

Tilson announces federal action to protect species at risk

Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson was in Alton Saturday to announce \$47,400 in funding from the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk for a new environmental project.

Stewardship is an important step in protecting critical habitat of species at risk. HSP fosters stewardship measures like land and resource use practices that maintain habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of species at risk, enhance existing conservation activities, and encourage new ones. Voluntary activities are clearly making a difference in habitat protection, the recovery of species and the conservation of biodiversity.

The project will ultimately enhance the habitat for brook trout in Shaw's Creek, a tributary to the Credit River through the rehabilitation of the Alton Millpond. Plans to modify the existing dam and other rehabilitation elements will allow upstream fish passage, a flow through route for cold water, and other natural stream processes to be reinstated.

The project is at the historic Alton Mill Arts Centre.

The announcement was made at the opening ceremonies of the annual Millpond Hockey Classic.

The species found in the creek are part of a coldwater fish community. The primary target species is brook trout, but secondary species include Iowa darter, longnose dace, brook stickleback, bluntnose minnow, blacknose dace, northern redbelly dace, pearl dace and white sucker. Threats facing these species reflect the negative human impacts on water quality, temperature, and blockage of fish passage associated with the existing dam.

"I'm pleased to be announcing this funding support to Alton Development Inc. for its considerable efforts to protect species at risk," Tilson said. "Our government is committed to protecting our natural heritage and programs, such as the Habitat Stewardship Program, are an important part of the government of Canada's National Conservation Plan to conserve Canada's lands and waters, restore Canada's ecosystems, and connect Canadians to nature.

"On behalf of the Alton Millpond Rehabilitation Committee, we are very pleased to receive funding support from the Government of Canada," commented Jeremy Grant of Alton Mill. "These funds supplement the monies we've been able to raise through on-going community-based fundraising over the past few years and will allow detailed environmental engineering and design to proceed. The millpond is a beloved part of the community and the project will improve the health of the stream and fish habitat, preserve an important historic element and create wonderful recreational, educational and arts and cultural opportunities. Thank you Environment Canada!"

In support of such stewardship activities, the National Conservation Plan, announced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in May, includes funding of \$50 million over five years to support voluntary actions to restore and conserve species and their habitats.

Programs like HSP are an important part of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan to conserve and restore our lands and waters, and connect Canadian families to our natural spaces.

Since 2006, under the Habitat Stewardship Program's Species at Risk Stream, the government has invested more than \$99 million to support 1,569 local conservation projects, benefiting the habitat of more than 430 species at risk.

In 2014-2015, the Species at Risk Stream will provide \$12.4 million for 178 projects of which 73 were previously approved.

Non-governmental organizations, Aboriginal organizations and communities, individuals, businesses, community associations and provincial/territorial and municipal governments are eligible for funding.



Last Saturday's Millpond Classic saw Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson on hand to announce some \$47,000 in federal funding to enhance the habitat for Brook Trout in Shaw's Creek. He's seen here with event organizers Randy Ugolini and Jeremy Grant. Photo by Bill Rea