



## **Kawartha Conservation opens new conservation area in Durham Region**

### ***Grand Opening marks environmental achievement for local community***

(Scugog, June 25, 2009) A sensitive ecosystem on the Oak Ridges Moraine, once overrun by off-roading, dumping and other illegal activities, is now officially a conservation area available to the public for low impact activities, such as hiking, bicycling and environmental education.

On June 25, Kawartha Conservation and the surrounding community celebrated the Grand Opening of the 1,134-acre Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area with a gate unlocking ceremony and guided hike. The conservation area is located in the southeast corner of Scugog Township and can be accessed at 4560 Devitts Rd.

During the ceremony, Jim McMillen, Chair of Kawartha Conservation, acknowledged the Grand Opening as a major achievement for the environment and local community.

“The implications for the environment are significant, as are the benefits to the surrounding community and everyone who lives downstream,” said McMillen. “Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area is a very special place for many reasons, and would not exist today without tremendous support from the local community and numerous funding partners.”

In order to create a conservation area that would protect East Cross Forest, private landowners donated over 655 acres of land worth over \$677,000 to Kawartha Conservation. Additional land was acquired through donations and funding from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, the McLean Foundation, the Region of Durham and the Township of Scugog. The Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ministry of Natural Resources also provided funding through the Ontario Greenlands Program.

Over the past 3 years, the community came out in large numbers to support volunteer events, such as community cleanups and trail building events. Volunteers have helped clean up a total of 210 cubic yards of garbage, over 1,400 litres of hazardous waste, more than 10 vehicles and many tons of assorted scrap metal. They have also helped build 3.5 kilometres of sustainable trails, and are currently participating in the rehabilitation of over 70 kilometres of unsanctioned trails.

Groups like the Cartwright Dyno Snowmobile Club, the Durham 4x4 Club, Friends of Kawartha Conservation, the Oak Ridges Trail Association, the Ontario Federation of 4 Wheel Drive Recreationists, Sir Sandford Fleming College, and many individual volunteers have provided numerous volunteer hours and equipment for these projects. Their contribution is valued at more than \$45,000.

Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area is located on the Oak Ridges Moraine, in a mostly Natural Core Area. It is noted for its ecological diversity, which includes forests, meadows, wetlands, sand dunes and plantations, and for containing the headwaters of East Cross Creek. Water from the area flows northward through East Cross Creek to the Scugog River, the source of drinking water for many people. The area also supplies groundwater to many neighbouring wells.

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The Grand Opening ended with a guided hike. Guests were shown unique plant communities and wildlife habitats, and how damaged areas were being rehabilitated and protected.

“We now have a magnificent place to enjoy, and the satisfaction of knowing that unique habitats, the headwaters of East Cross Creek and local groundwater recharge areas are being protected,” said Scugog Mayor Marilyn Pearce. “I encourage everyone to strap on their hiking boots, and come experience the beauty of Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area and see environmental protection and restoration in action.”



The gate is unlocked, as Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area is opened to the public for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding and other non-motorized recreational uses. From left to right: Kim Gavine, Executive Director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation; Marilyn Pearce, Mayor, Township of Scugog; Kristie Virgoe, Manager, Environmental Protection and Restoration, Kawartha Conservation; Jim McMillen, Chair, Kawartha Conservation.



One of several new interpretive signs unveiled at Durham East Cross Forest Conservation Area during the Grand Opening on June 25. From left to right: Kim Gavine, Executive Director of the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation; Marilyn Pearce, Mayor, Township of Scugog; Jim McMillen, Chair, Kawartha Conservation; Kristie Virgoe, Manager, Environmental Protection and Restoration, Kawartha Conservation.

