

The Glengarry News

Ducks Unlimited Canada and partners preserve important coastal wetland habitat in South Glengarry

June 26 2019 BY TARA MACDONALD News Staff

In partnership with Raisin Region Conservation Authority (RRCA), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) celebrated the completion of a significant restoration project at Charlottenburgh Marsh on Saturday.

Nestled within Charlottenburgh Marsh is Cooper Marsh Conservation Area; a popular destination for local school groups, outdoor enthusiasts and naturalists. Cooper Marsh offers a picnic area, Visitors Centre with educational facilities, and an extensive trail system featuring trails, wetland boardwalks and bird-watching stations.

A large coastal wetland, Charlottenburgh Marsh is one of the most significant wetlands in Ontario. However, in recent years, structures that help manage water levels in the marsh have eroded.

Balancing Recreation and Conservation

Wetlands play an important role in helping to protect local water sources, storing stormwater runoff and reducing damage to public and private property by reducing downstream erosion while enhancing the stability of habitat for aquatic life. Natural areas – such as Charlottenburgh Marsh – also play a key role in the health and well-being of our communities as well as to the economy.

“The project helped to protect our shorelines and contain flooding,” explained MPP Jim McDonell. “It's also important to protect the habitat and the wildlife that lives there as it allows our local residents and tourists to get close to nature.”

“We've visited Cooper Marsh with our children and grandchildren many times over the years,” continued Mr. McDonell, “it's important for them to see nature in all it's aspects from birds to fish to beavers and muskrats.”

South Glengarry Mayor and RRCA Chair of the Board Frank Prevost agreed. “The Township of South Glengarry is very fortunate to have Cooper Marsh Conservation Area within its jurisdiction for our local population to enjoy,” said Mayor Prevost. “This wetland gem is also a great tourist attraction and we welcome all visitors to our municipality.”

Working tirelessly to bolster conservation efforts

The RRCA and the Cooper Marsh Conservators have played a large roles in educating and leading the way for local conservation initiatives. “Today, we celebrated the enhancements of the western section of the Marsh,” said RRCA General Manager Richard Pilon.

The section, a short distance from Cooper Marsh, features a ringed dyke system which required general maintenance and repairs due to damages caused by muskrats and beavers. Phragmites, a towering invasive plant, had also infiltrated the wetland and begun choking out native plants which are essential for supporting wildlife.

Following the ceremony, DUC Conservations Specialist Chris Delage along with RRCA Watershed Biologist Brendan Jacobs led event participates to the project site to demonstrate the

work that had been done which included spraying of phragmites; reshaping the dyke system and re-coring the dyke with clay material to inhibit water infiltration and further reduce damage from burrowing animals; as well as an upgrade to the pump system that controls water levels within the marsh.

“The original project was done in the late-80s and hadn’t had any significant work done on it since that time” said Mr. Delage. “This project was significant in that it helped maintain the existing features before water levels became unmanageable while restoring the marsh for future generations.”

“The Raisin Region Conservation Authority has been a diligent caretaker of Charlottenburgh Marsh for almost 30 years,” says Richard Pilon, general manager for Raisin Region Conservation Authority. “We’re pleased the restoration will ensure that visitors continue to enjoy a healthy coastal wetland ecosystem with abundant wildlife into the future.”

This work would not have been possible without the support of Ducks Unlimited Canada and partner organizations such as the Crabtree Foundation, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Axalta Coating Systems Ltd. The project also benefitted from grants through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act for habitat projects in Canada that restore and enhance vital waterfowl habitats.

Axalta: Being a good business, means being a good neighbour

According to DUC, Axalta Coating System Ltd. - a leading global supplier of liquid and powder coatings - played an instrumental role in helping to fund the Charlottenburgh Marsh restoration project.

“Sustainability is central to Axalta’s business, and being a good neighbour and an engaged business partner that supports and protects habitats, is part of our overriding commitment to our hometowns around the world and to our terrific partners at Ducks Unlimited,” said Rob Ferris, Axalta Vice President of Corporate Affairs.

“One of the things that’s important to Axalta is that we complete and start projects with Ducks Unlimited Canada in areas that are close to where our employees live and work,” added Regina Tracy, Head of North America Communications and Global Corporate Social Responsibility. “We want our employees to have the opportunity to benefit from the work being done.”

A number of Axalta employees from the Cornwall branch, as well as some of their children, were present for the ceremony. “Many of our employees have visited Cooper Marsh and their children have benefitted from the educational programming,” said Ms. Tracy. “Our Corporate Social Responsibility is not just about writing a check and walking away, we want to participate in the activities and make sure that our employees, stakeholders and shareholders can benefit from what’s happening on the ground and some of the work that’s been done.”

While Mayor Prevost could not be present for the celebration due to a Strategic Planning session being held in Morrisburg over the weekend, he expressed his sincere gratitude on behalf of the township for the investment made in preserving the marsh. “A sincere thank you goes out to Ducks Unlimited Canada, Axalta, and the Crabtree Foundation for recognizing the importance of the Marsh and supporting enhancement projects to ensure the Marsh prospers and is an accessible natural space for all to enjoy,” said Mr. Prevost.

CAPTIONS:

The sun was shining as Ducks Unlimited Canada celebrated the completion of the Charlottenburgh Marsh Restoration Project on Saturday at Cooper Marsh Visitor's Centre. Left to Right: Richard Pilon - General Manager, RRCA; Lynette Mader - Manager of Provincial Operations, DUC; Jim McDonnell - MPP for Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry; Cynthia Edwards – Senior Development Manager, DUC; Ian McIntosh - President, Cooper Marsh Conservators; Sarah Barnett - Sustainability Manager, Axalta; Regina Tracy - Head of North America Communications and Global CSR, Axalta. - TARA MACDONALD

“Outdoor education is a major focus for the Cooper Marsh Conservation Area,” says Robin Poole, on behalf of the Cooper Marsh Conservators. “It’s a pleasure to share the wonders of wetlands and wildlife in the marshes with a new generation, including exceptional sights like nesting Sandhill cranes and the black terns which returned in the summer as a result of changes in the marsh this year.” - TARA MACDONALD