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Media Release

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For immediate release

READY, SET, CHECK YOUR WATERSHED!

We all know that droughts and heavy downpours can wreak havoc in our yards and gardens. But what affect do these and other factors have on our water? Twelve organizations including NGOs, conservation authorities, stewardship councils, and government agencies aim to find out at the 2nd annual Check Your Watershed Day on Saturday, July 21 from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm, and they need help from the community.

Three watersheds on the Oak Ridges Moraine are being studied: Duffins Creek (which includes Whitchurch-Stouffville, Uxbridge, Markham, Ajax, Pickering), Oshawa Creek (which includes Scugog, Whitby, Oshawa, Clarington) and the Ganaraska River (which includes Clarington, Port Hope, Hamilton Township). A watershed includes all of the land area from which water drains into a river system (or another body of water). Everyone lives in a watershed.

“It is going to be huge this year! We need over 200 participants,” says Joyce Chau, Program Manager with Citizens’ Environment Watch. “Here’s an opportunity for concerned residents to have some fun, get their hands dirty, their feet wet and collect meaningful data on the health of their watersheds”

Working in small teams with a trained leader, volunteers will check water flow levels throughout the Moraine. The aim is to check every small stream in the three entire watersheds...all in one day! No experience is required. Participants will be taught everything they need to know on the day of the event.

Many factors can affect stream flow including storms, droughts, urban sprawl, deforestation, mining and construction, as well as natural cyclical changes. However, it is still unclear how these factors interact to influence our watersheds. The volunteer-collected data is an important step towards keeping streams flowing and clean for present and future generations.

“The information collected from Check Your Watershed Day will be unique and dynamic,” say Chau. “Never before have such large datasets been generated in one day. And yet every little watercourse is significant. The data collected from such streams helps us to better understand the overall health of the watershed.”

The effects of drought or any adverse developments that influence water flow is seen first in small streams. By measuring in mid July, at "summer low flow" (a time when water flow is typically low) the water that is flowing can be directly attributed to the headwaters in the Oak Ridges Moraine.

In time, this annual study will track the water flow in all the 65 watersheds originating within the Oak Ridges Moraine.

For more information about this event, please visit:
<http://www.monitoringthemoraine.ca/cywd/index.htm>