



The Ontario Dune Coalition

Summer 2011

Annual Newsletter

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NY's Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland System: Guidelines for Resource Management in the 21st Century *By: Geoff Steadman*

*Photo left: A priority issue in the
2008 Department of State Report
concerns maintenance of the North
Pond inlet*

Many residents and visitors in the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland System think of themselves as stewards responsible for taking care of the system. They're aware of the impacts they can have on the natural environment and act in a way to help sustain the natural values of the system's beaches, dunes, and wetlands for future generations to enjoy.

Opportunities for stewardship are discussed in the report "New York's Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland System: Guidelines for Resource Management in the 21st Century" published in 2008 by the New York Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources. The report was prepared with input from The Ontario Dune Coalition (TODC) and others and is available online at www.nyswaterfronts.com/downloads/ny%20elodws/default/nys%20elodws.htm.

The report presents a Stewardship Vision for the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland System that's intended to provide a balance between environmental conservation and sustained beneficial use of the system with positive economic impacts on the local communities. Also included is a review of many accomplishments over the past 20 years, including establishment of Sandy Island Beach State Park, and a review of current issues still facing the system, such as management of the North Pond inlet.

TODC member agencies and organizations and elected officials attended a day-long workshop in the Fall of 2009 to set goals and priorities for advancing the Stewardship Vision. An important step toward advancing the vision is formal endorsement of its tenets. To that end, NYS Department of State is inviting each member organization to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to the effect that the organization supports the Stewardship Vision. Please contact your local TODC representative for more information.

TODC 25th Celebratory Evening

Dave White - New York Sea Grant

**June 16, 2011, 6-8pm
Sandy Pond Beach State Park**

This celebration highlighted your accomplishments...while focusing on how to work together toward embracing the "Stewardship Vision for Resource Conservation and Beneficial Use". The Tony Kotz-TODC interpretive panel was unveiled and dedicated. You are encouraged to visit Sandy Island Beach State Park to see this new panel.

The program consisted of a few short presentations that provided an overview of TODC, an historical retrospective, and as noted above, a very special dedication to Tony Kotz.

All of the efforts of all who were involved in the planning and implementation of the evening were appreciated. We look forward to another 25 years of continued partnership and success in the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes & Wetlands Area!

Your Dune Coalition

Tony Kotz - Former TODC Chairman - written in 2009

What a productive year it has been for TODC member agencies and organizations working and collaborating on efforts to support the protection and management of our very special dunes and wetlands system. You will read about many successes in this newsletter. Let me list a few.

- Publication and distribution of "A Stewardship Vision for the 21st Century," a guide for management of the system which many have contributed to. It is worth reading!
- Plans underway for a conference of policymakers, implementers, and others involved in stewardship of the system to become familiar with the management guide, originally scheduled for June, to be rescheduled in autumn due to scheduling conflicts of some speakers.
- On going educational programs for schools, private landowners, and at special events; interpretive signs soon to be placed on public lands; communications from many TODC member agencies and committees: and, of course, this newsletter.
- Continuation this summer of the successful dune stewards program.
- More...

I am pleased to announce the incorporation and establishment of The Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes Foundation, LTD. The foundation is finally "in business" independent of TODC, although it has applied for membership in TODC to facilitate communications and efforts with TODC member organizations as their purposes are complementary. You will receive a formal notice from the foundation describing its objectives and purposes in a few months.

Finally, I am often asked what, really, is TODC, who is it, what does it do and not do. It is an alliance of agencies and private organizations (not individuals except as representatives of the member organizations) to support protection and optimum public and private uses of the dunes and related wetlands and waterways. It is not political and does not lobby, regulate, or impose authority. Through its member agencies, it provides information and assistance to public and private property owners and users within the dune system.

The year 2011 will celebrate 25 incredibly successful years of TODC!

Eastern Lake Ontario Stewardship Update

Mary Penney - New York Sea Grant

Although the steward program many recreational users and TODC partners had become accustomed to was not able to continue, TODC partners are pleased to announce that there will be an organized presence on the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes & Wetlands Area (ELOWDA) and Salmon River corridor.

Mathew Levine has been selected as the Northern New York Field Representative for The Nature Conservancy, stationed at the Pulaski office. He will be coordinating management activities for Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland preserves in conjunction with adjoining resource management agencies. Prior to his appointment with TNC, he was a Biological Science Technician with the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service in the southern Appalachian region of North Carolina. He can be reached at (315)387-3600 ext 22 and mlevine@tnc.org.

Mat will be supervising an invasive species team during the 2011 summer field season. The TNC invasive species team will continue inventorying and slowing the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) in the ELOWDA. Their duties will include weed pulls and beetle releases to help slow the spread of purple loosestrife.

Shelly Wilmott has been the Selkirk Park State Beach manager, and has been appointed as the Sandy Island Beach State Park manager as well. She will be working closely with Gordon Betts, NYS Parks Central Region's official TODC representative. She can be reached at (315) 387-2657 and Shelly.Wilmott@oprhp.state.ny.us.

New York Sea Grant's (NYSG) Mary Penney, has been appointed as Coastal Community Development Specialist for NYSG. Using a community-driven needs assessment survey approach, she identifies and responds to priority issues of decision-makers for the Eastern Lake Ontario region and its tributaries. Penney assists local leaders interested in land use planning, watershed protection, science-based sustainable renewable energy discussions, and managing climate change impacts. She has also developed local volunteerism opportunities and supervises a team of coastal natural resource educators that enhance the stewardship of Great Lakes ecosystems. She can be reached at (315) 312-3042 and mp357@cornell.edu.

NYSG has hired former stewards Greg Chapman and Stacy Furgal to serve as NYSG's AIS Resource Educators. NYSG's new Aquatic Invasive Species Resource Educators are at work along the Lake Ontario and the Salmon River informing anglers, watercraft users, local residents and visitors about how they can recognize and help slow the spread of unwanted, non-native organisms. Greg Chapman of East Concord, NY, served as Chief Steward of the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Salmon River Steward program in 2008 and 2009. He is pursuing a degree in conservation biology from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and enjoys hiking and nature photography. Furgal, an Oswego County native from Williamstown, previously worked as an Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Salmon River Steward while earning her degree in fisheries and aquatic science at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. She is an avid outdoorswoman with an interest in fisheries biology and conservation. NYSG is partnering with Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance on this project.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is supervising 3 Student Conservation Association interns as dune and river stewards in the 2011 season. As always, the stewards will be enhancing awareness of dune and river ecosystems issues.

A cohesive training session was held for seasonal staff. This training opportunity included office and field site orientation. During the two-day-long training, seasonals became more aware of their educational duties as well as with the ecosystems themselves.

Planning: Sandy Creeks Watershed

By: Peter Clouse – NYS Department of State

New York's action plan for incorporating Ecosystem-based Management (EBM)—an integrated approach to management that considers the entire ecosystem, including humans—into state decision-making processes is described in *Our Waters, Our Communities, Our Future*, released in April 2009 (<http://www.nyoglecc.org/reports.html>).

The Sandy Creeks Watershed, including the Eastern Lake Ontario dunes/wetland/pond complex, is one of two areas designated under the 2006 New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act to demonstrate EBM implementation at the local level.

The New York State Department of State's (DOS) approach in the Sandy Creeks Watershed EBM Demonstration Area is to gain on-the-ground experience in applying ecosystem approaches to local land and water planning and undertake restorative and corrective measures to address known ecosystem problems.

DOS, with partners, the Tug Hill Commission and The Nature Conservancy, has:

developed an inclusive stakeholder decision-making process to identify and prioritize projects in the watershed; launched a campaign to map and eradicate invasive species with 568 acres treated to control the spread of pale swallow-wort and treating outbreaks of purple loosestrife with a biological control agent at six different outbreaks in the dune/wetland complex; oversaw the mapping and assessment of portions of the Tug Hill Aquifer; guided restoration of stream corridors and buffers with over 8,200 feet of fence installed, and 2,200 trees and shrubs planted along select tributaries; worked with user groups to limit ATV access to sensitive headwater stream areas; developed and delivered three forestry best management practices workshops; completed a field inventory for rare plants, animals and plant communities; developed two interpretive kiosks and eight interpretive panels to increase public awareness of the importance of the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes and Wetlands Area (ELODWA).

More information about EBM implementation activities in New York may be found at www.nyoglecc.org.

Spreading the Words, not the Weeds!

By: Gregg Sargis - The Nature Conservancy

Over the last few years, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has made great strides toward building public awareness of invasive species, locating and treating infested areas, and establishing a region-wide program to control invasive species in Northern New York. Recently, the Conservancy was awarded a contract with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to host the St. Lawrence - Eastern Lake Ontario (SLELO) Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). TNC is currently in the process of hiring a coordinator, who once hired, will coordinate all aspects of invasive species management for the PRISM in St. Lawrence, Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and Oneida Counties outside of Adirondack Park.

In 2010, the Conservancy was awarded two Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants totaling over \$716,000. This three year project will monitor and prevent early detection rapid response invasive species like water chestnut from becoming established and will control glossy buckthorn and common reed in high priority fens throughout the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetland Area (ELODWA). Additionally, this project will restore wetland function and structure by creating meandering channels and open potholes in the monotypic cattail dominated marsh of Lakeview WMA. This will improve habitat for keystone species like the muskrat and ecological quality indicators like the black tern. Finally, hydrologic connection will be improved through culvert replacement and additions in within an important fen community.

Sandy Creeks Watershed: Interpretive panels

Mary Penney - New York Sea Grant



Bird Sanctuary Interpretive Panel, El Dorado Nature Preserve.

New York Sea Grant partnered with New York State Tug Hill Commission and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in the development of a Sandy Creeks watershed series of interpretive panels. All panels have been manufactured and are currently being installed throughout the watershed including the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes and Wetlands Area. Topics of interpretive panels include sand transport, dune succession, wetlands, and human uses of the dunes. Panel content will improve ecological stewardship of the watershed. This project was funded by New York State Department of State's Ecosystem-based Management initiative.

For more information on this project, please contact Mary Penney at: (315) 312-3042 and mp357@cornell.edu.

Birds of a Feather Share the Shore

Gerry Smith - Onondaga Audubon Society

The shores and wetlands of Eastern Lake Ontario are critical to the survival of many species of shorebirds and water birds. Many arctic migrants use these areas for feeding and resting on their long journeys to and from their breeding grounds. Local breeders such as Caspian and the New York State designated Threatened Common Tern, need areas away from their island breeding colonies where adults can rest and feed and care for recently flying young. Many of these important life cycle activities occur from May through September, a time when we humans also abound on the beaches. It is our responsibility to protect these birds by assuring adequate space to meet their needs.

Shorebirds and water birds discovered energy conservation long before we humans did. They do not waste energy thus when their normal activity patterns are disrupted by other species they pay a price. The federally Endangered Piping Plover population that nested on our shores has vanished largely as a result of pressure from exploding gull and predatory mammal populations such as skunks. Humans, and particularly our dogs, have played an important

role in the loss of this species locally. Also when we disturb migrant shorebirds and loafing water birds unnecessarily they pay the price in energy expenditure or other impacts that can affect their survival.

Unlike ocean beaches our shores are narrow putting humans and birds in close proximity. All who visit our beaches can help birds coexist with us by applying a few simple steps:

- Stay out of designated bird sanctuaries.
- Keep all dogs on leashes and do not allow or encourage them to chase birds. Intentional harassment of migratory birds is an offense under federal law.
- If you see birds on the beach walk around them as best you can moving slowly and quietly to minimize disturbance
- In wetlands as well as on the beach avoid approaching wildlife too closely
- Do not feed gulls as this may enhance their survival to the detriment of more vulnerable species

A simple awareness of and attention to the needs of the wildlife by human beach users will assure their presence on our beaches for the enjoyment of future generations.

NY Sea Grant
SUNY Oswego
Oswego, NY 13126

The Ontario Dune Coalition is comprised of organizations interested in the stabilization of Eastern Lake Ontario dunes. This coalition of state and local agencies, private landowner/resource associations, and federal agencies are working in concert to:

1. Assist in the stabilization of dunes as natural systems
2. Develop measures to maintain their stability
3. Achieve optimum public use in keeping with private property considerations and dune protection and restoration objectives

For further information on The Ontario Dune Coalition, contact:

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The Ontario Dune Coalition newsletter is produced and distributed by:

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation,
NY Sea Grant and Friends of Sandy Pond Beach

Agencies and associations active in TODC:

Central NY Regional Planning & Development
Board
Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes Foundation

Eastman Place Association
FL-LOWPA
Friends of Sandy Pond Beach
Jefferson County Planning Department
Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District
Jefferson-Sunset Bluff Landowners Association
Montario Point Landowners Association
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
NYS Department of State
NY Sea Grant
North Jefferson Park Landowners Association
North Rainbow Shores Landowners Association
Onondaga Audubon Society
Oswego County Environmental Management Council
Oswego County Planning Department
Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District
Renshaw Beach Association
Sandy Island Beach Property Owners Association
Sandy Pond Channel Maintenance Association
Seaway Trail, Inc.
Selkirk Beach Association
South Jefferson Park Landowners Association
The Nature Conservancy
Town of Ellisburg
Town of Richland
Town of Sandy Creek
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

For additional information on the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes and Wetlands visit our web site at:

www.nysgdunes.org