



## Introducing *raresites*: A Watershed Approach to Saving Lands and Protecting Water, together

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During *rare's* Strategy and Planning process in late 2014/2015 it became apparent that one of the biggest issues faced by conservation in the Grand River watershed and adjacent areas is a lack of grassroots efforts to protect land; we are losing agricultural as well as natural areas at an unprecedented rate — *rare* is filling that gap.

The *rare Charitable Research Reserve* is an urban land trust and environmental institute, headquartered at the confluence of the Grand and Speed Rivers in Cambridge and North Dumfries Township. Our first six properties now comprise over 1,000 acres and include 24 habitat types — globally-rare alvars, remnant old-growth forest, cold water streams and wetlands, to name a few — and function as a living laboratory, taking us beyond traditional Western methods of land preservation and **providing unprecedented opportunities for ecological research, education, community engagement, recreation and reconciliation**. We discover best practices and answers to environmental problems that can be shared worldwide. And through a *Chain of Learning*, we make our findings available to even the youngest student.

**Now, more than ever, there is a real need for our work as a land trust in the upper Grand River Watershed to protect conservation lands, forever, community-owned and independent of government policies and frameworks that often do not offer strong protection or can change on a whim with the elected officials.**

Ontario's biodiversity is concentrated in the southern part of the province. To date, less than seven per cent of land in southwestern Ontario is protected, despite it being one of Canada's most biodiverse areas. Protecting large areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services is challenging, however, because there is very little intact habitat left — what does remain is in small parcels; almost all land is in private ownership; and property values are very high. **But, opportunities do exist...**

[www.raresites.org](http://www.raresites.org)

Charitable Registration #8776 15914 RR0001

## The Eramosa River Conservation Corridor

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More than four years ago we brought together individuals from different conservation and related organizations in Waterloo Region/Wellington area under the *rare* umbrella as the *raresites* land securement team; watching and exploring lands of ecological significance along the Grand River Watershed. What we found — which was confirmed through a needs assessment in the community — resulted in **a unanimous decision that Guelph-Eramosa is in need of further conservation efforts to protect unusually rare and sensitive landscapes.**

Through the *raresites* review, and confirmed through a needs assessment in the community, **the Eramosa River emerged as a priority for conservation**; a green corridor protecting the river and its adjacent uplands and forests forever, ensuring connectivity of spaces and survival of species in an increasingly and rapidly developing area — and thereby also ensuring our own health and well-being and that of future generations!

The properties in the Eramosa Corridor are highly sensitive, and include mature forest, floodplain habitats, and Provincially Significant Wetlands. The health of the river, in turn, is largely dependent on the stewardship of the adjacent lands.

More than 20 properties of significance have been identified and we are on our way to having six of them come under our stewardship over the next couple of years through additional land donations and conservation easements.

Thanks to more than 70 donors — many of whom Wellington County residents — the first two properties were purchased by *rare* and the conservation lands from the former Edgewood Camp will become part of *rare's* land holdings in the spring of 2021 thanks to a generous Ecogift from the consortium of seven individuals who came together to ensure those lands were protected for the community to enjoy forever — resulting in over 225 acres added to *rare's* land trust holdings in Wellington County.

As with our other properties, we will bring several dimensions of conservation activity on the lands, such as science- and Indigenous traditional-knowledge-based stewardship, threat mitigation, monitoring and the potential to develop research projects and partnerships on the property. We will also endeavour to connect the community to the property through such events as restoration work days, educational hikes, litter clean-up and citizen-science volunteer opportunities—for example, monitoring butterflies and salamanders—and community BioBlitzes, which will allow us to build a species inventory of this property, too.

We will also be maintaining several of the trails already on these properties for the community to access throughout the year.

**Because of the community's support, we are changing the course of history in conservation, not only in Ontario, but nationally where the goals are high and the time short.**

**For more information or to donate over the phone, please contact:**

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