
EASTERN ONTARIO LAND TRUST (EOLT) ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Photos were taken in the McAlpine Forever Forest by Jonathan Mack & Jakob Mueller

BACKGROUND

In 2017 initial discussions began in the community concerning the establishment of a Local Land Trust. During 2018 and 2019 information meetings took place with the objective of creating a land trust to preserve and protect local natural environmental resources, including forests and wetlands, sustainable farms and natural heritage features.

In particular, one owner of a 200 acres farm in Vankleek Hill, Ontario expressed a desire to preserve and protect in perpetuity the heritage farm established in 1834, including forests and wetlands, known as McAlpine Farm situated in Vankleek Hill, County of Prescott and Russell. In 2018 an article published as a blog entry by Mora Johnson Barrister & Solicitor outlined the initial plan for the establishment of a Forest in Perpetuity.¹ To that end, a conservation easement to protect the property was drafted and the search for an appropriate recipient of the easement began.

In 2020 discussions proceeded with the goal of establishing a local land trust.

In 2022 a community advisory meeting was held online to inform the community of intentions to establish a local land trust. Interested stakeholders attended via Zoom and potential board members were invited to stand for nomination to the first Board of Directors of a local land trust. A Board of nine directors was confirmed and organized. Two board members of the newly named Eastern Ontario Land Trust attended a national conference of the 2022 Canadian Land Trust Summit in Ottawa, Ontario. Ian Attridge was engaged as legal counsel. The Eastern Ontario Land Trust registered as an Emerging Associate of the Ontario Land Trust Alliance.

November 15, 2022 the first official meeting of the Board of Directors took place online for the incorporated Land Trust under the name of Eastern Ontario Land Trust/Fiducie Foncière de l'Est de l'Ontario. Nine (9) members of the board and two legal advisors and a meeting assistant were in attendance. A copy of the Bylaws for the new incorporation were adopted.² A motion to apply for charitable status was approved.

2023 ACTIVITIES OF THE EOLT

The year 2023 established a landmark of activities for the Eastern Ontario Land Trust.

Application for Charitable Status

An initial application for charitable status was completed and submitted to the Canada Revenue Agency. Upon receiving the initial response, further information and details will be completed

¹ www.morajohnsonlaw.ca Blog Post September 20, 2018 Forest In Perpetuity

² The Eastern Ontario Land Trust Constitution and Bylaws are stored in hard copy at the address of the EOLT.

in 2024.

Community Engagement

Members of the Board of Directors network with other local community groups dedicated to environmental issues. Two board members attended the showing of a film presented by Eco East and a presentation about EOLT was made introducing participants to the creation and activities of the Eastern Ontario Land Trust. One board member (Lisa Deacon) networks extensively with several community groups in Russell Township. Another board member (Lisa Henderson) represents the McAlpine Forever Forest Trees of Remembrance and oversees the tree planting activities. 200 trees were planted in a section set aside for an addition to the deciduous growth of the Forever Forest. Liaison between several local non-profit and charitable groups including the Vankleek Hill Nature Society, the Vankleek Hill Horticultural Society, the Vankleek Hill Farmers Market, Eco East, South Nation Conservation Authority, Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust.

Finances

At present, until charitable status is in place, there are no revenues or bank accounts underway on behalf of the EOLT. All expenses incurred on behalf of the land trust, including legal counsel, are paid by a private contributor with no expectation of return. All activities of the Eastern Ontario Land Trust are undertaken on a voluntary basis. Contributors of in-kind services include: Members of the EOLT Board of Directors, McAlpine Farm, Compass Consulting International Ltd., and community volunteers.

Conservation Activities

Discussions with the owner of McAlpine Farms continue with respect to the process of land donation, conservation easement and establishment of an endowment to cover costs of protecting and maintaining the property. Partnership with the Ottawa Community Foundation has been established in advance of eventual financial investments and oversight. Maps of the property and designations for use including the location of forests, wetlands and farm fields and buildings are documented on the McAlpine Forever Forest cloud server.

Another local landowner has expressed serious interest in preserving 500 acres of forest through collaboration with the EOLT. Discussions have begun to canvass possible options and further steps involved in preserving this forest in perpetuity.

A questionnaire has been developed to aid in the evaluation of land donor intentions and expectations.

Board of Directors

In 2023, three (3) meetings of the Board of Directors took place via Zoom in February, April and December, 2023. Minutes of the Board Meetings are documented at the official business office of the Eastern Ontario Land Trust and in a cloud file dedicated to the Eastern Ontario Land Trust. Records of meetings, decisions, activities, maps and other relevant documents and records are stored in the EOLT cloud folder and backed up under separate locations in order to preserve documentation relevant to the operation of the Land Trust.

Board Committees

The following Board Committees were active in 2023:

- Communications Committee
- Ecological Evaluation Committee
- Indigenous Outreach Committee

Activities of Committees are described below.

Communications Committee

Steps for establishing social media presence have begun. A rough logo has been designed and is in the process of being digitalized. Google accounts are in place. Social media presence is being investigated and will be posted in the new year. A website was recently launched under the address of www.eolt.ca



Ecological Evaluation Committee

The Ecological committee established a liaison with the Ottawa Field Naturalists to invite them to partner with the Eastern Ontario Land Trust in evaluating the natural resources of the forests and wetlands at McAlpine Farm. Two Field Trips to McAlpine Forests and Wetlands took place in June and October, 2023. Ten naturalists and EOLT members visited the McAlpine Forever Forest for the purposes of evaluating the species and natural environmental features of the property. Ecological Inventories were completed including hundreds of species of plants, amphibians, trees, geological features and assets. The Naturalists created lists of existing species and posted

their findings on INaturalist.org and iSeek.org providing a record of natural resources existing on the property. Their documentation includes a photo gallery of existing features, plants, trees and rare species that they found. 257 species were identified so far, including the following rare and protected species: black ash, butternut, wild garlic, common snapping turtle, unisexual mole salamander, eastern whitelip, crimson waxcap, ash tree bolete. They also found trees that are threatened by invasive insects: American elm (threatened by elm zigzag sawfly and Dutch elm disease), white ash, green ash, black ash (threatened by emerald ash borer), American beech (threatened by beech bark disease), eastern hemlock (threatened by hemlock woolly adelgid).

Because the initial field visits were so productive and beneficial for everyone involved, two further cooperative visits and explorations between EOLT and the Ottawa Field Naturalists are planned for 2024. Both parties agreed to continue the partnership in future years.



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Indigenous Outreach Committee

In acknowledgement of First Nations original stewardship of these lands as well as our mutual interest in conservation of lands and ecosystems, the EOLT in 2023 sought to reach out to Indigenous communities to determine whether any connections could be established that would provide benefit to all parties concerned with respect to local land conservation and stewardship.

Over ten different Indigenous groups were contacted to assess possible opportunities for liaison and cooperative activities. Such activities might include: spiritual ceremonies, medicinal plant resources, land stewardship and other beneficial projects. Several leaders and representatives of the indigenous peoples were approached. Board members attended some Indigenous gatherings and discussions ensued. The committee recommends that such outreach continue in the future with a view to establishing stronger links with Indigenous communities as priorities for both groups develop over time.

The following Indigenous organizations and communities were consulted in 2023:

1. The Algonquins of Ontario
2. Chris Craig of South Nation Conservation Authority
3. Three Sister Peace Garden
4. Metis Nation of Ontario
5. Valerie Vanderwick through Michael Gagnier of Aboriginal Healing Circle
6. Bruce Power of Indigenous Relations
7. Indigenous Grassroots Circle