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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - APRIL 11, 2005

Cormorant Massacre Continues

Toronto, April 11, 2005: Sources close to Ontario Parks say the McGuinty government is quietly making preparations to kill thousands of nesting double-crested cormorants at Presqu'ile Provincial Park on Lake Ontario for the next three years.

The McGuinty government is also considering extending their lethal 'egg oiling' operations in the Georgian Bay and North Channel region of Lake Huron. 'Oiling' eggs suffocates the embryo inside. And the Toronto Region and Conservation Authority (TRCA) is currently waiting for the government green light to begin egg 'oiling' at the Leslie Spit, also known as Tommy Thompson Park in Toronto.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has also confirmed that it has no plans to monitor the actions of private landowners who shoot cormorants on their private property.

Government fish and wildlife agencies have aggressively targeted the native migratory bird across North America because of pressure from sport anglers who wrongly blame the bird for fisheries depletion.

"Dalton McGuinty won't publicly announce his plans to eradicate the native birds from Ontario because he doesn't have a scientific 'leg' to stand on," says AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition. "These birds are being killed by the thousands because of political games."

Technically, the provincial government doesn't have to publicly announce its plans to destroy cormorants province-wide because it posted each program individually on the Environmental Bill of Rights for public comment at some point in the past. The 'oiling' program on Lake Huron was posted in 2002 and plans to shoot cormorants for four consecutive years at Presqu'ile Provincial Park was posted in 2004. The Toronto Region and Conservation Authority will likely host one public meeting, after which they will begin 'oiling'.

"The Conservation Authority has to at least 'appear' it is consulting with the public, even though the outcome of any public meeting is already predetermined," says Valastro. The TRCA is waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to ensure that all regulatory and legal requirements have been met before moving forward with a lethal cull. One public meeting will likely suffice to meet their regulatory obligations.

For more information, please contact AnnaMaria Valastro at 416.537.3212

Note To the Editor:

The 'official' response from the McGuinty government as to why they haven't publicly announced their plans to kill cormorants at Presqu'ile Provincial Park or elsewhere is that "they have yet to make a decision". When asked why a decision has not yet been made, considering it is a time sensitive issue, they state "the issue is of low priority".

press release

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Last year the Liberal government shot over six thousand nesting cormorants in just thirteen days at Presqu'île Provincial Park near Belleville, Ontario, and "oiled" 40 colonies in the Georgian Bay and North Channel region of Lake Huron. They also have plans to begin killing cormorants nesting on the Lake Erie Archipelago Islands, but not this year. Any plan to remove cormorants from Lake Erie will be done in conjunction with Ohio State and Parks Canada.

Double-crested cormorants are a native North American migratory bird that nest on the Great Lakes. They are black fish-eating birds that typically nest in large colonies of hundreds and thousands of birds. Cormorants almost disappeared from the Great Lakes thirty years ago because of high toxic pollution levels. Their near extinction resulted in the ban of chemicals such as DDT and PCBs. They have since made a stunning recovery, and are once again reoccupying their ecological niche.

The Toronto Region and Conservation Authority currently 'oils' ring-billed gull eggs at the Leslie Spit. It has been oiling gull eggs for 21 years. The program began in 1984.

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