Land Trusts

Land trusts can be defined, in a general sense, as non-profit registered charities which can hold land, conservation easements (which define certain conditions, such as rights-of passage for certain organizations or for purposes or restrictions to safeguard conservation of natural features), or enter into agreements called covenants with landowners. The purpose of land trusts is to maintain, protect, and steward properties with significant natural, cultural heritage, or agricultural values. Such trusts do not constitute a part of government, but remain non-profit registered charities based in the community.

There are now a number of land trusts in southern Ontario, and they are becoming particularly strong in some parts of the USA, where the national Land Trust Alliance has programs for education, guidance, publicity, and annual gatherings. The Ontario Land Trust Alliance currently lists 32 local land trusts and two provincial (the Ontario Farmland Trust and Ontario Nature). There are two local land trusts, the Branchton Village Land Trust that conserves a piece of Carolinian woodland next to the village, and the “rare Charitable Research Reserve”. Another form of land trust is a multi-property land trust that would be primarily interested in conservation properties not suited for recreational or public use.

The Region of Waterloo office of Planning, Housing and Community Services issued a directive to initiate public consultation on forming a land trust organization in Waterloo Region (see “A community-based conservation Land Trust in Waterloo region – Proposed discussion Forum” available on the Region’s website) and a preliminary meeting was held on Oct. 4, 2015. Information and contacts about ongoing meetings of a committee that was established can be made through Chris Gosselin, Senior Environmental Planner for the Region of Waterloo (cgosselin@regionofwaterloo.ca), or Roger Suffling (rcsuffli@uwaterloo.ca) of Waterloo Region Nature. **Rare** would also be happy to inform you about how it came to establish itself as a land trust. There is also copious information on the Internet, such as the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, which, among other things, provides primers for guidance in establishing your own land trust.