



Connecting Land and Lake Conservation

A Lake Huron Workshop

March 31, 2011

Ontario Land Trust Alliance

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Background

In March of 2010 the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and Environment Canada piloted a regional workshop in Sault Ste Marie that centred on Lake Superior and the various groups working around the lake. This pilot workshop was very successful in bringing a variety of environmental groups and agencies together to discuss opportunities for collaboration, tools for effective implementation, and raising awareness of the Lake Wide Management Plan for Lake Superior.

Building on this success, OLTA and Environment Canada came together in March of 2011 to develop the “Connecting Land and Lake Conservation” workshop for Lake Huron. Working from the original pilot, staff developed a more streamlined approach to the workshop that focused specifically on identifying collaboration and implementation opportunities that would advance the goals of the Lake Huron-Georgian Bay Framework for Community Action and the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (The Strategy).

Program Description

On March 31st, 2011, OLTA and Environment Canada hosted the “Connecting Land and Lake Conservation” workshop in Barrie, Ontario. The response to the workshop promotion was greater than anticipated, resulting in 77 participants from 50 organizations ranging from Conservation Authorities, provincial and federal resource management agencies, naturalists clubs, environmental non-governmental organizations, and Land Trusts.

The focus of the workshop was to transfer knowledge, share common interests, objectives, lessons learned, and conservation challenges through case studies and breakout sessions. The workshop provided greater clarity to land trusts and other regional based conservation groups on the work and priorities of the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (The Strategy) and opportunities to work together through the Lake Huron-Georgian Bay Canadian Framework for Community Action.

The goals of the workshop were as follows:

- To bring resource management agencies and conservation organizations with a conservation interest in Lake Huron together and create a dialogue between them which will continue beyond the workshop;

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- To identify synergies among conservation groups and opportunities for effective collaboration that address the priorities of The Strategy;
- To identify conservation barriers and needs and to begin discussions on how best to address common challenges, and
- To increase awareness and understanding of the efforts around the Lake Huron watershed and to provide a connection to programs that support conservation (Eco-Gifts, Eco-Action, Ontario Land Trust Assistance Program, Habitat Stewardship Program, Canada-Ontario Agreement, etc).

Key Outcomes:

- Participants recognized that the large variety and number of conservation organizations at work around the Lake Huron watershed and breakout sessions facilitated partnership building;
- Participants agreed that there is a need to continue the networking initiated by this workshop. Specifically there was consensus that engaging non-traditional partners (e.g., Aboriginal groups, municipalities, funders) is needed to move conservation efforts forward;
- Participants recognized the synergies among conservation groups and the priorities of The Strategy. They agreed that communicating their activities with the larger Lake Huron community is essential to effective implementation of The Strategy;
- Participants recognized that there is a need to engage other members of the community in conservation activities. It was discussed at length that there is a need to engage municipal governments and their planning staff in these types of training workshops.

Workshop coordinators commented that more free time for discussion would have further advanced networking among conservation groups. Some suggestions were made that a second day would have been beneficial to provide opportunities for people to connect in a less structured atmosphere.

Facilitated breakout sessions with conservation groups representing the Saint Mary's River, North Channel, Manitoulin Island, Eastern Georgian Bay, Southern Georgian Bay, Bruce Peninsula, and south-eastern Lake Huron facilitated effective communication to identify regional biodiversity conservation projects their purpose, goals, objectives, needs, barriers/challenges, cost, and potential for a collaborative

network/alliance. This was very well received by all attendees. A more detailed look at the barriers, recommendations, and opportunities are included in Appendix A - Breakout Group Discussion Notes.

The need for more municipal participation was repeated many times on the evaluation forms. This may represent an opportunity for future regional workshops that focus on joint discussion around challenges and opportunities for biodiversity conservation.

Geo-spatial analysis and regional cartographic products showing key conservation features and their ecosystem significance were provided by The Nature Conservancy of Canada. While map products were explained to participants through a presentation, some felt that greater explanation was needed and breakout sessions would have benefited by placing more emphasis on these map products. Many people expressed interest in accessing the maps to help guide their conservation efforts.

Program Results

The Ontario Land Trust Alliance conducted a workshop evaluation for our participants to provide feedback. Over 50% of the participants completed the evaluation survey. Overall the workshop was very well received by the participants. The high attendance level and the variety of groups represented helped to make this workshop a success. Comments on the evaluation forms indicated that the workshop was an excellent opportunity for learning, networking, and identifying collaboration. Participants felt the agenda was well organized and delivered. The summary of these surveys follows.

1. The content of the workshop was rated overall as 83%
2. 86% effective in creating networking opportunities
3. 78% effective in improving the understanding between the work they are doing, the Framework for Community Action, and the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
4. 80% effective in identifying opportunities for collaboration
5. 78% effective in identifying new project ideas for implementation

Funding for this workshop was provided by Environment Canada, and the Ministry of Natural Resource through the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes.

Appendix A

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Break-Out Group Notes

Breakout sessions provided an opportunity for participants to identify regional priorities for biodiversity conservation action and to summarize their project purpose, goals, objectives, needs, barriers/challenges, cost, and potential for a collaborative network/alliance.

Each session was facilitated to focus align projects with the needs of the Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy as follows:

- Address the selected biodiversity conservation features (e.g., coastal wetlands, coastal terrestrial, islands, nearshore, aerial migrants, migratory fish/tributaries);
- Address critical threats or indicators that scored low;
- Attention and discussion on projects that closely align with the recommended strategies and regional conservation needs.
- Project details on:
 - Background information: lead organization; new or existing project; describe the situation; project location; general social and environmental conditions of the area, and the main problems addressed by the initiative.
 - What are the project's purpose, goals, objectives, actions, and timelines?
 - What are the projects expected outputs, outcomes, and results?
 - What are the project needs, barriers, and challenges?
 - What is the overall cost?
 - What are the collaborations and conservation tools that would advance the projects goals and objectives?

REGIONAL BREAKOUT WORKING GROUPS

- Bruce Peninsula Working Group
- Eastern Georgian Bay Working Group
- Lake Huron Southeast Shore Working Group
- Manitoulin Island, North Channel, St. Mary's River Working Group
- Southern Georgian Bay Working Group

Bruce Peninsula Working Group

Bruce Peninsula Action Plan (2012-2017)

1. Conservation Alliance or new ENGO – \$50K

- Establish a network/alliance for local conservation partners to harmonize conservation actions
- Stakeholder Analysis: Identify and assess key people, groups of people, agencies, or institutions that may significantly influence conservation success
- Conduct a governance analysis
- Identify a community champion, build trust and establish a community of learning
- Regularly report on progress to ensure accountability and community empowerment
- Consider changing demographics and use this as an opportunity to advance conservation
- Gather socio-economic-ecological data to understand regional needs, overcome social barriers, and identify opportunities for conservation

2. Terrestrial Non-Native Exotic Species Control -Phragmites Control - \$50K

- Focus on areas of concern with active removal e.g., Stokes Bay, Owen Sound, or islands.
- Assess and map the distribution and vulnerability of Phragmites e.g., west coast
- Address spread on the coastal as well as in ditches, roads, and streams
- Conduct research on control methods
- Control vectors e.g., ATVs
- Build on current political support and efforts by Saugeen Ojibway Nation
- Secure multi-year (minimum of 10 yrs) funding
- Identify and resolve barriers to control e.g., pesticide act, overwater use of glyphosate, training for town staff.
- Include education and outreach as part of control program and all target sectors e.g., landscape companies.
- Extend program to others terrestrial non-native species e.g., knap weed (dunes), white-sweet clover, gm, hogweed (stokes bay).

3. Aquatic Non-Native Invasive Species Control – \$60K

- Assess and map the distribution and vulnerability of the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Make wetlands more resilient to invasive spp, coastal wetlands – check for gaps in protection
- Examine/understand non-point source pollution impacts to coastal wetlands and beds of submergent aquatic plants (macrophytes) e.g., septic inspection and nutrient loadings
- Consider carp barriers in sensitive and significant areas.

4. Septic Inspection - \$100K

- Establish and implement programs for monitoring, inspection, and education for the watersheds of the Bruce Peninsula.
- Select demonstration/pilot project areas for septic inspections and replacements.

5. High Resolution Assessment of Ecologically Significant Areas - \$50K

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- Complete a Natural Areas Inventory and include aquatic and terrestrial areas for natural heritage and coastal planning

6. Climate Change Adaptation \$200K

- Obtain detailed bathymetry for mapping using LIDAR
- Model changes in wetland distribution with a 1 metre drop in water level.
- Identify wetlands that would persist and act as refugia and source for re-colonization.
- Support other coastal planning actions.

7. Fragmentation \$60K

- Define coastal protection needs.
- Work with multiple agencies on new and stronger policy to protect newly emerged lands
- Identify areas for public access to shoreline (older Official Plans did not include this).
- Define baseline and thresholds for coastal development impacts on processes and biodiversity.

8. Managing Use of Beach Areas, \$10K

- Establish a Blue Flag designation for Dorcas Bay (80,000 visitors)
- Balance cultural and multi-use expectations for this beach.
- Find ways to prevent the perception of govt intervention by working with local stakeholders.
- Address fragmentation of nearshore areas.
- Understand and plan for coastal development.
- Monitoring of recreational water quality

9. Coldwater Stream Research \$100K

- Assess and prioritize tributaries for research and monitoring e.g., Crane river
- Determine need for management of Brook Trout streams due to beavers
- Learn from lessons from previous restoration in south

10. Land Protection \$10 model, \$2m

- Conduct a network analysis and assess needs and potential of establishing biological corridors.

11. Agricultural Nutrient Management and Whitefish Research and Rehabilitation - \$100K

- Protection of nearshore fish spawning habitat
- Research on early life history of whitefish in Stokes Bay, stressors and necessary BMPs
- Location: Fishing islands, Ferndale Flats and Drain, Black Creek, Stokes River, Stokes Bay
- Partnership/alliance needs: First Nation support, OMAFRA, Drainage Superintendent
- Actions: Nutrient management needs and participation from five local farmers. Introduce BMPs, fencing, trees planting, buffering, outreach/ education
- Show cost-benefit and net benefit of project.

12. Ecotourism / Education Study - \$25K

- Educate new residents through an visitor interpretation centre
 - Conduct an ecotourism study for Stokes Day to determine appropriate recreation access points to the Lake, changing attitudes, behaviour, education, and outreach needs.

Eastern Georgian Bay Working Group

Biodiversity Features and Projects for Conservation Focus:

Coastal Wetlands

- Georgian Bay Land Trust Wetlands Acquisition Strategy
- Adopt a wetland program
- Wetland evaluations and designation to Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs)
- Research on the impacts of sustained low water levels on wetland connectivity and function

Tributaries / Streams

- Moon River (spawning restoration program)
- Flow monitors
- Source water (Severn Sound)

Islands

- Georgian Bay Land Trust and stewards and other land trusts
- Bird monitoring (parks, conservation areas, bird studies)

Nearshore

- Eastern Georgian Bay SC- (Trap netting, Index netting)
- Small fish survey by the Lake Huron Fisheries Management Unit
- Municipal & Georgian Bay Forever & Severn Sound Environmental Association – Water quality
- Severn Sound Environmental Association – Fish tagging project

Coastal Terrestrial – Species at Risk

- MNR habitat
- Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve – SAR outreach and municipal Best Management Practices
- FMP's
- Provincial Parks

What's Missing?

1. Coordination and networking
 - Develop and implement a Coastal Wetland Conservation Strategy
 - Develop "Report Cards" for reporting, communicating and call to action – **2 year project \$100,000**
2. Communications and education
 - Gather and summarize baseline on current communications
 - Confirm communication goals

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- Conduct outreach to the unconverted and target different audiences for a broad base communication approach.
- 3. Municipal outreach Program
 - Secure Species at Risk biologists for property assessments
 - Incorporate coastal wetland protection in zoning
- 4. Invasive species sentinel and eradication plan
 - Develop and implement a monitoring and eradication program and coordinate with groups like the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH) and the Lake Huron Centre of Coastal Conservation (LHCCC)
- 5. Ongoing meetings at a basin scale and a regional scale
 - Continue the networking at this workshop and expand to meet the needs of various scales.
 - Consider Web forums / chat groups/conservation blogs to enable conservation groups to identify synergies, post questions and seek guidance and lessons learned from other agencies.

Opportunities for Collaboration

1. Work with colleges and universities to help align course work to meet local conservation needs, identify co-op placements, and needs relevant to environmental studies, event planning, business, marketing and communications.
2. Dialogue with Ducks Unlimited of Canada to understand their approach, lessons learned regarding a “Municipal Extension Program” to engage municipalities in conservation approaches.
3. Work with the Nature Conservancy of Canada to complete a stream barrier assessment and identify opportunities for volunteer placement.

Recommendations:

- Update the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement
- Update Technical Guidelines for Shoreline Management to address shoreline intensification and other emerging issues.
- Convert charts and tables to be converted to auto decision
 - Support tools
- Recognize the relationship between shoreline hazards and shoreline ecosystems
 - Integrate coastal zone management plans
 - Use a more systemic / holistic perspective
- Compendium of photos: Consolidation of photos; Central repository
- Tributaries Monitoring: Condition, threats, and flows.

Lake Huron Southeast Shore Working Group

Identification of Groups, Projects and Potential Challenges

Town of Saugeen Shores

- Project: Waterfront Master Plan
- Challenges: Invasive species such as Phragmites

Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

- Encourage the use of soft shore engineering and low impact development techniques
- Challenges: Bluff erosion and protection south of Goderich. Goderich shoreline has been altered beaches further south are starved of sand – Use dredge material at Goderich to nourish these beaches

Beaver River (Lake Eugenia Property Association)

- Needs: By-law enforcement, Invasive species management and control of ATV's
- Challenges: Overdevelopment, shoreline alterations

Saugeen Metis Council

- Challenges: Nuclear waste management

Grey Sauble Conservation Authority

- Challenges: Budget for stewardship

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority

- Needs: Community watershed plans along the Lakeshore in response to community concerns about water quality

Ministry of Environment

- Challenges: Southeast shore water quality and beaches, prioritized watersheds for remediation, and implement plans to meet targets

Ontario Streams

- Goal: to engage 75 community groups in Lake Huron Basin to develop small scale projects such as the Simcoe County community based "Adopt-a-Stream Program"

Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority

- Pine River is a priority watershed for non-point source pollution on the Southeast shore.
- Other fringe watersheds along the Lake Huron Shoreline need to be managed for non-point source pollution

Strategies to protect and address threats to biodiversity in southeast shore and near shore:

- Education – BMP's; invasive species control
- Strengthen policies at municipal level
- Need for a central location for information storage and access
- Provide information on who to call – what is having an impact
- Priority areas need to be identified in municipal plans with greater mechanisms for protection; provincially significant wetlands are still being lost; Natural Heritage Strategies can be denied at council (i.e., Municipality of Kincardine) when public support is insufficient.

What do we need to protect these areas?

1. These areas need to be provincially identified in Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).
2. Protect parks
3. Engage local residents who live near protected areas and involve them in local watersheds to protect headwaters. Use water quality as main business driver
4. Gather and share information on water quality and local watersheds

Educate people about nearshore water quality and connection with human activities and some lake physical processes.

Overall summary of conservation needs:

1. Develop and implement subwatershed plans to enhance water quality using an integrated restoration and protection approach.

Local agencies familiar with environmental stressors and needs (CA's, Municipalities, community members) to lead project.

Recognize community network champions and establish criteria that involve local people to help designate

priority areas for restoration and protection.

Convene more local county workshops to identify criteria for priority restoration areas.

Incorporate coastal and inland areas and capture the Dundalk Plateau.

Complete a geographic information system analysis and mapping to identify restoration and stewardship needs, including: Wetland restoration; Storm water control; Buffers; Dam removal; Naturalization

Consider community programs such as “Coast Watchers” and “Blue flag”

Communication needs: signs at beaches, articles in local papers, weekly column re: conservation

Identify how perceived economic loss be compensated and investigate tools such

as ‘Land Swapping’, and clarify landowner issues surrounding privacy Manitoulin Island / North Channel / St. Mary’s Working Group

1. Manitoulin Streams
 - Restoration of cold water streams and associated terrestrial lands
 - Partners include municipalities, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Laurentian University, and Stewardship Councils
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 2.5, 3.1, 4.2, 4.1, 2.2
 - Challenges – access to private land
 - Cost – \$2.7 million (2010) over 10 years

2. Manitoulin Island Defragmentation (**NEW PROJECT**)
 - Lead – Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 1.1, 2.5, 4.3
 - Barrier – Lack of knowledge, fear, tax base loss at municipal level
 - Cost - \$100K over 2.5 years

3. Kensington Shoreline Land Securement (**NEW PROJECT** – St. Mary’s/North Channel)
 - Lead – Kensington Conservancy
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 1.1, 8.4, 4.3, 2.5
 - Barrier – Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program – loss of municipal tax base, lack of understanding of conservation motives
 - Local decision makers lack the expertise and knowledge

4. Comprehensive cost/benefit analysis of land conservation for municipalities (**NEW PROJECT**)

This should talk to the quality of life not just the dollar values.

 - Partners: Local land trusts; Laurentian University and others; Manitoulin streams; FENOM (?); MNR; Ducks Unlimited Canada; Environment Canada; Stewardship Councils; First Nations
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 8.2, 4.2, 4.1
 - Barriers / Challenges: Lack of standardization in the approach to the analysis
 - Resources: Suzuki Foundation; Brookings Institute – Washington DC; Recreational Fisheries; Revitalization Initiative (GB)
 - Costs: \$20K - \$100K – may piggy back other strategies

5. NHIC Inventory for SAR
 - Partners: NCC; Other organizations that indicate need for inventory
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 8.6
 - Barrier: Lack of precise local knowledge
 - Cost: \$50K per year for all great lakes

6. Invasive Species Management (**NEW PROJECT**)
 - Partners: Stewardship Councils; Municipalities; Colleges, universities; Local community groups; MTO for signage; OFAH
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 2.1, 8.4
 - Barriers: Lack of research / knowledge; Balancing prevention with management; some regulation prohibiting pesticide use; Cost intensive; Lack of best practices (eg. Use of fill with seeds in it)
 - Resources: Remote sensing, tracking of invasives; Database; Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Plan
 - Cost: \$100K - \$1 Million – think of some low hanging fruit to get started

7. Research on Lake Sturgeon (**NEW PROJECT**)
 - *Address the threat of new hydro dams*
 - Partners: First nations (AofRC?); OFAH; LHBP ? Local fish and game clubs
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 8.1
 - Barriers: HR capacity; Time; Green power needs; Lack of ability for municipalities to influence
 - Resources: DFO; EC; MNR
 - Cost: \$30K per site up to 20 sites = \$600K.

8. North Shore Community Stream Stewardship program (**NEW PROJECT**)
 - Partners: Stewardship Councils (east Algoma); First nations; OFAH; Local land trust; Local landowners/cottagers associations; Municipalities; Local planning boards; Schools (secondary, post secondary); Agricultural community
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 2.5, 4.3, 8.6
 - Barriers: Achieving local buy-in
 - Cost: \$20K per year depending on scope of work

9. North Shore Conservation Strategy working group (**NEW PROJECT**)
 - *Document priorities, conservation action planning*
 - Partners: Stewardship councils; Planning boards; Landowner associations; EC; Lake Huron Bi-National Partnership
 - Addresses Lake Huron Biodiversity Conservation Strategies: 2.6
 - Barriers: Staying focused on task; Keep collaborating; Leadership; capacity
 - Resources: A strategy would guide local group initiatives; Manitoulin streams GIS data; Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint

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- Cost: \$45K - \$50K per year for 3-5 years
10. Sale of Crown lands should be offered to environmental organizations first (**NEW PROJECT**)
- Partners: Crown; Local Land trusts
 - Barriers: Need process to determine and guide sales; Overcoming beaurocratic processes; Liability issues with ownership
 - Cost: \$10K total

Common Barrier – Distrust of Government and local NGO’s by community and municipalities.

Southern Georgian Bay Working Group

Priority Projects:

NVCA New Project Ideas:

- **NVCA jurisdiction Nottawasaga Bay shoreline report card**
 1. focus on 2km fringe along shoreline
 2. look at forest/wetland/watercourse/shoreline health/islands and trends over time
 3. raise public profile/awareness
 4. communicate health/trends
- **Potential Collingwood Wetlands brochure/website**
 1. partner with Town
 2. Blue Mountain Watershed Trust
 3. raise public awareness of globally rare ecosystems and associated functions
- **Invasive species**
 1. control of dog-strangling vine and Phragmites along shoreline
 2. partnerships with Town/BMWT?

Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority

1) Nottawasaga Water Quality Improvement Program (NWIP)

- Goal: Improve the health of the Nottawasaga River and Georgian Bay Watershed
- Threats: community growth and land use pressures
- Strategies: Agricultural partnerships BMP's; Education; Outreach; Capacity building.
- Challenges: Sustainability; Funding; Negotiation of extra land for river edges; Collaboration with non-traditional partners; Municipal linkages; Access to additional staff support
- Timelines: 3 year workplan
- Actions: 1 large—scale restoration project per year; tree planting, dam decommissioning etc. Expand the Nottawasaga-Water Quality Improvement Program capacity to better engage, coordinate and integrate the efforts of the South Simcoe Streams Network and Ontario Streams.
- Cost: \$100,000 per year

2) Nottawasaga Bay Research and Mapping Exercise

- Goal: Substrate mapping (0-30metres), including shallow core samples looking at underlying materials like clays that can be exposed during dredging.
- Threats: Dredging and development adjacent to coastal wetlands
- Challenges: Obtain digital elevation data to model habitat forms and functions at different lake levels.

3) Nottawasaga Bay Critical Habitat Characterization

4) Southern Georgian Bay Shoreline Management –Impact Analysis

- Goal: Habitat zone mapping (Coastal Wetland Zone, Collingwood Harbour Zone, Rocky Shore east of Collingwood, Wasaga Beach Zone)
- Threat: Shoreline alterations e.g., dredging, infilling, hardening, development
- Strategies: Develop protection/management/restoration priorities and plans for each habitat zone.
- Actions: Examine benthic invertebrate density and diversity in exposed silty flats between groins and contrast with undisturbed substrates.

5) Silver Creek Coastal Wetland Protection

- Goal: Protect and steward the Silver Creek Coastal Wetland
- Threat: Development pressures adjacent to the Silver Creek wetland complex
- Strategies:
 - Develop a Natural Heritage System Strategy to characterize and protect significant nearshore and coastal terrestrial habitat to protect coastal wetland habitat.
 - Integrate Natural Heritage System Strategy into Official Plans to ensure protection
 - Characterize critical habitat requirements and current habitat use by using smallmouth bass as a key indicator to assess the health of shoreline habitats
 - Develop Index of Biotic Integrity monitoring for Silver Creek Wetland Complex similar to P. Chow-Fraser's research and monitoring.

South Simcoe Stream Network

- Goal: Improving water quality within the headwaters of the Nottawasaga river and lake Simcoe (building on success of NWIP)
- Threats: Development; Greenbelt legislation
- Strategies: Education; outreach

Wye Marsh

- **Goal: Education and Species at Risk projects**

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources -Stewardship Ranger Program

- Goal: Invest in youth within communities and involvement with stewardship initiatives
- Threats: financial support; coordination and leadership
- Strategies: education; outreach; capacity building

Ontario Streams- Adopt a Stream

- Goal: Build a network of 25 adopt-a-stream teams per year for 3 years
- Challenges: Sustainability; Capacity; Long-term volunteer commitment
- Strategies: Education; outreach
- Opportunities: South Simcoe Streams; NWIP; Ontario Nature; Land Trusts (OLTA)

Blue Mountain Watershed Land Trust – Silver Creek Wetland

- Goal: Protect the Silver Creek Wetland from development
- Threats: Development pressures; Politics – local municipality
- Strategies: Wetland protection; Coastal wetlands; Shoreline alterations; Stewardship
- Challenges:
 - Collaboration – landowner not willing to come to table
 - Land ownership – currently owned by developer
 - OP designation doesn't offer protection
 - Securing a conservation easement with township once property transfers to the municipality
 - Upland terrestrial values are not as highly regarded
- Opportunities
 - Connect with Couchiching Conservancy regarding working on municipal Conservation Easement (CEA)
 - Connect with Escarpment Biosphere Reserve regarding holding CEA
 - Connect with NVCA regarding planning and review

Couchiching Conservancy – Copeland Forest

- Goal: Provide assistance to MNR on the management and stewardship of Copeland Forest
- Threats: Lack of MNR \$ for effective ongoing stewardship; Ad-hoc trails established by users; Lack of data
- Challenges: Couchiching conservancy conducting biological inventory; Building stewardship network to support local MNR goals for property; Need groups to participate in stewardship network
- Strategies: Migratory fish; Stewardship; Education; Outreach; Restoration

Other Challenges and Barriers

1. Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt legislation is forcing development north and into Southern Georgian Bay subwatershed
2. Engaging developers as stakeholders
3. No incentive or mechanism for developers to donate sensitive lands similar to the Eco-Gifts program for private landowners

New Project Opportunity

ECO3000 (building on the ISO9000 program for manufacturing) proposed by workshop participant

Towns and municipalities are usually major influencers of projects on the landscape so their education about the natural environment is essential to making sound decisions in both planning and daily operations that meet the needs of conservation.

Issue: Municipal councils are not always supportive of environmental protection and stewardship initiatives. There is a high turnover of municipal council, and lack of corporate/collective memory of environmental projects and strategies.

- Successful conservation initiatives tend to have the long-term support of municipalities.
- Council and town staff and management must all be educated on the value of the nearshore aquatic system, coastal and inland wetlands, forests, tributaries, and also on ecological goods and services.

Goal: Raise the environmental IQ of municipalities by establishing an accreditation program that provides training and education on a range of environmental issues such as nearshore aquatic physical and biological processes and functions, ecological goods and services, Provincial Policy Statement, water quality needs of the Lake etc.

Strategy: Create a certification program that provides accreditation to municipalities.

- Much like ISO9000 has helped to improve quality and reliability in the Industrial and Distribution sectors, a similar evaluation and defined progression of levels (Capability Maturity Model - CMM) could be incentive to improve the Ecological IQ of town councils and staff.
- Towns could proudly display their special ECO logos. People can be proud of their results and plans.
- The public then has the ability to gauge their representatives' performance in natural ecology, and we all have a vehicle to facilitate improvement.

Challenges:

- Local buy in
- Changing municipal councils means the training leaves as council changes
- Staff need to be involved
- Municipal priorities change – how do we “re-certify”
- Who will lead?
- What is the incentive beyond PR? Is there \$ that could encourage early adopters?
- Needs to be taken seriously at the municipal level – do municipal staff have time to really participate in this?