



MONITORING the MORAINE

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Media Release

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PLENTY TO CELEBRATE ON THE OAK RIDGES MORAINE

The Oak Ridges Moraine was the ultimate winner at the inaugural Moraine Hero Awards gala event, held on June 15 in Caledon. The ceremony, attended by well over 100 people including Caledon Mayor Marolyn Morrison and Uxbridge Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor, also marked the official launch of Monitoring the Moraine, a collaborative project between Citizens' Environment Watch (CEW), STORM Coalition (Save the Oak Ridges Moraine), and Centre for Community Mapping (COMAP). The project is designed to engage and sustain community volunteers in science, stewardship, monitoring and decision-making on the Oak Ridges Moraine.



Pictured left to right: David Burnett on behalf of the CAMC, Emil Kolb on behalf of the Region of Peel, Kathy Guselle, David Donnelly and Alex Grant

Gord Miller (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario) delivered an inspiring keynote address, which emphasized the importance of public involvement in monitoring the health of the Oak Ridges Moraine. While he praised the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP), he warned, "all these protections and definitions are good but we have to ensure they're implemented. We have to make sure they're complied with, and we have to make sure that we monitor so that we know we're being successful. Or if we're not being successful we'll know that we have to take immediate action."

Traditionally, the government of Ontario has been responsible for such monitoring. But as Mr. Miller explained, "now the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Environment are The so under resourced that they can't do the job that the public expects them to... They haven't got the troops, they haven't got the expertise, they haven't got the money."

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Instead the public must accept the responsibility. “The people must do it, because if the people do it, it tells the government that it matters to the people,” said Mr. Miller. “It is absolutely the right thing to do. It is truly a noble thing for people in the community to monitor not only the ecology but also policy to make sure that the ORMCP is successful.”

Those who received Moraine Hero Awards are shining examples of how people can step up to the plate and make a difference through municipal and community leadership, as well as through collaborative planning and proactive policy approaches.

The Conservation Authorities Moraine Coalition (CAMC) was honoured for its approach to Collaborative Planning. The nine conservation authority members of the CAMC (Central Lake Ontario, Credit Valley, Ganaraska, Kawartha, Lake Simcoe Region, Lower Trent, Nottawasaga Valley, Otonabee, Toronto and Region) have worked with government agencies and citizens to help establish the ORMCP and continue to monitor and defend it at the Ontario Municipal Board. They work to build local partnerships for the securement of environmentally significant moraine lands for public access, recreational uses and environmental education programs and strive to advance the science and understanding of the ORM through community-based watershed plans and ORM-wide groundwater study partnerships.

The Award for Proactive Policy Approach was presented to Region of Peel, which has long recognized the importance of its groundwater resources and the steps needed to ensure their sustainability for future generations. This commitment of the Region to proactively plan and manage groundwater extends over twenty years. The Region has also initiated a private well abandonment program and completed groundwater quantification studies.

Alex Grant, Chief Administrative Officer, Township of Uxbridge received the Award for Municipal Leadership. Mr. Grant, whose jurisdiction lies 40% within the ORMCP area, has risen to the challenges presented by this new planning environment. Mr. Grant’s efforts go beyond municipal governance; he has acted as the lead staff person assisting the Mayor and dedicated Uxbridge residents in the development and implementation of *Uxbridge Naturally*, a strategy to create a town-wide trail and natural spaces system that connects communities and incorporates existing trail systems such as the Oak Ridges and Trans-Canada.

There were co-honourees for the Community Champion Award. Kathy Guselle’s concern about the growing threat of development in the Ganaraska River headwaters as early as 1988 led her to help unite a group of citizens into “SAGA, - Save the Ganaraska Again”. Through an Environmental Assessment Advisory Board hearing, SAGA successfully drew attention to the inadequacies of the planning and approvals process in the Ganaraska headwaters and the Oak Ridges Moraine as a whole.

In 1992, David Donnelly assisted the executive of SAGA to help raise awareness of the threat of urban development in the headwaters of the Ganaraska River. As Executive Director of the Canadian Environmental Defence Fund (now Environmental Defence), he organized one of the first press conferences at Queen's Park for SAGA to bring the issue of the moraine directly to provincial politicians and the people of Toronto. From 2000 - 2002, he was counsel to Save the Rouge at the now famous Oak Ridges Moraine OMB hearing in Richmond Hill. As a lawyer at Gilbert's LLP and legal counsel for Environmental Defence, David continues to advocate for the protection of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Monitoring the Moraine project partners are already seeking nominations and selection committee members for the 2007 Moraine Hero awards. For more information, or to find out how to get involved, visit www.MonitoringTheMoraine.ca, email info@MonitoringTheMoraine.ca or telephone: 647-258-3280).