

Conservation Strategy for Carolinian Canada

Summary Report

Introduction

A Unique Region & Program

Carolinian Canada is a unique region. Set in the most urbanized and intensively farmed landscape in the country, it still possesses a richness of wild species unparalleled in Canada.

The Carolinian Canada Program was established in 1984 as a partnership among government agencies and non-government conservation groups to address the special needs of this region. Over the past twelve years, this program has achieved a great deal, particularly in securement and protection of 38 priority sites. But unless effective steps are taken within the rest of the landscape, the loss of species and natural communities in the Carolinian region will inevitably increase.

A Landscape Under Pressure

Urban growth has been a major factor in the Carolinian region, and that development is expected to continue on the urban fringes. There is also substantial growth of rural non-farm residential

development in some areas.

Farming is the dominant land use in most of the region. Farming practices are becoming more intensive, with larger farms and more row crops. This raises concerns about the loss of habitat and water quality.

Forest cover continues to decline in most parts of the Carolinian region, with forest fragmentation into smaller blocks a particular conservation problem. Many songbirds and other species require a minimum forest size to protect them from predators that thrive along the forest edge.

Stream water quality suffers from sediment and pollutants from urban and rural run-off. Wetland losses also continue, although at a slower rate than in the past. Many natural habitats are a fraction of their original extent, particularly prairies and savannahs. Species and communities are increasingly at risk.

A Time of Change

A wide range of conservation programs are in place

in Carolinian Canada, but agency funding cuts have seriously reduced their effectiveness. Some important programs related to forest management and water quality restoration have been cancelled outright. Public ownership of natural habitats is very limited, about 2% of the landscape. First Nation lands, which total approximately the same area, often contain significant natural features.

Ontario is undergoing a major shifting of responsibilities from the province to municipal governments. At the same time, incentive programs such as property tax rebates are in a period of rapid change.

In the face of these changes, it appears to be time for a new focus for the Carolinian Canada program. A program that is more community-oriented, and that addresses the entire landscape rather than only individual sites, has better prospects for success in today's climate.

Developing the Conservation Strategy

The development of a conservation strategy was commissioned by the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee, chaired by Anne Redish. The study itself was undertaken by Ric Symmes of STERNSMAN, Ron Reid of Bobolink and Doug van Hemessen of the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee.

Issues and Options

The first stage in the project was the development of a 60-page *Issues and Options* report, which examined trends in land use and natural features, the adequacy of existing programs, issues related to conservation of biodiversity and possible options for future action. To promote discussion and feedback, this report was widely distributed to interested individuals and organizations in October 1996.

Vision & Priorities

Commencing at the 1996 A.D. Latornell Symposium, a structured process of discussion continued at a workshop of 65 conservationists held in London on November 5, 1996. Workshop participants included staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources, several Universities and Conservation Authorities, members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, naturalists and urban conservation groups, municipal and First Nations representatives and Carolinian landowners. Through the workshop process and a workbook of information, questions, and comments they described a realistic but preferred future for conservation in the region, that is *how they would like it to be*.

Objectives and Action Plans

The results of those workshops described a vision and priorities that were further discussed during December and January by a panel of 12 representatives from the initial workshops. This panel included members of the farm community, municipal planners, and landowners as well as representatives of conservation groups and agencies.

This Summary Report

This report summarizes the results of these discussions, and outlines the most immediate actions necessary to implement the conservation strategy. The next section of this report provides an overview of the vision and five priority goals for Carolinian Canada. The third section develops objectives and action plans for each of five priority goals. The final section recommends the kind of support structure needed for implementation and the most urgent next steps. A more detailed documentation of the workshops and panel deliberations, including a complete listing of objectives, can be found in the report to the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee titled *A Conservation Strategy for Carolinian Canada: Background Reports*.

This participative process was chosen to ensure that resulting conservation strategy was more than a plan developed in isolation by staff or consultants. It is meant to reflect the aspirations and priorities of landowners, conservation staff and volunteers and others with a stake in the future of this region. With this grounding in reality, we believe it provides a sound base for a renewed program of vigorous conservation activity in one of the most diverse and threatened regions of the country.

Acknowledgements

The Authors wish to acknowledge the contribution of many participants in the development of this Strategy. Those who participated in the Vision and Strategy Workshop are too numerous to list here. We would however, like to thank the members of the Stakeholder Panel who met in November, December and January to debate and contribute their expertise and perspective:

Conservation Strategy Advisory Panel

Mr. Brian Wheeler
Woodlot Owner, Oxford County

Carolinian Canada Committee
London

Mr. Brian McHattie
Canadian Wildlife Service
Hamilton

Mr. Paul Prevett
Ministry of Natural Resources,
London

Mr. Allen Woodliffe
Ministry of Natural Resources
Chatham

Prof. Stewart Hilts
Centre for Land and Water
Stewardship
University of Guelph

Ms. Alice Walent-Bellar
Lambton Wildlife Inc.,
Brights Grove

Ms. Sarah Rupert
Lambton Wildlife Inc,
Sarnia

Also several "corresponding members" who were unable to attend but provided comments:

Mr. Dan Lebedyk
Essex Region Conservation
Authority, Essex County

Mr. Steven Evans
County of Middlesex Planning
London

Mr. John Riley
Federation of Ontario
Naturalists
Mono Township

Judy Eising
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Mr. Don Hill
Environmental Farm
Plans Working Group,
Markham

Mr. Kevin Kavanagh
World Wildlife Fund
Toronto

Mr. Jim Boothby
Kent-Essex Stewardship
Network, Chatham

Mr. Wayne MacMillan
Grand River Conservation
Authority, Cambridge

Ms. Margaret Vilez
Ontario Federation of
Agriculture
Tillsonburg

Mr. Doug van Hemessen

Vision & Priorities

Vision

Preserving biodiversity is the over-arching scientific and ethical issue for many in Carolinian Canada. A vision to address this issue could be summarized as :

No further loss and a substantial increase in the size and quality of natural communities characteristic of Carolinian Canada.

In addition to biodiversity, there are other valid reasons for conservation of native ecosystems including:

- < economic (e.g. tourism, land values);
- < social (community pride, healthy communities, sense of place);
- < scientific (study, understanding); and
- < aesthetic (scenery, flowers, etc).

Combined, all these motivations led to a "Vision for Conservation" that emerged from a discussion of how our preferred future will differ from today:

- < the kind of landscape we want;
- < the approaches we prefer--how will conservation be achieved and biodiversity protected;
- < the organization preferred--who will do what, and how will this be coordinated;
- < the ways conservationists work together; and
- < funding for conservation.

Landscape

All elements of the landscape require some attention. However a shift in focus from past projects was proposed in response to new information about forest fragmentation and interior forest, threats to rural water quality and opportunities in urban greenspace. The group recommended greater emphasis on:

- < forest cover, particularly interior forest;
- < stream water quality and protection of wetlands;
- < native species and nature in urban areas; and
- < prairies and savannah (in the southern counties).

Approach

In the past, Carolinian programs focussed on securement and protection of 38 priority sites and the landowners within them. With this essential work well advanced, a much broader application of conservation measures is recommended to strengthen the remainder of the ecosystem. Expanding attention from "priority sites" to streams, wetlands, forests, and prairie requires a broad landscape approach and involves a much larger client group. New strategies are needed to reach this larger client group and new resources are needed to support these initiatives.

New strategies include finding common cause with landowners. 75 percent of the land base in Carolinian Canada is dedicated to farming. Too often, farmers and other landowners have participated late in the development of conservation programs. Clearly, to achieve significant progress in the broad landscape, farmers must be involved

from the outset and more cooperative approach will be essential.

New programs will need local funding, volunteers and political support. To secure these resources there must be broad community understanding of the issues and benefits of conservation and biodiversity. Only through better informed landowners and general public can programs expect better funding. Consequently, three principles underlie the proposed actions in this strategy:

- < **Education:** undertake extensive education and communication about biodiversity, endangered species and natural communities in the Carolinian Region, including greater use of native species in urban greenspace;
- < **Cooperation:** find common cause with farmers to develop programs that benefit both agriculture and nature; and
- < **Community:** spark local community action through a range of stewardship opportunities and activities.

Federal and Provincial purchases of land and direct action for conservation are being reduced. These decreases may be offset by increased regional, local and private efforts and investment. However, some functions cannot be assumed by others. Federal and Provincial governments must continue these essential functions including: enforcement of laws, international negotiation, tax incentives and programs of data collection, analysis, technical advice and research that support sound decision making by all sectors.

The following groups are forecast to play increased roles in conservation:

- < **conservation authorities**, because of their watershed perspective, land management experience and expertise and their community base;
- < **stewardship councils**, because of their local landowner representation;
- < **municipal governments**, because of increased planning responsibilities; and
- < **land trusts** and other private community based land protection organizations.

Organization for Conservation

Working Together

In the past, conservation depended on a few

organizations and individuals with a strong interest in some aspect of nature. This new vision requires a much wider participation and support, including: landowners, municipal councils, service clubs, chambers of commerce, health councils, farming and educational organizations. Everyone concerned with conservation should reach out and enlist groups not traditionally involved.

An inclusive program with participants joined by common conviction and objectives is very different than one dependent on a chain of command and control. Consequently, future working relationships should be:

- < broadly based, reflecting the benefits of biodiversity and a healthy region;
- < reaching out to other individuals and interest groups, e.g. health, tourism, commerce, industry, educational institutions;
- < more local involvement, local "ownership", more "friends of..." groups;
- < more collaborative, less directive, based on improved understanding and mutual interest;
- < better networked, avoiding duplication, more shared projects;
- < forward looking, goal driven rather than program or crisis driven; and

- < working with a sound scientific base, but action oriented when the balance of evidence supports, avoiding both "analysis paralysis" and emotional choices.

Bringing in more volunteer, community and cooperative participation will require a different structure and relationships. Coordination will be very important and challenging, but should be somewhat different than in the initial program led by the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee. A networking and facilitating organization is proposed, tentatively named the "Carolinian Canada Coalition" with membership and function as described in the *"Implementation"* section of this report.

Funding

Despite recent constraints on government funding programs, it is crucial that governments continue to address their responsibilities in this threatened region. There is no practical substitute for adequate funding of conservation by federal, provincial and municipal governments.

However, funding of future programs will change. Decentralization of planning and conservation should stimulate *increased* funds from:

- < corporate programs to benefit the community;
- < philanthropic individuals and organizations;
 - existing foundations
 - new groups formed to fund community projects (e.g. "Friends of...")
 - individual planned giving, tax planning and bequests;
- < user-pay/donations from tourists and others who benefit from using conservation facilities;
- < voluntary effort in aid of conservation; and
- < tax breaks and incentives for conservation through the Federal and Provincial

governments.

Priority Goals

Having described a future focus for conservation in the Carolinian region, it is apparent that considerable change will be required. In order to make the most progress in the next few years, it is important to focus our limited resources. A multi-stakeholder panel comprised of representatives of many of the groups participating in the initial workshop developed a series of priority goals based on the Vision described above:

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.
Community Action Goal:	Achieve broad community level action in support of biodiversity and conservation of native ecosystems, communities and endangered species throughout the Carolinian region, including the urban landscape.
Forest Goal:	Achieve no further loss of native forest cover and a substantial increase including an appropriate proportion of interior forest.
Stream/Wetlands Goal:	Achieve no further loss and a substantial increase in stream water quality and wetland quantity.
Prairie/Savannah Goal:	Protect all significant remaining prairie/savannah habitats and restore the full range of native prairie/savannah communities in appropriate locations.

From Goals to Action

The multi-stakeholder panel developed an extensive list of three year and one year Objectives and supporting Action Plans for each of the goals above. The Objectives are set out in detail in the report to the Carolinian Canada Steering Committee titled *A Conservation Strategy for Carolinian Canada: Background Reports*. It should be emphasized that the following Objectives and Action Plans are not all that is necessary to achieve the goals. Rather they are "year one objectives" that represent the most obvious starting points for productive action.

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.

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 broad 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Implementation

The priority activities identified under the 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, this will mean increased attention to building the capacity of local conservation groups (both government and non-government) and stimulating them to 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.

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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