

Conservation Update

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority

August 2013

Leaving a Legacy - Keith McLean Conservation Lands

The Keith McLean Conservation Lands was officially opened in a ceremony held on Thursday, June 27. Mr. McLean, who passed away on November 20, 2012, donated his 130 ha farm to the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation. "We discovered shortly after Keith's death that he was donating his land and a sizeable trust fund to our Foundation. It is a great gift and a huge responsibility," Duncan Skinner, President of the Foundation said.

The property includes wetlands, tallgrass prairie and farmland. The property is best known, however, for its lotus ponds.

"It truly is a remarkable gift," Steve Arnold, Chair of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority said. "Now it is our task and responsibility to see that this gift is transformed into the vision that Keith laid out for us."

A few years prior to Mr. McLean's death, he provided the Foundation with a letter of intent to donate his lands. In the letter, Mr. McLean laid out a challenge for the Foundation: "To accept this property and, with vision and foresight, enhance the beauty of this site, continuing the conservation effort for the benefit of wildlife and the general public." Then he went on, "There may be many ideas and improvements that I have never imagined but always bear in mind that this is a place where the public should always feel warmly welcome."

While the land was donated to the Foundation, the Conservation Authority, on behalf of the Foundation, will be managing this property. The first step will be the development of a management plan. In the fall, an open house will be held to seek input on the plan.

"The opportunities seem endless and will only be limited by our imaginations," Arnold said.



from left to right: Duncan Skinner, President, St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation; Ian Toll, relative of Mr. McLean; Karen Townsend, a close friend of Mr. McLean; and Steve Arnold, Chair, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority.



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A Wetland in Need of Protection

Peers Wetland was officially opened during a ceremony held on June 27. Peers Wetland is located just northeast of Wallaceburg on the Kimball Sideroad. Peers Wetland, owned by the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority, is the only sizeable wetland, around 11 hectares, that remains along the lower reaches of Otter Creek.

“Like many of the projects in which we are involved, we were not in this alone,” Steve Arnold, Chair of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority said. “The acquisition of Peers Wetland was accomplished through the hard work, ingenuity and perseverance of many partners.”

Since the property was acquired, a berm that holds in the water has been repaired and a pump installed to augment flows into the wetland in times of drought. Trees and tallgrass prairie have been planted to improve the habitat diversity of this site and there are plans for a trail and interpretive signs so the public can enjoy this beautiful property.

Peers Wetland falls within the St. Clair River Area of Concern, which prompted Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to support this project. The preservation and enhancement of this wetland directly addresses the habitat component identified as one of the beneficial use impairments for the St. Clair River watershed.

“This support, however, would not have been possible without demonstrated community interest and involvement. In short, the Peers Wetland Project would not have become a reality without the community joining in,” Arnold said. “We are very grateful for the efforts of the Sydenham Field Naturalists and the Friends of the St. Clair River who rallied the community to support this project, and to the Municipality of Chatham-Kent for their financial support.”



from left to right: Joe Faas, Councillor, Municipality of Chatham-Kent; Denise Shephard, President, Sydenham Field Naturalists; Darrell Randell, President, Friends of the St. Clair River; and Steve Arnold, Chair, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority.

Donors for the Acquisition and Enhancement of Peers Wetland

<i>Friends of the St. Clair River</i>	<i>Ontario Power Generation</i>
<i>Sydenham Field Naturalists</i>	<i>St. Clair Region Conservation</i>
<i>Chatham-Kent Community Partnership</i>	<i>Foundation</i>
<i>Municipality of Chatham-Kent</i>	<i>TD Friends of the Environment</i>
<i>Wildlife Habitat Canada</i>	<i>Foundation</i>
<i>Great Lakes Sustainability Fund</i>	<i>Lambton Wildlife Inc.</i>
<i>Shell Fuelling Change</i>	<i>AECON</i>
<i>Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources</i>	<i>Nature London</i>
<i>Ducks Unlimited Canada</i>	<i>Numerous Individuals and Businesses</i>
<i>RBC Blue Water Fund</i>	

Conservation Scholarships Awarded

The Conservation Scholarship program rewards graduating high school students continuing their post-secondary studies in a conservation related field based on their academic achievement and their demonstrated interest and involvement with the environment. In total, \$3,250 was awarded across the St. Clair region this year. The scholarships are made possible through trust funds established by the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation and its donors. Steve Arnold, Chair of the St. Clair Region Conservation Authority presented the awards.



Ian Van Arkel, Lambton Kent Composite School, Tony Stranak Conservation Scholarship



Derek Bulsink, Ursline College, A.W. Campbell Conservation Scholarship



Jordan Henry, St. Christopher Secondary School, Mary Jo Arnold Conservation Scholarship



Laura Williams, North Lambton Secondary School, A.W. Campbell Conservation Scholarship



Kurtis Smith, Northern Collegiate Institute & Vocational School, Conservation Scholarship

Next Conservation Authority Board Meeting

Thursday, September 19, 10:00 a.m.

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