



THE ISSUES

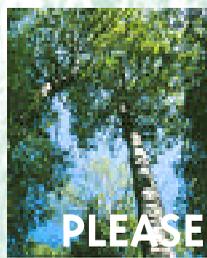
A proposed development plan would see over 4,000 housing units built on the Leitrims Wetlands complex. The plans also call for extensive drainage of the area.

- Water is the lifeblood of wetlands. Lowering the water table will have devastating and permanent detrimental consequences for the delicate biodiversity of the Leitrims Wetlands. While approximately 25% of the wetlands are directly threatened by housing developments (about 200 acres will be bulldozed), the remaining areas, including the protected core, will be vulnerable to massive drainage along the boundaries.
- The nearby Gloucester Landfill Site and the Federal Special Waste Compound (less than 1000 metres away) are known to be leaking toxic substances, towards the proposed housing development. 1,4-dioxane, a probable carcinogen, has been detected in concentrations more than 120 times greater than “acceptable” levels in deep aquifer monitoring wells on the site of the housing development. (From a recent Transport Canada report).
- Findlay Creek is one of the last cold-water fish spawning habitats in Ottawa. The stormwater management proposal outlines plans to dredge and straighten the creek bed and remove shoreline trees and shrubs. This will irreversibly damage the creek and its tributaries, which are crucial to the integrity of the larger wetland, and destroy important fish habitat.
- A thick layer of peat underlies much of the Leitrims Wetlands. Peatlands are designated as carbon sinks for their well-known ability to store greenhouse gases. As Leitrims Wetlands are drained the peat will dry out and release massive amounts of these gases into the atmosphere. Over time, most if not all of the peat will disappear due to peat wastage. This will lower soil levels and expose the roots of old-growth trees making them vulnerable to being blown over.
- The decision-making processes that exist to deal with issues of ecosystem protection are clearly inadequate and riddled with inconsistencies. Over the last 15 years, in the fight to preserve the Leitrims Wetlands, one government agency after another has failed in their responsibility to protect this irreplaceable, vulnerable ecosystem. These agencies include the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, City of Gloucester, Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, City of Ottawa, Ontario Municipal Board, National Capital Commission, Transport Canada, and now, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

“.... the proposed development is not consistent with sound environmental stewardship either with respect to the future of a Class 1 wetland or possible risks to human health.”

Environmental Advisory Committee to the City of Ottawa

Photo: Great Blue Heron nesting area in Leitrims Wetlands ancient pines.



PLEASE HELP

“This screening does not answer fully two key questions: Is the stormwater system likely to fail and drain the Leitrims wetlands? and, Should future local residents worry about their health because of the landfill nearby? Faced with this wholesale uncertainty and public concern, the federal Fisheries Minister has a legal duty to refer these questions to an independent public review by experts to give us credible and reliable answers before irreversible damage is done.”

Mike Lascelles, former Director of Legislation and Education,
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency,
Friends of Leitrims Wetlands

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED NOW

We will only have a full Environmental Assessment if enough people write in to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and demand that he act to initiate a public review.

Your request for a public review must be made before before midnight July 17 to be taken into account by the Department of Fisheries.

Write a letter to (no postage necessary):
The Honourable Robert G. Thibault, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Or e-mail the Minister at Thibault.R@parl.gc.ca

IMPORTANT: Also send a copy of your letter to:

Prescott District Office
Fisheries and Oceans Canada,
Ontario Great Lakes Area
401 King St. West,
P.O. Box 1000,
Prescott, ON K0E 1T0
e-mail: findlay@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Please cc your letter or e-mail to: Friends of Leitrims Wetlands,
c/o 14 Harvard Ave., Ottawa, ON K1S 4Z1
(lascellm@cyberus.ca)

For more information check out the Sierra Club of Canada website:
www.sierraclub.ca/national. Click on Chapter and go to Eastern Canada, then to the local Ottawa group.

Pamphlet sponsored by the Friends of Leitrims Wetlands and the Canadian Biodiversity Institute, Sierra Club of Canada, Environment Committee of Ottawa South, Greenspace Alliance, Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

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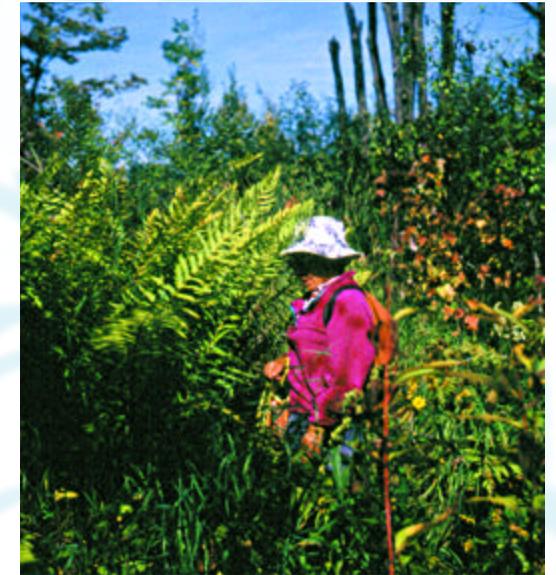
Requiem for a Wetland

Leitrims Wetlands gone FOREVER?



**Your help is needed NOW to
SAVE this unique
Ottawa treasure**

WHAT ARE THE LEITRIMS WETLANDS?



The Leitrims Wetlands are 870 acres of Class 1, Provincially Significant Wetlands located south of the Ottawa airport. Created about 8,500 years ago, Leitrims is a complex ecosystem encompassing cattail marshes, wet meadows, fens, bogs, woodlands, old fields and shrubby thickets. Small stands of old-growth trees are scattered throughout. Here ancient cedars, hemlocks, white pines and larches, some up to 250 years old, flourish.

More than 500 species of plants have been recorded, about 200 of them regionally, provincially or nationally significant species. No other wetland in North America duplicates the flora of the Leitrims Wetlands. At least 90 species of migratory birds make Leitrims their home. Indeed, Leitrims Wetlands are home to a remarkable diversity of species, from mosses to land snails, mammals to damselflies. In all, 1,032 species have been identified to date and this represents only a small fraction of the flora and fauna that live in this incredible ecosystem. Leitrims is one of Canada's finest examples of a complex wetland ecosystem and has been identified as a North American “biodiversity hotspot”. According to the Canadian Wildlife Service, “Leitrims Wetland is clearly an area of outstanding ecological significance.”

**And all of this is found
within the City of Ottawa,
just 20 minutes from
Parliament Hill!**



THE SCREENING REPORT IS INADEQUATE

Because fish habitat is involved in the proposed Leitrim developments, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has been the lead agency to assess the environmental impacts. They chose to initiate a Screening Report, merely a preliminary action as opposed to a full environmental assessment. **The Screening Report (Leitrim External Stormwater System - Findlay Creek) was released on June 18, 2003 and the public can submit comments until midnight on July 17, 2003. Copies of the report can be obtained on-line at <http://www.fish-habitat.com/> or at the Main Branch of the Ottawa Public Library.**

Public response to the Screening Report is required NOW. Without a large public outcry about the deficiencies in the report an Environmental Assessment will not happen.

The Friends of Leitrim Wetlands and other scientific experts have analysed the screening report and identified the following deficiencies:

- the original scope of the report is too narrow; it only addresses the effects of the stormwater remediation plan and fails to address the effects of the actual housing development;
- the report does not address the fact that baseline studies have not been done to allow for proper future assessment of the performance of the proposed stormwater management system and the significance of its impacts;
- the report does not analyse the situation, does not review the environmental risks, fails to clearly designate responsibility and includes no cost estimates for monitoring and mitigation measures;
- the report does not address the fact that baseline studies have not been done to allow for proper future assessment of the performance of the proposed stormwater management system and the significance of its impacts;
- the report fails to address the considerable uncertainty about the effectiveness of the proposed stormwater remediation techniques on the continued integrity of the wetlands;
- there is no consideration of the potential loss of biodiversity;
- the cumulative impacts have not been adequately addressed;
- the expert advice provided to DFO by the Friends of Leitrim Wetlands, and by federal departments has been ignored and marginalized in the report;
- there are no conditions laid down for on-going monitoring and any required remediation activities.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT WETLANDS?

- WETLANDS:**
- filter water, ensuring cleaner, safer drinking water for our communities.
 - act like giant sponges to trap water to reduce floods and ease droughts.
 - help to replenish our groundwater supply, especially during droughts.
 - reduce soil erosion by slowing runoff from storms and spring thaw.
 - especially peatlands, store carbon, reducing its impact on climate change
 - provide nursery areas and protection for fish.
 - provide essential habitat (food, water, cover, and breeding areas) for wildlife.
 - provide recreational, educational and important scientific opportunities.



Photos courtesy of:
Laurie Consaul, Albert Dugal, Steve Maslowski, Dan Sokolowski,