

The Economic Value of Nature

**The Economic Development & Marketing Case for Collaboration in
Nature Tourism**

Grey County Tourism Advisory Committee of Council

Prepared & Presented by: Linda Reader

October 2022

8:30 am

REVIEW: COUNTY FORESTS

- Grey County:
 - Rich in natural tourism resources e.g. 8500 Acres of forest, 77 km of trails
 - MNR -- 2009 placed a \$ value on green spaces - forests in Grey provided \$15, 284,000 of nature services to the community including tourism but also habitat and species protection and the mitigation of climate change among other benefits
 - In 2022, that value has increased to almost \$20 million
 - But tourism traffic to visit County forests & trails is not without controversy however (but Grey County is not alone)

METHODOLOGY

- Reviewed The Trails Master Plan & the Recreational Trails Master Plan
- Noted Tourism Advisory Committees concerns & strategies
- Conducted literature research on trends in Nature Tourism in Ontario and elsewhere and reviewed my own original survey results
- My observations have led to some recommendations

THE VALUE OF NATURE TOURISM*

1. Nature tourism was not created as a covid response :

2012: Top 3 recreational/tourism activities total \$1.434 billion
(The highest revenue in the Greenbelt)

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Hiking, climbing and horseback riding | \$872 million |
| 2. | Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing | \$326 million |
| 3. | Bird watching | \$236 million |

4.

*Evaluating the Economic Benefits of Greenbelt Assets, March 2012.

COVID & NATURE TOURISM

2. Covid accelerated travellers' desire to be in nature

- Destination Ontario* states in 2021 that:
 - Nature based tourism is #1 for those planning to travel
1. 49 %, the highest number, state walking & hiking as their motivators
 2. 34%, the second highest number state nature/natural wonders as their motivators

*Destination Ontario - Travel Intention & Motivator Research, July 14, **2021**.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF NATURE TOURISM

3. Nature tourism will generate the highest revenue of all other forms of tourism in Ontario. \$621.8 million projected.
- Destination Ontario 2021 states:
A group travelling to experience nature spend \$910 per trip

e.g. EBC'S Cup and Saucer Trail on Manitoulin Island hosts over 20 000 visitors each year potentially contributing \$9,000,000 (per 10 000 hiking couples) to the local economy.

CONCLUSIONS

4. Supporting Nature Tourism is good business for Grey County.

Based on Destination Ontario's projections and many examples in Canada, the US and around the world...

WHO IS THE 'NATURE TOURIST'?

- **5. The new Ontario nature tourist is an environmentalist seeking a peaceful experience in nature, a healthy escape and an opportunity to view native animals and plants first hand.**
- Some results from my survey of members of EBC:
 - # 1 Activity of five – Hiking 58 % -- 91 %
 - From GTA & Southern Ontario 44%
 - Desire Access to nature reserves 72%
 - Interested in protecting species 63%
 - & climate change strategies 54%
 - Mechanized activities 0 %

NATURE TOURISM IS NOT GOING AWAY

6. **Seventy-five percent of outdoor enthusiasts are continuing their activities after covid. Grey County has been discovered.**

Question:

How will we entertain them?

How can we extend their stay?

How can we make sure they spend money?

How can we make sure they return?

CREATE THE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

- 7. To the Nature Tourist, the trail is not just a route but a nature experience.**

QUESTION?

EBC'S FORESTS AND TRAILS POLICY

8. EBC defines the nature experience on their trails very clearly for their members. Should the County do the same?

- **Forest Management without lumbering**
- **Trails without motorized vehicles**
- **Preservation of wildlife and native plants**
- **Carbon capture for sale to support their activities**
- **Volunteer stewards to create & manage trails**

OBSERVATIONS OF GREY COUNTY TRAIL NETWORK TODAY

9. There is a huge opportunity for Grey County Tourism

OPPORTUNITY

To create what the new nature tourist is looking compared to what is presently being offered

BEYOND THE PARKING LOT

10. CONDUCT MARKETING RESEARCH

Opportunity:

To provide better services & infrastructure to accommodate increased tourist traffic

To provide unique trail experiences for targeted groups that will exceed tourists' expectations not diminish them

To create layered experiences/packages with local businesses

RECOMMENDATIONS

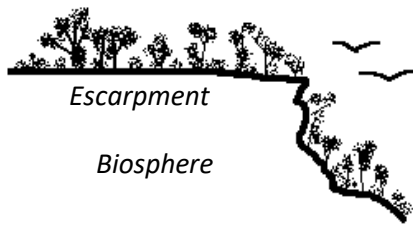
- Conduct research to identify the trail visitor & trail assets
 - e.g. refine messages to better market the trail experiences
- Collaborate with experienced land trust organizations etc
 - e.g. EBC for experience & strategies, OLTA, Tree Trust etc
- Protect the forest/trail environment for nature and travelers
 - e.g. develop a stewardship program, County code of ethics
- Seek funding support & partnerships -- OLTA etc
 - e.g. improve trails for a heightened tourist experience as well as infrastructure & signage, parking etc

EBC “Our Vision for Grey County”

- Robert ‘Bob’ Barnett, Executive Director
Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy
 - More tourists and tourism revenue
 - More access to nature for Grey County residents
 - Provide a healthier place to live
 - More habitat for endangered, threatened, rare and species of special concern
 - Slow the advance of climate change.

PETER MITCHELL - LAND STEWARDSHIP

- Research Associate with Dr Stewart Hilts, Director at the Centre for Land & Water Stewardship, University of Guelph for 25 years
- Passionate about preserving natural spaces in the Beaver Valley where he is a property owner while serving on the board of Friends of the Kimberley Forest, Beaver Valley Nordic Ski Club and Elephant Thoughts (owner of Kimbercote & River Stone Retreat Centre near Durham).
- Equally dedicated to sharing his stewardship expertise training young people at Guelph and, more recently, during his retirement



Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy

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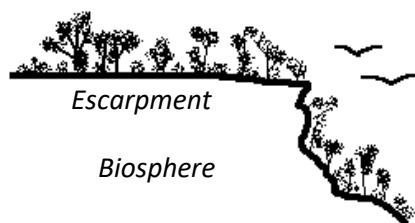
THE ESCARPMENT BIOSPHERE CONSERVANCY (EBC)

After 25 years, EBC is the largest land trust organization in Ontario. The achievements are notable. Led by Executive Director Bob Barnett since 1997, another 40 projects are to be completed this year. Bob and EBC are prepared to discuss collaborative projects with Grey County.

In 1997 The Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy was established to preserve the landscape, ecology and wildlife in the area of the Niagara Escarpment, Manitoulin, Bruce Peninsula and Saugeen River by developing and managing a system of nature reserves on which only ecologically sustainable recreational activities would be permitted.

- Protects **19,806 acres of land as nature reserves** .
- Hosts **70 species of conservation concern** including many endangered and threatened.
- Delivers over **\$36 million worth of ecosystem services** including flood reduction, better air and water quality and habitat protection
- Maintains over **80 km of public Nature Trails**.
- Contributes to achieving Canada's goal of **protecting 30%** of our land through land purchases and conservation agreements*..
- **Protects a donated acre of land for as little as \$50**. That acre can produce over \$1,800 of ecosystem services every year.
- Fights climate change by sequestering carbon in mature trees and wetlands, **700,000 tCO₂ of carbon reductions** from 2002 to date.
- Establishes **a new reserve every month**

* [Protect Your Land — Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy](#)



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EBC IN GREY

The chart below indicates acreages, trails, number of species protected and the tonnes of carbon sequestered plus the total value of ecosystem services provided to the County equaling \$10 744 million by EBC properties.

While EBC was gifted with the land for the Trout Hollow Trail in Meaford last year, EBC also creates conservation agreements with Municipalities as in the Heathcote Nature Reserve jointly owned with Blue Mountains. On Manitoulin Island where the Cup and Saucer Trail attracts over 20 000 visitors a year, EBC not only purchased the land for the trail but built an expanded parking lot for 50 cars in conjunction with the Municipality..

ESCARPMENT BIOSPHERE CONSERVANCY - GREY COUNTY NATURE RESERVES 08/2022

MUN.	ACRES OWNED BY EBC	ACRES CONSERVATION AGMNTS	TOTAL ACRES	TRAILS BUILT km	POSSIBLE TRAILS km	RARE SPECIES	CO2 TONNES	\$000 *ECO SERVICES
GEORG	1011.9	428.27	1440.17	2.4	10.5	25	7 472	4314
CHAT	134.06	1068.2	1202.26	-	3.1	3	4628	1473
WG	314.7	247.64	562.31	-	3	3	939	661
SG	171.79	142.0	313.79	-	1	3	1419	630
GH	231.78	636.96	868.74	1.8	2	17	3833	1690
MFRD	422.1	854.1	1276.2	3	4	6	3426	1364
HANR	18.0	-	18.0	-	-	-	-	-
B.MTN	75.1	301.93	377.03	1	-	-	1067	612
GREY TOTALS	2397.53	3679.10	6123	8.2	26.1	57	23 636 TONNES CO2	\$10 745 MILLION

* ECO SERVICES -Value of the services derived from the natural capital, both aquatic and terrestrial, found on EBC nature reserves and made available to the residents of Grey. Examples are cleaner water, less flooding, sustainable recreation, eco tourism, cleaner air, carbon sequestering**, less erosion and more biodiversity.

** EBC is the only land trust organization managing the collection and sale carbon offsets

L. Reader 2022_

Bob's comments to Grey County Tourism

I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you

So far, since August 1, we have completed 6 new reserves with 1,340 acres

We are proud that one is in Georgian Bluffs on Kemble Mountain with 102 acres, two more were in Bruce County and two in Simcoe. We have another project with 62 acres scheduled to close on the Kemble Escarpment in October.

So far, over 25 years, in Grey County we have completed the protection of 93 properties.

- 6,123 Acres
- 8.7 km Trail open
- 26.1 km of possible trail to add
- 57 Rare species identified on individual properties
- 23,636 Annual tonnes of CO₂
- \$10,745,000 Annual value of nature's services

Why are we doing this?

1. For the local community to benefit from: tourism, less flooding, cleaner air, cleaner water, protected species, more pollinators (a better place to live)
2. We are helping Canada achieve the objectives of the International Biodiversity Agreement by protecting 30% of our land by 2030
3. We are helping fight climate change by keeping mature trees in place, soaking up carbon (and getting paid \$100,000 a year selling carbon offsets) [only 15% harvested wood lasts 100 years]
4. We are keeping people out of hospital by lowering blood pressure as they walk in the woods

How can we do this better?

1. By working with you to build trail and advertise Grey as a great place to visit (examples: \$20,000 grant at Trout Hollow, \$220,000 grant on Manitoulin and half ownership at Heathcote)
2. By encouraging you to keep the trees in the Grey County forest to earn offset revenue and fight climate change.
3. By helping you encourage local landowners to take advantage of grants and favourable income tax treatment if they protect their properties from changes that reduce tourism and speed climate change.