

## Important new wetlands created in Southern Ontario

TORONTO, September 26, 2017 - The Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (OSSGA) has released a study on the creation of wetland features at former aggregate pits and quarries within the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and the Niagara Escarpment Plan Areas. The study reveals a total of 293 hectares of aquatic habitat features – or the equivalent of 1,849 NHL sized hockey rinks – have been created through the rehabilitation of surrendered aggregate sites.

“The preservation and restoration of aquatic habitat and wetland ecosystems across Southern Ontario is critical,” says Norman Cheesman, Executive Director at OSSGA. “Almost 70% of Ontario’s original wetlands have been lost to growth and development. Creating new wetland features and habitats is an environmentally exciting component of the extraction and rehabilitation cycle.”

Aggregate rehabilitation in Ontario is mandatory. The *Aggregate Resources Act* requires that aggregate licences undergo progressive and final rehabilitation prior to being surrendered. Through the rehabilitation of aggregate extraction sites there is an opportunity to create and restore natural heritage features, including aquatic ecosystems that contribute to the natural heritage features and hydrologic features and functions of the Greenbelt.

“The public is often unaware that former aggregate sites can be rehabilitated into significant wetlands,” says Cheesman. “Many of our producers have partnered with Conservation Authorities and NGOs like Ducks Unlimited to create productive wetland projects that support biodiversity, offer flood protection, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

“In the area covered through the study,” continues Cheesman, “nine of the new wetlands were identified by the government as part of provincially significant wetland complexes. This means that these rehabilitated sites are meeting the MNRF’s strict criteria for designation of significant wetlands based on their biological, social, or hydrological features. The aggregate industry is also thinking outside the box with their approach to rehabilitation efforts. One producer has even established a sustainable aquaculture fish farming operation that uses excess fish nutrients to support the growth of wetlands surrounding the rehabilitated quarry.”

Aquatic features become points of interest in recreational parks or golf courses, become part of provincially significant wetland complexes or are located adjacent to existing natural heritage features and can contribute to biodiversity and ecological functions on a local and broader landscape level.

OSSGA is planning a second phase of the study to field verify the findings to understand the ecological and social value of these important aquatic features.

### Study Results

The study, conducted on behalf of OSSGA by Skelton Brumwell & Associates Inc., looked at the 123 surrendered licences within the study area. The results found that:

- 9 wetlands were found to be part of Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) Complexes
- 68 (or 55%) of sites contained one or more aquatic habitat features
- A total of 173 aquatic features were identified and analyzed using aerial photography
- 63% of the features were found to be ponds

- 33% of the features were classified as wetlands
- 4% were a mix of both ponds and wetlands

**Note:** Significantly more wetland has been created by the aggregate industry than reflected in this study which, by design, *excludes* aquatic habitat features created through progressive rehabilitation on the approximately 3,700 active licences within the study area.

Examples of rehabilitated wetlands in southern Ontario:

- Milton Limestone Quarry/Kelso Quarry Park in Milton
- Burlington Quarry/Kerncliff Park in Burlington
- Snyders Flats in Bloomingdale
- McMillan Pond, Aberfoyle

OSSGA is a not-for-profit industry association representing over 280 sand, gravel, and crushed stone producers and suppliers of valuable industry products and services. Collectively, our members supply the substantial majority of the approximately 164 million tonnes of aggregate consumed annually in the province to build and maintain Ontario's infrastructure needs. OSSGA works in partnership with government and the public to promote a safe and competitive aggregate industry contributing to the creation of strong communities in the province.

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