



For all living things,
and for the Earth,
Tropical Conservancy
works to conserve
and protect
species, habitats,
and the environment.

GOALS:

To advocate and to
participate in
research, education,
and conservation to:
(1) augment knowledge
of life on Earth;
(2) conserve and
preserve biodiversity
and the environment;
(3) comprehensively
and sustainably
use and develop
bioresources.

Media Release

Sunday, June 12th, 2011

**OTTAWA GREENBELT SAND DUNE CONSERVATION:
SPONSORED BY \$100,000 ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION GRANT**

Ottawa, Ontario - Open sandy areas, commonly known as sand dunes, appear to have few living organisms present, but if you scratch beneath the surface, a rich diversity of species can be discovered therein. Many insects, including moth larvae and numerous beetles, as well as many unique and locally rare plants adapted to extremes of heat and drought, rely on dune ecosystems for their survival. Over the past 60-70 years in eastern Ontario the sand dune systems have declined to only 1% of their former natural coverage, endangering several provincially rare species and as many as 65 regionally rare species of plants and animals. Biodiversity loss is one of the greatest environmental concerns of the century and the decline of dune ecosystems has contributed to that loss.

A disruption in the natural fire regime, invasion by non-native species and urban development have all contributed to the decline of open sandy areas. The planting of trees, often Scots Pine, due to a lack of understanding of the biodiversity value of this endangered ecosystem and its peripheral areas, is a major contributing factor to the disturbance of this delicate ecosystem.

Tropical Conservancy (TC) has received a 2-year grant of \$100,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to study, conserve and restore a sand dune ecosystem located on Slack Road in Ottawa. The remnant biodiversity will be used as a core nucleus of species to restore the rich biodiversity of this area.

The project will include:

- (1) Educating youth on the importance of this ecosystem through workshops and local high school field excursions to the Slack Road sand dune site, and by encouraging youth volunteers to be part of the project team;
- (2) Working with the community adjacent to the Slack Road sand dune site to raise awareness of the importance of the dunes and to solicit community participation in the ecosystem restoration;
- (3) Establishing a community non-profit organization, tentatively entitled "Friends of the Sand Dunes", to sustain the conservation effort into the future.

OTF, Members of the Provincial Parliament and the National Capital Commission (NCC) are in support of this conservation initiative and the community awareness component to educate students and the general public of the value of this important area.

"As a parent, I am excited that this grant will go towards teaching our children the importance of studying and conserving our ecosystems. We couldn't have found a better organization than the Tropical Conservancy Corporation to be the steward of our beautiful sand dune ecosystem here in Merivale Gardens." -- Lisa MacLeod, MPP Nepean-Carleton.

A leading grant maker in Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation strengthens the capacity of the voluntary sector through investments in community-based initiatives. An agency of the Government of Ontario, OTF builds healthy and vibrant communities. www.trilliumfoundation.org

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