

Angell Woods angel

By Irene Chwalkowski, The Suburban 2007-04-11

Montreal, the City of Beaconsfield and Ducks Unlimited Canada scored a major environmental coup with the announcement of a \$4 million deal to buy 22 hectares in the heart of Angell Woods from Marcel Dutil of a company named Alta.

The greenspace, located at the southern most part of the Anse à l'Orme ecoterritory and extends north to Cap St. Jacques in Pierrefonds, starts west of Lakeview, continues halfway to the border of Baie d'Urfé and contains all the area between autoroutes 20 and 40. It excludes a little section on the southern side, which is occupied by Marian Hall.

Montreal is investing the greatest amount of money in the acquisition — \$3.4 million. Beaconsfield is using \$600,000 of the \$1 million it put aside to purchase the woods several years ago. At press time, it was unknown what role Duck Unlimited's would play in the deal, but there exists a large flooded area in the woods that is the nesting ground of the wood duck.

"There are at least 10 pairs of this species of duck nesting there," said local environmentalist Ryan Young. "Flooded forest area is hard to find. They can perch high up in trees and nest in holes that were made by pilleaned woodpeckers."

The deal brings Beaconsfield nature lovers, who have been using the woods as a recreation area for decades, one step closer to acquiring the entirety of the woods and preserving it for future generations.

"This is what Beaconsfield residents have been looking for for 35 years," said Mayor Bob Benedetti last week. "It's the beginning of the fulfillment of a long dream."

Stephen Lloyd, president of the Association for the Preservation of Angell Woods said the sale represents approximately 20 percent of the entire woods.

"It's great news," he said. "We were so worried when the Sunrise seniors' residence project moved in because it could have given other owners an incentive to develop. It's like a deck of cards. It could have gone the other way," he said.

Lloyd said that there are other deals being looked at to acquire other chunks of the woods. The area is cut up into lots that are the property of private developers, as well as the provincial government who owns a major portion of the northern section.

Benedetti said the acquisition could not have been made without the hard work of former Beaconsfield councillor Anne Marie Parent and Dinu Bumbaru of Heritage Montreal.

"They worked their butts off to have Montreal adopt a resolution before the demerger that stated its intention to acquire the woods."

Historically, this is the biggest investment in green space acquisition that Montreal has ever made.

Lloyd said that the residents who use the woods despite it being private property have made all the difference in the various landowners' perception.

"Six hundred members of APAW have 'invaded' the territory in a peaceful and respectful way, not antagonistically," said Lloyd. "They have seen how we respect and take care of the woods and said, 'Whoa! People here care for this land.'" Lloyd also expressed some surprise that the agglomeration council voted to give \$3.4 million toward the acquisition.