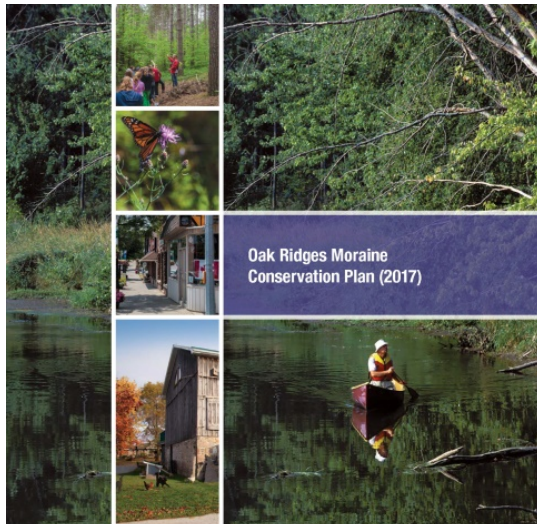


POSTSCRIPT - SECURING THE FUTURE

As we move on from our 25th Anniversary we can proudly claim that our organization is on a stable footing: our finances sound, membership solid, hikes numerous and well subscribed and our trail well maintained. There is a healthy mix of long serving and new Directors and key Committee Members. But new developments present new opportunities for new volunteers to contribute to the trail and association.

Developing the Association Services and Membership

Finance is a concern for the long term. Memberships, donations and limited grants do not cover the cost of an office, a part-time Office Manager, and printing and mailing *Trail Talk*. Consideration will have to be given to reducing expenditures and doing business differently from our current practice.



IBM has entered into a partnership to assist ORTA with Strategic Planning and the creation of a new Long-range Plan. They are supporting us through “branding” – a business process that focusses on purpose, stakeholders and future directions. We are optimistic that this shared work will result in the recruiting of additional members and potentially additional means of increasing revenue.

A contract with *KennKart* Digital Mapping Services for the next edition of *The Guidebook* will incorporate current technology and allow for electronic downloads to smart phones and GPS receivers. As well we will look at *Trail Talk*. How can we bring them both into the electronic age, control costs and yet keep both relevant to members?

Similarly our brochure should be revamped allowing new members to register electronically.

ORTA conducts Hike Ontario Certification courses and is thereby successfully recruiting new Hike Leaders. ORTA continues to promote “hiking for health;” our group hiking program provides more opportunities than ever for all categories of hikers.

Maintaining, Developing and Securing the Trail

There are from time to time not enough volunteers to maintain the trail, particularly in the east where chapters do not exist. The majority of our volunteers live near the central portions of the trail and prefer to concentrate their efforts close to home. Some Side Trails have been removed from our roster as they have been hardly used and thus fall into disrepair for lack of use.

Competition with the growing number of “Meet-ups” is a growing concern. Their participants pay no fees and do not contribute to trail maintenance; yet they still enjoy the benefits of hiking the trails.

There is scope for additional signage and especially kiosks at key access points.

A new Memorandum of Understanding has been negotiated with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust. This will guide our shared work in protecting the Moraine and securing the use of land for passive recreational purposes in the years to come.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan was revised effective July 2017 and thus continues to protect the lands traversed by the trail.

Only some 30% of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is the subject of formal agreements with the Landowners. Most of these agreements have to be renewed on a specified basis. Maintaining a good working relationship with each landowner is the first step to ensure renewal is, generally, simply a formality.

Where the trail is across private land there is always the possibility that a new owner may not wish this to continue. Loss of even a small length is problematic since rerouting usually changes the connections to the sections east and west. Trail on municipal lands is generally secure, but in urban areas may be affected by, for example, "improvements" to roads and adjacent new residential developments. There remain many sections where we need to get "off-road."

Regional Forests, Conservation Authorities and the Nature Conservancy of Canada have become great partners of ORTA. Our voice in support of their workshops and public events helps ensure their continuing development of recreational trails.

ORTA will continue to value intersections with other trail systems across the moraine. Crossing the ORMT in Richmond Hill a Lake to Lake cycling trail and hiking route is being developed bridging from Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario in downtown Toronto. Connections south from Uxbridge will link the Oak Ridges Moraine with the trail system in Rouge National Urban Park.

Future Challenges

Concerns for our future do exist and will prove to be challenges that will confront us in the years to come.

Are they surmountable? Yes, but concentrated efforts must be made to address them to ensure the continued health of the Oak Ridges Trail Association.

Kevin Lowe, President, 2016 -

