

Brome County News

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RVLT celebrates acquisition of new land

There was good reason to celebrate at Ruiter Valley Land Trust's (RVLT) annual general meeting at Mansonville Town Hall recently.

Stewardship and conservation are high priority for the trust, explained Stansje Plantenga, co-founder and RVLT president. As such, the year's key issue was the acquisition of 130 acres of wilderness land – 50 in the Ruiter Valley – from Joyce Booth and Plantenga, respectively.

The meeting was particularly interesting this year, said the president. She noted the high sense of commitment and involvement amongst members.

“(They) had a lot of questions and input, and we had an interesting and spirited discussion on conservation servitudes and other heartfelt issues on stewardship during the question and answer period.”

Founded in 1987, the Trust has acquired and maintained large tracts of rural land in the Eastern Townships for preservation in perpetuity. In 1999, it sponsored the Appalachian Corridor (ACA) project, a trans-border conservation strategy designed to protect one of the last wilderness regions in southernmost Quebec and northern Vermont.

Today, the Trust owns 605 acres in Potton Township, including 27 kilometres of marked trails, developed for year-long use by hikers, environmentalists, cross-country skiers and snowshoers.

Beneficiaries are the local community and general public, including future generations who will be able to enjoy wilderness and other previously at-risk rural land.

“It's been a wonderful year”, said Plantenga, who described the charity's core focus in 2001 as landowner contact, education and scientific research. Activities included general meetings, which highlighted the ecological features of the area as well as individual stewardship meetings with landowners interested in participating in voluntary conservation.

Executive Director Terri Monahan noted the ever increasing support coming from landowners. A former president and long-time volunteer, she referred to them as “the trust's strongest allies”, noting especially the growing interest in voluntary conservation being shown by those in the Ruiter Valley and Sutton Mountains.

As executive-director, Monahan advanced and implemented stewardship programs in the territory with landowners in the regions. Along with environmental events, the Trust also collaborated in the assembly of a landowner's information kit produced by ACA.

As part of scientific research, the Trust identified habitats of vulnerable or threatened species and proposed conservation strategies, compiled and inventory of threatened and/or endangered birds, conducted a study of amphibians and reptiles and continued with its ongoing search for signs of Eastern Cougar in the Sutton Mountains.

The resulting information helped produce and update a data bank, as well as provide a basis for conservation plans for landowners in the Rooter Valley and elsewhere in the Appalachian Corridor.

The board also chose the following as officers for the 2002-2003 year: Stansje Plantenga, president; Charles Weldon, vice-president, Rick Petersen, president-elect, Marie-Claire Planet, secretary, Marcel Baillargeon, treasurer. Other directors include: Willie Coulter, Jean Demers, Brian Herman and Jim Freeman.

For more information about membership in the RVLTC and/or landowner conservation, call 450-243-5411.