

Conservation authorities providing places to 'step into nature'

About 70 per cent of young Canadians currently spend one hour or less a day outdoors, according to Conservation Ontario. A new Ontario's Children's Outdoor Charter strives to turn that around by encouraging organizations and individuals to help children to get outside in order to be more active and to experience nature. Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities provide many opportunities for children and their families to 'step into nature' and are supporting the new Charter.

'We all know that children need to be outside more in order to be healthy, and conservation authorities offer over 270 conservation areas which provide lots of outdoor space and activities for all ages, especially children,' said Conservation Ontario General Manager Kim Gavine.

Conservation Authorities also work with more than 430,000 children per year through education programs and water festivals. Developed by a coalition of agencies, including the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Back to Nature Network, the intent of the Charter is to provide a framework that can be used by organizations and individuals to incorporate into their programs and communications so that they can encourage and advocate for more children to explore, discover, play, learn and understand the environment.

The Charter's website www.childrensofdoorcharter.ca provides suggestions for lots of activities that children can do outside. Conservation Ontario's Step Into Nature website www.ontarioconservationareas.ca provides a map and website links to all kinds of conservation areas' outdoor activities, special events, and locations.

Ontario is the first province to develop an outdoor charter for children and youth. To receive regular email newsletters about activities underway in conservation areas across the province, sign up for the Stay Informed Newsletter www.ontarioconservationareas.ca/