



NEWSLETTER

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The Mont O'Brien Association Mandate

To maintain the wilderness environment of the Mont O'Brien area by protecting the numbers and varieties of flora and fauna while providing educational opportunities and recreational access to the forests, lakes, rivers and mountains

Visit the Mont O'Brien Association website:
www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca

Have you bought your 2005 family membership? Your membership is important – not only because you gain access to this beautiful piece of crown land, you are demonstrating your support so that it will be preserved for generations to come.

FIFTH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING FAMILY HIKE

Saturday, October 8, 2005

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Meet up the hill from Ross' Creek
(see flyer for full details)



The Mont O'Brien Association invites you and your family to the annual Thanksgiving family hike on Mont O'Brien. Come and see the spectacular view of the surrounding hills and the leaves in their full colours.

Car pooling is encouraged and parking is available 'up the hill' from Ross' Creek located 3 km down Mont O'Brien Road from Hwy 301 entrance.

The hike will be a minimum of three hours (approximately 8 km) therefore be sure to bring water, a snack and good hiking shoes.

Back by popular demand are Joe Jamison's famous bannock and John Noel's 'over an open fire' tea!
(Donations appreciated)

To register for the hike contact Joe Jamison (819) 459-3933 or by e-mail bjj@travel-net.com.

The Mont O'Brien area could be given Protected Area Status in 2006 What does this mean?

Prepared by Pam Miles, President, Mont O'Brien Association
(scientific consultation with Paula Armstrong)

Who would have thought five years ago when the Mont O'Brien Association was taking shape that we would have such a great opportunity – to be given Protected Area status by the Québec Government. But what does this mean? Why is this important for the wild animals and plants in the proposed area, for the Association members, the Alleyn-and-Cawood Municipality and the surrounding community of permanent residents and seasonal property owners?

First, what is Québec's Protected Area Strategy? In May 2002, the Québec Cabinet announced the target of protecting 8% of its land surface, in keeping with its ratification of the 1992 U.N. Rio Accord. In December 2002, it passed the "Natural Heritage Conservation Act" setting out the Protected Areas process.

Most Québec Protected Areas will be first categorized as "Biodiversity Reserves", meaning that they are established to both represent and safeguard natural biological diversity far into the future. Their natural state is to be preserved; this means that animal wildlife, wild plants and other organisms will be monitored and protected in their natural habitats as much as possible. At the same time, social and economic factors in the surrounding areas are to be considered and all possible community benefits sought. Traditional low-impact recreational activities are to continue in a "Biodiversity Reserve".



Protected Areas can vary in size from a few hectares to over 20,000 square kilometers. Since 2002 several large Protected Areas have been established in the north and far east of Québec, along with scattered small protected areas in southern Québec along the St

Lawrence Valley and in the Eastern Townships. The only Protected Area established since 2002 under the Natural Heritage Conservation Act in the Outaouais is the 21 square Km Forêt La Blanche

north of Mayo, which is an "Ecological Reserve", a higher protection category than "Biodiversity Reserve".

"Biodiversity Reserve" status sets aside an area from forest harvesting, from hydroelectric development, and from mineral, oil and gas exploitation. No digging or construction is to be done, except as part of the reserve's conservation plan. For a Mont O'Brien Biodiversity Reserve, discontinuing forest harvesting would be the most obvious change and major benefit. At the same time, traditional fishing, hunting, and trapping would continue.

This year the Québec Government is focusing on the "Southern Laurentians Province" of its environment ministry (now called the MDDEP, the Ministère de développement durable, l'environnement et parcs), which includes the Outaouais Region.

The Act may be found in English at the website of the Canadian Legal Information Institute (www.canlii.org) or in French as "la Loi sur la conservation du patrimoine naturel", at the website of the Québec environment ministry

On July 15th, 2005 all interested groups and citizens were to submit Protected Area status proposals to the environment ministry's regional office in Gatineau. The Mont O'Brien Board of Directors submitted a three-page letter, with a map, describing the main area we would like to see given Biodiversity Reserve protected area status -- the 60 square Km of Crown land south of Hwy 301 we refer to as 'Mont O'Brien'. This had been decided in 2004, and was discussed and supported at the March 2005 Annual General Meeting.

In its letter, the Board also requested that the equally-large area of Crown land surrounding the Picanoc River in the northern part of Alleyn-and-Cawood Municipality to be *considered* for Protected Area status. As was said in the submission, "*The Picanoc River area once supported magnificent northern red oak stands, and the river is 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.'" Sadly, some of the Crown land forest surrounding the Picanoc River has been heavily logged in the past few years. Biodiversity Reserve status would help preserve the forest and the Picanoc River. It would also restore public access to the river and this Crown land, which has been lost during the past few years.

For a copy of the Mont O'Brien Association submission letter go to www.danfordlakevillage.gc.ca and select Mont O'Brien on the left menu and go to Reports.

So we've submitted the letter – what is next? The letter was just one step in achieving Protected Area status as a Biodiversity Reserve.

September-December 2005: the environment ministry reviews all proposals submitted for the Southern Laurentians, including the Mont O'Brien Association proposal, to ensure the areas submitted are ecologically viable and representative of the geographic "reference frame" for this region of Quebec. We could be eliminated from the process at this stage. I wonder if they would eliminate us from the process because of the amount of logging that has taken place? We will soon find out.

January-March 2006: the environment ministry consults with other Québec ministries and departments on possible "constraints" on Protected Area designations. The Mont O'Brien Association does not participate in these discussions -- this is 'ministry to ministry' discussions.

On Crown land, these constraints may include CAAF contracts with mills for wood supply (several mills--Louisiana-Pacific, Mitigog and Bowater--have wood supply contracts for 2005-2007 on Crown land in the municipality). It may be decided that the wood still available to be harvested in the Municipality of Allyn-and-Cawood is too valuable to not cut, in which case the protected status discussion would end there.

Another possible constraint is that the municipality has submitted a proposal for an engineered landfill within the Crown land north of Hwy 301, and preliminary bedrock drilling and hydrological studies

are being submitted to the environment ministry for assessment this fall. It should be noted that the location of this landfill project was drawn on the map we submitted to the environment ministry and that the Mont O'Brien Association Board has been neutral on the advisability of a landfill project. It really is in the hands of the environment ministry to determine if both projects will proceed - keeping in mind that both projects have different evaluation criteria. One possibility is that the area proposed for the landfill could have a different zoning than for the Biodiversity Reserve. Both would exist side-by-side.

April-May of 2006: If the process stays on schedule, the environment ministry announces in the spring the areas in the Southern Laurentians region to be given *provisional* Protected Area legal status, which is typically for a four year period. This would be a major milestone for the Mont O'Brien Association.

From this point, there are two stages before a permanent designation of Protected Area Status is granted, and in Mont O'Brien's case, as a permanent biodiversity reserve. The two stages are separated by a period of public consultation and assessment (BAPE hearing).

(1) Provisional Protected Area status: At the start of this first stage, an immediate moratorium on all industrial and commercial activities applies. For Mont O'Brien, this means there would be a moratorium on logging. Notice of Protected Area designation is published in the Gazette officielle, as well as in a local newspaper. The environment ministry prepares a conservation management plan, also published in the Gazette officielle, and carries the plan out for a minimum of four years. Existing recreational activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing (recreational activities already occurring) are allowed to continue in a Biodiversity Reserve.



Overall planning and administration of a Biodiversity Reserve is conducted by the environment ministry, although local organisations or communities may participate in certain areas. It is important to communicate that the Mont O'Brien Association is not the manager of the Biodiversity Reserve, although it might be a major contributor as well as, I suspect, the municipality and the MRC of Pontiac.

Québec government does make grants available for financial or technical assistance and/or research to implement the aims of the ministry's conservation management plan at this time. (Grants could be made for wildlife studies that would involve local hunters; plant and forestry studies and restoration involving local woodworkers; for constructing safe hiking trails and bridges; studies to determine ecotourism potential; and for population viability studies by biologists.)

Public Consultation: If Mont O'Brien is given provisional Protected Area status, after four years the Minister of the Environment announces a BAPE (Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement) hearing to take place within 12 months. This is a broad-scale public consultation, along with a review of environmental assessment, ecological, and other findings during the previous four years. Notice of this hearing is published in the Gazette officielle of Québec and a local newspaper. A BAPE hearing usually lasts less than a year but it may go on longer.



During the hearing many items are discussed including:

- reasons to increase or decrease protection in parts of the reserve;
- if the boundaries the Biodiversity Reserve needs adjustments;
- whether or not the reserve status should be removed;
- suggestions for monitoring, management, changes to access routes and buffer zones;
- hunting, fishing, ATV and snowmobile access, pedestrian trail development and use, and other recreational activities.

BAPE commissioners publish their findings within six months of the end of this public consultation, and their findings will aid in setting the reserve's future status and management.

2) Permanent Protected Area Status could then be granted. It must adhere to a long-term conservation management plan written by the environment ministry. The plan takes into account findings and reports from the first four years of provisional status, as well as the report of the BAPE commission. Permanent Protected Area status is published in the Gazette officielle and in local newspapers. The plan is still subject to adjustment and to input from the public.

So, we are still a long way off from obtaining permanent protected area status – but it sure will be satisfying if we are granted provisional projected status next spring!

This will be an exciting year for the Mont O'Brien Association and would like to thank the members of the Association and the many volunteers; Mayor Joe Squitti and municipal council members; and all those who have helped to bring us to this point. We look forward to continuing to organize hikes for our members; maintaining the trail network and establishing new trails; work on the roads and continue to meet with the Mayor, the council members and others who are interested in having input to the future of the Mont O'Brien area – whether we obtain protected status or not.

If we do not obtain protected area status ... well that's a discussion for another day.

See you on the Mont!

September 2005

Spring 2005 Hike



On the May long weekend, a small group of enthusiastic hikers participated in the Mont O'Brien spring hike. It was a cool day – perfect for a hike up our beloved Mont O'Brien to enjoy the view and the serenity of the area.

Thank you to Joe Jamison, John Noel, Allen Noel and Roy Peck, board members of the Mont O'Brien Association, who lead the way and ensured everyone found their way back to Ross' Creek.

Trails:

Trails are very important to the future protection of the Mont O'Brien area. If Mont O'Brien becomes a Biodiversity Reserve, most of our trail network will probably be used for recreation and ecotourism.

If we do not gain protected area status, the trails, once approved and registered with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Fauna of the Quebec Government will be protected from clearcut logging for 30 m on either side. This is assured in the Québec RNI law. In particular, this will preserve many beautiful stands of trees.

As well, some narrow, winding old roads will be preserved from bulldozing, by being incorporated into our registered trail network; thus we are rescuing a cultural heritage of the local community for future generations to appreciate.

If you are interested in joining the 'trail' team, please contact me.

--Paula Armstrong
pda@cam.org

Raffle Tickets for Sale! Portable Picnic Table

\$1.00 a ticket OR
\$5.00 for six

The details:

- Four feet long table top and Three feet high
- Made from a sheet of plywood and can fit into the trunk of your car
- Excellent for camping and fishing excursions or when you have extra guests for dinner



To purchase tickets contact John Noel at 459-2479 or come out for the Thanksgiving Hike and buy a ticket then.

** Thank you goes to John Noel and Roy Peck for donating the materials and constructing the table. **

Thank you!

Donations have a huge impact on how much we can accomplish each year. This includes improving and making new roads and installing culverts, breaking new trails and communicating with you. Thank you to all those who have made a contribution to the Association.

Already this year, \$900 has been contributed, up and above membership dues. Thank you!

If you are interested in making a charitable donation and would like a tax receipt, please make your cheque payable to Municipality of Alleyn-and-Cawood and send it to:

Mont O'Brien Association
c/o Municipality of Alleyn-and-Cawood
10 Jondee Road
Danford Lake, Quebec, J0X 1P0

Otherwise you can send your cheque to:
Mont O'Brien Association
Box 904, Danford Lake, Quebec J0X 1P0



A few of the Board members and friends of Mont O'Brien participated in the Spring hike. Pictured from left to right: Irma Peck, Allen Noel, Roy Peck, Pam Miles, Joe Jamieson, Paula Armstrong, Andre Carriere and John Noel.

BECOME A VOLUNTEER

There are lots of ways you can help out, so give us a call.

We need help making trails, building roads, developing the newsletters, stuffing envelopes and helping out with the group hikes. Are you interested in becoming a board member?

If you are interested in finding out more, call Pam Miles at (613) 724-5959 or at the cottage (819) 467-4468.

MONT O'BRIEN ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Members and friends of the Mont O'Brien Association are encouraged to contact a director for additional information on the Association and our plans for the future:

- Pamela Miles, President (613) 724-5959
- Roy Peck, Vice President (819) 467-5473
- John Noel, Secretary (819) 459-2479
- Joe Jamison, Treasurer (819) 459-3933
- Harold Emery, Road King (819) 467-5251

Members at Large:

- Lindsay Peck, (819) 467--4259
- Allen Noel, (613) 748-9794
- Ellis Adams, (613) 234-0813
- John Lanthier

The Board meets once a month and our meetings are posted on the Web-site:

www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca – otherwise give one of us a call.

Content of this newsletter was prepared by Pam Miles and Paula Dalgaard Armstrong. Thank you to Michele Borchers for preparing the French translation and to Bertha and Chris Kirby for their role in managing the membership database.