

Lesley Baird, Ontario Parks (February 2010)

The full story of the acquisition and management of Peter's Woods Provincial Park

Peter's Woods Provincial Park is on the sandy, north-facing slope of the Oak Ridges Moraine. The original 33 hectare Peter's Woods Provincial Park was regulated under the Provincial Parks Act in 1976. The park is non-operating and development is limited to a small parking area and one hiking trail. Two blocks of land acquired in 2002 are recommended for addition to the park through the new park management plan.

At Peter's Woods, you will find a small remnant of a near virgin maple-beech forest similar to that which once covered many parts of Southern Ontario. European settlement of this property dates back to 1810. As the land changed hands, areas adjacent to it were cleared for agricultural purposes; however, the core woodland remained virtually untouched. The park also includes areas of land used in the past for agriculture, and which we now know are remnants of rare tallgrass prairie and oak savannah habitat.

Ontario Parks and the Nature Conservancy of Canada purchased the additional 320 hectares for the park in 2002. These new lands contain tallgrass prairie, globally rare black oak savannah, and oak woodland habitats, which once covered thousands of hectares of Northumberland County's "Rice Lake Plains." Today the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Parks are working together to restore, through active management, the tallgrass prairie and oak savannah habitats on these sites. Prescribed burns conducted by trained professionals are necessary to manage these rare habitats. Over time these lands could become some of the best remaining examples of these habitats in all of Ontario.

A new park management plan for Peter's Woods Provincial Park (Nature Reserve class) was approved in June 2009 and can be accessed through the link below.

http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/pete_planning.html