

Efforts to Save Marcy Woods Continue

The Niagara Group has joined again this year with Fort Erie to urge that the beautiful Marcy Woods continue to be protected.

This beautiful site, **along Lake Erie on the Canadian side, and containing a rare forest**, does not yet have permanent protection. We are urging the government in Toronto to extend protection indefinitely, until a permanent and sound policy is adopted.

Margaret Wooster wrote the following letter for the protection of Marcy Woods. Niagara Group signed on to it along with many other environmental organizations. below:

February 15, 2005

The Hon. John Gerretsen, Minister
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street
Toronto Ontario M5G 2E5

Dear Minister Gerretsen:

On behalf of all who care about protecting the natural heritage of Lake Erie and southern Ontario, thank you for again extending the zoning order on Marcy Woods. Since the intention of the order was to allow the Town to finish its official plan review and establish locally developed protection measures, and since neither of these actions has been accomplished, this extension was necessary.

However, it is also true that we have been waiting for 18 months for the zoning order to accomplish its purpose, and yet, in all this time, no plan for permanent protection of Marcy's Woods has even been proposed, let alone publicly discussed or adopted.

To ensure that this extension of time accomplishes its purpose, **we ask you to clarify that a plan for permanent protection of Marcy's Woods must be in place as a condition of lifting the zoning order.** We also repeat the request in our June 24th letter to you: that you convene the interested parties, including government, property owner and environmental community representatives to discuss and determine the best options for protecting the property in perpetuity.

We understand your commitment to local empowerment and accountability. However, just as you look to the Town to adopt an Official Plan that guarantees long-term protection of Marcy's Woods, the Town, as per its February 2 petition to you, rightly looks to the Province for help. The fact is that local zoning laws and policies are not sufficient to protect a natural heritage site of Marcy's Woods quality, in part because they are vulnerable to ongoing requests for variances or amendments. There has already been

such a request to the Niagara Region to allow building in an environmentally sensitive area at Marcy's Woods, and it won't be the last.

Marcy's Woods is too valuable to be subject to these continued challenges. In some sense Marcy's Woods is southern Ontario's natural heritage. Its 285 acres contain old growth Carolinian forest, provincially significant wetlands, a pristine stretch of Lake Erie beach and sand dunes, and a well-documented diversity of bird and plant species. It is internationally recognized as an Important Bird Area, and provincially as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. It is the only place in Ontario to possess all the native species of Trillium, the provincial wildflower.

We believe that only a permanent inviolable land use restriction such as a conservation easement or the conveyance to a governmental entity will guarantee protection of Marcy's Woods in perpetuity.

Minister Gerretsen, please back up the zoning order extension with your commitment that it will not be lifted until a plan for permanent protection of Marcy's Woods is firmly in place.

Yours sincerely,

Rick Stockton, Vice President
Bert Miller Nature Club

Charles Hahn, Executive Director
The Hahn Family Foundation

Jon McCracken, Ontario Program Manager
director
Bird Studies Canada

Jan Ciborowski, U. Windsor, Co-
director
Lake Erie Millennium Network

Julie Broyles
Cattaraugus Creek Watershed Task Force

Dave Dempsey, Policy Consultant
Michigan Environmental Council

Larry Caldwell, President
Community Preservation Initiative

Sandy Bihn
Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper

Peter Grames
The David Suzuki Foundation

Joyce Sankey, President
Niagara Falls Nature Club

Robert Burns
Detroit Riverkeeper

Vicki Deisner, Executive Director
Ohio Environmental Council

Joshua Matlow, Campaign Director
Earthroots

John Potter, President
Peninsula Field Naturalists Club

David Higby, Great Lakes Project Director
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Environmental Advocates of New York

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Chapter

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Dr. John Bacher, President
Friends of the Twelve Mile Creek

Larry Beahan, Executive Committee
Sierra Club, Niagara Frontier Group

Derek Stack, Executive Director
Great Lakes United

Margaret Wooster
Great Lakes Consultant

c.c. Stephane Dion, Minister of the Environment, Canada; John Maloney, MP Welland; Dalton McGuinty, Premier, Ontario; David Ramsay, MPP Minister of Natural Resources; Leona Dombrowski, MPP Minister of Environment; Jim Bradley, MPP Minister of Tourism and Recreation; Tim Hudak, MPP, Erie-Lincoln; Kim Craitor, MPP, Niagara Falls; Madeleine Meilleur, MPP Minister of Culture; Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner; Peter Partington, Chair, Regional Municipality of Niagara; Gord Harry, Chair, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority; Wayne Redekop, Mayor, Fort Erie; Barbara Heidenreich, Ontario Heritage Foundation; Michael Bradstreet, Nature Conservancy Canada; Michelle Kanter, Carolinian Canada