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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - FEBRUARY 1, 2005

McGuinty To Eradicate Cormorants From Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Ontario

Toronto, February 1, 2005: A report written for Minister of Natural Resources David Ramsay is recommending a total eradication of nesting double-crested cormorants from Presqu'ile Provincial Park near Belleville, Ontario. Double-crested cormorants are a native North American migratory bird.

"The report is shocking," say AnnaMaria Valastro of the Peaceful Parks Coalition, "because it actually recommends cutting down trees; killing all cormorants; harassing non-nesting cormorants including during their fall migration, and destroying and oiling all ground nests—basically eradicating the birds."

But the worst part of the report is that it lies about the damage Ontario Parks caused non-target species at the colony. For example, great egrets aborted 19 of their 29 nests. Great blue herons aborted 25 of their 63 nests and black-crowned night heron nests fell from 80 in 2003 to 59 in 2004. Ontario Parks considers this to be minimal damage.

McGuinty is also hiding the fact that stomach contents analyzed from dead cormorants shot at Presqu'ile last year identify alewife and round gobies—both invasive species—as the bird's primary diet. The McGuinty government announced last year a campaign to contain the spread of round gobies.

"Dalton McGuinty can go ahead and eradicate all the native wildlife he doesn't like, but in the end we are going to eradicate him come election day because people are pretty much fed-up with lying and inept governments," says Valastro.

While the report keeps the committee members anonymous, the Peaceful Parks Coalition has nicknamed them the "coalition of the willing" because every committee member is government staff, except for one, either from Canada or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and each one of them has advocated for the killing of cormorants—see 'note to the editor' for a list of committee members.

This report will be the foundation to begin eradicating these native birds across Ontario in all their nesting areas across the Great Lakes basin. The eradication of double-crested cormorants from the Great Lakes has been in the works since 1999, after a joint meeting between the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The primary reason for eradicating cormorants is because they are fish-eating birds, and vilified by anglers. In the Lake Erie Archipelago Islands, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources will target fish-eating birds beyond cormorants—most likely merganser ducks which have been identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as eating more fish than cormorants. Since cormorants and other fish-eating birds cannot be blamed for fish depletion, the Ministry targets cormorants nesting in trees to win over public support.

press release

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Tree nesting cormorants will eventually kill the host tree through the deposit of their guano, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. This process is highly visible, but wildlife killing trees prematurely is a naturally occurring process found throughout the natural world. Beavers dam creeks and flood forest areas, yellow-bellied sapsuckers drill holes into the tree's bark for its sap, pileated woodpeckers carve huge holes in old-growth trees—all assist in killing trees. Natural wildfires also kill trees. These trees eventually become "snags" providing habitat for an array of wildlife, and eventually breakdown into soil.

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Full copies of documents revealing the governments' plans to kill cormorants across the province are available upon request.

Notes to the Editor:

The complete report can be found at:

http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/planning_pdf/pres_CormorantRecommendationsjan05.pdf

The Peaceful Parks Coalition knows who the committee members are because we meet with them in October 2004. They are:

John Boos, Fish and Wildlife Branch OMNR

Don Tyerman, Ontario Parks, Presqu'île Provincial Park

Tim Bellhouse, Ontario Parks,

OMNR Vicki Friesen, Associate Professor, Biology Dept. Queens University

Saewan Koh, TerraSystems Research,

OMNR contract staff Chip Weseloh, Canadian Wildlife Service,

Jim Farquhar, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The report omits listing the nest failure rate for Great Egrets because it was so substantial. However, Ontario Parks revealed this information at a recent meeting of the Waterbird Society/Pacific Seabird Group in Portland Oregon.

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