



Northumberland Land Trust

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MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release

April 23, 2015

Northumberland Land Trust Conducts Another Highly Successful Prescribed Burn

Cobourg, ON – This spring, another highly successful and controlled prescribed burn was completed at the Northumberland Land Trust’s McEwen Nature Reserve on Saturday April 18, 2015. The burn was conducted by Lands and Forests Consulting and observed by Val Deziel from the Nature Conservancy of Canada along with John Geale and Bill Newell of the Northumberland Land Trust. The burn crew arrived about 9:00 am to prepare the site, the burn was completed by 1:30 pm, and the crew departed about 2 hours later after ensuring that the fire was completely extinguished.



The fire works its way across the field

Prescribed burns are essential to restore and revitalize globally rare tallgrass prairie and savannah habitat in Northumberland County.

“Tallgrass prairie and savannah plant species depend upon fire to live. As natural fires have long been suppressed in southern Ontario, conservation scientists across North America use professionally-managed prescribed burns to bring new life to these wildlife habitats,” says Mark Stabb, Nature Conservancy of Canada’s Central Ontario Program Director.

Prescribed burns are intentionally set and professionally managed fires that burn across a pre-determined area under strictly controlled circumstances in order to restore natural habitat. Fires clear scrub and brush, allowing sunlight to reach the soil where native grassland seeds lie. Native prairie species flourish following a fire, restoring the native grassland habitat of the area. Fire can also help to remove invasive species. Burning only occurs under specific weather conditions that will allow a safe and controlled fire.

This is the second prescribed burn at the Northumberland Land Trust’s McEwen Nature Reserve in as many years. Last year the burn was completed on the southern portion of the nature reserve while this year the northern section of the property received the benefit of a prescribed burn. Preparations for this year’s burn began last October 24, when volunteers from the Northumberland Land Trust assisted the Lands and Forests Consulting team in establishing the firebreak.



Setting the firebreak

The McEwen Nature Reserve prescribed burn is part of ongoing habitat restoration efforts by the *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative*. Prescribed burns are planned for this year on various Oak Ridges Moraine sites by the *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative* partners, including Alderville First Nation, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (four sites), Northumberland County and Ontario Parks as well as the Northumberland Land Trust.

Lands & Forests Consulting is an independent prescribed burn consulting firm. Detailed burn plans, fire permits and insurance are obtained in advance for each site. For safety reasons, the public is not allowed access to the prescribed burn areas during the burns. Media representatives and the public are welcome to observe burning operations from a safe location, to be determined by fire control staff. Prescribed burns are weather-dependent and site-specific. Typically they occur in mid-April to early May, after all snow has melted and once sites are dry.



Landscape after the fire; it will return to green very quickly

The crew at the McEwen Nature Reserve burn was very efficient, careful and professional, and clearly had complete control over the fire. It was a beautiful sunny day and the wind varied from almost none to quite strong and gusty. The whole area looked like a barren black wasteland after the burn, although on closer observation some green plants apparently unaffected by the fire could be seen. It will be interesting to see how quickly life returns and the burn area becomes a more normal-looking field.

Land Trust President John Geale says **“Thanks to Jane Zednik for supplying the weather data required to determine a suitable day for the burn. Thanks also to the neighbouring landowners, the local fire department and Port Hope Fire Chief Jim Wheeler, and the Peterborough airport for their cooperation and interest in this burn, which will allow us to maintain a wonderful area of grassland habitat.”**

This year’s prescribed burn was funded by public donations to the Northumberland Land Trust. If you wish to support the work of the Northumberland Land Trust please visit their web site at www.northumberlandlandtrust.ca and select the “Donate Now” button, or call (905) 342 3851.

The McEwen Nature Reserve is open to the public for pedestrian activities year-round with permission. If you wish to visit this property please contact the Northumberland Land Trust at president@northumberlandlandtrust.ca or call (905) 342 3851.

Land trusts are not for profit, charitable organizations which have as one of their core activities the acquisition of land or interests in land (such as conservation easements) for the purpose of conservation. Most land trusts focus on conserving the biological values of land but across the continent, land trusts have also been established to protect cultural, scenic, historical, agricultural and recreation lands.

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