



Media Release – For Immediate Release

Kawartha Conservation receives 25-acre gift in Township of Scugog

Land will be part of new East Cross Conservation Area open to the public in 2009

(City of Kawartha Lakes, January 25, 2008) Kawartha Conservation has received 25 acres of environmentally significant land off Devitts Road in the Township of Scugog. Through Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program (www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/egp-pde/), Leslie Beauchamp gave the land worth over \$20,000 to Kawartha Conservation to help protect the East Cross Creek headwaters and maintain the integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

"For a long time, I've envisioned a large conservation area connected with the Test Hill area, and this is a way of making that happen," says Ms. Beauchamp. "It has been a great experience working with Kawartha Conservation, who made the whole process seem easy. Having them as its 'guardian,' I know the property will be safe."

"Kawartha Conservation is really grateful to Ms. Beauchamp," says Kristie Virgoe, Kawartha Conservation Manager of Environmental Protection and Restoration. "Her gift will have benefits that trickle through the whole watershed. It's a pleasure to work with people who are truly dedicated to environmental stewardship."

The property contains mostly wetland and is located within Kawartha Conservation's East Cross Forest project boundary. It is recognized as an important source of water for the East Cross Creek and surrounding aquifers.

The East Cross Forest project was initiated after many properties in the area were devastated by off-road vehicles and other illegal activities. Kawartha Conservation is rehabilitating and managing acquired lands to ensure abundant clean water for surrounding residents and businesses, and to protect cold-water habitat and sensitive species such as Brook Trout.

Ms. Virgoe says Ms. Beauchamp has been a good steward of her land. "Most of the hardwood wetland is of high quality, and shows very little obvious disturbance," she comments. "A barred owl, which was noted during natural heritage studies by our staff, is a good indicator of the quality and the overall size of the wooded area, since they are known to be area-sensitive species that prefer larger trees for nesting."

Kawartha Conservation is incorporating the land into the East Cross Forest Conservation Area, which will be open to the public in 2009.

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For more information, or to arrange interviews, contact Brent Kulba, Kawartha Conservation Communications Specialist, (705) 328-2271 x220, bkulba@kawarthaconservation.com

Kawartha Conservation is a watershed-based environmental organization focused on providing abundant clean water within a healthy landscape. It is one of 36 conservation authorities in Ontario providing natural resources management. The Kawartha watershed intersects portions of the municipalities of City of Kawartha Lakes; Scugog; Brock; Clarington; Galway-Cavendish & Harvey; and Cavan-Monaghan.

www.kawarthaconservation.com



Media Backgrounder

East Cross Forest Conservation Area, January 2008

The Beauchamp Property:

The 24.5-acre Beauchamp property is located in a natural core area on the Oak Ridges Moraine, completely within Kawartha Conservation's East Cross Forest project boundary.

The East Cross Forest project is designed to protect the headwaters of East Cross Creek from environmental degradation caused by off-road vehicular trespassing and other threats.

Natural Core Areas protect lands with the greatest concentrations of key natural heritage features that are critical to maintaining the integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine as a whole.

Left in a natural state, with no activity for the past nine years, the property holds a wetland that displays significant recharge characteristics for the East Cross Creek headwaters.

This wetland makes up approximately 10 percent of the total wetland cover in the East Cross Forest area of interest.

Protection of this property will make a substantial contribution to maintaining wetlands in this otherwise dry part of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Into the Future:

Kawartha Conservation is currently in the process of collecting data and identifying areas of interest and concern.

This information will be key in developing an effective management plan for East Cross Forest Conservation Area, which will be completed this year.

The property is currently closed to visitors and will open in 2009.

Partners and Supporters:

Kawartha Conservation, Township of Scugog, Region of Durham, Durham Regional Police, East Cross Forest Implementation Team, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Greenlands, and area residents.

History of East Cross Forest Conservation Area:

In 2002, the Township of Scugog established the Test Hill Task Force to develop a long-term strategy to address illegal activity taking place in the southeastern area of the Township near the headwaters of the East Cross Creek.

In November 2003, the task force released a report entitled "Proposal for the Protection of East Cross Forest," which recommended that a comprehensive acquisition strategy be developed. A working group, the East Cross Forest Implementation Team, was established to act on the recommendations, one of which was to seek funding to undertake and sustain restoration and management activities. A large grant was subsequently secured through the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation.

In December 2005, the team turned over leadership of the initiative to Kawartha Conservation, which agreed to hold title to future properties and manage them as a conservation area. The team assumed the role of a stakeholder group to provide input into the management plan.

In 2005, the Nature Conservancy of Canada approached Kawartha Conservation with regard to a significant tract of land that was available as a donation. The property was within the targeted acquisition area of East Cross Forest, and discussions began.

In October 2006, Mr. Erast Huculak donated 552 acres of property to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, who then transferred title to Kawartha Conservation. For many years, the unoccupied property, and the properties surrounding it, had been subject to unauthorized motorized vehicle use and other illegal activity, which caused considerable environmental damage.

A security group was immediately contracted to patrol the property and enforce the Trespass to Property Act. This patrolling will continue until the trespassing and illegal dumping is brought under control.

A community clean-up event was held in June of 2007 and resulted in over 75 volunteers collecting over 60 cubic yards of garbage, in addition to a number of abandoned cars and hazardous wastes.

In the spring of 2007, Kawartha Conservation purchased an additional 5 acres within the area of interest.

In October of 2007, another 250 acres of vacant land was purchased adjacent to the original 552 acres.

In December of 2007, Kawartha Conservation finalized a donation of 24.5 acres of wetland, forest and savannah by Ms. Leslie Beauchamp through Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program (www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/egp-pde/).

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