



For Immediate Release

Land trust celebrates protecting 20th farm

Farmland, wetland and natural corridor remains protected forever

September 8, 2022, Guelph, ON. – Farmland is worth protecting, that is the message Michael Douglas and Anna Bourgeois wanted to send when they decided to entrust the protection of their farm to the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT). As the only land trust in Ontario that is solely dedicated to preserving farmland, OFT was uniquely positioned to be able to help Michael and Anna fulfill their wish through a conservation easement.

Located in Simcoe County, the 39 hectare (97-acre) farm, called Brechin Brae, offers a combination of habitats for both aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, in addition to farm fields. The property is approximately half farmland that is used to grow crops, and half wetland, forest and grassland. Many species-at-risk have been viewed on their farm, including the Bobolink (Threatened), Eastern Meadowlark (Threatened), Monarch (Special Concern), Snapping Turtle (Special Concern), Midland Painted Turtle (Special Concern).

One of the primary reasons Michael and Anna protected their farm through the Ontario Farmland Trust was to protect it against nearby aggregate mining. It is their belief that the land should remain forever protected.

In addition to the animal habitats and farmland, both Michael and Anna have noticed over the past 30 years that the lower level of their property is a natural corridor for animal movement, having seen animals ranging from deer, bears and coyotes to wild turkeys travelling along the path. Though none of the wildlife movement is documented in studies, Michael said it's uncanny how often wildlife can be seen moving around their property.

Ontario Farmland Trust Executive Director Martin Straathof knows how hard Michael and Anna worked to protect their farm.

“We as an organization need to be active throughout the Province, engage in policy discussions, and educate Ontarians of the importance of farmland protection,” he said. “A big part of that will be done through community engagement and creating unique partnerships to get in front of people who maybe have not considered farmland protection before.”

In the meantime, OFT will continue their mandate to protect farmland, wetland and natural habitats across Ontario.

“We could not do what we do without the generous support of our donors, foundations, and the Government of Canada,” Martin said. “We are grateful they see the value in our mission and can help us address the prevalent need that exists today for agricultural preservation.”

This project was made possible by the Government of Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, part of Canada’s Nature Fund.

A portion of this project was donated to the Ontario Farmland Trust under the Government of Canada’s Ecological Gifts Program. This program provides enhanced tax incentives for individuals or corporations who donate ecologically significant land.

FACTS:

- The latest 2016-2021 Census of Agriculture shows an increase in farmland loss to 319 acres per day from 175 acres in the 2011-2016 census
- Brechin Brae is the 20th farm Ontario Farmland Trust has protected in Ontario
- Local farmland supports a \$34 billion agri-food sector – a key driver of Ontario’s economy
- Ontario has lost 2.8 million acres of farmland in the past 35 years
- Only five per cent of Ontario contains the soil types needed to support agriculture

ABOUT:

The Government of Canada’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is a unique public-private partnership to support new protected and conserved areas by securing private lands and private interests in lands. The program is managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). Federal funds invested in the program are matched with contributions raised by NCC and its partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the country’s land trust community.

To learn more about the Ecological Gifts Program, please visit <http://www.ec.gc.ca/pde-egp/>.

The Ontario Farmland Trust is a non-profit, charitable organization that works across Ontario to protect farmlands and associated agricultural, natural and cultural features of the countryside for the benefit of current and future generations.

There are three components of OFT’s work: (1) Direct land protection, using agricultural easements, (2) Farmland policy development and (3) Research and education.

LEARN MORE:

Visit: www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca

Follow us on Twitter: @ONFarmlandTrust

Become a fan on Facebook: OntarioFarmlandTrust

Find this News Release online: <https://ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/2022/09/08/Land-trust-celebrates-protecting-20th-farm-/>

CONTACT:

Melissa Schneider

Communicatons and Development Manager

Ontario Farmland Trust

melissa@ontariofarmlandtrust.ca

(519) 781-3276