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## 3,400 Acres of Carolinian Canada Protected Thanks to The W. Garfield Weston Foundation Gift to Nature Conservancy of Canada

Part of \$100 Million Donated by The Foundation to Organizations across Canada, protecting more than 100,000 acres

TORONTO, May 27 /CNW/ - The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, a private family foundation, has made possible the preservation and restoration of more than 3,400 acres (1,375 hectares) of Carolinian Canada land in the Norfolk region of south-western Ontario, one of the most biologically diverse regions of Canada. Through a donation to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, these lands will be gradually restored to natural habitat for many species-at-risk.

Since the early 1980s, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has donated more than \$100 million to conservation organizations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada to conserve more than 100,000 acres of significant natural habitats across Canada. "Canada is blessed with a rich and diverse natural legacy. Through careful science and advanced stewardship techniques and the co-ordinated efforts of private individuals, family foundations, non-governmental organizations, and others, we can protect that legacy for generations to come," said Geordie Dalglish, Chair of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation.

The Foundation's Norfolk Carolinian Legacy project will help the Nature Conservancy of Canada preserve land on the Southern Norfolk Sand Plain, part of the Carolinian Life Zone - which comprises less than a quarter of one percent of Canada's landmass, but is home to 25 percent of all species at risk. The lands that are part of this initiative are outstanding examples of Norfolk County's best forests, savannahs and wetlands.

The timing of this project is especially significant as 2010 is the U.N. International Year of Biodiversity. Areas of Norfolk County and Long Point 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.

"We are inspired by the commitment of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation to champion conservation in Canada," says John Lounds, President and CEO of the Nature Conservancy of Canada. "The Weston family's generosity and foresight have allowed us to dream and plan for projects of this scope across the country. They have ensured a remarkable legacy."

### About the Project

The Norfolk Carolinian Legacy land is home to many species at risk of extinction in Canada including the Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, American Badger, Eastern Foxsnake, Spotted Turtle, American Chestnut and Eastern Flowering Dogwood. In fact, Norfolk County is home to 60 nationally listed species-at-risk and 221 provincially rare species.

The area is home to a number of key conservation initiatives including Backus Woods, Long Point, the South Walsingham forest and the St. Williams Conservation Reserve.

"We're particularly pleased that this project will contribute to the significant progress already made by the Norfolk community to have conservation co-exist productively with agriculture and other land uses," said Dalglish. "Walking trails will be established for local community access and also to support local tourism."

### Facts

- The Norfolk Carolinian region is Canada's biodiversity "hotspot";
- This portion of the Carolinian Life Zone contains one of the highest densities of species-at-risk in the country;
- The area has the highest level of forest cover in south-western Ontario;
- The W. Garfield Weston Foundation's investment in the Norfolk Carolinian Legacy project will increase the amount of natural habitat on the landscape and improve corridors and linkages among existing protected areas at Long Point, Backus Woods, South Walsingham and the St. Williams Conservation Reserve;
- Clean water in Dedrick Creek and Big Creek are essential to maintaining the health of Long Point Bay and its significant sport and commercial fisheries;
- Each year tens of thousands of ducks, geese and swans, and hundreds of thousands, to millions of smaller birds stop in the region to rest and feed during spring and fall migration;
- Long Point is the longest freshwater sand spit in the world.

### 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.

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has long played a leading role in helping to preserve Canada's unique landscapes. The Foundation has previously worked with NCC to support the conservation of ecologically significant land from coast to coast, including the Waterton Park Front in Alberta, Old Man on His Back in Saskatchewan and the Musquash Estuary in New Brunswick.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is the country's leading land conservation organization, working to protect our valuable natural areas and the plants and animals they sustain.

Since 1962 NCC and its partners have helped to protect more than 2 million acres (800,000 hectares) coast to coast. By investing in conservation we are ensuring our natural world remains a home for wildlife, a haven for recreation and a vital resource that filters the air we breathe and the water we drink. Through strong partnerships NCC works to safeguard our natural areas so that our children and grandchildren will have the chance to enjoy them.

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