grassland Habitat; Species-at-Risk Habitat; and, Aquatic Ecosystems.

Land Securement

Land securement, like land stewardship, is a key non-regulatory means of protection for the Oak Ridges Moraine. Public polling and stakeholders surveyed for Measuring Success said they were strongly in favour of the Foundation's securement work and wish it to continue.

If the Foundation is able to move forward, we would also like to refine the Securement Strategy to create a more focused set of targets, including the establishment of an Oak Ridges Moraine Parks, Open Space and Trail System, to meet 2015 objectives.

Education and Outreach

The Moraine runs 160 kilometres from the Trent River to the Niagara Escarpment. It's home to 300,000 people and 32 municipalities. Try doing anything on that scale without education and outreach. Impossible.

Going forward, education efforts need to expand. The Foundation has a continuing role to play in promoting the values of the Moraine, especially its importance to groundwater.

Ecological and Hydrological Health

The Foundation commissioned a rigorous assessment of the Moraine's ecological and hydrological health. Its value is threefold: (i) Results provide a baseline for the Review of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan in 2015. (ii) Data collection methods meet the need for a reliable, ongoing monitoring system. (iii) Specific findings point to areas of greatest need for attention from now until 2015.

The results of the Study concluded that the Moraine possesses a healthy base of natural terrestrial cover. Nevertheless, most health indicators in the Study revealed that continued improvements are necessary.

For example: Most naturally vegetated stream corridors are well below the ecological targets of 75% coverage; Stream conditions are well below target standards on the basis of fish community health, benthic community health, phosphorous loading and E. Coli levels; Forest interior habitat, critical to forest dependent species, is inadequate in Natural Linkage areas, and Prairie, Savannah and Sand Barren habitats are rare on the Moraine, and bird species dependent on these habitats are in decline.