

Help Us Decide Which Land Will Be Conserved

By Bob Barnett

Life is about choices. Right now, we have 30 wonderful properties all of which should be protected. We want to conserve all of them and more. This could be a banner year: 4,000 acres, or 16 sq km, with dozens of important species whose habitat needs protection, 20,000 tonnes of CO₂ sequestered and \$8,000,000 worth of flood protection, tourism, cleaner air and water. The easy part? We can conserve 24 projects for a tiny fraction of their land value. Generous owners are donating their land or development rights. But we need help to find \$3-\$5,000 to pay for the appraisal and legal fees for each new reserve.

Ten are land donations: from Bruce Peninsula shoreline near Pike Bay and Tobermory, to Niagara Escarpment forest near Kemble, Kinghurst, Chatsworth and Pine River. We can protect 500 acres for only \$106 per acre.

Fourteen are donated – conservation agreements where the owner agrees to never mine the aggregates, subdivide the property or over-harvest the forest. These projects stretch from the west Humber River in Caledon, along the Escarpment from Georgetown to Acton, Erin, Creemore, Singhampton, Kolapore, Kinghurst, Griersville and Chatsworth with entire lakes, wetlands and even buffer provincial parks. With your help we will protect 1,000 acres for \$115 an acre.

Six projects are more challenging. All would be owned by Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC), but the owner or a generous supporter is able to donate only part of the value. Two

are on the Escarpment near Georgetown and protect Jefferson Salamander, Wood Thrush and Eastern PeeWee. A Huron shore project would protect the Spotted Turtle. All these animals are listed species; two are endangered. Two projects are on

Manitoulin where we can protect Huron shoreline, Niagara Escarpment land, build new trail and protect rare species. The sixth is a very special project on the LaCloche Mountains where we can protect almost 2,000 acres, four km of Heaven's Gate Trail from peak to peak and three lakes, all painted by the Group of Seven.

These projects present a funding challenge as they cost from \$600 to \$6,500 an acre. The LaCloche project, to protect an entire skyline from mining or cottages, costs less than \$1,000 per acre. EBC is applying for partial funding to meet Canada's goal of protecting 17 per cent of our land.

Where You Come In

Here's where you come in. Vote with your feet by helping us build trail, or running for pledges, or biking to work and donating the transit fare you save, as supporters have done in the past. Join us and help us raise money in your community of friends. Vote with your pen



▲ Looking southwest to Manitoulin Island and the North Channel from the LaCloche hills. PHOTO BY HILARY DUFF.

by letting government know this is your priority. Vote as you party: supporters have celebrated birthdays from their tenth to their 50th, by letting their friends know that they'd rather have acres of land protected than get another "thingy." Make your family carbon neutral: every acre of forest removes five tonnes of CO₂ every year. Let us know which type of projects you support.

Connect with us by mail, Facebook, email, Instagram. Get news of each project as it emerges. Every donation is receipted. Cash donations save about 40 per cent on your taxes while donations of land or securities can save up to 65 per cent.

You can pledge assistance. We have one \$20,000 pledge for Manitoulin's south shore to use as a springboard to encourage others. You can learn more or visit the properties. We can show you pictures, maps, give you more details, direct you there for a look or take you there to see for yourself. Just ask.

Decide What to Protect

You get to decide what gets protected. Your generosity and views will guide us as we make your chosen projects come to life. Maybe we can complete each and every one. EBC has set aside \$150,000 from Alan Shaw's bequest, a previous \$100,000 gift and we budget \$100,000 annually for acquisition expenses, but that's not enough. Pick a project, talk to your friends, talk to us, make your project happen! You can make a huge difference.

What's next? You will be overwhelmed by the depth of feeling when you visit the site you helped preserve. Join our volunteers and help build trail or manage the reserves. It is doable. But it doesn't get started, unless we conserve the sites. Please give me a call. Let's chat about your priorities and get you involved with that first step, preserving a site, making it a nature reserve.

Bob Barnett is waiting for your call at 888.815.9575. See www.escarpment.ca for more.