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COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION LEADERS LAY OUT NEW VISION FOR PROTECTED AREAS IN ONTARIO

TORONTO – On the heels of a [new global report](#) warning that humanity must solve the nature and climate crises together or risk solving neither, an unprecedented gathering of conservation and community leaders is happening this week in Ontario to lead the way on meeting international commitments to protect 25% of lands and waters by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

More than 50 speakers from all walks of life across many geographies will come together June 15-17 to showcase and celebrate efforts to protect special places in Ontario. From Tall Grass Prairie in Windsor to Rouge Valley in Toronto to Algonquin Park near Huntsville to the ‘breathing lands’ of Hudson Bay Lowland, the [Peoples’ Summit](#) has it covered.

The Summit will lay out a new vision on protected areas that is inclusive, equitable and expansive. “We can stop the collapse of nature, ensure a livable climate and rebuild our lives,” says Janet Sumner, Executive Director for Wildlands League and one of the co-hosts of the Summit.

“Nature was a refuge for all of us in the pandemic,” said Katie Krelove of Wilderness Committee, a co-host of the Summit. “Now it’s up to us to protect it and ensure people have access to more protected natural areas everywhere in the province. It will help us recharge our souls, rebuild our lives, and ensure we are better prepared for when the next pandemic hits,” Krelove added.

Organizers are deeply honoured that more than ten Indigenous Nations will share their stories about protecting their irreplaceable lands and waters. These include Asubpeeschoseewagong (Grassy Narrows), Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Nation, Moose Cree First Nation, Weenusk (Peawanuck) First Nation, Attawapiskat First Nation, Kashechewan First Nation, Mushkegowuk Council, Shawanaga First Nation, Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River First Nation), Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Mohawk Council of Akwesasne and more.

Canada, the US, and more than 50 countries across the planet have already committed to conserving 30% of its lands and oceans by 2030 (the 30 x 30 commitment). Ontario is at 10.7%.

“There is a palpable hunger for more here and what the people are saying is, ‘We got this,’” Sumner added.

“What inspires me is that all across this province people are already leading the way to protect forests, wetlands, rivers, habitat, and areas vital to their well-being and future,” says John McDonnell, Executive Director, CPAWS Ottawa Valley, a co-host of the Summit. “In my own backyard, I see tremendous



opportunities for new protected areas, that will not only protect eastern Ontario's rich biodiversity, but also create jobs in and bring investment to, rural communities,” McDonnell says.

“Southern Ontario’s Carolinian Zone is the most fragile, threatened and biodiverse landscape in Canada,” says Michelle Kanter, Executive Director, Carolinian Canada. “The good news is that a strong network of leaders including First Nations, landowners, business, government and community are collaborating and innovating to grow healthy landscapes in the spirit and practice of reconciliation.”

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Visit <https://peoplessummit.ca/> for more information.

The Peoples’ Summit is co-hosted by Wildlands League, Wilderness Committee, CPAWS-Ottawa Valley and Carolinian Canada.

Summit Agenda: <https://peoplessummit.ca/agenda/>