



NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

- page 1 **Our Mandate**
Contact a Board Member
- page 1-2 **Biodiversity Reserve status:**
the culmination of seven years of effort
- page 2 **Information Meeting**
AGM delayed
Spring Hikes
- page 3 **MegaDump News**
Membership
- page 3-4 **Forests and Development**
- page 4 **Administrative Recourse for Board**

Mandate of the Mont O'Brien Association:

- 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.

To contact Board members:

Jennifer Heeney (819) 467-3087
mary.francis-007@hotmail.com

Paula Armstrong (514) 254-7884
pda@cam.org

Charlene Scharf (819) 467-3644

Lindsay Peck (819) 467-4259

Renato Livinal (819) 827-5803

Ralph Lafleur (819) 467-3644

Interim Biodiversity Reserve Status for Mont O'Brien and Territory



On the summit of Mont O'Brien, summer 2002

Mont O'Brien has been designated an 11-square-mile Interim Biodiversity Reserve with the Québec Environment ministry. Biodiversity Reserve status is in accord with our mandate. This designation is part of the government's effort to protect 8% of Québec territory from development, commercial wood harvesting, Hydro dams and other construction, in order to conserve biological diversity, which is particularly urgent under the stress of rapid climate change. The Mont O'Brien Biodiversity Reserve will be subject to a BAPE hearing in 2012, at which time it should become protected permanently.

Biodiversity Reserve status is the culmination of seven years of effort by the Association. We have worked to attain this type of protection since we incorporated in December of 2000. Michele Sura, our first president, tried to limit forest clear-cutting, and she succeeded in saving most of the red maple trees at the northwest base of Mont O'Brien. The Association signed a "Perpetual Agreement" for access with Renato Livinal, as a landowner, to build a road to the public land of Mont O'Brien in exchange for access. In 2002, we obtained a grant from Natural Resources Canada to use GIS to explore and map our territory (and share information with Allevyn-and Cawood municipality). Crews of members, with some use of municipal machinery, worked on the road for more than two years, and succeeded in the Fall of 2003.

In May of 2003, Michele attended a conference with forest industry representatives to tell them we wanted to protect the territory from further clear-cutting in their next "General Plan". In October of 2003, twenty members met with CPAWS (Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society) to discuss Québec's new Protected Areas Strategy, including "la Loi sur la Conservation du Patrimoine naturel" (2002). They decided that we would apply for Biodiversity Reserve status. From 2003-2007, we participated in eight Ministry of natural resources consultations on wood harvesting on the territory in an effort to reduce forest cutting and new road-building.

In 2005, under president Pam Miles' leadership, we attended meetings at the Québec Environment ministry. The Board submitted a map showing 62 km² of territory, accompanied by a detailed letter describing our proposed Mont O'Brien Biodiversity Reserve. For 2½ years, we heard nothing from the Environment ministry. But in January we were informed by the Pontiac MRC that the government was considering three separate small blocks of protected area here.

February 11, 2008, the Board and our Forest Advisory Committee submitted a resolution and a map illustrating a 29 km² (11-square-mile) territory that is better than what the government had proposed--for nature protection, for trails, as well as for ecotourism development to benefit the local economy. The territory includes Lac O'Brien, Copeland, Mud, Green, Tuffet and Paddy's, the Old-growth Refuge, tiny shaded old roads for trails, and stretches of the Kaz River. The north border is at Ross's Creek. The territory is surrounded by public forest land, to provide a buffer zone.

The Pontiac MRC considered the advantages of the 29 km² territory that we had mapped. It then passed a resolution supporting this plan in its own name, rather than our name, because of our Board problems, which still were not settled (see p. 4). At public consultations March 31 and April 2, the plan received broad support.

With the support of the MRC, the region, and the ministry, and with a good management plan, we will improve the Mary Haydon trail and develop several more pedestrian trails. The management plan and borders of the Reserve will be subjected to a BAPE hearing in 2012, at which time it should become protected permanently.

ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO AN INFORMATION MEETING SATURDAY, MAY 10TH AT 1:30 P.M. AT THE DANFORD MUNICIPAL LIBRARY, RE:

(1) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BIODIVERSITY RESERVE STATUS, OUR ROLE IN MAKING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS, A DELEGATE FROM CPAWS WILL SPEAK AND LEAD DISCUSSION; AND...

(2) HOW A BOARD FUNCTIONS; INCORPORATION, REGISTRATION WITH THE QUÉBEC REQ, DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING. GILLES PARENT OF THE PCDC WILL SPEAK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be delayed until June to allow time for the administrative recourse with the Québec Register of Companies (REQ) to be settled. New board members cannot be registered until we have the REQ's ruling. Our charter from the Québec government permits seven directors. Four or five seats will need to be filled this year. Their term is two years.

Please give careful thought to nominating directors who will make good use of the opportunity we now have to achieve our goals, fulfill our mandate, and help the community with Biodiversity Reserve planning. Directors also work with committees of regular members, and bring their decisions to the board. Good committee members are also essential. More than ever, achieving our long-sought goal of a Biodiversity Reserve requires a board that will work together democratically and effectively.

Spring Hike Saturday, May 10, 2008



Wild Purple Clematis: Mont O'Brien, May 2007

The Spring Hike will be held from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. If the day is cold we will climb Mont O'Brien on the Mary Haydon trail; if it's warm, we'll explore the territory that will be saved from logging by the Biodiversity Reserve designation. One advantage of a hike or walk early in the spring is that blackflies will not be out.

Hikers must call or email Jennifer, Paula, or Allen Noël ((613) 748-9794) during May 6-9 before the hike to hear where to meet and plans for the route. Please bring a lunch and dress appropriately.

Botanical Excursion

A separate Botanical Excursion with FloraQuébeca, similar to the excursion with John and Allen Noël in 2006 that discovered "Squaw-root" (a rare and threatened plant species), is tentatively planned for later this year on our territory. The schedule of their excursions may be consulted at

www.floraquebeca.gc.ca.

MegaDump News

An engineered landfill close to Mont O'Brien and the Picanoc River is looking less likely, because three MRCs and Gatineau have signed a contract to ship their waste to Lachute until 2013, and Gatineau is making great efforts to recycle and compost 65% of its waste by 2011. Four MRCs have formed a committee to study the most appropriate technology and location for a waste solution that is better than landfilling.

The Mont O'Brien Association submitted a major brief to the BAPE Commission in June of 2007, and spoke at a Commission hearing in Otter Lake, stating its opposition to the engineered landfill, as did the majority of residents in the region (see www.bape.gouv.qc.ca). The Commissioners concluded that the proposed engineered landfill project would not be the best solution to the waste management problems of the Outaouais Region.



"Wood Frog Pond" by old road

BECOME A MEMBER!

Help build a legacy in the Danford Lake area and have access to beautiful wilderness.

Contact Ralph Lafleur, Jennifer Heeney, or Lindsay Peck for a Membership form and a Responsibility form. They may also be emailed to you (contact pda@cam.org or mary.francis-007@hotmail.com).

Then your forms should be mailed to **10 ch. Jondée, Danford Lake, Qc J0X 1P0** with the annual membership fee of \$20.00 for a family with children aged 17 years or younger. A separate membership is required for those 18 years or older. A key and a membership card will be mailed to you.

Forms, keys, and cards will also be available at the Information Meeting May 10.

Forests and Development



This map shows the southwest half of the Biodiversity Reserve, inside the green outline. The green half-circle is the Old-growth Refuge that the MRN designated in 2007. Lac O'Brien is in the upper right corner, dark blue. (*Send an email request to see the newsletter and map in colour.*)

The pink areas are about one thousand acres of mature hardwood forest--oak, maple, and beech, with some cedar and hemlock, the last mature forest remaining on the Mont O'Brien territory that is not on steep slopes. The mills want to log this.

In the most recent General Plan of the Natural Resources ministry, for 2008-2013 (consultation Aug-Sept. 2007), all 1000 acres of this mature forest was scheduled to be roaded and harvested. The forest was in our 2005 Biodiversity Reserve proposal (see our 2005 newsletters). Under the new MRN OPMV law, we had the right to participate in development of the 2008-2013 General forest management plan. So in April 2007 we showed the consultation mandataire our plans and map for future hiking trails using these tiny old forest roads; we expressed our wish to see this forest and tiny roads preserved.

In early 2008, we learned that the Québec Environment ministry proposed three separate blocks (total 24.6 km²) of Reserve at Mont O'Brien. This resulted from our 2005 proposal for one 62 km² Biodiversity Reserve. Interim Biodiversity Reserve protection imposes a moratorium on road construction, logging, mining, dam-construction, etc.

February 11, 2008, the Mont O'Brien board and the Forest Advisory committee submitted a resolution letter with a map of one block of 29 km² (11 square miles) to the MRC and the Environment ministry. Our proposal was a great improvement over the ministry's, because it included the Old-growth Refuge, the mature forest bordering it and lying between it and Lac O'Brien, the lakes, the sheltering ridge to the west, and stretches of the Kaz River. As well, the Reserve is almost completely surrounded by public land, which will act as a protective forest buffer, something always recommended by protected area managers.

The MRC Land Use committee agreed that this was a better plan than the ministry's, for ecological reasons, for logistical reasons, and to aid in development of nature tourism in the region. They passed a resolution supporting the delimitation we recommended. The mills still might object by saying that their logging will make openings that are good for deer. However, our maps show that there are already forty recent clearcut openings fragmenting the Mont O'Brien territory. This last remaining mature forest on gentle slopes, in the very midst of the Biodiversity Reserve, must not be roaded with 30-m-

wide clearances, and must not be logged---it would literally gut the Reserve.

The MRC supported the proposal, though it could not support it as coming directly from our board, because of the present interference problem with our registration with the Québec REQ (Registre des entreprises). However, the MRC was able to submit the proposal as coming from themselves (with the support of their foresters and an ecologist) to the consultations held with the Regional Conference in March and April, and sent on to the Québec Environment ministry.

By the time this newsletter arrives at our members' mailboxes, our Environment Minister, Line Beauchamp, may have announced Protected Areas in l'Outaouais, including a Mont O'Brien Biodiversity Reserve.

During the next four years, we expect to collaborate with the Environment Ministry in preparing a management plan for the Biodiversity Reserve. We will be able to gradually develop



improved trails (see photos in the November issue), both for our members and for groups, such as FloraQuébeca (who discovered the rare Squaw-root), the birders of Club des Ornithologues, the mushroom-hunters of les Mycologues amateurs de l'Outaouais, and guided school groups. Of course, we will continue our Family Thanksgiving Hike up Mont O'Brien. Members will continue to receive the newsletter. We should have no problem in obtaining grants for Mary Haydon trail improvement and trail development. We may be able to hire a combination director general-trail builder, and temporary local workers on trails and

the road during these four years.

Hunting & fishing are allowed on Biodiversity Reserves, so we will need to make arrangements with hunters so that we will not disturb one another. They might need to become members and participate in care of the Reserve. Lindsay Peck suggests that as a priority, a special crew should take away rubbish from old hunting camps.

At the end of four years, a public BAPE hearing is held regarding adjustments to Reserve boundaries & management, and giving it permanent legal status. The Québec Law on Conservation of Natural Heritage (2002) describes the process.

The Interim Biodiversity Reserve designation makes it imperative that regular members step up to the plate, to serve our mandate and help with planning, on the board or on a committee, which could be more flexible and in line with their interests. Besides planning trails and financing them, a committee that maintains the trails is essential, as well as a committee that organizes family excursions. We would also like to have a group of members who learn about the plants and animals on the Reserve, and monitor them over the years; their work will go far in achieving permanent status, by managing the Reserve in the interests of biodiversity, its primary raison d'être and half of our mandate. Our GIS map

will be updated, showing developed trails, and plant/animal habitats.

We need an active committee of regular members to help with these efforts, which will aid in achieving permanent protected status. **You are invited to serve on the Forest, Trails, and Development Committees:** Call Lindsay Peck, Jennifer Heeney, or email pda@cam.org and we will get back to you.



This elegant little forest caterpillar carries bristles and red spots warning, "Do not touch!"

He symbolizes our biological diversity.

On the other hand, he might symbolize prickly board problems!

Resolving Board Problems--

Administrative Recourse

In October, 2007 we obtained a copy of our non-profit incorporation Charter (registration with the Québec REQ). It specifies that seven members may sit on our board of directors.

At the AGM May 20, 2007, we had two board members starting the second year of their two-year term (Lindsay Peck and Paula Armstrong), as well as a representative from the Allevyn-&Cawood municipal council (Charlene Scharf). But instead of electing four new directors, we mistakenly elected nine. According to advice from a professional consultant on non-profit administration, and from a Québec lawyer, the first four persons elected should be considered to be 2007 directors. Jennifer Heeney, who was elected vice-president May 27, of necessity called a board training session for Oct. 9, and a transitional board meeting for Oct. 28. We learned Oct. 27 that the first four elected had been Roy Peck, Harold Emery, Renato Livinal, and Ralph Lafleur. Jennifer was elected Oct. 28 by a quorum to replace Harold, who had resigned in August.

However, some members have disputed our actions in various ways. We were advised by the REQ to file an "Administrative Recourse" with them to regularize the registration of the Association. Otherwise the board cannot conduct the business of the Association. We did that, and the Recourse is in progress now. The REQ will rule on how the Association may be registered.

Until the ruling has been made, our AGM cannot be held and new board members cannot be registered. We expect to have the ruling by June 1st.

Thank-you to Paula Armstrong, editor, Michèle Borchers, translator, and other board members & their families for mailing! Colour electronic versions of all of our newsletters are available.