

Friends of Leitrim Wetland

MEDIA RELEASE

December 9, 2007

Proposal to take billions of litres of water imperils ancient Leitrim Wetland

OTTAWA – Developers of the controversial Findlay Creek Village in south Ottawa have filed an application with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment for a Permit To Take Water, proposing to remove as much as 17 million litres of water per day from the site for the next 10 years – more than 60 billion litres in total, or the equivalent of nearly 50 Olympic-size swimming pools each week.

Not content to wait for the Permit to be granted, between September 10 and October 25 the developer, Tartan Homes, illegally removed water during 29 out of the 43 days. “Here is an example of what the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario warned about in his Annual Report last week,” says Carol Gudz, one of the Friends of Leitrim Wetland. “Wetlands are critically important ecosystems, but development and large water-takings are a major threat to their survival.”

This summer, Dr. Clarke Topp, one of Canada’s leading soil physicists, made measurements of soil permeability in seven locations at Leitrim Wetland. He concludes unequivocally that further drainage will – within months, not years – result in rapid lowering of the water table and bring about degradation of the wetland.

Cheryl Doran, a mother of three and another Friend of the Wetland, wonders how her children’s children will connect with the natural world if gems like Leitrim Wetland are allowed to be destroyed. Says Ms. Doran: “Leitrim Wetland has no rival in this city or even in North America, when it comes to ecological value.” She also notes that the habitat of Blanding’s Turtle is put at risk due to the proposed drainage activity. Blanding’s Turtles are a Threatened species, struggling to survive in Ontario.

The Friends of Leitrim Wetland urge the public to object to this proposal by writing to the Ministry of Environment before the December 29 deadline. “The citizens of Ottawa expect the Ministry of the Environment to abide by its own Statement of Environmental Values,” says Sol Shuster, “to ensure the security of Ottawa’s irreplaceable natural legacy for today and future generations.”

With the legal assistance of Ecojustice, the Greenspace Alliance of Canada’s Capital had already objected to an earlier proposal for water-taking at Leitrim and earlier last month filed an application with the Divisional Court for a Judicial Review of an OMB Decision that would allow the development to proceed.

For further information please contact:

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Dr. G. Clarke Topp – 613-828-0863

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

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The Proposal for a Permit To Take Water:

The Proposal can be found on the web site of the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry, EBR No. 010-2230: <http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/> . Comments may be made on-line or to Peter Taylor, Ministry of the Environment, Operations Division, Eastern Regional Office, 1259 Gardiners Road, Unit 3, PO Box 22032, Kingston Ontario, K7M 8S5, Phone: (613) 540-6868.

The Groups

The Friends of Leitrim Wetland comprises members of a number of environmental groups in Ottawa including the Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, the Coalition for a Healthy Ottawa, and the Sierra Club of Canada.

The Greenspace Alliance of Canada's Capital, formed in 1997, works to preserve green spaces in the National Capital area. www.greenspace-alliance.ca .

Ecojustice is Canada's legal champion for the environment. Founded in 1990 and formerly known as Sierra Legal Defence Fund, Ecojustice is Canada's largest environmental law organization. www.ecojustice.ca .

More Information

- Report by Dr. Clarke Topp on the permeability of the soil at Leitrim Wetland: <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/node/314>
- Report by Prof. Gabriel Blouin-Demers on Blanding's Turtle at Leitrim. <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/node/318>
- Action Alert about these Applications for Permits To Take Water: <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/node/319>
- Illegal Water Taking at Leitrim and Elsewhere <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/node/339>
- November 26 Media Release on an Application to seek a Judicial Review of an OMB Decision on development at the Leitrim Wetland: <http://greenspace-alliance.ca/node/338>