



Farmland Preservation News

A quarterly publication from the Ontario Farmland Trust



Fall/Winter 2011 - A Special Aggregates Issue

View east of the proposed Dufferin County quarry, looking onto Niagara Escarpment Commission Land. Image by Donna Wellis.

Quarry Proposal Threatens Dufferin Potato Lands

By Matt Setzkorn

In March, the Highland Companies of Dufferin County filed an application with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to excavate the largest limestone quarry in Canada's history near Shelburne. The proposed "mega-quarry" would be located in the centre of Ontario's largest potato growing region and threatens over 2,300 acres of our most valuable Class 1 agricultural land. Farmers, citizen groups, local politicians, land and water conservation advocates, such as OFT, and others are banding together to recommend that the province reject the quarry application.

The quarry proposal lands are in Melancthon Township, which has supported potato production for decades, supplying half of all the potatoes used within the Greater Toronto Area each year. This sustained production is a result of a unique combination

of rich Honeywood silt loam soils, a relatively cool micro-climate and a farm community heavily invested in potato production, packing, storage and distribution, and supporting infrastructure. The quarry would significantly disrupt this unique agricultural area by permanently removing over 16 percent of Melancthon's potato lands from production. In addition, the quarry would be located at the headwaters of five rivers and aims to excavate 200 feet below the water table, which not only makes rehabilitation to agriculture virtually impossible, but affects the drinking water of numerous communities living downstream. The Highland Companies' proposal also fails to demonstrate the need for a quarry of this magnitude or provide adequate justification for locating the quarry within the prime agricultural area of Melancthon Township.

For all of these reasons, OFT added

its voice alongside some 5,000 other concerned individuals and organizations in April, writing letters urging the Province and our political leaders to revoke the Highland Companies' application and stop the quarry development. September 1st marked an unprecedented moment in Ontario's history when the Ontario Minister of the Environment announced that a full environmental assessment of the quarry will be required. Typically quarries and other aggregate operations are subject to much less stringent review under the Aggregate Resources Act, even though quarries can significantly alter a landscape and impact the natural environment, particularly when excavating below the water table. The environmental assessment signals recognition and concern by the Province in response to growing public pressure for action.

October 16th was a true test of Ontarians commitment to defending Ontario agriculture, farmland and the abundant water resources beneath. The North Dufferin Agricultural and

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Quarry Proposal Raises Provincial Policy Questions

By Matt Setzkorn

The Dufferin quarry, as proposed, is a development that affects all Ontarians, both urban and rural, undermining our domestic food security by eroding the landbase and farm communities that give Ontario the ability to feed its population with dependable, nutritious and delicious local food. It would also have significant impact on the natural environment and could potentially affect the drinking water of millions of Ontarians.

Ultimately, the Dufferin quarry heightens the need for discussion and debate about what we value as Ontarians, and how well provincial policies reflect those values. Currently our policies prioritize the protection and extraction of mineral aggregate resources over all other land uses, and require very little consideration of the real or potential impacts quarry developments have on agriculture and the environment.

The Dufferin quarry proposal raises a number of important provincial policy questions:

- Why is aggregate extraction a higher provincial priority than protection of our agricultural land resources?
- Why are all quarry developments

exempted from Ontario's Environmental Assessment Act?

- Why is aggregate extraction permitted below the water table in Specialty Crop Areas and prime agricultural areas where the land can never be restored for agriculture?
- Why does the Province have no procedure to identify and establish new Specialty Crop Areas?

OFT raised many of these same questions and concerns as part of the Provincial Policy Statement review in Fall 2010, and we continue to promote improvements to provincial policy that strengthen protections for our best farmlands, including:

1. Developing a process and guidelines at the provincial level for identifying and designating new Specialty Crop Areas that allows the province to safeguard unique agricultural land resources of provincial interest and allows municipalities to apply for provincial Specialty Crop Area designations that enhance the protection of farmlands important to their communities and local economies;
2. Prohibiting extraction of mineral aggregate resources

in Specialty Crop Areas, which are intended to give absolute priority to agricultural land uses;

3. Prohibiting below-water-table aggregate extraction in prime agricultural areas (Canada Land Inventory soil Classes 1-3) where restoration of agricultural capability is not possible;
4. Mandating that environmental assessments be conducted on any new or expanding aggregate operations;
5. Requiring that new quarry proposals demonstrate the need for additional aggregate resource extraction in meeting the demands of the Ontario aggregate market;
6. Prioritizing the recovery and recycling of aggregate resources over approval of new extraction sites.

While OFT recognizes the need for aggregate extraction in Ontario, we oppose quarry developments within Specialty Crop Areas and prime agricultural areas where the highest and best use of the land is farming and food production.

Join the discussion: How do you think we should value agriculture and aggregates in Ontario? Send your comments to info@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca



Above: Tractor Tour, August 28, 2011. Image courtesy of NDACT (www.ndact.com)

Right: Potato field, people on route to Foodstock, Oct 16, 2011. Image by Donna Wells.

The images of Dufferin County by Donna Wells were taken from her book *Landscapes and the Proposed Mega-Quarry*. Some proceeds of the sale of the book will go towards NDACT. More information can be found at: www.donnawellsphotography.ca.



Tour Brings City to the Country

By Bonnie Littley

The bus approached along the tree-lined farm lane and pulled up to the barn. A group of twenty people piled out and happily greeted me, anxious to stretch their legs after a longer-than-normal drive through Toronto traffic. It was a beautiful fall day in September and Belain Farm was the first stop on a "Planning for the Future of Food" tour organized by Sustain Ontario and the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee. This was just one of twelve day-long "City to Country" bus tours happening at the same time across the Toronto area featuring "good food ideas," from farms to schools to crop research centres and food processing plants.

It was interesting to see the diversity of professions stepping off the bus, including planners, public health officials and community garden coordinators. Belain Farm is the first farm OFT permanently protected through its farmland conservation easement program in 2009, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Deirdre Wright. Bringing people out to the farm provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the work of the Farmland Trust and the value of offering voluntary land conservation options, such as easements, to farmers and other landowners.

The farm is surrounded on three sides by aggregate

operations – a major conflicting land use with agriculture in Caledon. The property also contains a great mix of agricultural, cultural and natural features, including farm fields, pasture, a historic barn and farm house, a mature hardwood maple forest and provincially significant wetlands. Hiking around the farm allowed participants to see firsthand the impact of easements on shaping land use patterns and preserving important elements of the countryside landscape.

It was refreshing to see the high level of interest from the group in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of easements and the larger land use planning system in Ontario as means to preserve farmland. There was genuine concern about the need to maintain the ability to feed ourselves in Ontario, recognizing that protection of the farming landbase is a critical piece of the puzzle. There was also lively conversation about planning for competing land uses, like agriculture and aggregates, the farm income crisis and creating planning policies that are supportive of diverse agricultural operations.

Left thirsting for more, the tour moved down the road to Spirit Tree Cidery where everyone cooled off with a drink and listened to other perspectives on farmland preservation from another farmer and some Peel Region planners. Overall, it was a fantastic day and a great leap into my work with OFT as a newly elected Board member.



Above and below: Belain Farm, Images by Dean Palmer

Save the Date!

OFT's 2012 Farmland Preservation Forum will be held in Guelph on **February 17th**. Mark your calendar now – you won't want to miss it! The theme is *Balancing Agriculture and Resource Demands in Rural Ontario*, which is sure to spark some great discussion. Program details will be announced soon!



New Ministry Fact Sheet Profiles Farmland Conservation Easements

A new fact sheet published by The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) highlights the use of *Conservation Easements for Agricultural Land Use*. Conservation easements provide a way for landowners to permanently protect agricultural and natural features on farm properties, while benefiting from specific tax credits.

This factsheet, produced by OMAFRA's Business Unit, addresses the legal and tax issues associated with setting up a conservation easement for the purpose of protecting agricultural land. The fact sheet, which lists OFT as a resource contact, is available at: www.omafra.gov.on.ca. Or give us a call and we can mail you a copy.

Farmland Trust Welcomes New Board Members

At our Annual General Meeting in June, the Farmland Trust welcomed two new members to our Board of Directors - Norm Ragetlie and Bonnie Littley.



Norm is currently the Director of Policy and Stakeholder Engagement at the Rural Ontario Institute, based in Guelph. Norm has been a volunteer with the Association of Peel People Evaluating Agricultural Land (APPEAL), a group that promoted farmland preservation for many years in the region. Norm has also managed a food cooperative in Toronto and was President of the Ontario Natural Food Coop. With an MSc in Rural Planning from the University of Guelph, Norm worked as a professional planner for Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, with a rural land use and environmental focus, before moving on to work with OMAFRA in Rural Community Economic Development.



Bonnie is a former councilor in the Region of Durham who has been involved with environmental stewardship and food policy issues for a number of years. As councilor she helped to establish Pickering's first Community Garden and successfully built consensus within Regional Council to adopt food security principles into the Regional Official Plan and Regional Strategic Plan. She was successful in the Council endorsement of the newly created Durham Region Food Charter. Bonnie established the new Durham Region Food Policy Council in 2010. Bonnie is also a co-founder and current member of the Rouge Duffins Greenspace Coalition. The group was successful in establishing the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

Recognizing Volunteer Contributions

OFT's AGM in June saw two long-standing Board members, Don Prince and Rodger Cummins, recognized for their outstanding contributions to the work of the Ontario Farmland Trust over the years. Don and Rodger, both founding OFT Board members, have spearheaded OFT's land securement efforts. This has included pioneering the use of conservation easements for the protection of working agricultural lands, and the protection of over 500 acres on five farm properties. Rodger is no longer on the OFT Board, but remains active in OFT's Land Securement and Stewardship Committee. Don continues to be our first point-of-contact for landowners interested in protecting their farms through OFT's easement program. OFT is very grateful for the dedicated service Don and Rodger have provided in advancing our work.



OFT Chair, Stew Hillts presents awards to Rodger Cummins (top) and Don Prince

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Community Taskforce, or NDACT, hosted "FoodStock" – a local food festival on four Melancthon farms that haven't been sold to the Highlands Companies. The event was planned in conjunction with the 2011 Canadian Chefs Congress, bringing more than 70 of Canada's best chefs to the farms to showcase their most creative local food recipes. Over 30,000 people attended the event, demonstrating solidarity with the quarry opposition. No one issue in Ontario has brought so many urban and rural residents,

farmers and conservation advocates together to defend our foodlands and water.

Next steps include asking our MPs and Canada's Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Peter Kent, for a Joint Review Panel to be formed under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to ensure the environmental assessment of the quarry is conducted in a transparent and unbiased manner. Letter writing to local and provincial politicians is also ongoing. At the local

municipal level, work is being done to designate the Dufferin potato lands as a Locally-Significant Crop Area in Official Plans, which would indicate that agriculture is intended as the priority land use in this area, and farmlands here are to be protected as a strategic and important resource for the community.

Visit www.ndact.com for the latest news and information on how you can be involved in the effort to stop the quarry developments in Dufferin County.

Investing in our Farmlands

OFT teamed up with FarmStart on October 29th to deliver an exciting workshop titled *Investing in our Farmlands and a New Generation of Farmers: Connecting Social and Community Finance Initiatives with Farmland Preservation and New Farmers*. It was part of the larger Bring Food Home conference, organized by Sustain Ontario, which brought together all the individuals and groups working on local food and farming issues across the province with an interest in building a more sustainable food system.

The workshop began with an expert panel of speakers looking at how to further farmland preservation across Ontario and reduce barriers to land ownership for new farmers. A representative from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture spoke to Ontario's land use planning system and the challenges new farmers face within this structure, particularly accessing smaller parcels of land that are affordable and include housing. Another speaker looked at the

potential for creating innovative land ownership cooperatives that provide equitable retirement options for existing farmers while at the same time make land affordable to new farmers and allow them to farm smaller acreages. An Ottawa farmer explained how he financed his start-up beef operation by selling small private "bonds" to a number of interested investors. FarmFolk CityFolk B.C. highlighted the value of community-based cooperative farms in pooling resources to purchase land and supporting the next generation of farmers on this land. And lastly, the Centre for Social Innovation shared its experience, as a non-profit organization, setting up a community bonds structure that allowed them to attract enough private investment to purchase a \$6.8 million building in Toronto.

There are roles for many different partners in developing new models that bridge land conservation and support for the next generation of Ontario farmers. For OFT, the ideas most directly linked to our work include the use

of community bonds to attract private investment in farmland preservation and the application of land ownership cooperatives. A working group is now being formed based on all of the interest in this topic and OFT is currently pursuing funding to develop some on-the-ground case studies and business models that would make these new ideas feasible. Please contact the OFT office if you are interested in participating in the working group.



New farmer posing with vegetables at FarmStart's McVean Farm in Brampton. Image courtesy of FarmStart.

Farmland Trust Receives Provincial Achievement Award

The Ontario Farmland Trust received a Provincial Achievement Award from the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) at the annual OLTA gathering in Kingston this September. OLTA is a professional association of 32 community-based land trusts in Ontario. The OLTA Land Trust Achievement Award in the Provincial category recognizes a land trust that has made a substantial contribution to the broader land trust movement.

"The Ontario Farmland Trust is honoured to receive this award and we are pleased that the protection of working farmlands has been recognized as an important part of the land trust movement in Ontario," says Bruce Mackenzie, OFT Executive Director.

OLTA notes that "OFT has created a unique approach in the protection of farmland that extends beyond traditional conservation approaches. The OFT's programs and conservation work is exemplary in bringing the issue of farmland loss to the forefront." Mackenzie adds that "the growing public interest in locally-grown food has provided an exciting opportunity for land trusts to become more engaged in food and farming issues."

Last Chance to Double the Impact of your Gift

As the holidays near, don't forget that donations to OFT make great gifts! It's especially true this year, as donations to our new Stewardship Fund are matched dollar for dollar until **December 31st**, doubling your impact on farmland preservation!

Thanks to our partnership with the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation and to the Ontario Land Trust Alliance's Caring for Your Land initiative, we are actively building this important Stewardship Fund that allows us to invest in long-term stewardship of properties under the care of the Farmland Trust.

Since launching the new Stewardship Fund this summer, the response from both old and new supporters has been very generous. OFT and SPCCF would like to thank the following donors for their recent contributions to the fund:

Annabell Thomson
Linda Pim
Michael Watts
Molesworth Farm Supply
Paul and Susan Robinson

Stew and Maria Hilts
Barry and Kathy White
Susan Chan
Bruce Mackenzie

Leave a Legacy for Local Food and Farming

Have you considered a legacy gift to the Ontario Farmland Trust as part of your estate planning? Please contact us about how you can incorporate a gift to the Farmland Trust in your will. Your planned gift of cash or securities to OFT will help to support local farmland preservation for local food production and the future of Ontario agriculture.

The Ontario Farmland Trust is a certified recipient of "Ecological Gifts" under the federal Income Tax Act and can accept donations of land with agricultural and ecological significance. As OFT is a registered charity, landowners donating property or farmland conservation easements through the Environment Canada Ecological Gifts program are eligible for significant tax savings, which can reduce the tax burden on your estate.

Call us at 519-824-4120, ext. 52686. We would be happy to meet with you and your professional advisors to explain estate planning options that benefit your family as well as farmland conservation efforts across Ontario.



Membership Opportunities

Become a member of the Ontario Farmland Trust and help support efforts to keep Ontario farming!

Your membership supports important research and public education, as well as on-the-ground projects that promote and advance the preservation of Ontario's agricultural lands for future generations of farmers. Donations are tax-deductible.

Please visit www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca for more information.

Membership Category	Annual Membership Fee
Individual/Family	\$30
Non-profit (Farm and Conservation Organizations)	\$250
Corporate	\$500



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