

Conservation Strategy for Carolinian Canada Objectives & Action Plans

Introduction

From November 1996 to January 1997, a multi-stakeholder Panel met to assist in the development of a Conservation Strategy for Carolinian Canada. They were asked to:

- < Refine and develop the Priority Goals identified at the November 5th Workshop;
- < Develop 3 year and 1 year strategic objectives and Actions Plans; and
- < Make recommendations for implementation and measurement.

The Panel identified many supporting objectives as set out in the following document. In addition, the panel singled out 12 key objectives and created related Action Plans that are highlighted. The contribution of the panel members is very much appreciated:

Conservation Strategy Advisory Panel

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Woodlot Owner, Oxford
County

Mr. Paul Prevett
Ministry of Natural
Resources,
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Ms. Alice Walent-Bellar
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Mr. Dan Lebedyk
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Ms. Judy Eising
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Prof. Stewart Hilts
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Also several "corresponding
members" who were unable
to attend but provided
comments:

Mr. John Riley
Federation of Ontario
Naturalists
Mono Township

Mr. Kevin Kavanagh
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Ms. Margaret Vilez
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Organization of this Report

The Vision and Priorities workshop held on November 5, 1996 identified five priority goals. For each of these, the Panel identified a list of three year objectives and one year objectives. It is hoped that these will stimulate activity by a wide variety of organizations.

From the One Year Objectives, the panel selected twelve objectives that represented a good starting point for action, and proposed Action Plans for each including suggested participation.

Recommendations for Participation

The following section summarizes key Objectives and Action Plans for each Goal. The Vision suggests that Objectives would be achieved by groups working collaboratively. In proposing the Action Plans, certain groups came to mind as logical participants because they are already working in the field or have particular skills. The Panel suggested those groups as appropriate to lead and participate in specific actions.

It is important to note:

- < These are suggestions and do not imply any commitment by those groups (although we have already received many offers of participation arising from the workshop process);
- < The lists of names suggested are samples, they are incomplete and not exclusive.
- < Any interested party/group with something to contribute is welcome and nothing should be inferred from groups not specifically named; and
- < If there is no specific group suggested, the action plan is addressed to the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee or any successor group, such as the Carolinian Canada Coalition.

The following material is grouped by goal as follows:

- < Goal description
- < Key Objectives (for each goal)
- < Action Plans (to support each key objective)

These sections are followed by suggestions for implementation.

Key Objectives and Action Plans

Education Goal: Achieve broad awareness of the importance of ecosystems, communities and endangered species in the Carolinian region by the general public and particularly by landowners, and gain their support for measures to protect biodiversity.

This education goal supports all the other goals and strategies since it provides the understanding and motivation for volunteer work, landowner stewardship and fund raising as well as community support for protective measures such as watershed and municipal planning. The following are year one objectives.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Develop a strategy for education of youth concerning conservation of natural communities and biodiversity in the Carolinian Region of Ontario

ACTION PLAN 1-1

Request that Federation of Ontario Naturalists convene a workshop of educators, including interested organizations such as the Heritage Resources Centre (University of Waterloo), Ministry of Natural Resources, Conservation Authorities and other Provincial agencies to:

- < identify barriers to education of youth about biodiversity and natural communities in the Carolinian Region (e.g. lack of materials, distribution problems, etc);
 - < identify specific actions to enhance education of youth with respect to biodiversity and natural communities in the Carolinian Region.
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OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop a Marketing Strategy for conservation of natural communities and biodiversity in the Carolinian Region that targets adults, including groups and organizations not traditionally focussed on conservation e.g. Service Clubs, Municipal Councils and Officials.

ACTION PLAN 2-1

Request that the Centre for Land and Water Stewardship, University of Guelph, in consultation with interested parties, develop a concise and

persuasive "Case for Carolinian Conservation" that explains in common language why this is an important public issue.

ACTION PLAN 2-2

Request that the World Wildlife Fund of Canada (WWF) convene a workshop of interested parties such as the Heritage Resources Centre (University of Waterloo), to discuss a marketing strategy for protection and rehabilitation of natural communities and biodiversity in the Carolinian Region. Such a strategy might include:

- < speakers and presentations for service clubs
 - < media material, educational material
 - < special events and presentations.
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OBJECTIVE 3

Secure a sponsor and an operator for a Carolinian Canada Web site.

ACTION PLAN 3-1

The Stewardship Information Bureau (SIB) in Guelph has already created such a page. It is recommended that:

- < SIB be commended for this initiative;
- < Environment Canada, FON, and other organizations provide supporting material and "hot links" to Carolinian information on their home pages; and
- < Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) secretariat should publicize this information source with particular emphasis on potential educational and media users and find a funding source to develop the potential of this site.

Education Goal: Achieve broad awareness of the importance of ecosystems, communities and endangered species in the Carolinian region by the general public and particularly by landowners, and gain their support for measures to protect biodiversity.

3 Year Objectives (April 2000) will be achieved when:	1 Year Objectives (April 98) will be achieved when:
A youth education program about Carolinian species and biodiversity is being implemented. An adult education program about Carolinian species and biodiversity (including urban landscape) is being implemented.	OBJECTIVE 1
A Carolinian biodiversity educational kit that fits within curriculum guidelines is available for use in every school in the zone.	Existing Carolinian biodiversity educational materials have been collected and assessed, and a listing of sources published.
There <i>are</i> at least five magazine articles about biodiversity in the Carolinian zone and at least one significant media piece per month in the Carolinian zone on an ongoing basis	
There <i>is</i> at least one demonstration farm/site in each township with at least three organized farm tours annually to demonstrate conservation measures and protection of habitat in practical farming	Material suitable for incorporation with the Environmental Farm Plan has been developed collaboratively with farm groups.
There <i>is</i> an active outreach program of conservation groups and individuals meeting with organizations and groups not traditionally associated with conservation.--Missionary Work	A strategy and priorities have been developed for communication with groups not normally associated with conservation.
There <i>is</i> an active WEB site and online information base about Carolinian ecosystems and conservation with links to particular topics such as Tall Grass Prairie/Savannah	OBJECTIVE 2
Best Management Practices for Carolinian logging, and a "Sustainable Logging Professional" designation is commercially desirable	A sponsor and process for collaborative development of "Best Management Practices for Carolinian Logging", guidelines and a training program leading to a "Sustainable Logging Professional" designation have been identified.

Community Action Goal: Achieve broad community level action in support of biodiversity and conservation of natural communities and endangered species throughout the Carolinian region, including the urban landscape.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Distribute "Best Management Practices" and other information to support the protection of native ecosystems and communities in the Carolinian Region to all participants in Environmental Farm Plans.

ACTION PLAN 4-1

Enlist the support of Environmental Farm Plan Working Group and the Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association to encourage wide distribution of material supportive of protection of natural communities in the Carolinian Region:

- < to all farm plan workshops and participants; and
- < to all Stewardship Councils in the Region.

OBJECTIVE 5

Evaluate past land owner contact programs, recommend a model strategy and identify funding sources for new programs.

ACTION PLAN 5-1

Request that the Centre for Land and Water Stewardship, University of Guelph, and Wildlife Habitat Canada share their evaluations of stewardship models through the Coalition.

OBJECTIVE 6

Develop a model by-law and official plan language to support and encourage protection of biodiversity and natural communities in the Carolinian Region.

ACTION PLAN 6-1

Request that Ontario Professional Planning Institute (OPPI) develop a model by-law to support and encourage protection of natural communities and biodiversity in the Carolinian Region, in consultation with other interested parties such as the World Wildlife Fund, FON, the Association of Rural Municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Community Action Goal: Achieve broad community level action in support of biodiversity and conservation of natural communities and endangered species throughout the Carolinian region, including the urban landscape.

3 Year Objective (April 2000)	1 Year Objective (April 98)
A strategy to involve the municipal officials in supporting biodiversity and native Carolinian species has been implemented.	A strategy to involve the municipal officials in supporting biodiversity and native Carolinian species has been developed (e.g. ties to eco-tourism, civic pride, land values etc)
Biodiversity policies and targets are incorporated into municipal Official Plans(OP's) and Watershed/subwatershed Plans, and such plans should identify and include, and protect where practical, significant native Carolinian communities	OBJECTIVE 6
Research programs are clarifying the role and value of urban natural areas for forest birds, herptiles, native plants and other components of biodiversity	
There are 50 projects sponsored by community groups under way that will contribute to Carolinian biodiversity.	
A speakers bureau, with at least 20 active members is prepared to speak to community groups is well known within the zone.	There is a travelling Carolinian slide show and speaker support materials available for interested groups
There are at least 6 new active Land Trust Organizations in the zone	Training sessions and support for local Land Trust and conservation organizations are available at regular intervals.
The number of private land owners contacted annually concerning natural heritage stewardship in the zone has doubled. There is designated person/agency in each county/region for natural heritage stewardship land owner contact.	

<p>There will be a package of conservation land management materials targeted specifically at rural non-farm landowners. Contact with conservation land stewards are maintained and there is an annual workshop opportunity</p>	<p>Needs for support/educational materials for landowners have been assessed and prioritized. "Caring for your Land" materials have been evaluated for wide use.</p>
<p>There is high profile recognition for land stewardship in the Carolinian Zone in particular</p>	<p>OBJECTIVE 5</p>

Forest Goal:

Achieve no further loss of native forest cover and a substantial increase including an appropriate proportion of interior forest.

"Substantial" will vary with region but generally a 30-50% increase from existing forest cover would be considered substantial. "Appropriate proportion of interior forest cover" should be more than 10% of forested area 100+ metres to the edge, and more than 5% 200+ metres from the forest edge.

Protecting and expanding forest area, particularly interior forest, is expected to have many important benefits. Large forest blocks are disappearing, habitat that is critical for interior forest birds and other species that will not compete with edge species. In addition to providing critical habitat for endangered species, forests provide water recharge, flood control, aesthetic benefits and forestry income. Thanks to improved mapping it is possible to identify areas where a little regeneration in holes and gaps could achieve significant improvement in the extent of forest interior. With many County Plans in preparation, the time is right to make progress.

OBJECTIVE 7

Identify a minimum of 12 "Forest Opportunity Areas" (at least one per County or Region) where potential large forest blocks might be assembled through filling gaps, reconnecting existing blocks etc.

ACTION PLAN 7-1

Recommend that all Remedial Action Plan Areas (RAPs), Counties completing official plans, and Conservation Authorities completing watershed plans:

- < Complete forest patch mapping as part of their current process, where possible in a compatible GIS format;
- < Identify "forest opportunity areas" where interior forest could be recreated;
- < Adopt measures and policies to support and encourage protection and rehabilitation of large forest blocks within their areas of interest; and
- < Work cooperatively with "opportunity area" landowners, including First Nations, farmers and rural non-farm landowners, to increase large forest blocks.

ACTION PLAN 7-2

Convene a "scoping workshop" including the Stewardship Councils, Federation of Ontario Naturalists, the World Wildlife Fund, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Forestry Association, Ontario Hydro, Conservation Authorities, MNR, Environment Canada and other interested parties to develop a strategy to protect and restore large forest blocks in cooperation

with landowners. Such a strategy might include:

- Education, stewardship support materials for landowners
 - Recommendations for new incentives; and
 - Other enabling recommendations.
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OBJECTIVE 8

Complete a feasibility plan/study to provide an adequate stock of native tree species (e.g. a proposal for the St Williams site)

ACTION PLAN 8-1

Request that the Ontario Forestry Association and the Forest Gene Conservation Association, in consultation with other interested parties, initiate a feasibility study to ensure an adequate stock of native tree species.

ACTION PLAN 8-2

Maintain a registry or links to directories of nurseries and other sources of native tree nursery stock to assist municipalities and other groups who wish to plan native species.

Forest Goal:

Achieve no further loss of native forest cover and a substantial increase including an appropriate proportion of interior forest.

3 Year Objectives (April 2000) will be achieved when:	1 Year Objectives (April 98) will be achieved when:
Forest cover in all regions mapped and "opportunity areas" are identified (opportunity areas being places to get the most forest area for the least cost/effort--eg filling holes in existing forest blocks)	OBJECTIVE 7
Sufficient quantities of appropriate native tree stock are available for restoration work	OBJECTIVE 8
Comprehensive land owner education programs in place in all regions--including demonstration projects	Existing demonstration sites are listed and published. A strategy has been developed for education including status of existing land owner contact programs
Ecologically based native forest community restoration and enhancement guidelines are in place (e.g. NHRP program "Restoring Nature's Place" J.M. Daigle et al)	Materials for use with land owners, including interior forest are available
Measures to "support and encourage" native trees, forest cover and particularly interior forest cover are imbedded in the planning process in every region.	Model by-law and official plan language has been developed in consultation with representative farmers and other landowners, and included in current round of official plan reviews. A municipal sharing event/conference has taken place to discuss trees and forest cover initiatives (what is working, what is needed).
New/enhanced land owner incentive programs are available to support retention and restoration of forest cover.	Evaluation of existing programs and recommendations are complete
Science and research has clarified the socio-economic rationale for increased forest cover and interior forest	Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) has completed element/occurrence evaluation A science an research agenda for forest cover has been drafted
Forest monitoring process has been established.	A monitoring baseline agenda has been developed
A net increase of secured forest (legally protected) is achieved	An inventory of secured forest is complete There are some conservation easements for forests in place

Stream/Wetlands Goal: Achieve no further loss and a substantial increase in stream water quality and wetland quantity.

"Substantial" will vary by region but generally represents a 30 % improvement. "Quality" should be defined by stream base flows, fish and indexes of diversity, percentage of banks with vegetation cover, provincial water quality standards for contamination, sediment input to wetlands.

Contaminated water can pose serious problems for livestock, farms and urban communities as well as wildlife. Protecting streams and water quality can seldom be achieved by an individual--it requires cooperation and community action. The benefits of healthy streams like fishing and swimmable water are large but occur downstream, making combined action necessary. Streams and wetlands are essential to many species including some that are endangered, additional reasons to take action now.

OBJECTIVE 9

Identify a minimum of 12 "Wetland and Stream Valley Opportunity Areas" (at least one per County or Region) where potential significant large wetland or stream valley blocks might be protected through stewardship, conservation easement, or purchase.

ACTION PLAN 9-1

Recommend that all Remedial Action Plan Areas (RAPS), Counties completing official plans, and Conservation Authorities completing watershed plans:

- < Complete stream valley and wetland mapping as part of their current process, where possible in a compatible GIS format;
- < Identify "wetland and stream valley opportunity areas"
- < Adopt measures and policies to support and encourage protection and rehabilitation of significant wetlands and stream valleys; and
- < Work cooperatively with "opportunity area"landowners , including First Nations, farmers and rural non-farm landowners to secure protection of significant wetlands and stream valleys.

Best Management Practices identify practical ways to protect surface and groundwater from contamination. Gradual progress is evident in the form of windbreaks, conservation tillage improved manure management and other practices. The challenge is how to speed up the awareness and participation. The Environmental Farm Plan Program is a practical program developed by farm organizations, but currently reaches less than 10 % of farms. A much higher participation is needed to ensure protection of the resource.

OBJECTIVE 10

Develop a strategy to increase participation in Environmental Farm Plans (EFP's)

ACTION PLAN 10-1

Meet with Environmental Farm Plan Working Group and the Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association to discuss barriers to greater participation and to offer assistance.

ACTION PLAN 10-2

Recommend to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada that the Carolinian region be designated as a pilot area for programs arising from their "Three Year Action Plan for Biodiversity"

OBJECTIVE 11

Develop a land stewardship program for rural non-farm property and hobby farms that corresponds to the Environmental Farm Plan.

ACTION PLAN 11-1

Encourage the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association to complete and distribute its plan.

Request that CLWS, University of Guelph, in consultation with parties such as the OFA, FON etc, evaluate and report on the Carolinian Canada component in the "Master Steward Plan" and any complimentary plans, and recommend means to encourage wider application of suitable plans.

Stream/Wetlands Goal:

Achieve no further loss and a substantial increase in stream water quality and wetland quantity.

3 Year Objectives (April 2000) will be achieved when:	1 Year Objectives (April 98) will be achieved when:
Wetland and stream valley improvement "opportunity areas" are identified	<i>OBJECTIVE 9</i>
Participation and implementation of Environmental Farm Plans (EFP) have doubled	OBJECTIVE 10
There is a program similar to EFP for non-farm land and hobby farms	OBJECTIVE 11
There is a 25 % decrease in urban (including golf course) phosphorous run-off to streams	Strategy has been developed for urban education program developed Strategy for golf courses has been prepared
Spending on reduction of "non-point" sources of phosphorous run-off reduction has doubled. A "phosphorous trading" program to allow achievement of phosphorous reduction objectives by spending on alternate sources. A new incentive program for rural stream water quality improvements is in place	Diffuse sources study for the Carolinian Zone approved A strategy for urban sewer separation and catchment basin management has been developed A new incentive program to encourage improvements in rural stream water quality has been designed.
Several more stream valley and wetland rehabilitation demonstration projects are in place	Demonstration site(s) have been identified
Most municipal drains, natural watercourses and wetlands have appropriate buffer strips as a result of a cooperative program	A rationale and strategy has have developed in consultation with farm organizations for buffer strip implementation
6 More major watershed plans complete	A Strategy has been prepared to complete Watershed Plans
"Hot spots" for sedimentary nitrate and phosphorous are identified and mapped and programs to secure improvement are in place Research has identified key sources of nitrate in rural water	An Environment Canada listing of "hot spots" is complete and distributed

Prairie/Savannah Goal: Protect all significant remaining prairie/savannah habitats and restore the full range of native prairie/savannah communities in appropriate locations.

Prairie and savannah areas were identified as important remnant habitats in terms of diversity and rare species. However additional planning and action is needed to restore sites and protect the gene pool.

OBJECTIVE 12

Complete and publish a review of existing prairie and savannah sites, identify opportunities and priorities for action, and initiate at least one additional restoration site.

ACTION PLAN 12-1

Finalize the draft status report on tall grass prairies, and request that MNR convene a meeting of the Tall Grass Prairie Association MNR and the Rural Lambton Stewardship Network (RLSN) develop priorities for action, and means to encourage appropriate local initiatives.

Prairie/Savannah Goal:

Protect all significant remaining prairie/savannah habitats and restore the full range of native prairie/savannah communities in appropriate locations.

3 Year Objectives (April 2000) will be achieved when:	1 Year Objectives (April 98) will be achieved when:
No net loss of existing significant prairie or savannah habitat and at least one additional restoration project is under way	OBJECTIVE 12
All remaining significant prairie/savannah sites are digitally mapped (suitable for Geographic Information Systems--GIS) and identified	Responsibility for mapping all sites has been established, including a baseline map estimating original vegetation and prairie soils
A WEB site to support access to information concerning prairie/savannah restoration techniques is operational (see also Education)	An annotated bibliography of prairie/savannah restoration techniques has been prepared and published
There are commercial businesses producing and marketing native prairie seeds/planting stock to support restoration efforts, and there is a least one pilot of prairie seed growing as an alternative farm crop.	Needs for restoration planting stock have been assessed and the results published
Nurseries and other sources of native prairie/savannah species are identified and well known	Sources of native species are identified, and an inventory of stock prepared
A long term education program is in place (see Education)	
A program of land owner recognition and encouragement for appropriate use of prairie/savannah restoration (see Community Action)	

Implementation

The Goals identified in this Conservation Strategy will require greater involvement from the private and volunteer sector, with a greater emphasis on local coordination and local initiative and a strong emphasis on education and cooperation with landowners.

To be successful, there must be increased attention to building the capacity of local conservation groups (both government and non-government) and to stimulating action. It will require building bridges to other kinds of organizations to build a broad base of support, including farm, tourism, and economic development organizations. It will need conservation groups to be more goal-oriented, looking forward and planning their role, rather than simply reacting to opportunities or funding programs. While there will always be a role in Carolinian Canada for provincial and national agencies and organizations, there is a strong sense that delivery of the program should move increasingly to the local level.

The Coordination Role

Under this model, the role of the Carolinian Canada program would place more emphasis on providing services and information to local partners, and less on direction and the allocation of funding.

There is strong agreement that some form of coordinating body is necessary to:

- minimize duplication of effort;
- bring interested parties and resources together;
- provide recognition and support of local efforts;
- report on progress;
- share and celebrate successes; and
- periodically review strategies, goals, and action plans.

To stimulate local activity, the coordinating body should not appear to have the resources or authority to direct and fund activities. A structure that is suited to administration of provincial programs will not foster the local initiative that is necessary. The coordinating and facilitating role is more important than ever.

This role could be provided by a small secretariat with a volunteer Board drawn from local and provincial groups/agencies active in projects in Carolinian Canada. This proposed coordinating body could be called the *Carolinian Canada Coalition*.

Carolinian Canada Coalition.

The primary functions of the Coalition would include:

- < Communication hub, linking groups to information
 - newsletter service
 - Web page supporter
 - ensuring that communication is maintained with landowners previously contacted on the 38 priority sites.

- < Convenor of annual Carolinian Forum
 - review strategy, set new priorities and action plans
 - measure progress and identify obstacles
 - celebrate success and learn from others
 - meet others, compare notes, and coordinate actions
 - draw media attention and release new information

- < Facilitator
 - bring resources and interested groups together
 - spark local and member group activity

Funding Conservation Activities

The proposed Coalition would not fund conservation projects directly, although it could play an important role in promoting the development of appropriate funding programs, and providing information to local groups/agencies about funding sources. The only funds raised directly by the Coalition would be those necessary to maintain the secretariat and its activities.

Nonetheless, funding is clearly a major constraint on the level of activity and effectiveness of all organizations involved in Carolinian Canada. The benefits of conservation are spread far too wide to be captured by local sources alone. In particular, the two senior levels of government have legislated responsibilities and international commitments to conserving biodiversity. They should be expected to be significant funders of conservation activity, both for their own functions and in partnership with others.

Decentralization of conservation activities in Carolinian Canada should also stimulate some increased level of support from local and regional organizations and individuals. For example, local land trusts may tap local sources to fund protection for certain sites. Those who benefit, such as tourists and bird watchers should see opportunities to make donations or help fund projects. User fees may rise and voluntary efforts may replace some centrally funded work. In general, new and entrepreneurial approaches must be initiated.

While competition for funding is stiff, well-conceived projects that address the conservation needs of communities and the Carolinian region are likely to find support.

Next Steps

Moving from the past Carolinian Canada program to a new vision and a new structure will require a transition period. At least three actions can be taken to make the transition as smooth and effective as possible.

First, the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee should distribute this report broadly, and encourage discussion of its approach and its recommendations.

Second, a major Carolinian Canada Forum should be sponsored, as a way of celebrating the close of the first phase of the program, and marking the beginning of the new phase. The Forum could include technical information and case studies, as well as workshops on priority areas such as education. It would also provide an appropriate setting to elect a new Coalition Steering Committee.

Third, municipalities, Conservation Authorities, Stewardship Councils, and community groups within the region should be encouraged to begin immediately to develop and undertake projects that are in keeping with this conservation strategy. During the development of the strategy, we heard of many projects, and many ideas, that would immediately advance conservation activity within the region. These should be given every possible encouragement to proceed.

The success of this conservation strategy is dependent to a large degree on the initiative and involvement of people at the local level. To attract this involvement, the Coalition and its members will need to "sell" the people of the region on why local action is so important, suggest appropriate activities and projects, and lead by example in their own programs. Together, we must ignite a brushfire of local conservation activity in Carolinian Canada, and then fan the flames with renewed enthusiasm.

Submitted by:

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