

# 400 acres turned into latest conservation area

**WILLIAMSBURG —**  
**DIGNITARIES**  
GATHERED AUG. 22 TO WELCOME THE NEWEST CONSERVATION AREA INTO THE SOUTH NATION CONSERVATION FOLD OF PEOPLE-FRIENDLY PARKS AND PRESERVES.

It's the Williamsburg Forest Conservation Area in the Municipality of South Dundas, on Mackenzie Road south of Chesterville. The site includes 25 acres



Cutting the ribbon at 'The 400' Conservation Area, from left, SNC General Manager Dennis O'Grady, community representative Brian Barkley of Elma, Mayor Steven Byvelds, SNC Chair Bill Smirle, Kemptville District Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Acting Resource Management Supervisor Jeff Ward, and past SNC Chair Lawrence Levere.

of spruce plantations, low-land hardwoods, and provincially significant wetland over 400 acres.

Williamsburg Forest is the second conservation area officially opened in SNC jurisdiction during the past month. A gift from a local family, 100-acre Reveler Conservation Area in North Stormont Township was dedicated July 26.

"SNC is grateful to assume ownership and

management of Williamsburg Forest from South Dundas," said Jim Hendry, the authority's Team Lead, Property.

"We're very fortunate that municipalities and private citizens are placing parcels of treed land in the public trust at a time when we're losing forests to agricultural expansion and residential development. It helps offset some of the losses."

During the dedication ceremony, SNC chairman Bill Smirle, a Morewood

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## Area

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farmer, thanked South Dundas Mayor Steven Byvelds, a local grain farmer, and his Council for their foresight in deciding upon perpetual preservation for the forested land.

In fact, since 1961, the property — known locally as "The 400" — has been preserved under the Agreement Forest Program with former Williamsburg Township, later absorbed by South Dundas.

The Williamsburg Forest was managed by Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry until 1995 when the the program was dissolved and the forest reverted to the municipality which kept it for recreational use.

When South Dundas briefly put the land up for sale in 2012, it prompted a petition and public outcry, and council beat a hasty

retreat from that plan.

Talks with SNC about assuming ownership began last year.

MNRF is a partner in the Williamsburg Forest project and was represented at the opening by Jeff Ward, Kemptville-based District Acting Resource Management Supervisor.

The most prominent features of the new conservation area are 12 acres of provincially significant wetland and 320 acres of locally significant wetland, Hendry said. The property is an important headwater for both Hoasic Creek and the South Nation River.

"The size and healthy condition of the forest provides excellent bird watching conditions," he observed. "The property will be open for general recreation and hunting opportunities. It should be noted that a letter of permission from SNC is required to hunt on all SNC properties."