









SER Ontario News
The Newsletter of the Ontario Chapter of the Society for Ecological Restoration
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Chapter Update

We have received 25 completed Members' Surveys (Survey forms were enclosed with the last newsletter.) That is a return rate of approximately 20%! Thanks to all those that provided us with feedback. We will be following up on your suggestions and your offers of assistance in the next few months. A summary of the survey results as well as a Chapter Update follows.

Forty-four percent of survey respondents had attended a Field Day in the past. We were pleased to see 25 participants, many of them students, at our recent Fall Field Day where we profiled the key element that makes Toronto unique-its ravines. One of the participants, Michael Peppard, a student of Niagara College's Ecosystem Restoration program has written an excellent summary of his impressions of the day for this issue (Student perspective on restoring the ravines of Toronto). Special thanks to the City of Toronto's Beth McEwen who organized the day and who also provided us with an excellent update on the City's new restoration efforts in the ravines. Congratulations are also due to the City for their recent adoption of a Ravine Control By-law that facilitates the removal of exotic species, especially Norway Maples.

Ninety-five percent of survey respondents liked our current format for field days, but were also willing to pay more for bus tours and/or training workshops as well as send in a registration fee beforehand. We'll look at your suggestions when we plan the Spring Field Day next year.

All respondents said they read the newsletter and most (72%) said they would read the newsletter if it were updated on the SER-Ontario Web page (we would send you an e-mail reminder as each issue is installed). The Executive is presently working on updating our Web Page, managed by someone in Australia (!) and placing responsibility for future updates, including an electronic version of this newsletter, with our headquarters at Trent University. We look forward to realizing this goal in 1998.

All respondents indicated that the planned Ontario Restoration Directory would be useful. The Executive is currently soliciting for display advertising to cover our production costs and we hope to have a product for distribution in February of 1998.

We are pleased to welcome new executive members, Jill Cherry and Tom Whillans (SER- Executive welcomes new members in this newsletter). Jill and Tom have already attended their first Executive meetings and we are already benefitting from their participation. We are still looking for two Directors-at-large or a Vice Chair. If anyone is interested in either of these positions, please let me know.

Next year, the Executive will also be working with the Canadian Land Reclamation Association (CLRA) to host a joint national conference on ecological restoration/land reclamation in Toronto in the fall of 1998. Since SER shares some common objectives with the CLRA, the Executive felt this would be an excellent opportunity to promote ecological restoration principles to a wider audience. Kevin Trimble and Steven Smith will join several CLRA members on the organizing committee to plan this event. An announcement will be available in the next newsletter issue.

SER-Ontario is also working on a joint project with the Royal Ontario Museum to produce an educational display on the problem with invasive exotic species for the Canada Blooms Garden show in March.

Thanks to Dale Leadbeater who is providing the SER-Ontario lead on this project.

Marion Norman, our administrative assistant at Trent University, is now updating our Members Directory with information supplied in the returned Members' Surveys. If your address has changed since this years' Members' Directory (or if you have recently joined the information highway and have acquired an e-mail address), please let us know by contacting Marion at ser_ont@trentu.ca or 705/748-1634. We would also still welcome additional completed Members' Surveys-it's your opportunity to provide us with your opinion on SER-Ontario's direction for 1998!

Best Wishes for the New Year!

Silvia Strobl, Chair

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Policy and Ethics Sub-Committee Update

The Policy and Ethics Sub-Committee was established in 1996 to coordinate the development of Chapter policies, draft or solicit position papers, liaise with SER

International and other organizations in this area, and maintain a policy file. Policies include those related to organizational goals and procedures, professional ethics, and restoration practice. Key policies adopted by the Chapter to date include: Chapter By-laws, Newsletter Policy, and Chapter Representatives. Policies currently being developed include: Growers Guidelines, Collegial Etiquette, and Conflict-of-interest. Members will be given an opportunity to review draft policies in the near future. SER International has expressed an interest in reviewing SER-Ontario's policies and may adapt some for wider use.

SER International has also produced several policies. Along with organizational policies (such as By-laws), there are a number of restoration policies of interest to practitioners. These include an Environmental Policy, Project Policy, and Project Evaluation Policy, all of which can be obtained from the SER office in Madison.

Also at the international level, a policy-related "Steering Committee on Restoration Ethics" has recently been formed. The Committee, which is chaired by Eric Higgs, will address both professional ethics and restoration ethics. I was honored to be invited to sit on this committee and will keep the Chapter informed of our progress. SER members will be invited to participate in the discussions through various venues to be determined.

Inquiries have been made into the recent CCHREI (Canadian Council on Human Resources in the Environment Industry) move to certify environmental professionals. The Policy and Ethics Sub-Committee and Board will assess the implications for restorationists and, if necessary, will seek a Chapter representative to liaise with this group on a regular basis.

At this time, Policy and Ethics Sub-Committee members include Kevin Trimble and Donna Havinga. Chapter members with an interest in actively participating in this area are invited to join us. Please contact Donna at 905-939-8498 or via e-mail at eoutlook@ican.net.

Donna Havinga

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Student Perspective on Restoring the Ravines of Toronto

I am a graduate of the Zoology program at the University of Guelph, and am presently enrolled in the Ecosystem Restoration program at Niagara College. On Saturday October 4th, I attended the SER conference on restoring Toronto's ravines. I was asked to provide a student perspective of the day - long event.

In this light I will simply relate the key issues which stood out the most in my mind. Foremost among these would be my surprise at the extent of 'natural' areas remaining in the heart of this urban landscape. Next would be my realization that a landscape covered in beautiful, mature forest does not necessarily mean that a 'healthy', functional ecosystem exists there. Rather, in the case of a number of the city's ravines, there exist landscapes crowded with invasive and exotic species (eg. Norway Maple, garlic mustard), damaged by erosion, and degraded by direct and indirect human activities.

I was introduced to forests in which Norway Maple had crowded out virtually all other tree species, shaded out native understorey plants, and generally created a species poor environment on rapidly eroding slopes. Beyond this, I witnessed disturbance from nearby residential areas and extensive disturbance from other human activities (eg. recreational). From this perspective, the conference participants related their efforts to restore to these areas, some semblance of a functional ecosystem.

Herein, the key to the success of each restoration effort appeared to revolve around public perception, awareness and participation. Essentially, if the public (most immediate stake-holders) were invited to join in the process of restoring their neighbourhood ravines, then success was more likely to be assured.

Examples of remediation efforts included invitations by a local school and a private home-owner to restore the small portions of ravine under their ownership. From my perspective, there appeared to be a high degree of enthusiasm on the part of the public regarding an all out effort to restore these landscapes. This was especially true once they were made aware of the problems and potential solutions involved. Interestingly however, aesthetics occasionally became a bit of a stumbling block to the process. In many cases, Norway Maple trees had grown to become the largest, most populous species in the ravines. They therefore provided the core example of nature's beauty in the area. Unfortunately, they are also one of the biggest factors contributing to the degradation (loss of species diversity, erosion) of Toronto's ravines. As such, their long-term removal is essential for the recovery of these areas. A point which had to be clearly brought across to the public.

Overall, the conference provided an intriguing, informative and enlightening tour of the efforts to redress some of the damage brought upon our natural landscapes. These efforts will owe much of their success to the use of nature itself in the remediation process (re-introduction of native species, natural methods of erosion control, opportunity to heal itself free from human disturbance).

Michael Peppard

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SER - Ontario Executive Welcomes New Members

Jill Cherry is currently Regional Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Toronto. Her jurisdiction includes over 200 parks, including most of the ravine lands owned by the City, as well as Wards Island. She has been involved in numerous restoration and naturalization projects including High Park and Sherwood Park. In addition, she is responsible for the High Park Greenhouses and has provided support to the Native Plant production programme that provides for the propagation and production of native plants for planting in the City's parks as well as in other jurisdictions.

Tom Whillans is an ecologist with particular interests in fisheries, fish habitat, wetlands, co-management, community development, watershed restoration, historical ecology, bioregionalism, restoration ecology and related environmental problems. His doctoral work was in the Department of Zoology, while located at the Institute for Environmental Studies, at the University of Toronto. Since 1983, he has been a professor in the Environmental and Resource Studies Program at Trent University. He chaired the Program from 1989-91 and 1994-5. Most of his research has focused on problems in the Great Lakes basin, although he has worked in both the Northwest Territories and Ecuador on issues relating to aboriginal use and the management of watershed and aquatic resources.

A warm welcome to you both!

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The Right Tree in the Right Place - an FGCA Progress Report

There is growing evidence, both in research and in practical experience, on the implications of using inappropriate stock on the long-term economic and ecological success of tree planting efforts. People are becoming increasingly aware of the problems of using the wrong species on a particular site. However, the problem of using the right species, but the wrong source of seed is little understood. It is a question of genetically appropriate stock, which is a function of: source of seed - trees/seed from different climates within a species range can vary in their adaptedness if moved outside of their particular set of environmental conditions - use seed sources adapted to the planting environment quality of seed - the genetic diversity within a seedlot - ensured by collecting during good seed years, from large, healthy stands, and from many individuals in that stand.

The Forest Gene Conservation Association of Ontario is trying to ensure the long term economic and ecological success of tree planting efforts, by helping consumers get appropriate stock for their planting projects. These consumers include municipalities, conservation groups and individual landowners. Some do not know what stock is appropriate for their situation. Others may be quite knowledgeable, but can't find appropriate stock due to lack of supply, or a lack of labelling. A supply of trees is needed that is in some way labeled as to its origin and quality. Tree planting is an expensive proposition these days. If you can't be assured of its origin or quality, it can be best to postpone your plans.

Producing such labeled stock can be a tricky business for the industry. It involves extra work to maintain the identity of the seed, from the parent tree through to the collector, processor, grower and distributor. It means deciding what species you are going to produce for what climate zones, several years in advance of knowing if there is even a market for that particular stock. However, labelling can give seed collectors through to growers an advantage in marketing the material they do produce.

It is a complex issue of supply and demand. Certification of the stages and operations involved in producing planting stock can help the consumer be assured of what they are buying. Consumer education and help in marketing are ways to help the industry produce appropriate stock. The FGCA has plans to intervene in all 3 areas - certification, education and marketing - to help ensure the planting of appropriate material in Ontario's landscape. It is an ambitious undertaking, and will likely take several years to fully implement.

During the process we will attempt to involve the many different people involved in reforestation efforts in Ontario. To this end we recently distributed a background report to update people on the concern, and the possible solutions. The report was sent to approximately 50 people. From these 50 we are putting together a Working Group to further direct our efforts. We are also maintaining a mailing list of people who want to stay informed but can not commit the time to the Working Group.

Currently we are compiling responses from the background report, as well as the input from several people who attended an October 23 working group meeting at The Arboretum, University of Guelph. One idea we will be acting on immediately is production of a directory of currently available source identified seed and stock. Next steps include:

more research into certification programs in other jurisdictions, more meetings to gather input from Working Group members preparation of a draft certification program implementing a pilot program in 1998 creating an education program for consumers and the stock production industry.

If you have any questions, or would like to be involved, please contact me at (613) 269-3145 or newleaf@storm.ca. I would be very pleased to hear from you.

Barb Boysen FGCA Coordinator

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Watershed Restoration in Latin America

April 1997 was the beginning of a major five- year community-based ecological restoration project in Mexico and Ecuador. Coordinated by Trent University and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, the project is called the Inter-American Networking for Studies and Training in Natural Resource Usage for Community Transformation (INSTRUCT). Other partners include the educational institutions University of Guelph, Universidad Autonoma Chapingo (Mexico), Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Ecuador, University of New Brunswick, Colegio Postgraduados (Mexico), Sir Sandford Fleming College and non-government or community groups such as Comité para la Defensa del lago San Pablo (Ecuador) and Grupo Ecologista Texcocano (Mexico).

INSTRUCT operates from the premise that education is fundamental to community-directed ecological restoration. An enduring approach to ecological restoration would require understanding and capacity on the part of communities, government and non-government development agencies, and formal educators, particularly in universities. In order to facilitate the development of such a system of knowledge and capacity, INSTRUCT will use particular watershed restoration initiatives as demonstration projects in a program of education/training at three levels in the two countries; community, extension-worker, and university. The community, development agencies and universities involved will, at the end of INSTRUCT's five year life, serve as regional centres of learning about watershed restoration.

The project is focusing initially on the Mexican watershed of Rio Texcoco and the Ecuadorian watershed of lago San Pablo. After three years an additional watershed may be added for each country. The two initial watersheds have been degraded ecologically and economically by thousands of years of intensive agriculture, some urbanization, topography-enhanced erosion, pollution from nutrients and persistent toxins, deforestation, water withdrawal, and invasion of exotic nuisance species. The watersheds were selected because their citizens (persons and institutions) had demonstrated the inclination and some capability to enact a program of rehabilitative integrated ecosystem management. INSTRUCT will not remediate the watershed programs in its five year life. The project will, however, endeavour to leave in place: university programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels on integrated watershed restoration (functional restoration), a network of trained trainers of professionals on the same, community-based organizations primed to serve as mentors on the same for other communities in other watersheds, and a series of demonstration projects on the range of redevelopment actions that could be undertaken to restore a watershed ecosystem that could be used in the above listed educational/training activities. Where problems or solutions are not immediately clear and, in general, in order to facilitate adaptive managerial response, programs of self-directed participatory research will be initiated.

Although most of the educational work and research will be done in the south, there will be some opportunities for northern graduate students and other collaborators. For more information, contact:

-  David Morrison, INSTRUCT Director, 705-748-1314, dmorrison@trentu.ca
-  Linda Slavin, INSTRUCT Manager, 705-738-1314, lslavin@trentu.ca
-  Raul Ponce-Hernandez, (Canadian contact on the Mexican component), 705-738-1261, rponce@trentu.ca
-  Tom Whillans ,(Canadian contact on the Ecuadorian component), 705-748-1261, twhillans@trentu.ca

Tom Whillans

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Planting the Seed...A Guide to Establishing Aquatic Plants

...is now available from: Environment Canada Environmental Conservation Branch Conservation Strategies Division 4905 Dufferin St. Downsview, ON M3H 5T4

...and will soon be available on the web (<http://www.cciw.ca/green-lane/intro.html>). Several SER-Ontario members contributed to this concise, 24-page guide. The guide outlines steps in establishing wetland vegetation e.g., developing a plant list, obtaining plant material, selecting plant stock, seed collection, cleaning and propagation, and planting. Two other guides in the series are also being produced by Environment Canada: one for woodlands and another for meadows, prairies and savannahs. Numerous SER-Ontario members will contribute their expertise to the production of these guides as well!

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