



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Northumberland County Prescribed Burn Open House scheduled for March 15th, 2010

Cobourg, ON – This spring, experts will return to conduct the fifth season of prescribed burns on the Rice Lake Plains. Partners of the *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative* and the *Caring for the Moraine* project are hosting a Prescribed Burn Open House on March 15th from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Centreton Fire Station (2267 County Road #23). Representatives from organizations planning prescribed burns in the County will be available to answer questions.

The 2010 spring burns will take place within the Northumberland County Forest, the Nature Conservancy of Canada’s (NCC) Webber and Van Hove & Evens properties, and on Alderville First Nations’ land. These prescribed burns are essential to restore and revitalize globally rare tallgrass prairie and savanna habitat in Northumberland County.

“Tallgrass prairie and savanna 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 threatened places,” says Mark Stabb, NCC’s Central Ontario Program Manager. “We encourage our neighbours to come to the open house to learn more about this season’s plans, and to address any safety concerns they may have.”

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 also helps to remove invasive species. Burning only occurs under specific weather conditions that will allow a safe, controlled fire.

The prescribed burns conducted on the various Oak Ridges Moraine sites will be carried out by trained professionals. Burns sponsored by the *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative* partners will be managed by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, 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 will not be 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.

The prescribed burns are supported by two successful partnerships, both receiving support from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation. The *Rice Lake Plains Joint Initiative* partners are NCC, Northumberland County, Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, Lower Trent Conservation, Ontario Parks, the Alderville First Nation and the Northumberland Land Trust. The Ganaraska Hills partnership includes 15 groups promoting and coordinating restoration and stewardship activities on a large portion of the moraine in the vicinity of the Ganaraska Forest.

PLEASE NOTE: 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. Announcements of individual prescribed burns will be issued as soon as details are known.

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