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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**

**May 1, 2014**

## **Northumberland Land Trust Conducts Highly Successful Prescribed Burn**

**Cobourg, ON** – This spring, a highly successful and controlled prescribed burn was completed at the Northumberland Land Trust’s McEwen Reserve on Thursday April 24, 2014. The burn was conducted by Lands and Forests Consulting and observed by Val Deziel from the Nature Conservancy of Canada along with John Geale, Bill Newell and Bill Crowley of the Northumberland Land Trust. The burn crew arrived about 11:30 am and the burn was completed by 5:00 pm. Photographer Bill Crowley documented the burn.

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, NCC’s Central Ontario Program Manager.

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, controlled fire.

The McEwen Reserve prescribed burn is part of ongoing habitat restoration efforts of the *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative* partners, which include the Nature Conservancy Canada, Northumberland County Forest, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, Lower Trent Conservation, Ontario Parks, Alderville First Nation, Willow Beach Field Naturalists, Lone Pine Marsh Land Trust and the Northumberland Land Trust.

The prescribed burns conducted on various Oak Ridges Moraine sites by *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative* partners are being carried out by trained professionals. Burns sponsored by the *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative*

partners are managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Alderville First Nation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Lands & Forests Consulting, 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 snow melt and once sites are dry.

The crew at the McEwen Reserve burn was very efficient, careful and professional. They had amazing 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 were seen. It will be interesting to see how quickly life returns and the burn area becomes a more normal-looking field. Bill Crowley will return periodically over the coming weeks to document the greening process.

A pre-burn census of birds in the area was done by David Geale on Monday, April 21, 2014. The local bird population will be monitored following the burn as well. A pair of Tree Swallows seems to have claimed ownership of one of the on-site nest boxes, and they, and at least two other individuals were already hawking for insects overhead as the last smouldering patches of the burn were doused with water. In another nest box a pair of Bluebirds already had 4 eggs. The crew thoroughly watered the post the box is on before the burn, and it escaped unscathed.

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

The McEwen Reserve is open to the public with permission. If you wish to visit this property please contact the Northumberland Land Trust at [stewardship@northumberlandlandtrust.ca](mailto:stewardship@northumberlandlandtrust.ca) or call (905) 342 3851.

Another prescribed burn is planned for the McEwen Reserve in the north Field in 2015. 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 the web site at [www.northumberlandlandtrust.ca](http://www.northumberlandlandtrust.ca) and select the “Donate Now” button or call (905) 342 3851.

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