



MONITORING the MORAINE

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Monitoring the Moraine (MTM) is a collaborative project between Citizens' Environment Watch (CEW), STORM Coalition (Save the Oak Ridges Moraine), and Centre for Community Mapping (COMAP). It is designed to engage and sustain community volunteers in science, stewardship, monitoring and decision-making on the Oak Ridges Moraine.

In 2002, the Ontario government took steps to protect the moraine through the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP). The MTM project partners applaud the vision, objectives and intent of the ORMCP, and believe it provides the foundation to sustain and strengthen the ecological and hydrological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine and its associated communities. However, the moraine continues to be under pressure from challenges associated with urban sprawl. The ORMCP, like any regulation, is only as strong as the will of people to implement it. The future health of the moraine will not rest solely with the provincial or municipal governments; residents and other interested parties must also be involved. People living on the moraine, and those in neighbouring urban centres, must work together to ensure that the ORMCP is not only adhered to, but that it is also effective and remains relevant over time. An effective way for volunteers to achieve this is through ecological and policy monitoring at the community level.

The Monitoring the Moraine project engages volunteers in ecological and policy monitoring with the goal of determining the effectiveness of the ORMCP and measuring changes to the moraine landscape as a result. The project will ensure that the information gathered by participating volunteers is successfully communicated to other stakeholders. This is not an easy task given the geographic size and complexity of the Oak Ridges Moraine. In order to develop an accurate picture of the entire moraine's ecological health, consistent standards or protocols must be agreed upon and applied at all levels of monitoring – the MTM project works toward this goal. The challenge is to create a common monitoring framework within which everyone dedicated to the moraine's preservation can work. Thus, the Monitoring the Moraine project aims to:

- Develop, implement and evaluate collaborative approaches to community-based monitoring across the Oak Ridges Moraine landscape;
- Improve the efficiency and utility of both environmental and policy monitoring;
- Develop an effective and dynamic monitoring framework that is widely applicable to all communities and moraine-monitoring organizations;
- Generate a visual and interactive 'big picture' in the form of an online map that can be viewed and updated by anyone with Internet access;
- Inform decision making by disseminating relevant and credible environmental and policy monitoring data to key decision makers;
- Facilitate a strong and informed community voice in the upcoming 2014 review of the ORMCP;
- Provide a model for other large scale monitoring projects, provincially, nationally and internationally.

The MTM partners bring a variety of complementary skills and experience to this collaborative project. STORM has years of experience in policy and planning advocacy on the Oak Ridges Moraine. CEW is a leader in providing education, equipment and support for community-based environmental monitoring. COMAP develops web-based data management tools that will enable users to report the results of their monitoring, as well as access the findings of others, with a few simple clicks of a computer mouse.





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The success of this ambitious project relies on community initiative and participation. The project is being guided and implemented by the “Monitoring Advisory Committee”, comprised of local volunteer champions, moraine-based environmental and citizens’ groups, environmental non-government organizations, provincial and regional government, conservation authorities, and the private sector. As a result, diverse areas of expertise and knowledge are being drawn upon. At the same time, this collaboration ensures the project will recognize and support what residents hold dear.

The MTM project will benefit communities across the moraine in numerous ways: by providing the necessary education, training and support to carry out monitoring projects and by helping to ensure that the data generated by participating volunteers is valuable and scientifically defensible. This will allow community members to raise and act upon environmental concerns in a timely fashion. Community empowerment will lead to wider community involvement and ensure that those who live, work and play on the moraine will be informed, engaged and well positioned to protect this unique landscape for years to come.

The project is supported by the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation, and Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network (EMAN), Environment Canada.

For more information, or find out how to get involved, email info@monitoringthemoraine.ca, call 647-258-3280 or visit www.monitoringthemoraine.ca.

