



Alternative Land Use Services
Growing a healthier environment

THE W. GARFIELD WESTON
FOUNDATION

Contact: Olivia Yu
416-969-2718

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 8, 2011

\$1.5 Million Gift to Alternative Land Use Services by The W. Garfield Weston Foundation supports both farming and conservation in Norfolk County

Ecosystem approach enhances farmland and supports farmers

Simcoe / Toronto, ON – [The W. Garfield Weston Foundation](#), a private family foundation, today announced a \$1.5 million three-year donation to the [Alternative Land Use Services' \(ALUS\) Norfolk Project](#). The donation will strengthen the ecological renewal and regrowth of unusable farm land in Norfolk County, Ontario.

Since 2007, the Norfolk Project ALUS team has engaged farmers to restore the local ecosystem in the face of climate change.

Through the ALUS program, farmers in Norfolk County are eligible to enrol and have up to 20 per cent of their unusable farm land revitalized and reclaimed by nature. Farmers are provided with technical and financial support for their environmentally sound practices. To date, ALUS has engaged 97 farm families on 102 farms, impacting over 700 acres of agricultural land.

"The W. Garfield Weston Foundation is proud to be partnering with the Norfolk ALUS program in their farmer-driven approach to sustainability, community, and conservation," said Eliza Mitchell, Director, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. "Our new expanded partnership underlines our confidence in the program and its impact on local ecosystems. ALUS is a leader in engaging audiences and positively impacting agricultural lands."

Norfolk County is a biologically-diverse hotspot, and one The W. Garfield Weston Foundation strongly supports. For more than a decade, the private family foundation has assisted ALUS initiatives as they have been established across Canada, most recently with support to a new ALUS pilot program in Alberta.

"We are striving to find a balance between farming needs and that of ecological health," said Bryan Gilvesy, ALUS Chair, Norfolk ALUS Pilot Project. "The generous donation from The W. Garfield Weston Foundation helps us tip the scales in favour of success for local farming families, while protecting our environment."

The donation from the private family foundation will also enable ALUS to develop the ALUS Ecological Credit, a uniquely local approach to environmental offsetting.

"Carbon credits can be a vague concept, often with offshore benefits," said Gilvesy. "With the Foundation's help, we will be able to develop a program with concrete ecological benefits, that sees results such as cleaner air and water right in our own backyard."

The first stage of the ALUS Ecological Credit program is a developmental one, focused on the protocol for the verification of carbon sequestration of native landscape, such as Tallgrass Prairie and the ecological services produced on ALUS habitat creation project sites. The credit will contribute to cleaner air, cleaner water, wildlife habitat and a more resilient landscape, with potential economic benefits for farmers in Norfolk, Ontario.

About the Norfolk Alternative Land Use Services Project

Since the program piloted in 2007, the Norfolk ALUS Project team has been building relationships with the farmers of Norfolk County to create healthy and sustainable farm lands while rebuilding the natural environment. Previously unusable land is restored into patches of healthy, functioning ecosystems that benefit the greater society with the purification of water and air, pollination, biodiversity, erosion control, sediment retention and soil renewal.

The pilot stage of ALUS in Norfolk will wrap up in March 2011 and move into the second phase of the program: to expand and make the ALUS concept a permanent way of life in Norfolk, and to explore the development of the ALUS Ecological Credit program.

About Norfolk County

- In 2010, funding provided by The W. Garfield Weston Foundation enabled ALUS to enrol 40 farmers on 42 farm properties in the 2010, accounting for roughly 280 acres of wildlife habitat;
- Areas of Norfolk are part of the UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, an area that has been designated as one where conservation and sustainable land use can exist in harmony;
- Norfolk has some of the most fertile land in Ontario;
- Norfolk's agricultural landscape supports a diversity of natural features including Carolinian forest, coldwater streams, groundwater, a rich variety of flora and fauna, and the largest concentration of species at risk in all of Canada;
- Norfolk is home to Backus Woods, one of Canada's largest remaining examples of Carolinian Forest;
- Some of Ontario's oldest trees, including Tulip, Beech and Black Gum trees, which are more than 400 years old, can be found in Backus Woods¹.

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation is a private Canadian family foundation first established in the 1950's by Willard Garfield Weston and his wife Reta. The Foundation directs the majority of its funds to organizations and projects in the fields of land conservation, education, and science in Canada's North. For three generations, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has maintained a family tradition of helping charitable organizations to make a difference and enhance the quality of life for all Canadians.

Alternative Land Use Services

Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) is an ecological goods and services program proposal that is unique because it's designed by farmers, for farmers. It recognizes the value of conserving and restoring Canada's natural capital while respecting and rewarding the important role that farmers play in environmental management.

###

¹ <http://www.ancientforest.org/oldtrees.htm#ages><http://www.ancientforest.org/oldtrees.htm>