

News Release

February 22, 2022

Clay Bank Nature Park for Outdoor Learning Receives Grasslands Stewardship Initiative Funding

(Arnprior, ON): The Township of McNab/Braeside is pleased to announce that our application for funding through the Grassland Stewardship Initiative (GSI) has been successful. The GSI contribution of \$15,675 will be augmented by in-kind contributions amounting to \$3,821.

The Grasslands Stewardship Initiative is a habitat restoration initiative implemented by Grasslands Ontario, a division of Forests Ontario. The goal is to support the conservation and recovery of Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark populations through the management and protection of high-quality grassland habitat in Ontario.

The GSI funds and in-kind contributions will be used to enhance five hectares of grasslands at Clay Bank Nature Park for Outdoor Learning, a 20+ hectare property situated along the Madawaska River between Arnprior and the village of White Lake. The grasslands at the Park attract Bobolinks (up to 20 nesting pairs have been sighted in the past) and Eastern Meadowlarks. The population for both bird species has been declining because of the loss of prairies and other grasslands habitats.

“This funding support is one more piece in our efforts to enhance and preserve the natural habitat of Clay Bank Outdoor Park for Nature Learning. This small but mighty park attracts an amazing diversity of bird species, including the endangered Bobolink and the threatened Eastern Meadowlark,” says Councillor Heather Lang, who has focused much of her efforts over the past six years to the park.

“I am thrilled to see the tremendous support that we are receiving for our efforts—and I can’t thank the Arnprior Rotary Club enough, in particular its chair of the environmental committee Rod Smith, who has been with me every step of the way in our efforts to preserve and enhance the habitat found at Clay Bank. I also wish to thank the Macnamara Field Naturalists Club for its support for this initiative, in particular its founder and president, Michael Runtz, who helped write the habitat assessment piece of the grant application.”

“The leadership shown by Heather Lang and the Township of McNab/Braeside in working to establish Clay Bank Outdoor Park for Nature Learning as an active demonstration of how we can all best sustain our local and Ottawa Valley natural heritage is both far-sighted and practical. Rotary International has taken on environmental sustainability as one of its primary areas of focus worldwide and the local Rotary Club of Arnprior is pleased to do its bit by actively supporting creative and meaningful projects such as this that help us to learn by doing,” notes Rod Smith.

“In addition to offering safe haven for species at risk such as the Bobolink, Clay Bank Nature Park for Outdoor Learning is an outstanding educational resource not only for local residents but also for visitors from afar. The forest fringe that borders the Madawaska River is an important corridor for migration and offers exciting opportunities for both young and old to observe birds at close hand. With development continuously consuming what was once habitat for birds and other animals, the park plays an essential role in the preservation of natural habitats,” says Michael Runtz.

The GSI grant will be used to undertake vegetation surveys; prepare the grasslands for seeding with native grasses; remove invasive plant species; conduct breeding bird surveys pre- and post-treatment;

and build and erect birdhouses for non-target bird species such as the Eastern Bluebird and American Kestrel.

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