

The ECOLOGICAL GIFTS PROGRAM

JANE GLASSCO

“I believe we should stop making such huge footprints on the land. I think everything we do must make it better for seven generations coming after us. I can't imagine 100 years from now that there are going to be spaces like this.”

— Jane Glassco
© Environment Canada; photo: Ian Parsons



A Conservation Easement on the Oak Ridges Moraine



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Under the caveats of the conservation easement, Ms. Glassco still lives on the donation site.

A sensitive and treasured family property has been protected in perpetuity through a conservation easement donation by landowner Jane Glassco to the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT). It joins a network of land protected by this organization across the 160-kilometre-long moraine. Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program certified the conservation easement, providing a tax incentive that helped facilitate the donation.

Ms. Glassco's 109-hectare property of mature forests and Provincially Significant Wetland is nestled in the rolling hills and river valleys of the Oak Ridges Moraine; one of the last remaining green corridors in southern Ontario.

The *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan* identifies the property as an important Natural Linkage Area. The Natural Linkage Area connects various aquatic and land-based ecosystems, enabling the movement of wildlife as well as filtering and replenishing the headwaters of numerous streams and rivers that feed Lake Ontario to the south and Lake Simcoe to the north.

From her porch, Ms. Glassco can gaze upon Hall Lake, an unusually large and deep kettle lake that was created during the last ice age. The lake supports Brook Trout and the endangered Redside Dace, a small minnow-sized fish.



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The Redside Dace feeds on insects, which it catches by leaping out of the water. The small fish is found only in Ontario and is protected under the *Species at Risk Act*.



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Receding glaciers formed Hall Lake 13,000 years ago during the last ice age.

Ferns and wild strawberries are scattered amid the stands of American beech and sugar maple in the western section of the property. A variety of wildlife including White-tailed Deer, Wild Turkey, the Northern Flicker and Red-shouldered Hawk is attracted to the area.



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Part of the trail system Ms. Glassco maintains.

Ms. Glassco says the land has always been a favourite for family get-togethers, childhood play and hard work. As a child, she helped her parents and siblings plant thousands of red and white pine trees on the eastern section of the property to stop intense soil erosion.

Ms. Glassco's family has been dedicated to conserving the land's unique ecology since her father bought it in 1946. However, Ms. Glassco says she is worried about the integrity of the Moraine's natural features due to increasing development pressures. She wants the Moraine to remain intact for future generations so they can experience the benefits of the haven she enjoyed throughout her youth.

In an effort to conserve her property's natural features, she decided to donate a conservation easement "ecogift" to the ORMLT, a non-profit organization established to protect the natural environment and heritage sites of the Moraine.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement registered on the property title, in which mutually agreed-upon covenants spell out allowed and restricted land uses and activities. The easement holder, in this case ORMLT, has a right and an obligation to inspect the property and enforce the covenants.

Ms. Glassco's conservation easement restricts future building and subdivision development on her property. Being that she would rather the area be protected, she chose this type of donation because it allowed her the option to continue to own the land and to maintain her right to sell or transfer the property to her family. Further, she and the ORMLT agreed to allow her current land use activities to continue. She currently lives on the property, runs a guest house, and maintains a modest trail system.

An "ecogift" can be a donation of land or a partial interest in land, such as a conservation easement. Through the program, the federal Minister of the Environment certifies the fair market value of the property, and the recipient issues a charitable tax receipt for the property donation. The benefits can be applied against 100 percent of the landowner's taxable income, and the taxable capital gain on the disposition of the property is eliminated.

She says she wanted to retain title to the property because her family is very connected to the land. If her family ever chooses to sell the property, the new title holder is legally bound to fulfill the obligations of the conservation easement, ensuring that the land will not be developed in the future.

"It's been such a special place to the whole family for four generations and a tremendous amount of work has gone into it," she says. "I think the idea of golf courses and houses where this property is, and everything being cut down, is appalling. We need a lot more properties than this for our future generations."

To find out more about making an ecological gift, please contact:

The Ecological Gifts Program
Canadian Wildlife Service - Ontario
Environment Canada
4905 Dufferin Street
Toronto, ON M3H 5T4
Tel.: (416) 739-4286,
(416) 739-5828
Website: www.on.ec.gc.ca/ecogifts
E-mail: ecogifts.ontario@ec.gc.ca

