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www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca

July 15, 2005

Mr. Marc Dubreuil  
Directeur régional  
Ministère de Développement durable, l'Environnement et des Parcs  
98, rue Lois  
Gatineau, (Québec), J8Y 3R7

Dear Mr. Dubreuil,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Mont O'Brien Association and our 525 members, I would like to respectfully request that the Ministry of the Environment assign biodiversity reserve status to the Mont O'Brien region under the Québec Government's Protected Areas Strategy.

The Mont O'Brien region is a 60 square km parcel of beautiful Crown land near-wilderness, in the Outaouais administrative region, situated five km west of the village of Danford Lake in the Municipality of Allevyn-and-Cawood in MRC Pontiac.

However, an equally-large area of Crown land surrounds the Picanoc River in the northern part of Allevyn-and-Cawood Municipality, which members of the Association would also like to see considered for protected area status. The Picanoc River area once supported magnificent northern red oak stands, and the river was excellent for fishing and canoeing. Members believe it should begin to be restored to its former glory, and that protected area status might help achieve this. We are submitting all the Crown land outlined on the map, but our priority is the 60 square km area we refer to as "Mont O'Brien".

Within the 60 square km main Mont O'Brien region are several lakes, and bordering the lakes are steep wooded and rocky slopes such as Mont O'Brien at an elevation of 394 metres, and several other hills at over 300 m elevation. Along the south and east side of the region at about 180 m elevation runs the Kazabazua River. Beaver marshes occupy parts of the lowlands. The region is covered in forest, about 750 ha of which was recently cut in large blocks under CAAFs, and some of which was partially cut by local workers using horses in the 1950s and is recovering well with white birch, poplar and tolerant hardwoods. Tall old hemlock groves are scattered through the middle portion. On several hilltops with some lichen-covered flat bedrock the forest is non-commercial red oak and amelanchier and remains totally natural. As well, one certain "core" area of about 50 ha is covered by an undisturbed mature natural forest of tall hardwoods such as sugar maple, basswood, red oak, and yellow birch, with pit-and-mound topography, large-diameter decaying logs on the forest floor, large hollow snags, and an herbaceous understory typical of "old-growth" forest. Several rocky, steep ridges in the western portion also have never been touched.

The Mont O'Brien region is home to many animal species, including large herbivores and predators: timber wolves, black bear, moose, and white-tailed deer are resident, along with otter on the western lakes, indicating a viable, complete ecosystem. Trappers also report the presence of lynx, marten, and fisher. Numerous bird species breed in a great variety of marshes, clear-cuts, successional and deep old forest; a bald eagle was sighted last fall foraging over "Lac Mark". The complexity and diversity of environments supports many small animals—frogs and salamanders, insects, micro-organisms, etc. The biologist Raymond Saumure studied a turtle species soon to be listed as vulnerable in Québec in this region three years ago. Please see his attached letter.

The following is a brief history of the Mont O'Brien Association:

During our community's December 1999 Development Planning process, the goal of protecting the flora and fauna of the Mont O'Brien region was established. This plan called for the creation of a semi-wild park that would protect native biodiversity at the same time as providing educational opportunities and restoring non-intrusive recreational access to a beautiful piece of public land that was an important part of the community for many decades, used for hunting, used until 1947 for winter logging and river-driving of pine and spruce, for horse and cow pasture on the flats, berry-picking, fishing, boating, picnicking and swimming—truly a natural resource available to everyone. (See also the historical section of [www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca](http://www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca).)

We were distressed to learn in the spring of 2000 that our beloved area was scheduled to be commercially logged under the 2000-2005 PQAF for AC 71-04. Since then we have tried to minimize the negative environmental and visual impact of these logging activities by communicating closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources and with the mills which hold CAAFs in our region. While the MRNF has been somewhat sympathetic to our cause, logging proceeded during 2000-2005 and a significant portion (particularly north of Mont O'Brien, and close to the Kazabazua River in the east and south, totaling about 10 square km) of the 60 square km natural environment has been altered by block clear-cuts. Yet large portions of the middle and the western regions remain in a fairly natural or even near-pristine state.

In October 2000, the Mont O'Brien Association took official form. Our mandate is to maintain the natural environment of the Mont O'Brien area by protecting the numbers and varieties of native flora and fauna and to provide educational opportunities and recreational access to the forest, lakes, waterways and hills.

Since the spring of 2000, an active volunteer force has been working with the Alleyn-and-Cawood community as well as with local cottagers' associations to protect and preserve the Mont O'Brien region as an integral part of Danford Lake Village's 125-year history. The membership is made up of 175 families (over 525 people) who are permanent residents in the Municipality of Alleyn-and-Cawood and neighbouring municipalities and recreational property owners in the surrounding area. The members have donated hundreds of hours to upgrade and maintain an access road; develop and maintain pedestrian trails; develop topographical maps of the area using GIS equipment; prepare newsletters and organize mailings; orchestrate fundraising initiatives and attend countless meetings. The highlight of each year is the autumn family hike, particularly on our loop trail which climbs Mont O'Brien to scenic lookouts. In spring 2004 we dedicated part of this trail in memory of Mary Haydon, an active founding member of the Association. Coverage of our activities in local newspapers has been generous. The Board of Directors and the members have worked hard to acquire and maintain access to the region and are delighted to have support of the mayor of Alleyn-and-Cawood, Mr. Joe Squitti, and council members.

The Association has an initiative presently underway that constitutes a unique form of historical conservation. In the process of creating several pedestrian trails, our volunteers realised that several narrow old woods roads built with care and skill by local people in the 1950s remained in good condition. These roads actually constitute a form of community cultural heritage, as well as forming attractive forest lanes along which to walk, and if they can be protected from bulldozing they may be used by many generations to come. Therefore, to preserve these old roads we plan on turning them into trails through registration and maintenance.

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003, twenty-five members and friends of the Mont O'Brien Association held a community planning session with two representatives from the Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. They discussed options for a future legal status of the Mont O'Brien region. The group unanimously agreed that the Mont O'Brien region should be protected as a biodiversity reserve under the Protected Areas Strategy of the Québec government. This was officially endorsed by the membership in a motion that was adopted at the March 2004 annual general meeting. The Mont O'Brien Board of Directors continues to endorse the request to have these sixty square kilometres of Crown land become a biodiversity reserve. Having read the December, 2002 Québec Act Respecting the Conservation of Natural Heritage, we understand that some areas within a biodiversity reserve could have a higher protection status (ecosystem reserve), but that hunting may be allowed in other areas if numbers of game animals are sufficient. We also understand that some pedestrian trails would remain, similarly to our present arrangement.

On behalf of the 175 families who presently hold memberships in the Mont O'Brien Association and who are strongly committed to our mandate of protecting the Mont O'Brien region's flora and fauna, I thank you for this opportunity to present our proposal.

We are including a 1:6 050 scale GIS map of Alleyn & Cawood Crown lots and the Mont O'Brien territory in order to facilitate your work. The Crown land around the Picanoc River appears on this GIS map as well.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can supply additional information about the Mont O'Brien region, our volunteer-run association, our work and our vision for a protected area.

Yours sincerely,

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cc. Board of Directors, Mont O'Brien Association  
Charlotte L'Écuyer, Member for Pontiac, Québec National Assembly  
Thomas Mulcair, Directeur, Ministère de développement durable, l'environnement et parcs  
Michael McCrank, Warden, MRC Pontiac  
Joseph Squitti, Mayor, Municipality of Alleyn-and Cawood  
Jean Langlois, M.Sc., Directeur Général, Ottawa Valley Section, CPAWS  
Linda Bédard, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests, Fort Coulonge  
Tim West, Community Program Manager, Sustainable Communities Initiative, Natural Resources Canada.  
Tina Michaud, Director, Outaouais CEDEC  
Jean-Pierre Ledoux, Directeur Général, CLD du Pontiac  
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Raymond Saumure, Ph. D.