



COMMUNIQUÉ

For immediate release

ROAD ECOLOGY: NEW TURTLE PASSAGE UNDER ROUTE 245 IN BOLTON-EST

Eastman, May 15th, 2018 - Appalachian Corridor is proud to have contributed, in partnership with Québec's ministère des Transports, de la Mobilité durable et de l'Électrification des transports (MTMDET) and ministère de la Faune, des Forêts et des Parcs (MFFP), to the installation of a crossing structure for turtles and other small animals on the section of Route 245 that crosses Peasley Pond in Bolton-Est. This is the first crossing of its kind developed by the MTMDET in Quebec. This area had been documented by Appalachian Corridor as a hotspot for turtle collisions, including species listed as threatened in Quebec or Canada. "As a community, we can be proud to be the first in Quebec to set up wildlife crossings like these. The installation of this crossing is a major achievement for the recovery of turtle populations. We warmly thank the MTMDET for agreeing to collaborate on this outstanding innovative project," said Mélanie Lelièvre, Executive Director of Appalachian Corridor. Fences were installed on both sides of the road to direct turtles towards the crossing. The MTMDET took advantage of a scheduled culvert rehabilitation to integrate this wildlife passage with the road infrastructure.

Turtle hotspot

Peasley Pond is a key habitat for turtles: the Missisquoi Nord River as well as surrounding wetlands and terrestrial habitats used as nesting sites are nearby. During turtle egg-laying season in late spring and early summer, females move further away from the water in search of a sandy or gravelly place to bury their eggs. Unfortunately, our roadsides and their gravel shoulders are popular places for females looking to lay eggs, often resulting in injuries to or death of those females following collisions with vehicles. "Wetlands and aquatic habitats on either side of the road at Peasley Pond are particularly important for turtles including the Painted Turtle and Snapping Turtle. It takes many years before turtles reach sexual maturity, and females lay their eggs only once a year. The death of each adult female thus represents a major threat to turtle populations. A significant decline can occur in affected populations, even leading to local extinction," explained Clément Robidoux, biologist and conservation coordinator at Appalachian Corridor. Clément Robidoux is a member of

the Quebec Turtle Recovery Team, a group working to implement a recovery plan for turtle populations in Quebec, and is therefore well aware of the situation faced by turtle species in Quebec.

Increasing numbers of wildlife passages

Passages designed to help animals cross roads are common in Europe and increasingly popular in the United States and Canada. At Peasley Pond in Bolton-Est there are two crossings: an aquatic passage and a dry passage. The aquatic passage (6.6 ft x 6.6 ft) consists of a prefabricated concrete box culvert, while the dry underpass consists of a 20 in. x 12.6 in. polymer concrete tunnel with open slots on the top to let in light. Fencing on both sides of the road guides turtles and other small animals to these passages. Crossings by fish, frogs, American mink, muskrat, river otter, raccoon, and beaver have already been confirmed in these two underpasses, which may also be used by amphibians and reptiles species in the area. In addition, Appalachian Corridor will provide, if necessary, a dry shelf inside the aquatic passage to facilitate the passage of small and medium mammals such as fox, American mink, or raccoon. "While transportation infrastructure is essential to our mobility and economy, roads and culverts may have unintended consequences for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Across our region, transportation agencies are increasingly aware of the importance to provide safe wildlife passages across our roads. Congratulations to the MTMDET and Appalachian Corridor for their visionary leadership and collaboration in designing this passage to benefit turtles and numerous other animals. This exemplary project is a cost-effective, replicable solution for other parts of Quebec and beyond," remarked Jessica Levine, Coordinator of the Staying Connected Initiative, an international partnership that seeks to maintain and restore ecological connectivity across the Northern Appalachian Ecoregion.

A well-researched, win-win partnership project

Since its inception, Appalachian Corridor has sought to protect turtle populations in its territory of action. Staff members, visitors, and local residents alike have reported observations of dead turtles along Route 245 for a number of years. In response, Appalachian Corridor started to document these sightings and reported the situation to the MTMDET. Subsequently, the MTMDET informed Appalachian Corridor that an aging culvert was scheduled for replacement on one of the road sections identified by staff as a turtle-vehicle collision hotspot, and that they wanted to address this issue. Appalachian Corridor partnered with the MTMDET and MFFP, assisting with project development and providing a commitment to monitor and document the use of the new wildlife crossing by animals. This post-construction monitoring aims to collect data that could prove useful both here and elsewhere in Quebec. Appalachian Corridor has been collecting data at this location since 2012. Biologists and ecological technicians are thus initiating their seventh year of monitoring turtle mortalities from collisions with vehicles on this road. "In this specific case, culvert reconstruction was required, and essential

work was already scheduled at this location. It was the perfect opportunity to integrate wildlife crossings into the road design to facilitate wildlife movements and improve road users' safety by reducing the risk of collisions," explains Yves Poulin, Environmental Coordinator at MTMDET.

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About

Appalachian Corridor is a non-profit conservation organization founded in 2002 with a mission to protect natural areas in the Appalachian region of Southern Québec. Through the implementation of a transborder conservation strategy, Appalachian Corridor works with local communities to maintain and restore a way of life that respects the ecology of the region from a perspective of sustainable development.

www.appalachiancorridor.ca

The Staying Connected Initiative is a visionary partnership working to restore and enhance landscape connections for the benefit of people and wildlife across the Northern Appalachian/Acadian region of the eastern U.S. and Canada. Each step of the way, from the Tug Hill Plateau and Adirondack Mountains in New York across the forests of New England to the Canadian Maritimes, the actions we take in our own backyards and communities make a difference.

www.stayingconnectedinitiative.org

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Road 245 in Bolton-Est crosses Peasley Pond, an important habitat for turtles



Thanks to this crossing with slots letting the light in, turtles can cross the road safely



Fish, frogs, American mink, muskrat, River otter, raccoon and beaver have already used the underpasses.



View from inside the aquatic underpass