

PRESS RELEASE

Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve brings new conservation to Morin Heights

Project is latest in series of municipal, developer, and community collaborations.

November x, 2018 – MORIN HEIGHTS – The newly created *Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve* will add 215 acres of conservation to a series of connected municipal green spaces. The project is a collaboration between the municipality of *Morin Heights*, developer *Invesco Habitation*, and the *Lac Echo Buyers Club*: an informal collective of concerned citizens. *La fondation de la faune du Quebec*, and the *Echo Foundation* provided additional funding. *The Nature Conservancy of Canada* acted as advisor.

Morin Heights has expanded municipal green spaces in the last xx months by xx% including the Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve to a total of xx acres with a view to preserving a network of trails and protect natural beauty. A series of acquisitions, land donations, and major donations of funds for the purpose of land acquisition, like those made by the Lac Echo Buyers Club, have made the expansion possible.

The Lac Echo Buyers Club was formed in early 2018 by Jane Hope, resident of Lac Echo (*lacecho.com*), to respond to citizen concern for water quality in the Ruisseau Jackson watershed. The Ruisseau Jackson originates at Lac Anne, feeds Lac Dainava and Lac Echo, before joining La Riviere a Simon in the village of Morin Heights. The watershed includes extensive wetlands that filter toxins and sediment from the water and are home to a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna according to a 2018 *EnviroSolutions* study.

Hope, with other members of the Lake Echo Buyers Club, is also a member of *Ruisseau Jackson Aire Naturelle Protegee* (*ruisseaujackson.org*), a grassroots movement formed to protect the watershed. Founded in 2014 by Morin-Heights resident, Mathieu Regnier, RJANP conducts regular water testing, and monitors residential and commercial adherence to environmental protection laws, maintains a working relationship with municipal, regional

and provincial authorities to review remediation options. RJANP actively encourages private and public conservation and organizes environmental sensitization activities for the community in accordance to its mission of protecting the natural environment around the Ruisseau Jackson watershed.

Mathieu Filion, Co-owner, Invesco, is a founding member of RJANP, and a major sponsor of the Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve. Invesco is a residential development company located in Morin Heights and responsible for the *Allen Falls* development. The development implements stringent the environmental practices. In collaboration with the municipality, Invesco dedicated 50% of the project to green space, a total of 86 acres, versus the legally mandated 8%. The Allen Falls development imposes after purchase environmental rules for residents, all in an effort to preserve the forests and waterways in their natural state.

Hope and Filion, who met through the RJANP, brought the Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve project to Morin Heights Mayor, Tim Watchhorn in early 2018. “It sounds like a joke: A politician, a developer, and a conservationist meet in a bar,” says Hope. “But we all had serious reasons for wanting to make the project work.”

Hope and Filion had separately bid on a major land acquisition from *Mont Saint-Sauveur Inc.* The 330 acres stretched from the bridge at Chemin Wood to Route 329, and included a network of streams and wetlands critical to preserving water quality in the watershed. The land was also strategically adjacent to Filion’s Allen Falls development that he hoped to expand. “We were both very determined. It became clear that the way for everyone to win was to work together,” says Filion. The solution was to split the property. An adjacent property already owned by Invesco was also split. The result is 215 acres toward the river reserved for conservation, and 219 acres along Route 329 allocated to development lots sized between two and six acres.

“We all wanted a lot of green,” says Morin Heights Mayor, Tim Watchhorn. “Morin Heights is home to 150 km of trails, the Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve is key in a series of connected green spaces that allow the trails, and the revenue they bring to the municipality, to be preserved for generations to come.” Those responsible for environment, urbanism and sports and leisure at the municipality became key players in the project. The Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve marries extremely low-density development with pure conservation. Both the Allen Falls development and the Ruisseau Jackson

Nature Reserve are protected by eco-servitudes that dictate permitted and prohibited activities on the trails, and no activity of any kind off trail. An application to further protect the conservation area with Quebec provincial *Reserve Naturelle en milieu Privee* status is a prerequisite of the acquisition.

“Morin Heights is united by love for nature. The Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve is the result of generous gifts of time, skill, and funds dedicated to that shared purpose,” says Hope.

The Ruisseau Jackson Nature Reserve will connect to the North with: Parc Lac Lefebvre, 86 acres donated by Invesco; Molly’s trail, xx acres donated by the Lackman family; and Basler Park, xx acres acquired by the municipality of Morin Heights. To the South, the vision is to connect with Viking Park, 500 acres recently donated by the Sheldon family.

About Morin Heights

www.morinheights.com

About Invesco

www.invescohabitation.ca

About Ruisseau Jackson Aire Naturelle Protegee

www.ruisseaujackson.org

About Echo Foundation

www.fondationecho.ca

About Fondation de la faune du Québec

www.fondationdelafaune.qc.ca

About Nature Canada Conservancy

www.natureconservancy.ca