

# Marmora sits in the middle of the land between



■ Vivian Collver and Bruce Tierney, directors of the Marmora and Lake Ratepayers' Association, welcomed Heather Brooks-Hill and Peter Alley of the organization The Land Between to a well-attended August 24 meeting held at the town hall.

BY JUDY BACKUS

## Marmora and Lake - During the

June 28 inaugural meeting of the Marmora and Lake Ratepayers' Association, Vivian Collver explained the makeup of the land on which the municipality sits. "Geologists and others are studying a 20- to 40-mile corridor that begins at the mouth of the Severn River and ends at Kingston. The Municipality of Marmora and Lake is within that corridor. The organization conducting this study is called The Land Between, and is concerned about the sensitive land that lies between the granite barrens and the limestone plains. This area, a mosaic transition zone, is sensitive, vulnerable, and in need of protection. It is described as a water source for many rivers, home to many uncommon and rare species and several globally-rare natural communities. The creation of the greenbelt north of Toronto is driving development north and east. Without good land management, the future of The Land Between looks grim."

On August 24, Peter Alley and Heather Brooks-Hill addressed another meeting of the Ratepayers' Association to further explain the land and the situation. Alley, who has enjoyed many positions during his career, is now retired, but works full-time on The Land Between, which involves a working group of six supporters, "from end to end of that 240-kilometre-long landscape," as noted by Collver in her introduction of the speaker.

Brooks-Hill is a community activist "whose work focusses on health promotion and community development..."

Using maps, diagrams, and photographs, Alley explained that what defines The Land Between more than anything else is its biodiversity. He told how it is one of the areas in Ontario with the largest varieties of species, describing it as a transition zone from the mixed wood plains of Southern Ontario to the forestry of the Ontario Shield. In between is the land which is under both discussion and threat. The Land Between contains limestone plains and granite barrens in a mosaic pattern as illustrated in visuals he provided. "It's the mosaic that gives it the diversity," he stated.

The Land Between crosses eight counties with varying land-use management requirements and is vulnerable, as printed information indicates, "to even slight disturbance - because of bare rock, thin soils and small shallow water bodies. Damage is occurring at an increasing rate."

Another statement, which pointed to the need for action, suggested in relation to a move towards increased development for leisure and retirement residences, "Without appropriate land use management in place by about 2010, the damage from these trends will have been done. Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing could now create an open process for decision on land-use management that protects The Land Between."

Additional information provided by Alley reads, "The Land Between, a ma-

major mosaic transition zone is in danger of major damage because it has been overlooked. Protecting the naturalness of many types of landscapes in southern Ontario has fortunately been gaining attention in recent years. Bill 26, on planning, will no doubt prove how future development affects environmentally-sensitive areas. Ironically, Bill 27, on the greenbelt, is threatening. It will drive ex-urban development northward to The Land Between, a landscape more vulnerable, and less prepared for it, than southern areas closer to the major cities. It need not end that way."

Information published by the group in March of this year indicates that the conditions found within the patchy mosaic that is The Land Between means that it takes little in the way of development, "be it housing, septic systems, golf courses, roads, or trails for motorized vehicles to spoil the soil and water balance of this natural heritage system."

Alley suggested, "The question is not that there should be no development, but where it should be - what sort of places make sense for more development and which should be protected if we want to keep them around."

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Government statistics mentioned by Alley show that "between 2000 and 2015 there will be an extra 1.5 million people in the cities of Barrie, Greater Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa. All of those are cities that will have people taking leisure residences in The Land Between." Other pressures on The Land Between include ex-urban retirement home buyers and the telecommuter who "lives in this area, commutes to the big smoke two or three days a week, and does the rest of their work with their computer and their telephone."

Alley stressed the need for a consultation and dialogue process such as the one used in the planning of Kawartha Highlands Park and issues relating to Oak Ridges Moraine. Although the terrain is different, Alley suggested that the same process could be used in relation to The Land Between with input

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## Plans needed for natural heritage systems

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from the organization, industries, and communities.

He explained in relation to the examples given, "Not everybody can have everything that they want...How can we slice it up in a way that makes most sense in the long term and short term?"

Alley went on to outline the makeup of the six-member group, noting that they were looking for additional people including representation from Hastings, Frontenac and Haliburton - people with contact and standing in their communities, who would have perspective enough to look at the big picture and deal with issues of general direction and policy.

In reference to the new Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), developed through a consultation process which he said should be read as a whole, Alley noted that the municipalities are charged with the responsibility for planning a wide range of things, but most important, he said is that plans are required to take into account natural heritage systems, something which is seen to be of benefit to The Land Between.

"Natural features don't end at county boundaries," stated Alley, going on to say that the PPS, when it finally came out, stated that "the coordination was within municipalities or across lower single- and/or upper-tier municipal boundaries to manage natural heritage resources and ecosystems."

With regard to individual landowners, Alley suggested that they had an opportunity to become involved, through managing their properties in an environmentally sound way. He charged them to keep informed through various groups such

as the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations and the Conservation Authorities. "Look at specific intervention, he said," and ask, "What can we do as a group that can make a difference to planning and the way it's applied?" He suggested that residents take the opportunity where possible to influence local and provincial policies.

Heather Brooks-Hill gave a synopsis of four stories relating to potential development of properties in the Stony Lake area she calls home. Some she claimed were good stories and others bad, but all had to do with planning issues and outcomes. She stated, "There is a group of us who are not trying to stop all development or protect every single tree. It's responsible decision-making based on sound information."