



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 2006 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.

SIXTH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING FAMILY HIKE

Saturday, October 7, 2006

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.

No dogs permitted on hike this year due to unnecessary problems last year.

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 jbi@travel-net.com.

Trails Report

An application and map for registration of the Mary Haydon-Lookout Trail on Mont O'Brien, as well as for seven other future trails that we have mapped, was submitted to the Lands Directorate of the Ministry last winter. The Municipal Council of Allevyn-and-Cawood kindly provided us with a letter of support for registration of these trail this spring, and this month we asked the MRC Pontiac for a similar letter, which should help to speed up their registration.

Registration of trails is necessary in order for them to be developed on a permanent basis, and it protects the forest for 30 metres on either side from clear-cutting.

The trails range through a variety of forests, hills, and wetland habitats across the 25 square miles of Mont O'Brien territory. They will provide variety for present members, and help to attract new members, for family hikes, and for viewing scenery, wildflowers, and wildlife such as forest birds and waterfowl.

Some trails such as our Mary Haydon Trail, will be moderately strenuous. One trail will be long, but a couple of trails will be easy and safe walking, with a boardwalk to traverse a wetland that most people would not normally be able to reach.



A rare Northern Water Snake found in Marle Sector

We are applying this fall for funding from the Hydro-Québec Foundation for the Environment, for next year. This would support maintenance of our necessary access roads as well as financing top-quality, attractive trails development, and employment of a trails developer-builder for six months. Mont O'Brien members will be invited to help with trail construction details. The funding would also support community education and outreach.

--Paula Armstrong, Forest Biologist

A Visit to Mont O'Brien by one of Quebec's top botanists is fruitful

Allen Noel, Horticulturist and Mont O'Brien Board Member

John and Allen Noel led a team of 16 botanists from FloraQuébeca on a hike over the Mary Haydon trail on Mount O'Brien August 6th.

We are pleased to announce that we found over 50 colonies of a rare and significant plant species called "Squawroot"; *Conopholis americana* is its scientific name (see photo). The species is parasitic on oak trees, so it doesn't need green leaves. This plant is an important food for Black bears in the spring.

The Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife has been made aware of our findings. There are other significant or rare plants that may be found in our area, such as *Goodyera pubescens*, an orchid usually found under

hemlock trees.



Conopholis americana found on Mont O'Brien

The fact is that enough information is currently available to do a much better job of protecting botanical resources than we are presently doing. Gathering more information may make people feel secure and useful, but clever action more

than information is the most urgent need.



Fringed Orchid found near stream bed

Marle Sector: Profolia builds its main haul road through designated "Refuge Biologique"

Since January of this year, the Mont O'Brien Association, along with the local Pontiac environmental group PEP, has been engaged in public consultation on Public forest cutting plans in our region. Such public consultations are mandated under the 2001 Québec Forest Act. The area north of the Picanoc River has been subjected to heavy cutting of large red oak and other hardwoods during the past few years. A five-square-mile sector called "Marle" is scheduled for harvest by the mill Profolia this fall and winter (2006-2007). It is named after a particularly beautiful small lake tucked among steep, wooded hills. The Marle sector contains the largest tract of mature hardwood and hemlock remaining in this UTR unit.

March 2nd, as part of the consultation process, PEP and Mont O'Brien asked to have about 56 acres (of the 3000 acres Profolia is planning to harvest) set aside to become "old growth" forest. Our request was in line with the MRNF ministry's new "Objectives" policy. Part of this policy specifies that the 2006-2007 annual plans from the mills are to allow for setting aside of 2% of forest in each UTR unit as "refuge biologique", meaning the forest in the "refuge" will be allowed to develop through ecological succession into "old growth", or be protected if it already is "old growth" forest, in perpetuity.

Allowing even a few forest stands to naturally develop into "old growth" tree sizes, species, and small sunlight gaps helps protect natural biodiversity. Many animals need old trees for food (for example, only large, mature beech trees produce beech-nuts), and for shelter (even chickadees use tree-holes for nests). Many animals use hollow logs for shelter, but the logs only become hollow while they are mature standing trees. And of course there are many species of small plants, lichen, mosses, insects and fungi which live on or under large trees, snags, and logs.

On April 14th, Profolia sent a proposal to the ministry and to us, with a map showing about 40 acres on the Marle sector on which they agreed to follow the "Objectives" policy. The policy stipulates "no interventions" on such a "refuge biologique" area, according to its official 2005 Directive. The ministry Regional Director, Martin Gingras, wrote to us April 26th saying that we should accept this proposal. However, we continued to be involved in the consultation and to ask for a conciliator, because we were concerned that this might not be the best location for such a "refuge biologique", since striped flagging running toward it seemed to indicate that the major trucking road of the sector might run close to its eastern edge. It was also smaller than we'd asked for. We had written to the ministry planner in Fort-Coulonge April 21st saying that we did not accept Profolia's proposal, and repeating our request for a conciliator. We wrote to Minister Corbeil and to the Regional Director May 3rd and May 11th by email, and May 13th by registered mail in French and English. We wrote July 5th, and again August 12th repeating our request for appointment of a conciliator. I met with the Regional Director June 28th, expressing our concerns, and mentioning the possibility that the company's main haul road might pass close to the eastern edge of the 40 acres, and close to adjacent Public forest off the Sector, which the ministry was proposing to designate, to start bringing the area of reserve in the UTR unit up to 2%.

In August, we discovered that Profolia has built their main haul road through the middle of the "refuge biologique" that they

and the Regional Director had proposed in April. We are certain that the company knew of the location of the "refuge" before they built this road, and that they were aware of the official Directive



of the ministry concerning "refuge biologiques". In August the road was up to 30 metres wide, with a built-up, rock-hard roadbed, banked curves and wide ditches. This haul road will obviously be used by 18-wheel logging trucks for many years, and its effect will be felt for several hundred years. The regional ministry representative saw this road this summer, and she agrees that it essentially negates the value of the "refuge" for old forest values. Numerous scientific studies have shown that many small animals do not cross wide roads, that wide roads fragment forest, bring invasive plants, and in many ways are a threat to biodiversity, particularly considering climate change and the need for plant and animal populations to migrate.

This situation is a threat to the human social order as well: By misleading Mont O'Brien and the ministry, Profolia has confirmed a belief of the local populace that "The companies will do whatever they want, it doesn't matter what we say or what the law says."

At a large meeting last week of Table de Concertation Gestion Intégrée des Ressources, PEP and the Mont O'Brien Association were supported by a resolution from the Table asking the ministry to negotiate further with us. At this meeting the District Director told us he had just learned that Profolia is pulling out of the Marle Sector, at least for the rest of the 2006-2007 season. This probably has nothing to do with us, and it still leaves the wide new logging roads in a location that fragments the "refuge" that had been suggested by Profolia and the ministry. Trees are marked, a CAAF contract was apparently signed at the end of April, and logging will occur in the near future, but this at least gives us and the ministry more time to work out a better area to reserve within the Marle and the UTR unit in order to accomplish the setting aside of suitable forest as "refuge biologique". The area of this UTR is about 72 square km, so 144 ha (356 acres) of forest could be preserved forever from roads and cutting under the "Objectives" policy. We have GPS locations of stunning cathedral hemlock forest and isolated cove hardwood forest with great value for wildlife, and we are very hopeful!

--Paula Armstrong, Forest biologist, and the Mont O'Brien Board of Directors

The Association is still waiting to hear re Protected Area status

This is a summary of the process of applying to the Québec environment ministry for protected "Biodiversity reserve" status, written by Pam Miles for our Fall 2005 Newsletter.

Québec's "Natural Heritage Conservation Act" of 2002 covers the process of setting protected areas. Its purpose is to reach the 8% target, to improve protection of native biodiversity. The process is administered by the MDDEP (ministry of environment) but other ministries have to be consulted.

We applied in July of 2005 to have the 25 square miles of Crown land south of Highway 301 achieve status as a "Biodiversity Reserve". Such status will allow light recreation to continue, as well as hunting and fishing that does not threaten survival of any species, but not commercial logging, mining, nor commercial development and construction. The Mont O'Brien Association would participate in management of the "biodiversity reserve", but the "reserve" would not be a "park", nor belong to us. It would be managed under the rules in the Natural Heritage Conservation Act. We would, however, be in a better position to apply for funding for trails development, nature education, etc.

"Biodiversity reserve" status for the Mont O'Brien area would greatly benefit the municipality of Alayn-and-Cawood. Such status provides secure protection of natural beauty, forests and wildlife. It also enhances outdoor recreation and collaboration over use of the land. It will have a profound, long-term positive effect on attractiveness for tourism, promote conscientious development in the region, increased opportunities and better quality of life for residents.

To see a copy of our submission to the MDDEP, go to Mont O'Brien's web-page, which is within the website www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca, in the left-hand column. Then click on Mont O'Brien.

During last fall and winter, the MDDEP considered proposals for protected areas in the Outaouais region and its "Southern Laurentians" natural "province", and considered how to achieve representation of ecological communities, landforms and geology across the region. The environment ministry is taking a long time to settle on specific areas to protect, partly because it is negotiating with other ministries such as the ministry of natural resources and wildlife. The MRNF has its own plan to set aside 2% of forest stands that are good candidates for protecting "old growth", and it is possible that about half of those stands may be accepted by the MDDEP as protected areas.

A detailed description of the Protected Area process was in our Fall, 2005 Newsletter which can be retrieved from the web-site: www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca/mo.html or by contacting a board member.



Old Hemlock on the Marle Sector

Board of Directors

At our AGM in June, Pam Miles stepped down as President. Allen Noel joined the Board and agreed to serve as a Co-Vice President. Paula Armstrong joined the Board and will continue to serve as Scientific Advisor. Another AGM will be held in March, 2007. We invite more members to join the Board.

- Allen Noel, Co-Vice President
(613) 748-9794; alnoel@sympatico.ca
- Roy Peck, Co-Vice President
(819) 467-5473
- John Noel, Secretary (819) 459-2479
- Joe Jamison, Treasurer (819) 459-3933
- Harold Emery, Road King (819) 467-5251
- Paula Armstrong, Forest Biologist pda@cam.org

Members at Large:

- Lindsay Peck (819) 467-4259
- Ellis Adams (613) 234-0813

The Board meets once a month and our meetings are posted on the Web-site: www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca
Or give one of us a call for more information.

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www.danfordlakevillage.qc.ca/mo.html

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Thank you to Bertha and Chris Kirby for their role in managing the membership database.