



Gerry Smith Recognized for 17 years of Dune Coalition Service



John DeHollander (left), Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District and Chair of The Ontario Dune Coalition, presents Gerry Smith with the Jean Wetsig Distinguished Service Award.

On June 5, 2002, Mr. Gerry Smith was awarded the Jean Wetsig Distinguished Service Award at The Ontario Dune Coalition meeting at the Sandy Pond Sportsmen's Association clubhouse.

Gerry was honored for his relentless commitment in securing a voice for natural habitats along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. He was one of the founding individuals that brought together an organization we now know as The Ontario Dune Coalition. He was instrumental in helping to shape the structure and goals of this unique organization, even before its creation in 1985.

During the past seventeen years, Gerry has provided the desire and knowledge in proclaiming "what is good for the birds, is good enough for humans." His thoughts and views during Coalition meetings helped to balance the discussions, and, at times, make the rest of the Coalition members think.

The Ontario Dune Coalition thanks Gerry for his thoughts, knowledge and humor. TODC has grown wiser because of him. The Coalition appreciates Gerry's contributions and hopes that he continues to educate others on this plot of land we call Earth.

Feature Article:

Physical, Biological, and Human Interactions Shaping the Ecosystems of Freshwater Bays and Lagoons: An Overview of the Lake Ontario Biocomplexity Study

By Gail Steinhart, Center for the Environment,
Cornell University

Researchers from Cornell University, Syracuse University, and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry are currently studying several embayments along the New York coast of Lake Ontario including the associated watersheds, wetlands, and human settlements. Lake Ontario embayments are representative of wetland-dominated coastal habitats around much of the Great Lakes and they are of great importance in the region. The embayments provide habitat for many Great Lakes aquatic species, change the quality of water entering the lakes, affect nutrient inputs to the open waters, support highly diverse and productive wetland vegetation, and provide very desirable locations for water-oriented human settlements. The research group includes biologists, ecologists, engineers, and planners from the three institutions; eight scientists, two full time staff, several seasonal technicians and interns, and about fifteen graduate students. The five-year study, which received funding from the National Science Foundation in the fall of 2000, is entering its second season of intensive field studies.

The primary goal of the study is to determine the degree to which the embayments are self-organized or controlled by external influences, and to understand the relationships between ecosystem components, as well as their relationship to their environment. The main hypothesis is that water

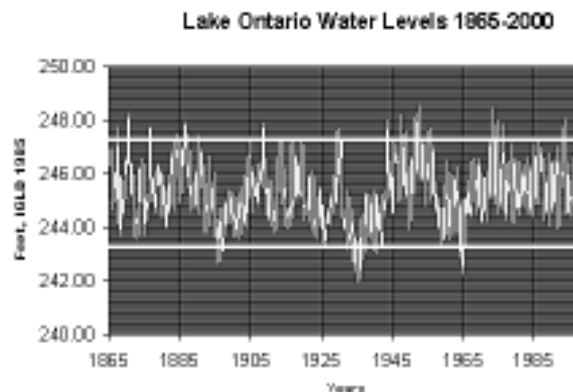
residence time, the average time it takes water to move through an aquatic system, is a key variable that controls the extent to which the embayments are self-organized or dominated by external influences. Members of the research team are examining many aspects of the embayment ecosystems, including water exchange between the bays and Lake Ontario, water chemistry, phytoplankton, zooplankton, fish, aquatic and wetland vegetation, human settlements, and land use patterns in the study area watersheds. In self-organized systems, interactions between ecosystem components should be relatively strong. In externally driven systems, interactions between ecosystem components and outside forces such as climate, Lake Ontario, or the embayments' watersheds should be stronger.

While the study attempts to address fundamental questions of how these ecological systems function, the research group also hopes to make their findings available to managers and policy makers who may be able to apply the results in practical settings. Towards this end, the project is overseen by an advisory board made up of representatives from several state, federal, and international agencies with an interest in the management of Great Lakes resources.

For more information on the Lake Ontario Biocomplexity Study, please visit:
<http://ontario.cfe.cornell.edu/>

Correction to Summer 2001 Newsletter

Regulation, which began in 1960, aims to maintain Lake Ontario between 243.3 ft/74.15 m and 247.3 ft/75.37 m (represented by bold horizontal lines on the graph), rather than between 74.37 m and 75.59 m as presented in the Spring 2001 article, *TNC Takes Part in Bi-national Study of Lake Ontario Water Levels*. The Conservancy regrets the mistake and apologizes for any resulting misconceptions.





Dune stewards from left: Evan Proulx, Kirstin Berben, Keren O'Brien Murphy, Barry Mahar, Kenny Smith

Summer 2002 Dune Steward Program Update

The Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward tradition continues this year with one big change. This year the program has increased from four interns to five. The additional intern allows for increased coverage of the dune areas during weekdays.

The five interns were chosen from a pool of students at SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry (SUNY-ESF), Oswego State University, Cornell University, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), and SUNY-Cobleskill. The interns are receiving college credit and a stipend. NYS DEC Region 6, with headquarters in Watertown, and Region 7, Syracuse, are paying the stipend. Molly Thompson, a Dune and Habitat Educator with NY Sea Grant, Oswego, returns as the program coordinator. The Nature Conservancy, which has overseen the dune steward program in past years, continues co-funding this position.

Evan Proulx is an Oswego State University student entering his senior year. His major is Public Justice with a double minor in Biology and Forensic Science. His ultimate career goal is to become an Environmental Conservation Officer for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. When he's not working at Deer Creek WMA he enjoys hunting, fishing, camping and mountain biking.

Kenny Smith is a RIT student entering his sophomore year. He is in the Environmental Science program at RIT and is a native of Rochester. You will find Kenny at Sandy Pond Beach most of the summer,

but when he's not there he enjoys baseball, ultimate frisbee, studying turtles and the rock band *Motorhead*. Kenny is also very active in scouting and has achieved the rank of Eagle Scout.

If you're visiting Lakeview WMA or Southwick Beach State Park this summer, look for Keren O'Brien Murphy as she patrols the beach. Kerin is a SUNY-ESF student who just graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies: Policy and Management. She will be starting work on her Master's degree this fall at ESF focusing on Urban Environmental Policy. She enjoys kayaking, painting and studying turtles.

Kirstin Berben, another SUNY-ESF student will be busy at Black Pond WMA and El Dorado Nature Preserve this summer. She is studying Environmental Science and Forestry in the Conservation Biology program at ESF and just completed her second year. In her free time Kirstin enjoys backpacking, snowboarding and sketching.

This year we are fortunate to have Barry Mahar return as a steward. Barry was the Lakeview WMA/Southwick Beach steward last year. With the experience he gained last year, Barry is now working at all of the sites as needed and has been a great help training the stewards. Barry is a SUNY-Cobleskill student majoring in Fisheries and Aquaculture. In his free time he enjoys fishing, boating and relaxing.

We'll see you at the beach!!

TODC Member Profile: *Private Landowners Committee*

By *Sally A. Sessler, Chair*

The Private Landowners Committee is one of the four committees of The Ontario Dune Coalition (TODC), which was established in 1985. This committee is responsible for performing clearinghouse functions for residential, commercial and other private landowner interests and for serving as a point of communication between TODC and private landowners. One of the goals of the committee is to have representatives from all of the landowner associations and areas in the 17-mile dune area on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. At present this includes all associations listed on the last page of this newsletter and 2 others not officially organized into associations, Rainbow Shores (south section) and Montario Point. We meet once or twice a year during the season and during the off-season members are contacted by email or postal mail with updates. All representatives are members of TODC and are sent communications of minutes and meetings. Our members are encouraged to share all information with their respective associations.

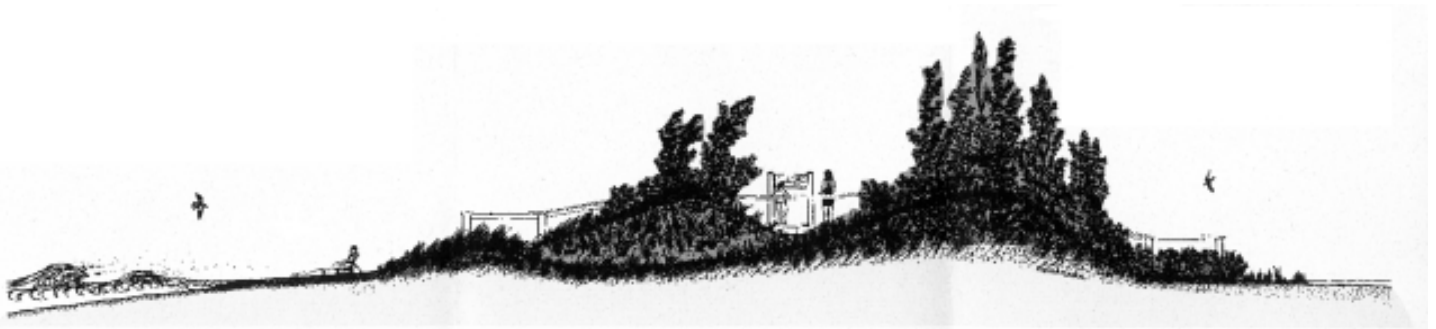
Our concern, as is for all members of TODC, is the stabilization of the dunes in our area. This is why we are so active educating our members and others on the regulation of the level of Lake Ontario. We want to protect our fragile dune system and barrier beaches and, of course, our property. Many members have planted beachgrass on their dunes to achieve this preservation. We work closely with the Friends of Sandy Pond Beach in an effort to contact landowners and explain the benefits of beachgrass planting. Enclosed with this newsletter is a beachgrass fact sheet prepared by the Friends. We encourage property

owners to read this carefully and give it serious consideration.

Regarding the lake level, we keep in contact with the International St. Lawrence River Board of Control which regulates the Lake and the River, and its parent organization, the International Joint Commission (IJC). We arranged a private meeting with the Board and some IJC members in June 1998 in conjunction with the Board's annual public meeting that year. The discussion and communication were excellent and our members came out of the meeting with better knowledge of how the system works and the Board and IJC members heard our concerns. This was the beginning of several contacts with the Board. One of the Board members, Frank Sciremammano, gave an excellent presentation at a later TODC meeting when more Coalition members and landowners could attend. We also assisted in planning a meeting in August 2001 to discuss the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Five Year Study now in progress (see separate article in this newsletter). Our chair, Sally Sessler, is a member of the Public Interest Advisory Group for the Study.

Our committee has also been active in discussions of regulations of the dune area and the lake and ponds. We have been in contact with Department of Environmental Conservation and Oswego County officials and have encouraged more coverage to protect our unique area.

All landowners are encouraged to keep in contact with their representatives for information and to present their concerns.



August 2002 Dune Field Trips

Black Pond Wildlife Management Area August 11 at 2 p.m.

Explore this newly accessible Wildlife Management Area with a Dune Steward. The steward will lead you along a boardwalk trail and over to the beach. Along the way you will experience the change in habitats from wetlands through dunes and to the shore. On the beach you are sure to see migrating shorebirds. This walk is approximately 1 mile and is easy. The trailhead parking lot is reached by traveling about 3 miles south of Henderson Harbor on NY State Rt 3 and then onto Bolton Road. At the end of Bolton Road is a roadway that runs 0.75 miles to the parking area. Call 315-846-5155 for more information.

Southwick Beach and Lakeview WMA Saturday, August 3 at 2 pm. Meet at the Southwick Beach State Park concession stand.

Take a guided walk at Southwick Beach State Park and Lakeview WMA, through dunes, wetlands and forests. Dune Steward, Keren O'Brien Murphy, will lead you on a walk through the variety of habitats along the newly redesigned Southwick/Lakeview nature trail. Along the way you may see deer, fox, a variety of songbirds, and possibly a rare Black Tern. This walk is approximately 2 miles over easy terrain. For more information call 315-846-5155.

IJC Lake Level Study Update

The International Joint Commission established the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study to assess and evaluate the current rules used for regulating outflows from Lake Ontario through the River (see enclosed brochure). This study is currently in its second year of a 5 year study and consists of a study team, nine technical working groups and a Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG).

There have been many accomplishments made during the first year of the study. The Public Interest Advisory Group made public presentations to over 1,000 people. The Technical Working Groups collected data and information in each area of study and are continuing this data collection during the second year. For more information see the enclosed brochure and visit the web site,

www.losl.org. A newsletter, *Ripple Effects*, is being published to keep everyone up to date on activities of the study. If you are not receiving this (2 issues have been published) and would like to be on the mailing list, please notify Arleen Kreuzsch, Public Affairs Specialist, 1776 Niagara St., Buffalo, NY 14207 or call her at (716) 879-4438.

There will be a public meeting in Sackets Harbor August 8, 7-9 pm at the Sackets Harbor Central School, 215 South Broad St., Sackets Harbor. At that time, there will be an educational presentation explaining the current regulation system to the public. Following the presentation, there will be opportunity for public questions and comments, which will be gathered for input into the Study. Check the LOSL web site for further information.

Lake Level Update

As of July 14, Lake Ontario was 10" above its long-term average of 246' and 10" above the level at this time last year. Lake level should be dropping over the next 4 weeks. All of the other Great Lakes, are below their long term averages, but all are above the levels they were at at this time last year.

For the most up-to-date information on lake level issues the following web pages provide a wealth of information. If you do not have access to the web, contact NY Sea Grant at 315.312.3042 for information.

International Joint Commission:
www.ijc.org

St. Lawrence River Board of Control:
www.islrbc.org

U. S. Army Corp of Engineers:
huron.lre.usace.army.mil/levels/hmpglv.html

NY Sea Grant:
www.nysgcoastalprocesses.org

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The Nature Conservancy for \$100.
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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:

The Ontario Dune Coalition
c/o Jefferson County Planning
175 Arsenal Street
Watertown, NY 13601

The Ontario Dune Coalition newsletter is produced and distributed by:

NY Sea Grant and The Nature Conservancy

Agencies and associations active in TODC:

Black River RC&D
Eastman Place Association
Friends of Sandy Pond Beach
Jefferson County Cooperative Extension
Jefferson County Planning Department
Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District
Jefferson-Sunset Bluff Landowners Association
North Jefferson Park Landowners Association
North Rainbow Shores Landowners Association
North-South Sandy Pond Association
New York Sea Grant Extension
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
NYS Department of State
Onondaga Audubon Society
Oswego County Cooperative Extension
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
Seaway Trail, Inc.
Selkirk Beach Association
The Nature Conservancy
Town of Ellisburg
Town of Richland
Town of Sandy Creek
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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