Invites all members to attend our

**2019 Annual General Meeting**

Friday, June 14, 2019

**Visitor's Centre -Rondeau Provincial Park**

Welcome & Registration: 9:30 am
AGM: 10:00 am – 11:00 am
followed by guest speaker, lunch and field tour within Rondeau Park
*Agenda includes:*
*Business Meeting/Board Member Elections & President's Remarks*
*Presentation of TGO accomplishments in 2018 & 2019*
*The Tallgrass Ontario Annual General Meeting and Information Session is **free** to Tallgrass Ontario **current** and **new members only**. Are you not yet a member but want to join us and attend the event?*

*To become a member visit http://www.tallgrassontario.org/memberships.html*

*If you would like to attend the event **without membership** to Tallgrass Ontario, you will be responsible for paying your **Park entrance fee** and an **AGM registration fee of $10** (to be collected at the event venue on June 14, 2019). Please note that the Park entrance fee and registration fee exceeds the value of a one-year membership to Tallgrass Ontario ($20) and access to all the benefits of the organization.*

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

Contact info@tallgrassontario.org to register or for more information

**Rondeau Provincial Park Tallgrass Ecosystems and Restoration Efforts**
**By Sandy Dobbyn**

Rondeau Provincial Park occupies a landform known as a cuspate sandpit, which was formed by a combination of sand deposits left during the last glaciation event and intersecting long-shore currents. The peninsula is an active land formation, which naturally continues to grow to the east and south. Hardening of the shoreline west of the park has, however, resulted in a loss of sediment being transported to Rondeau from the west and has resulted in significant erosion on the southern shore of the peninsula causing the park to recede northward.

Since the peninsula has grown from its western edges and continues to grow to the east, Rondeau provides an amazing opportunity to observe the process of classic forest succession. Forests to the west are in a late succession stage of a mature southern hardwood or "Carolinian" forest, while habitats to the east are successively newer in age beginning with oak woodland and then oak savannah, beach-dune and eventually, the open beach strand along the shore of Lake Erie.

Wave action from Lake Erie prevents plants from colonizing the active beach shoreline, and storm events remove any newly colonized plants for a short distance inland. However, as storms and currents add new sand ridges to the beach, the dunes far enough inland to be protected from wave action eventually become colonized with early pioneer species such as Marram Grass, Little Bluestem and Beach Wormwood. Over time, the sandy soils begin to

develop and become able to sustain early succession trees or shrubs including Eastern Cottonwood, Red Cedar and willows, and later, various oaks resulting in treed sand dune ecosystems. The understory also continues to succeed with grasses transitioning from Marram Grass to dense colonies of Big Bluestem, Canada Wild Rye and Indian Grass. The resulting ecosystems transition from dune through open prairie, savannah and eventually woodlands as the density of oak and other tolerant tree species increases, and before the maples, hickories and other intolerant species gain a foothold resulting in a moist, shaded "Carolinian" forest. These are the tallgrass habitats of Rondeau which have formed naturally but were likely maintained through accidental and Indigenous fire for centuries.

After becoming a provincial park in 1894, fire suppression activities became much more effective at halting the beneficial effects of fire, and many of the tallgrass systems became degraded. Fire-intolerant species such as Tulip Tree, Blue Beech, Hop-hornbeam and later maples become established and shaded out tallgrass grasses and forbs and halted the regeneration of oak trees.

Beginning in 2001 Ontario Parks began a program of active prescribed burning to restore degraded tallgrass habitats in Rondeau, beginning with a large Black Oak Savannah in the south-east portion of the park. Several open sites that had been converted to mown picnic areas were also burned and quickly returned to Big Bluestem prairie and open oak savannah. With success in these areas, the burn program was expanded and eventually most of the degraded woodland habitats between Lakeshore Road and Harrison Trail were treated with fire at least once, and many new prairie sites were created.
Ontario Parks now plans and delivers its own prescribed burn program at Rondeau, The Pinery and several other parks in southern Ontario with a goal to maintain and restore the ecological integrity of these provincially significant tallgrass ecosystems.