



NEW NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Natural Environment Work Program: Consultation Summary Report – 2nd Point of Engagement

Niagara Region
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SUSTAINABLE REGION



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Niagara Region is developing a new Niagara Official Plan (N.O.P.) – through a process known as a “municipal comprehensive review”. As part of Niagara’s land use planning that is intended to responsibly manage land and resources throughout the Region, the N.O.P. will be a long-range policy planning document to shape Niagara’s physical, economic, and social development.

Natural Environment planning is undertaken in consideration of the broader land use planning needs of the Region, and includes natural heritage, water resources, and watershed planning is an important part of the process. As part of the new N.O.P., natural environment mapping and policies are being developed as part of natural environment planning for the new N.O.P. – this work is being completed as part of the Natural Environment Work Program, which commenced in 2018.

An important component of the Natural Environment Work Program is to engage with public agency stakeholders, interested groups/stakeholders, Indigenous groups and the public about natural environment matters in the region to better inform the development of options for the natural environment system(s) and policies. The purpose of this 2nd Point of Engagement was to inform the public and stakeholders on the options for the Natural Heritage System (N.H.S.) and Water Resource System (W.R.S.) through conceptual mapping and policy framework that was completed as part of Technical Report #2: Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment Systems (s) (North-South Environmental Inc. et. al., 2020) and to seek input towards the evaluation of the options.

The purpose of this document is to summarize the results of the 2nd Point of Engagement, identify key themes and related implications, and inform the identification of preferred options for the N.H.S. and W.R.S that will be carried forward into the next steps in the work program.

Overview of the Consultation Process

The 2nd Point of Engagement has been document in this Consultation Summary Report, which summarizes the second of three points of engagement that will take place over the course of the work program. Forms of engagement included presentations, virtual workshops and virtual public information sessions. Stakeholder and community engagement included the following:

- Planning and Economic Development Committee Presentation
- Meetings with Local Planning Staff
- Stakeholder Workshops

- Virtual Public Information Centres (P.I.C.s)
- Planning Advisory Committee (P.A.C.) Presentation
- Agricultural Policy and Action Committee (A.P.A.C.) Presentation
- NPCA (Board, Staff, and Planning Advisory Committee) Presentations
- Provincial Planning Staff Presentation
- Niagara Escarpment Commission (N.E.C.) Presentation
- Niagara Parks Commission (N.P.C.) Presentation
- Team Niagara Presentation
- Ongoing Engagement with Indigenous Groups

Key Themes

Through the consultation process three key themes emerged related to the identification of preferred options for the natural environment systems, and three key themes related more generally to the Natural Environment Work Program. The following provides a summary of the key themes, in no particular order, and the implications for consideration by the Region and consultant team when developing the natural environment policies and options for mapping the natural environment system.

Key Themes to Inform the Identification of Preferred Options

1. Balanced Land Use Planning: Protection of the Natural Environment and Opportunities for Growth

There is no consensus on what the N.H.S. and W.R.S. in the Region should look like. There were a wide range of opinions expressed related to the identification of a preferred option, from a comprehensive and well-connected enhanced system, to a more basic system that minimizes constraints to development within settlement areas and allows targets set by the Province for growth to be achieved within settlement areas to the extent possible. When taken together, these opinions speak to the need for a natural environment system that goes beyond the minimum provincial standard to identify and implement a comprehensive N.H.S. and W.R.S., with a policy framework that limits restrictions on development and growth in settlement areas.

2. Recognize and Protect Agricultural Uses

Agriculture is an important part of the Region's land base, economy, and historical fabric that must be recognized and protected as part of the policy framework for the protection of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. Policies should be consistent with Provincial plans that provide permissions and exemptions for certain agricultural uses (existing and proposed), as well as be clear on other prohibitions and permissions.

3. Informed by Science and Guided by Goals and Objectives with Numerical Targets

The identification of the details of the preferred options should be informed by goals and objectives with numerical targets, based on an analysis of statistics on the current natural cover, areal extent of the natural environment system, and impacts to the

amount of developable area. The preferred option should be designed to meet goals, objectives and measurable/numerical targets that will ultimately inform the development of policies and guide future interpretation and implementation of policies.

Key Themes to Inform the Natural Environment Work Program

1. Accurate and Comprehensive Mapping of the Natural Environment Systems

Mapping is intended to support the interpretation and implementation of policies; therefore, it is foundational to facilitating wise and informed decision-making. Mapping accuracy and completeness is therefore considered important to support the interpretation and application of N.H.S. and W.R.S. policies. Clear mapping also provides important information to the public and landowners related to natural environment resources in the Region. Mapping should be current, accurate, easily available and updated on a regular basis to reflect notable updates in datasets. Policies should recognize that mapping is inherently imperfect by allowing refinements to be made, through approved site-specific studies, without the need for an Official Plan Amendment.

2. Clear, Consistent Policies and Guidance for Implementation

Policies should be clear and recognize policies and regulations of other agencies for the same features to ensure either consistency or to avoid conflicting direction. There is a need to provide more clarity on how linkages and supporting features will be identified, refined, and mapped through site-specific studies. Guidelines will be required for the identification of these features and areas.

3. Build Trust Through Continued Engagement, Collaboration and Education

There have been a range of expectations of what the natural environment policies should be or should emphasize which differ considerably among stakeholder groups — from calls for more flexibility and fewer restrictions, to much greater environmental protection. In addition, members of the community have expressed a desire to have ongoing opportunities to provide meaningful input to the development of the natural environment systems and policy. The Region has implemented a comprehensive consultation and engagement plan as part of the Natural Environment Work Program that will continue through the development of details for mapping and policies of the preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S.

Direction for the Selection of Preferred Options

The feedback received through the 2nd Point of Engagement included a wide range of opinions and preferences related to the identification of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. The opinions ranged from a desire to maintain flexibility and minimize additional restrictions on development (N.H.S. Option 1 or 2), to calls for a systems-based approach to identify a connected and enhanced N.H.S. with much greater environmental protection (N.H.S. Option 3C). A consensus will not be reached on a preferred option that meets the expectations of the public and stakeholders to both prioritize protection for the natural environment, and growth and development.

A balanced approach to land use planning will be necessary to address the wide range of interests including the strong desire for protection of the natural environment, the requirement for growth and development, and to recognize the primacy of the agricultural system. In order to achieve this balanced approach, the policy framework for the natural environment system should:

- a) ensure strong protection of significant features and areas within the N.H.S. and W.R.S., as informed and supported by science-based goals and objectives with measurable and achievable targets;
- b) recognize Provincial requirements for growth and development by including permissions and exemptions, where appropriate, that still achieves the goals and objectives for the N.H.S. and W.R.S.; and
- c) recognize the primacy of agriculture and ensure consistent policies with Provincial plans that include exemptions and permissions related to existing and proposed uses and normal farming practices.

Based on the options developed in Technical Report #2 that were presented to the public and stakeholders as part of the 2nd Point of Engagement and subsequent comments on the options, a N.H.S. and a W.R.S. that adequately protects significant natural features while providing flexibility for development should be carried forward as the preferred option. The selection of the preferred option should also be informed by more details about the options, particularly within urban areas, including statistics of areal cover of each option, and the policy intent of each option in order to better compare and contrast the options. Following a review of this more detailed information, it is possible that a blend of N.H.S. Options 3B and 3C, and W.R.S. Option 2A may achieve a natural environment system that both protects significant natural features and provides flexibility for development.

Next Steps

The input received through the 2nd Point of Engagement has provided direction to the Region and consultant team that will inform the development of a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. It is clear through the consultation and feedback received that there is no consensus on a preferred option for the natural environment systems. The framework for the identification of a N.H.S. and W.R.S. and the related policies identified in Technical Report #2 will need to be modified to reflect the direction provided in this Consultation Summary Report. Furthermore, there have been requests for additional details related to the options that can better inform decisions on a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. As part of providing an update to Regional Council, Region staff had prepared a memorandum on November 20, 2020 (CWCD 314-2020) noting that as part of addressing the request to provide more details on the options to assist with identifying a preferred option, the consultant team would undertake additional analysis on each of the options for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. within urban areas. This additional work will include establishing a preliminary methodology and criteria for each feature-type of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. and providing detailed statistics and comparison of each option. To accompany these detailed statistics, the policy intent of

each option will also be explored in more detail to better compare and contrast the options. Following this additional analysis, a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. mapping and policy framework will then be presented to Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee to seek their endorsement to move forward with the Natural Environment Work Program.

Following Council's endorsement of the preferred option for the natural environment systems, the detailed design of the preferred options will be developed through Phase 6 and identified in Technical Report #3, along with more detailed definitions and criteria and recommendations for the policies for the natural environment. Following the development of this third technical paper, the Region will commence with the detailed mapping of the systems and the policy development process in Phase 7; this will ultimately be followed by the 3rd Point of Engagement in Phase 8 of the Natural Environment Work Program.

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1.0 Introduction

Niagara Region is developing a new Niagara Official Plan (N.O.P.) – through a process known as a “municipal comprehensive review”. The N.O.P. will be a long-range policy planning document to shape Niagara’s physical, economic, and social development.

Natural Environment planning, which includes natural heritage, water resources, and watershed planning, is an important part of the process. As part of the new N.O.P., natural environment mapping and policies will be developed to reflect the current vision, goals, and objectives for Niagara Region. A key element of the work to develop the new NOP will be policies and mapping that incorporate Provincial requirements on natural environment planning. Niagara Region has retained a consultant team, led by North-South Environmental Inc, with Meridian Planning Consulting Inc., Ecosystem Recovering Inc., and GLPi, to support the Region in undertaking the Natural Environment Work Program.

The Natural Environment Work Program commenced in 2018 and includes the following phases:

- Phase 2 - Mapping and Watershed Planning Discussion Papers and Comprehensive Background Study [complete]
- Phase 3 - 1st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study [complete]
- Phase 4 - Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s) [complete]
- Phase 5 - 2nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural Systems [currently underway]
- Phase 6 - The Regional Natural Environment System and Considerations for Implementation
- Phase 7 - Develop Draft Official Plan Policies and Finalize Mapping
- Phase 8 - 3rd Point of Engagement: Draft Official Plan Policies and Schedules

An important component of the work program is to engage with public agency stakeholders, interested groups/stakeholders, Indigenous groups and the public. The purpose of this 2nd Point of Engagement was to inform the public and stakeholders on Technical Report #2, which presented conceptual options for the natural environment systems and policy framework, and to seek input towards the options for the natural heritage system (N.H.S) and water resource system (W.R.S).

The following table (Table 1) provides an overview of the activities that were undertaken as part of this point of engagement.

Table 1. Dates of engagement activities undertaken during the 2nd Point of Engagement.

Date (2020)	Activity
July 15	Presentation to Planning and Economic Development Committee (P.E.D.C) (P.D.S. 26-2020)
August 28	Introduction Presentation to Area Planners
September 11	Meeting with Port Colborne Planning Staff
September 14	Meeting with Niagara Falls Planning Staff
September 15	Meeting with St. Catharines Planning Staff
September 16	Presentation to Provincial Planning (M.M.A.H., M.N.R.F., & M.E.C.P). Staff
September 16	Presentation to Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) Staff
September 16	Presentation to Planning Advisory Committee (P.A.C.)
September 17	Presentation to Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (N.P.C.A.) Board
September 18	Meeting with Lincoln Planning Staff
September 18	Stakeholder Workshop – Development Community & Planning and Ecological Consultants
September 21	Meeting with Wainfleet Planning Staff
September 21	Meeting with Fort Erie Planning Staff
September 21	Stakeholder Workshop – Agricultural Community
September 22	Meeting with West Lincoln Planning Staff
September 22	Stakeholder Workshop – Environmental Stakeholder Groups
September 23	Meeting with Grimsby Planning Staff
September 23	Virtual Public Information Centre 1 (Natural Heritage System)
September 24	Presentation to N.P.C.A. Public Advisory Committee
September 24	Virtual Public Information Centre 2 (Water Resource System and Watershed Planning)
September 25	Meeting with Pelham Planning Staff
September 25	Presentation to the Agricultural Policy and Action Committee (A.P.A.C.)
September 28	Meeting with Welland Planning Staff
September 29	Presentation to N.P.C.A. Staff
September 29	Presentation to Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) Staff
September 29	Meeting with Thorold Planning Staff

September 30	Participate in Trout's Unlimited 12 Mile Creek Subwatershed Study Meeting
October 1	Meeting with Niagara-on-the-Lake Planning Staff
November 19	Presentation to Team Niagara
December 11	Meeting with Mississauga of the Credit First Nation Staff

1.1 Consultation Summary

This consultation summary report provides an overview of the 2nd Point of Engagement that has been recently completed. It is the second of three consultation summary reports that will be prepared by the consultant team over the course of the Natural Environment Work Program. As illustrated in **Figure 1**, the public and stakeholder engagement program Natural Environment Work Program includes a variety of engagement opportunities to communicate, educate, engage participants, receive input, and to inform.

The general comments and feedback received from each group are provided in the following sections:

- Planning and Economic Development Committee
- Local Planning Staff
- Stakeholder Workshops
- Virtual Public Information Centres (P.I.C.s)
- Other Public and Stakeholder Feedback
- Planning Advisory Committee (P.A.C.)
- Agricultural Policy and Action Committee (A.P.A.C.)
- NPCA (Board, Staff, and Planning Advisory Committee)
- Provincial Planning Staff
- Niagara Escarpment Commission (N.E.C.) Staff
- Niagara Parks Commission (N.P.C.) Staff
- Team Niagara Presentation
- Ongoing Engagement with Indigenous Groups

Appendices are provided that include invitations and notices of meetings, presentation materials, completed questionnaires, and e-mail and letter submissions.

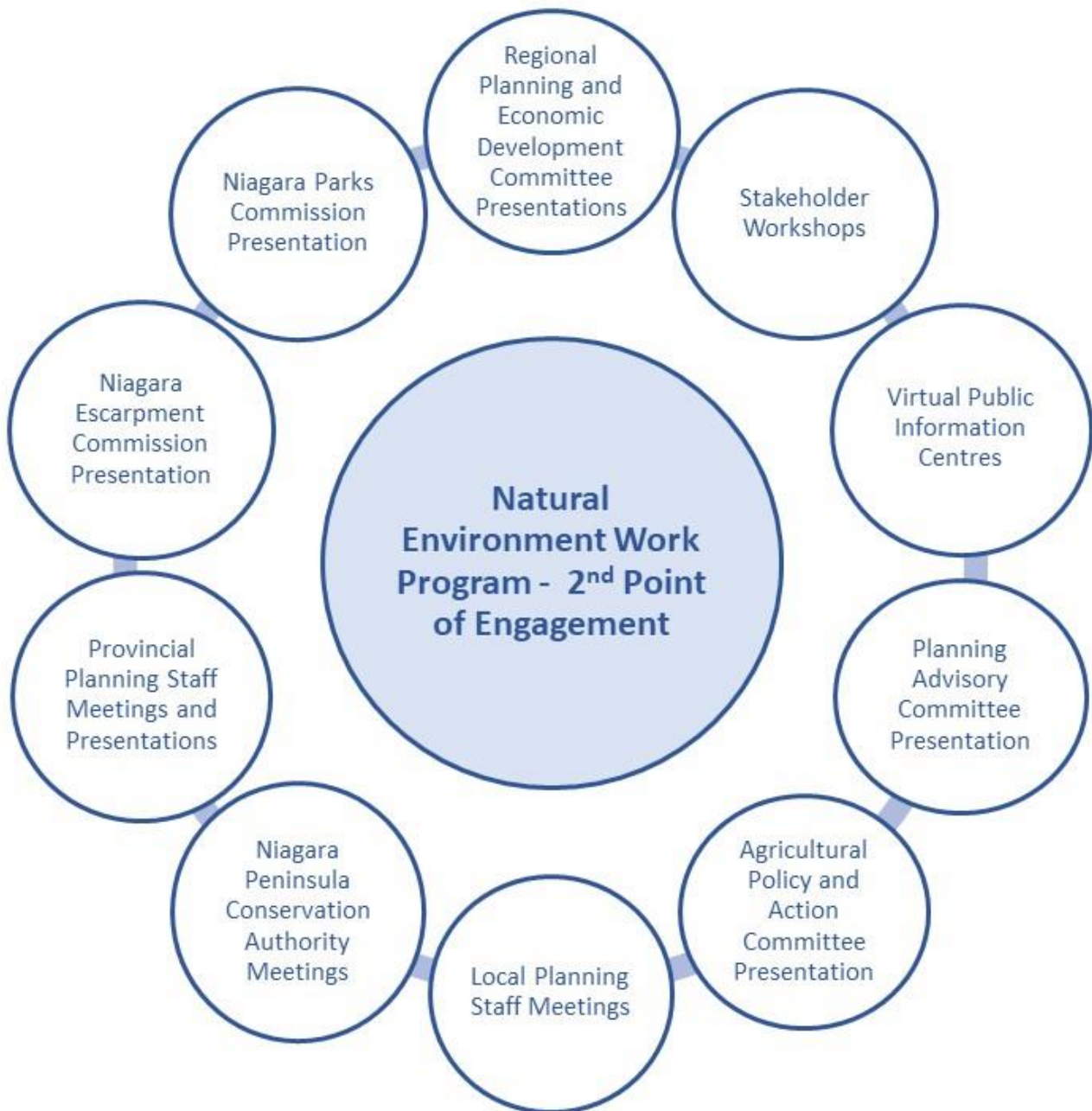


Figure 1. Schematic of Consultation Undertaken during the 2nd Point of Engagement

2.0 Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee Presentation

At the July 15, 2020 Planning and Economic Development Committee (P.E.D.C.) meeting, the staff report PDS 26-2020 was presented (**Appendix A**). Following the presentation members of the P.E.D.C. discussed the presentation and asked questions for clarification.

2.1 Summary of Comments

Comments received at the July 15, 2020 P.E.D.C. meeting have been summarized as follows:

Summary of comments to inform the preferred options

- Sufficient protection of the natural environment system should be achieved through a preferred option.
- Normal farming practices should not be affected by the identification of a natural heritage system or water resources which may also serve to support the agricultural community, particularly man-made features (e.g., agricultural drains, irrigation ditches, etc.).

3.0 Meetings with Local Planning Staff

There was a high-level of engagement with the Local Municipalities. Niagara Region Planning Staff introduced the topic at an Area Planners meeting and then conducted one-on-one meetings individually with the Planning Director and Planning Staff from all of the Local Municipalities to provide an update on the work program, an overview of the options, as well as to seek input towards the identification of a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. A copy of the presentation given by Regional staff is included in **Appendix B**.

The following provides a summary of comments received during the 12 meetings with local planning staff, organized into themes as follows:

Comments on Options

- N.H.S. Option 3 (A, B, C) will be the most challenging to implement, in part due to linkages over agricultural areas, even with agricultural exceptions.

- Development potential will be impacted with the identification of additional features and areas within urban areas in N.H.S. Option 3. The decision to go beyond minimum standards should be supported by science and more detailed information.
- It is recognized that there are competing land uses; an option that achieves a balance is preferred.
- Maximum protection outside of the urban area and minimal protection inside the urban area is preferred to direct growth and development in settlement areas.
- A hybrid between N.H.S. Option 3B and 3C should be considered. It is suggested that secondary planning in greenfield areas can be used to look at linkages inside of the urban area (rather than being mapped now and a required component as in Option 3C).
- There is concern about how the Region's growth management objectives will be realized with additional features and areas identified in an N.H.S. that goes beyond the minimum – for this reason, N.H.S. Option 1 or 2 are preferred.
- If the Region goes ahead with N.H.S. Option 3 there is concern about the municipality not agreeing with the linkages and not being able to change them.
- N.H.S. Option 3B seems reasonable and balanced as it captures more features and provides connectivity, but concern with the impact on development without seeing details of policies.
- N.H.S. Option 3A is sufficient in urban areas., and it is the easiest to implement. Option 3B and 3C would reduce the land supply in settlement areas. Additional protections/ enhancements should be considered outside urban areas only.
- As an overlay N.H.S. Option 1 is preferred for allowing changes to mapping errors and minimizes impact to developable areas in settlement areas.
- Option 3A is preferred inside settlement areas and Option 3C for outside settlement areas.
- It is difficult to provide input towards a preferred option without seeing more detailed draft mapping in settlement areas and compare and contrast the options to understand the implications of the options on development potential within settlement areas.

Goals/Objectives/Targets

- Questions were asked about how targets will be measured and monitored to determine the success of the option selected.
- It would be good to know how targets can inform planning decisions (e.g., how much tree planting should be required as a part of new developments? Should green infrastructure/LID contribute to achieving targets? etc.).

Mapping

- If possible, update mapping to reflect changes to feature boundaries based on approved development applications (as informed by Environmental Impact Studies).

- There is concern about inconsistent mapping between the N.P.C.A. and the Region.
- There should be a consistent approach to mapping across the Region.
- Provincially Significant Wetlands and regionally significant wetlands should be mapped as a separate land use designation to be more clear about the type of protection through policy, particularly in greenfield areas.
- Features and linkages should be mapped now and the secondary planning process should be used to refine them or to justify reducing or enhancing them.
- Linkages should be included in an option to connect isolated features.
- Accuracy of mapping is important.
- There is concern about not being able to adjust mapping.
- There is concern that Provincial mapping is not ground truthed and will be imposed on municipalities. Several local municipalities expressed an interest in being involved in the process of making technical refinement to the Growth Plan N.H.S.
- There is concern about having natural features mapped on top of agricultural buildings or areas.
- If fish habitat is not mapped, the Region should maintain an internal fish habitat and other watercourses dataset to support screening as part of pre-consultation to ensure fish habitat is not overlooked.
- It is better to map buffers and linkages to ensure these components are not overlooked – allow refinements through site specific studies.

Planning/Policy Direction

- There is general support that the Region should continue to review Environmental Impact Studies and provide their technical expertise – it was generally mentioned that most local municipalities do not have this expertise “in-house”.
- The policies related to managing development on aquifers need to be carefully considered given the large extent of aquifers throughout the Region.
- There is a continued preference that the approval of EISs in urban areas should be the responsibility of the local area municipality, even where there are natural features mapped as part of the Region’s N.H.S. mapping. The Region should continue to provide their expertise in the review of environmental studies (i.e., keep status quo).
- The current Environmental Protection Areas (E.P.A.) and Environmental Conservation Areas (E.C.A.) designations are confusing.
- Clarification was sought related to a Regional designation and the requirement for local Official Plans to update zoning by-laws to reflect the Region’s designation.
- Municipalities sought confirmation that the identification of the N.H.S. and policies were not intended to add further restrictions to agricultural uses or buildings beyond any restrictions and exemptions provided by Provincial policies.
- There is concern about the issue of setbacks from watercourses and the impact this has on very small lots.

- There were questions asked about how optional features in the urban area will be implemented if an area is already developed.

Linkages/Buffers

- There is concern about how policies for linkages may impact the amount of developable land in urban areas. Policies need to clearly indicate restrictions and permission for development within linkages.
- The identification of buffers and opportunities for refinement of buffers needs to be informed by updated Environmental Impact Study guidelines.
- A systems approach to the N.H.S. should include linkages.
- There is concern about mapping buffers in settlement areas that may require additional mapping changes; whether buffers are mapped or not, policies will need to be clear about restrictions, exemptions and potential for refinements based on site-specific studies. It is important that in settlement areas every feature and buffer is treated differently and subject to an evaluation.
- Criteria for linkage size, width and form should be developed.
- Mapping buffers could assist with ensuring they are included in a plan and also provide clear intentions for buffers so developers can factor them into their design and how they achieve density targets.

3.1 Summary of Comments

Through meetings with local planners there were a range of opinions and comments provided across the municipalities demonstrating the varying needs and interests of the municipalities in land use planning. The comments summarized below are not intended to represent a consensus of opinion, but rather reflect the range of opinions provided. Based on the input received during meetings with the local planning staff, the comments have been consolidated below as they specifically relate to the identification of a preferred option for the natural environment systems, as well as other comments more generally related to the Natural Environment Work Program.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- There is no consensus on what is the preferred N.H.S. or W.R.S. option for the Region. Generally speaking, an approach that recognizes the inherent balance between a range of land uses is preferred.
- More details related to the implications of the options in settlement areas is needed to compare and contrast the options in order to understand the impacts on development potential within settlement areas.
- Mapping should be based on an accurate dataset, be clearly illustrated and reflective of the policies.
- Policies for the water resource system should provide flexibility recognizing the large extent in area of some components (e.g., aquifers).

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Policies will need to clearly indicate restrictions and exemptions for agricultural uses
- Policies should clearly identify restrictions and permission for development in linkages or other optional components if they are included in settlement areas
- Policies should permit refinement of mapping through more detailed studies
- Regional expertise and support to review Environmental Impact Studies when the local municipality is the approval authority should continue. Local municipalities should continue with their ability to approve E.I.S's within settlement areas.
- Criteria and/or guidance should be provided to identify and refine linkages

4.0 Virtual Stakeholder Workshops

Three virtual stakeholder workshops were held during the 2nd Point of Engagement, with the date and time, and number of participants who participated recorded in **Table 2**. A copy of the invitation for each workshop is included in **Appendix C**. Several follow-up e-mails were sent by the project team after each workshop with additional information. A copy of this correspondence can be found in **Appendix C**.

Table 2. Virtual Stakeholder Workshops Details.

Group	Date and Time	Approximate Number of Attendees
Development Community, Planning Consultants and Ecological Consultants	September 18, 2020, 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	35
Agricultural Community	September 21, 2020, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	12
Environmental Stakeholder Groups	September 22, 2020, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	32

Each stakeholder workshop consisted of a presentation of the Natural Environment Work Program, including provincial policy direction and requirements for natural environment planning and an overview of the options development for the natural heritage system and water resource system (**Appendix C**). The formats of the webinar-style workshops were designed to provide attendees the opportunity to type in questions via the Q & A function in Zoom, to which Regional staff and members of the consultant team provided live verbal responses. Written responses (**Appendix C**) to both questions answered as well as those questions posed which were not answered live, were provided in a formal table via email after the workshop to each person who attended. The written response table also included a copy of all input that was made in comment form.

Furthermore, a questionnaire (**Appendix C**) was distributed to all attendees seeking additional input and comment on the identification of options for the natural heritage system and water resource system. **Appendix C** includes a copy of all of the questionnaires that were completed and returned. The following sections summarize the questions, comments, and responses from the workshops, as well as input received following the stakeholder workshops (i.e., via completed questionnaire).

4.1 Development Community, Planning Consultants and Ecological Consultants Stakeholder Workshop

The questions, comments and responses to the Q & A and the questionnaires have been summarized below and paraphrased as comments:

- Option 3A provides a forward-thinking approach because it allows for development and proper planning to be focused inside the urban area and reduces unnecessary sprawl.
- Niagara Official Plan policies should not duplicate other agency policies (e.g., N.P.C.A. policies related to wetlands) and/or conflict with other agency policies
- The option of the N.H.S. should clearly define features and areas in order to make policy interpretation more clear.
- Option 1, 2 or 3A are the only options which will allow for balance in the Region and prevent premature urban sprawl.

- Option 3B and 3C will have implications on environmental planning may lead to premature urban sprawl. These options have also not taken into consideration the implications that urban expansion would have on the agricultural community or the taxpayers.
- Option 2 for the N.H.S. and Option 2B for the W.R.S is preferred because it allows to plan for development while protecting the natural heritage system and providing enhancement opportunities.
- By expanding and improving the natural environment policies beyond the minimum standards it allows for support and compliance by landowners and developers.
- These options do not explore the potential for options 3B and 3C to cause urban sprawl and the impact that would have outside settlement areas.
- Clear, concise, and user-friendly sources such as interactive mapping are the most beneficial and useful resources for the public and technical professionals.
- The preferred option should not result in a decrease in potentially developable land within settlement areas.
- Long-term ownership by public agencies should be considered for those features that are protected (i.e., not developed) within settlement areas.

4.1.1 Additional Clarification Regarding Buffers

The Natural Environment System Background Study provided a comprehensive review of policy requirements for buffers, a review of comparator municipal approaches to identifying and implementing buffers, and best practices to identifying buffers. Technical Report #2 carried the recommendations from that review forward in order to provide suggested approaches to applying buffers in settlement areas vs. outside of settlement areas as part of allowing an evaluation of options for the N.H.S. framework. Technical Report #2 provided a suggested approach for the identification of buffers across Options 3A, 3B and 3C; the report did not clearly represent the intent of increasing components and protection across the options.

Through developing conceptual mapping for the N.H.S. for the presentations as part of the 2nd Point of Engagement, it was necessary to revisit the suggested approaches described in Technical Report #2; as such the presentations given as part of the 2nd Point of Engagement provided clarification on how buffers are being proposed across the options. In settlement areas, buffers are not proposed in Option 3A and 3B; mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers (i.e., to be determined through detailed study) are included in Option 3C. Outside of settlement areas, mandatory (non-prescribed buffers) are introduced in Option 3A, while Option 3B and 3C have minimum (prescribed) buffers.

4.1.2 Summary of Comments

Based on the input received during the development community workshop, the comments have been consolidated below as they relate to the identification of a preferred option, as well as other comments more generally related to the Natural Environment Work Program.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- In identifying a preferred option, the broader planning perspective should be considered that limits constraints to development in settlement areas, and identifies opportunities for additional features and connections outside of settlement areas, to limit the extent of expansions outside of existing settlement areas.
- The selection of a preferred option should take into consideration the potential impacts to the developable area within existing settlement areas and the impact on urban sprawl.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Policies, definitions, criteria, and guidelines related to the natural environment should be clear.
- Roles and responsibilities for the application of policies for “shared” features (e.g., wetlands are both components of the N.H.S. that require protection through official plan policies as well as are regulated by the N.P.C.A.) should be clear or at least consistent between the agencies.

4.2 Agricultural Community Stakeholder Workshop

The questions, comments and responses to the Q & A have been summarized below and paraphrased as comments:

- The open ditch irrigation in Niagara-on-the-Lake and “man-made” swales should not be included as part of the options.
- Irrigation channels should not be identified as fish habitat.
- Some landowners would like to be notified of mapping of the natural environment systems on their property and be provided with an opportunity to provide further comment.
- The agricultural system should continue to take primacy over the natural heritage system.

4.2.1 Summary of Comments

Based on the input received during the agricultural community stakeholder workshop, the comments have been consolidated below as they relate to the identification of a preferred option, as well as other comments more generally related to the Natural Environment Work Program.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- The options for the N.H.S and W.R.S should not include “man-made” swales and watercourses associated with the irrigation system.
- The agricultural system should have primacy over the natural heritage system.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Provide advanced notification to allow for a review of draft mapping of the natural environment system by landowners.

4.3 Environmental Stakeholder Workshop

The questions, comments and responses to the Q & A and the questionnaires have been summarized below and paraphrased as comments:

- N.H.S. Option 3C represents a forward-thinking approach because:
 - It includes linkages of various sizes that support a functional ecological system and most vigorously defends the natural systems in the Region both in and out of settlement areas. This option best promotes ecological function across the natural system as a whole.
 - environmental degradation most often occurs on edges of protected area and mandatory buffers assist in reducing damage to protected features.
 - It does the most to mitigate the effects of climate change and maintaining environmental sustainability, function, and biodiversity for future generations
 - It does the most to support health and well-being
- W.R.S. Option 2B most vigorously defends that natural systems in the Region, identifies additional features in settlement areas, does the most to mitigate the effects of climate change.
- A truly forward-thinking approach should include objectives, like those laid out in the Region’s current OP under “Objectives for a Healthy Landscape”; currently none of the options provide a forward-thinking approach as they lack targets, goals, and objectives to determine if they are forward-thinking.
- Growth and economic development are a threat to agricultural areas of the Region, and we need to maintain agricultural zones. Providing the best option for the natural environment will not impact agriculture.

- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B will direct development to urbanized areas, brown field, etc. Option 3C encourages efficient new neighbourhood development (denser population areas with more efficient transportation services) rather than urban sprawl into natural or agricultural areas.
- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B ensures growth takes place in the appropriate areas because it provides the necessary protection for features in and out of settlement areas that. These options ensure buffers and linkages are mapped to mitigate impacts to our natural heritage.
- Options 3C and 2B protect more beaches, woodlands and other natural areas within settlements which are highly desirable by Niagara residents and especially for young families as has been evident during the past seven months of COVID.
- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B allows for development and proper planning to be focused inside the urban area and reduces unnecessary sprawl. These options can help achieve higher density, compact, transit-friendly communities without compromising our green space. Re-development should be encouraged over urban sprawl.
- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B are the options that best protect the natural systems and ultimately protect the economy, particularly the ecosystem services we rely on: resistance to environmental threats associated with climate change, flood protection, cleaner air and water, and recreation areas that promote good health.
- The environment should not be seen as an impediment to growth, development, and economic prosperity; rather it should be integrated into future designs and smarter more efficient designs should be developed to ensure the protection of the natural environment.
- Option 3C gives planners more tools for negotiating what is deemed “appropriate” growth and economic development.
- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B will help protect wetlands, woodlands, meadowlands, and watercourses in our settlement areas where the majority of people live. More natural areas in settlement areas will benefit everyone.
- Even though N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. 2B attempt to do the right thing for the community they lack in commitment and do not go far enough to meet the objectives in the current OP.
- Mapping should be more comprehensive. We need to go further to ensure what we have left in settlement areas is protected.
- Linkages and buffers do not receive enough protection; these are required to ensure a healthy environment and climate change mitigation.
- The Ecological Land Classification study should have been completed prior to making recommendations for which options are best.
- The options have been developed without goals and objectives. Goals are necessary to inform the development of options and policy. Need to outline goals for achieving a sustainable natural heritage system that will lead to a healthy ecosystem and mitigate climate change first.
- There is concern related to relying on an Environmental Impact Study that is produced for and paid for by a developer.

- A more advanced option should be identified that is first based on a goal to protect existing features and areas with mandated buffers, requirements for linkages, and identified enhancement areas; the option should include the following:
 - additional features in and out of settlement areas;
 - supporting features inside and outside of settlement areas including potential enhancement areas;
 - mandatory large medium and small linkages outside of settlement areas;
 - suggested large, medium, linkages inside settlement areas;
 - mandatory small linkages wherever possible inside settlement areas;
 - mandatory prescribed buffers outside of settlement areas; and
 - prescribed minimum buffers for key features and supporting features and areas inside of settlement areas.
- In order to increase natural cover in the region, the option should also require planting of only native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers on all new developments and on municipal lands; naturalize 25% of municipal parks; provide more efforts for naturalization.
- To make the natural environment policies more defensible, the Region should include wording that the protection of Niagara's natural heritage and water resources is a first priority for the Region.
- Consider the Carolinian Canada initiative, "In the Zone", where settlement residents are encouraged to plant native species to provide wildlife habitat.
- Consider the findings of several studies that question the future growth stats from the Growth Plan including:
 - Greenbelt Council Report, Growth Plan 2020;
 - Population Forecasting in the GGH-EBY GMPS – March 26, 2020; and
 - Growth Plan ERO Submission Ontario Nature – July 2020.

4.3.1 Summary of Comments

Based on the input received during the environmental groups' stakeholder workshop, the comments have been consolidated below as they relate to the identification of a preferred option, as well as other comments more generally related to the Natural Environment Work Program.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- Option 3C for the N.H.S. and 2B for the W.R.S. best achieves the following:
 - is most inclusive of natural features and areas throughout the Region;
 - provides the most connections (i.e., linkages) in and outside of settlement areas; and
 - protects ecological functions and ecosystem services, including within settlement areas; and
 - mitigates the effect of climate change.
- Buffers should be required for features when there is a proposed change in adjacent land use.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Goals, objectives, and targets should be identified for both the N.H.S. and W.R.S.
- Since not all features and areas will be mapped a full set of internal screening datasets should be maintained by the Region, such as habitat for species at risk, cold/cool/warm water fish habitat, etc.
- Policies should ensure the permanency of features and areas as part of the natural environment systems

5.0 Virtual Public Information Centres

Two virtual public information centres (PICs) were held as part of the 2nd Point of Engagement:

- Public Information Centre #1 – Natural Heritage System - Wednesday, September 23, 2020, 6:00 - 8:00 pm,
- Public Information Centre #2 – Water Resource System and Watershed Planning Project – Thursday, September 24, 2020, 6:00 - 8:00 pm

Notice of the PICs were posted on the new Niagara Official Plan's website and advertised through the Region's social media and in print in several local newspapers in the Region. A copy of the PIC notice is included in **Appendix D**.

The virtual P.I.C.s were held via Zoom, in a webinar-style format with information presented to the attendees (**Appendix D**). The format of the P.I.C.s also provided attendees with an opportunity to write in questions via the Q & A function in Zoom, or ask verbal questions through either Zoom or by calling in. Regional staff and members of the consultant team provided live verbal responses. Written responses then followed (**Appendix D**) to questions posed which were not answered during the live webinar. The table with the written responses also includes all feedback that was received in comment form. The webinar was recorded and is available at the following link: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/public-information-centres.aspx>.

Comments received during the P.I.C.s have been summarized in the following sections.

5.1 Public Information Centre # 1: Natural Heritage System

Comments received during PIC #1 regarding the N.H.S. have been organized into themes as follows:

Mapping

- All features and areas (e.g., fish habitat, significant woodlands, specialized habitats and rare vegetation communities) should be mapped as a lack of mapping could lead to loss of features.
- The Growth Plan N.H.S. mapping should be reviewed and recommendations for revisions/corrections be provided to the Province.

Goals/Objectives/Targets

- Goals/ objectives for the natural environment system options should be provided.
- Performance criteria should be developed for the various options to evaluate if the policies are resulting in the desired outcomes.
- Woodland cover targets should be considered and a goal to increase woodland cover should be established recognizing 30% is recommended as the minimum by 'How Much Habitat is Enough?'
- Plantations should be considered part of forest cover.
- Periodic reviews, perhaps annually, should be undertaken to determine if success is actually being made in Niagara in increasing forest cover.
- The benefits and ecological functions of Niagara's agriculture areas should be considered in how Niagara is meeting natural cover targets.

Planning/Policy Direction

- It should be recognized that the Province's Growth Plan and N.H.S. is a one-size-fits-all approach that does not recognize regional geography and limitations in Niagara, and the pressure of growth on the natural environment.
- Option 3 could speed up the need for urban boundary expansion and hasten sprawl into the rural areas.
- The policies need to be clear to ensure Local Municipalities with independent agendas are consistent in their interpretation and application of policies for the protection of the natural environment.
- There was a suggestion that all EISs should require a peer review by a third party.
- The identification of a features as “significant” should be consistent and objective to avoid bias and reduce subjectivity in applying criteria.
- It needs to be clear who is responsible for restoration and tree planting of developments and a process to ensure the success of these plantings must be in place.
- It should be clear that directing development to Urban Areas does not imply that natural areas will be open to development simply because they are zoned as urban.
- Regarding claims that protection of natural areas would create pressures to expand urban boundaries most of these lands are already protected to some degree and excluded from development potential. The exclusion of lands as enhancement areas would likely be limited in scale.
- Requirements for studies (e.g., Environmental Impact Study) should be scoped depending on the scale of the proposed development.

Environmental Protection

- The Region should choose the most forward-thinking scenario and not simply do the minimum.
- There was a comment made that none of the options presented are good enough to preserve the environment.
- COVID-19 has shown us how important natural areas are to our health and well-being. These natural areas need to be where people live. N.H.S. Options 3B and 3C are the best to ensure these natural areas within settlements are protected.
- Bill 68 requires municipalities to demonstrate how they will maintain, protect, and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality. The option that best meets this should be strongly considered by the Region.
- There should be compensation required for disturbance to fish spawning areas.
- The options must adequately address the urgency of climate change.
- There was an opinion expressed that site- specific surveys are biased by developers since they are paying for them. It is important that the natural features mapped be protected without any doubt or bias during the Environmental Impact Study process. This should be reflected clearly in policy to ensure there is no subjectivity.
- Cumulative effects should be considered when selecting an option.

Buffers/Linkages

- Considering N.H.S. and W.R.S. as continuous systems, linkages are essential to analysis, protection and enhancement of features and must include settlement areas.
- Without linkages in place between natural watercourses and areas, heat sinks, and heat islands will develop that will alter hydrology.
- A question was asked about how buffer size will be determined.
- The minimum buffer approach in agricultural areas should not take agricultural land out of production and policies need to be clear how these competing interests will be addressed.
- Make buffers mandatory as suggested in N.H.S. 3C to afford the most protection to natural areas.

Other

- Preliminary preferred options should not have been included in the Technical Report prior to receiving feedback from the consultation process.
- The City of Toronto has a very good approach available on their website. The City of Hamilton is working on a Biodiversity plan. These documents should be considered by the project team.

5.1.1 Summary of Comments

Based on the input received during P.I.C. #1, the comments have been consolidated below as they relate to the identification of a preferred option, as well as other comments more generally related to the Natural Environment Work Program.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- The preferred option should be inclusive of all features and afford the maximum protection possible to natural features and areas to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Linkages and buffers should be mandatory to ensure features are connected and adequately protected.
- The mapping of the preferred option should be as comprehensive as possible.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Environmental Impact Studies (E.I.S.s) should be scoped to the scale of the development and potential for impact and include a review of cumulative impacts.
- Clear goals, objectives and natural area cover targets would support the identification of the preferred natural heritage system as well as support the interpretation and implementation of policies. Periodic reviews should be undertaken to determine if success is actually being made in Niagara in achieving goals and objectives.

5.2 Public Information Centre # 2: Water Resource System and Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent Project

P.I.C. #2 included both a presentation on the W.R.S. Options and the Niagara Watershed Plan (N.W.P.) Project. Comments related to both the N.W.P. and the W.R.S. have been organized into themes as follows:

Mapping

- Clarification was requested about how policies will be implemented if a feature is not mapped.
- There was a question asking when full mapping will be provided for comment.
- Consider other sources of information and mapping, including, the Ontario government, Brock University Earth Sciences and Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Ontario Geological Survey have watershed flow assessment tool (e.g., <https://www.ontario.ca/page/watershed-flow-assessment-tool>), Nature for Niagara's Future.

Planning/Policy Direction

- The growth numbers put forward by the province and what effect the increase in growth will have on these options should be considered.
- Development should not be occurring on top of highly sensitive aquifers.
- Urban Growth should be within the existing urban boundaries and sprawl should be reduced.
- All future development proposals should undergo cumulative impact assessments.

Environmental Protection

- W.R.S. Option 2B should be selected because it better protects water resources including those within settlement areas.

- An opinion was stated that the proposed options do not prevent the further destruction of Niagara's natural resources.

Water Quality

- Ground water contamination is a serious problem that needs more attention.
- An opinion was stated that aquifers are not afforded enough protection. The need to protect drinking water should be incorporated into the policies.
- There should be policies against illegal dumping to help protect watercourses.
- Policies should provide protection of and improvement of water quality.

Other

- A watershed plan regarding urban growth would be a helpful form of damage control.
- Please suggest possible responsible uses for exhausted aggregate quarries where quarrying has been done into an aquifer.
- The following should be considered when designing the preferred option for the W.R.S.:
 - recreation areas for fishing, swimming, shorelines/beaches, etc.
 - flood control, water table
 - utilization by agriculture, industry, the Welland Canal, and urban developers
 - utilization by the indigenous population (hunting, fishing rights)
- Accelerated flow rates resulting from more frequent storm events must be better addressed.

5.2.1 Summary of Comments

Based on the input received during P.I.C. #2, the comments have been consolidated below as they specifically relate to the identification of a preferred option for the W.R.S., as well as other comments more generally related to the Natural Environment Work Program.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- W.R.S. Option 2B is preferred because it better protects water resources including those within settlement areas.
- The identification of options should incorporate the information from other sources, such as Nature for Niagara's future and watershed flow assessment tools.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Environmental Impact Studies (E.I.S.s) should include a cumulative impact assessment.
- Policies should be included that protect water quality, address groundwater contamination, pollution, and provide adequate protection for aquifers.

6.0 Other Public and Stakeholder Feedback

A range of comments and feedback were provided to the Region through e-mails, via the Region's website, and submission of letters leading up to, and throughout the 2nd Point of Engagement. In total, five (5) letters (**Appendix E**) were provided on behalf of the following:

- Agricultural Associations:
 - Grape Growers of Ontario
 - Niagara Federation of Agriculture
 - Ontario Tender Fruit Growers
- Niagara Home Builders' Association
- Joint Letter from Environmental Groups

In addition, a total of 61 online submissions and e-mails were provided (**Appendix E**). The comments provided in the letters from each of the groups and the comments received in the online submissions and e-mails have been compiled below followed by a summary of the comments.

6.1 Agricultural Associations

- There is a strong preference for N.H.S. Option 1.
- Agricultural operations rely on agricultural water resource infrastructure for the viability of the agri-food sector; agricultural groups have requested the following components not be mapped as part of the N.H.S.
 - agricultural swales,
 - constructed drains,
 - ditches,
 - privately owned irrigation ponds,
 - and all current and future municipally or privately owned irrigation systems or channels.
- Linkages should not have an impact on the agricultural land base and future development potential.
- Policies need to be clear related to exemptions to normal farming practices.

- There is concern that Option 3C prioritizes protection of natural heritage above agriculture.
- Members of the agricultural community would like to be provided an opportunity to review mapping before it is finalized.
- An Agri-Food Network for the Niagara Specialty Crop Area should be established by the Region with members of the Agricultural Policy Action Committee.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- N.H.S. Option 1 and W.R.S. Option 1 are preferred because they will have the least impact on the agricultural system/community.
- The following components of the agricultural water resource infrastructure system should not be mapped as part of the N.H.S.:
 - agricultural swales,
 - constructed drains,
 - ditches,
 - privately owned irrigation ponds,
 - and all current and future municipally or privately owned irrigation systems or channels.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- Landowners should be provided with an opportunity to review mapping and policies before they are finalized.
- An Agri-Food Network for the Niagara Specialty Crop Area should be established by the Region with members of the Agricultural Policy Action Committee.
- Linkages and enhancement areas should not impact farming.
- Exemptions and permission should be clear related to farming.

6.2 Niagara Home Builders' Association

- The priority of the Regional Official Plan (R.O.P.) should be about growth management, and how the Region will proactively plan to accommodate significant growth in the coming years. Issues such as housing supply and affordability will be negatively impacted by an overly restrictive planning framework. Accommodating growth should be the main position from which all other R.O.P. work emanates.
- The proposed approach to the N.H.S. will cause further fragmentation and limit growth opportunities in otherwise appropriate locations within urban areas.
- More detailed mapping is needed with statistics of areal coverage of the N.H.S. in each of the options that would inform policy direction.

- Mapping should be based on current more accurate datasets.
- The Region should provide statistics for each of the features and areas mapped for each option, particularly in settlement areas.
- Duplication of policies for regulated features (e.g., wetlands) should be avoided to avoid inconsistent/contradictory comments from reviewing agencies.
- There needs to be more information available to demonstrate the need for going beyond the minimum standards that also takes into consideration the other objectives of the Official Plan related to growth and development.
- Growth information, as informed by criteria, needs to be integrated into the analysis to inform the identification of the N.H.S and W.R.S.
- Buffer widths should not be pre-determined but based on ground-truthed information obtained through site-specific studies.
- The options for the natural environment systems should not result in higher restrictions on lands outside of the urban area that could limit the viability of Agricultural operations in the Region.
- Landowners should be notified of any designation changes prior to the change being finalized.
- Offsetting should be considered as part of the policy framework.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option:

- The Region should provide statistics for each of the features and areas mapped for each option, particularly in settlement areas to better inform and justify the selection of a preferred option.
- Buffers should not be pre-determined – they should be determined through site-specific information and studies.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program:

- There needs to be more information available to demonstrate the need for going beyond the minimum standards that also takes into consideration the other objectives of the Official Plan related to growth and development.
- Accommodating growth should be the priority of the R.O.P. and should be taken into consideration when selecting an option for the natural environment systems.
- There needs to be clear and consistent policies among agencies to ensure transparent interpretation and implementation.
- Landowners should be provided with an opportunity to review mapping and policies before they are finalized.

6.3 Environmental Groups

- The Region should adopt the most robust N.H.S. and W.R.S. due to the limited ability of the Woodland Bylaw to protect existing tree cover.
- Option 3C for the N.H.S. and Option 2B for the W.R.S. are the best of the options to protect the remaining natural areas in Niagara for the following reasons:
 - Identifies additional features in and outside of settlement areas
 - Identifies supporting features inside and outside of settlement areas including potential enhancement areas
 - Includes large, medium and small linkages
 - Requires mandatory (prescribed) buffers outside of settlement areas and mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers inside of settlement areas
 - The W.R.S. identifies additional features and areas Region-wide, including within settlement areas.

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B are preferred for the following reasons:
 - Identifies additional features and supporting features in and outside of settlement areas
 - Includes large, medium and small linkages
 - Requirement for buffers throughout the Region
 - The W.R.S. identifies additional features and areas Region-wide

6.4 Online Submissions and E-mails

- Option 3C is preferred for the N.H.S. and Option 2B for the W.R.S. because they apply a more comprehensive ecosystem approach that includes enhancement areas and linkages, both inside and outside of settlement areas and prescribes mandatory buffer minimums outside of settlement areas with suggested policy minimums inside of settlement areas.
- Goals and objectives related to environmental sustainability, biodiversity protection, ecosystem function and climate change crisis are missing from the current options and should be provided to demonstrate how the options are achieving the goals and objectives.
- Areas should be flagged for species at risk based on more recent information to ensure that landowners and developers are aware of this restriction.
- Targets should be established to ensure that there is adequate representation of the natural communities and their components, including a tree/woodland cover target.
- The Official Plan must clearly state what the Region's goals are for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. and demonstrate that measures will be included which will both retain and protect existing assets and identify and support opportunities for remediation where needed.

- Rather than developing in undeveloped areas, urban areas should be re-developed. There are empty buildings across the Region that can be re-developed.
- Green infrastructure should be utilized in re-development.
- The policies and mapping should provide clear direction for protection of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. in order to better inform where development and growth can occur which will reduce conflicts and contentious applications.
- Buffers are required to protect features and prevent/reduce degradation of the features resulting from adjacent land uses.
- Small linkages should be included in settlement areas because it assists these natural areas to function as a larger system rather than isolated units.
- There needs to be clear and strong policy that ensures interpretation and implementation is consistent and achieves the goals and objects for the N.H.S. and W.R.S.
- Given the low percentage of natural area cover in the Region, protection of wildlife habitat, biodiversity and overall wildlife populations should be prioritized through the selection and implementation of the most comprehensive option – N.H.S Option 3C.
- Option 3C provides the greatest resilience to climate change, best addresses biodiversity loss, and identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas.
- Protecting natural areas and enhancing them is key to improving ground water quality.
- Ecosystem services should be considered, including benefits of green infrastructure such as shade/cooling, water purification, flood abatement, oxygen production and erosion control.
- Option 3C provides the greatest benefit to the overall physical and mental health of residents, the economy and the health of the environment.
- Where tree removal is permitted as part of an approved development application, replacement of the trees/woodlands should be enforced in order to avoid a reduction in tree cover.
- Niagara's remaining natural areas and water resources should be protected to maintain and enhance biodiversity and natural environment resilience for future generations.
- The science must come first, followed by other considerations, if we are to have a N.H.S. that will adequately address protection and mitigates natural deficits.
- The process to identify and implement a preferred N.H.S. and W.R.S. must be transparent.
- The N.H.S. options considered by Niagara Region should follow the guidance of the Natural Heritage Reference Manual and conform to relevant policies requiring the identification and protection of the N.H.S. and natural features and areas.
- Providing natural spaces including forests, fields, and habitat for wildlife close to residential neighbourhoods has proven invaluable to minimize anxiety and permit outdoor activity while other indoor activities are restricted.

- Agricultural practices should not be permitted to damage the natural environment through applying policies that exempt normal farming practices.
- Nature clubs should be asked about Significant Wildlife Habitat.
- There is currently no requirement to consult with local people about planning, impacts, significant features, etc. Consultation processes should be improved with the new policies and mapping.
- The findings of the review of Environmental Impact Studies by municipal staff should be presented to a committee made up of members of the community with relevant qualifications/expertise for additional feedback/review.
- The information presented through the workshops should be geared more towards the general public with less focus on policy, and more focus on the mapping of the options.
- There should be more monitoring of natural areas, with strong protection, serious fines/punishment when violations occur, and requirements for remedial action.
- The interpretation of policies from the Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan that require vegetation protection zones, with some exemptions for planting crops or permitting existing uses should be considered as it relates to impacts on normal farming practices. This is particularly a concern with respect to managing pests that may be invade a crop/orchard and affect yields and revenue.
- There can be an impact to crops resulting from pests that originate from natural vegetation found in vegetation protection zones located adjacent to crops – the N.H.S. features should not create the circumstance where pests can have a negative impact on crops (e.g., grapes).

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B are preferred for the following reasons:
 - Follows a more comprehensive ecosystem approach that includes enhancement areas and linkages, both inside and outside of settlement areas.
 - N.H.S. includes mandatory buffer minimums outside of settlement areas with suggested policy minimums inside of settlement areas.
 - Helps address biodiversity loss.
 - Does the most to mitigate the impacts of climate change and protect ecosystem services.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- The preferred options for the natural environment systems should be informed by goals, objectives and targets.
- Development should be directed to urban areas and areas for redevelopment.
- The policies and mapping should provide for the protection of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. in order to better inform where development and growth can occur.
- Ecosystem services should be recognized as important and protected through the development of policies for the natural environment system.
- The process to identify and implement a preferred N.H.S. and W.R.S. must be transparent and continue to provide opportunities to contribute to the identification of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. mapping and policies.
- Vegetation Protection Zones should take into consideration the impact on crops.

7.0 Planning Advisory Committee Presentation

The Planning Advisory Committee (P.A.C.) consists of eight (8) public members with expertise on a range of planning and land use topics who provide input on topics to be addressed by the new N.O.P. The P.A.C. is responsible for reviewing background studies and other inputs and providing comments, high-level direction/confirmation. The PAC will also provide comments on draft policies as they are being developed, including the natural system policies.

At the September 16, 2020 P.A.C. meeting, a presentation (**Appendix F**) was made by staff from the Region and the consultant team regarding the Natural Environment Work Program for the new N.O.P. During the presentation several questions were posed and comments made - these have been summarized as comments:

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- More mapping and statistics related to the options should be provided to inform the preferred option.
- Objectives and targets could help inform the identification of the preferred options. Objectives and targets could also allow for an ongoing evaluation of success of implementation of policies and protection of the natural environment systems.

8.0 Agricultural Policy and Action Committee Presentation

The Agricultural Policy & Action Committee (A.P.A.C.) is an advisory committee established by Niagara Region to recognize the critical primacy of agriculture in the Region in terms of both public policy and demonstrable actions. A.P.A.C. was also established to advise Regional Council on issues that impact the agricultural industry, and to support Regional Council, reporting through the Planning and Economic Development Committee, by initiating, developing, implementing and participating in actions and strategies needed to advance the agricultural industry and preserve the agricultural land base throughout the Niagara Region.

At the September 25, 2020 A.P.A.C. meeting, a presentation (**Appendix G**) was made by the Consultant Team with the support of Regional staff to provide an overview of the options developed for the natural heritage system and water resource system. During the presentation several questions were posed and comments made - these have been summarized as comments:

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- The municipal/agricultural drain/irrigation system should not be included in the W.R.S., but be included in the OP under a different set of policies
- Man-made swales/ditches should not be included in W.R.S. or N.H.S.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- A question was asked about linkages: even if conceptual at this time, could they eventually become more restrictive in the future, including to existing uses in agricultural areas?
- Suggestion that natural features, including floodplains, be given higher protection in urban areas recognizing the ecosystem services these features and areas provide.
- There should be consideration for the expansion of the existing agricultural irrigation system and the development of a new agricultural irrigation system in St. Catharines/Lincoln within the new Niagara Official Plan.

9.0 Meetings with Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

Niagara Region Planning Staff gave separate presentations to the Board of the N.P.C.A., staff, and the N.P.C.A. Public Advisory Committee to provide an update on the work program, provide an overview of the options, as well as to solicit input towards the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system. A copy of the presentations (3) given by Regional staff are included in **Appendix H**.

During the presentation several questions were posed and comments made - these have been summarized as comments:

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- N.H.S. Option 3C appears to best meet the objective of creating a resilient system.
- The identification of a W.R.S. should extend throughout the Region and not stop at urban boundaries.
- There are concerns with the ability to implement a mandatory buffer.
- The identification of options needs to be informed by science and statistics, such as current natural area cover.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- There was a question asked related to the identification of a preliminary preferred option being presented prior to received input through the 2nd Point of Engagement.
- The issue of the difference between the Forestry Act definition and the ELC definition of Woodlot was raised by NPCA staff.
- Goals and targets should be used to inform the natural systems.

10.0 Meeting with Provincial Planning Staff

Niagara Region Planning Staff gave a presentation to staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the work program, provide an overview of the options, as well as to ask the Province about any additional direction or guidance documents that could be provided to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system. A copy of the presentation given by Regional staff is included in **Appendix I**.

Following the presentation Regional staff asked several questions to seek input from the Province. Staff from the provincial agencies did not provide any specific feedback or comments that would inform identification of a preferred option. No additional guidance or information was provided from the Province that could be used to inform the identification of a preferred option.

11.0 Meeting with Niagara Escarpment Commission Staff

Niagara Region Planning Staff gave a presentation to staff from the Niagara Escarpment Commission to provide an update on the work program, provide an overview of the options, as well as to solicit input towards the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system. A copy of the presentation given by Regional staff is included in **Appendix J**.

During the presentation several questions were posed and comments made – these have been summarized as comments:

Summary of comments related to the identification of a preferred option

- Ensure that if Provincial data sources are being used to map components of the natural environment system, the most current dataset is being used.
- The Region can identify an option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S that is more restrictive than the Niagara Escarpment Plan; the Niagara Escarpment Commission would implement the Region's more restrictive policies.
- There is support for identification of linkages within the Niagara Escarpment Plan area.
- Niagara Escarpment Commission staff note that in the Niagara Escarpment Plan area, all wetlands are protected, not just Provincially Significant Wetlands (section 2.7.1 of Niagara Escarpment Plan).
- The Niagara Escarpment Commission is supportive of more protection for the natural environment and going beyond minimum standards.

Summary of other comments to inform the Natural Environment Work Program

- The Niagara Escarpment Commission support the decision to not use offsetting, unless where disturbance is absolutely necessary (e.g., emergency road repair).
- There is concern with intensifying development, especially in the NEP area or adjacent to NEP area. Need to make sure natural features are protected in those urban areas and minor urban centres.
- Ensure there is reference to the Niagara Escarpment Plan in the Niagara Official Plan and adequate explanation of how to implement policies from the Niagara Escarpment Plan and Niagara Official Plan where there is overlap.
- There is support for the identification of linkages in settlement areas to provide for tree planting and restoration efforts and help manage invasive species.

12.0 Meeting with Niagara Parks Commission Staff

Niagara Region Planning Staff gave a presentation to staff from the Niagara Parks Commission to provide an update on the work program, provide an overview of the options. A copy of the presentation given by Regional staff is included in **Appendix K**. Staff from the Niagara Parks Commission gave a presentation to the Region that is also found in **Appendix K**. There were no comments provided to the Region that would inform the identification of the preferred option for the natural environment systems.

13.0 Team Niagara

Team Niagara is a group of economic development staff from the Region and Local Municipalities that meets on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate on issues related to economic development in Niagara. On November 19, 2020 Region staff presented an update on the Natural Environment Work Program to Team Niagara. This presentation was part of an overall update on the status of the new Niagara Official Plan. Team Niagara representatives stressed the importance of engaging with industry representatives in the Region – such as the Home Builders Association (note: correspondence from the Niagara Home Builders Association is included in **Appendix E**).

14.0 Ongoing Engagement with Indigenous Groups

Ongoing engagement with Indigenous Groups is an important part of the Natural Environment Work Program and the engagement program for the Niagara Official Plan in general. Through the 1st Point of Engagement, as documented in Consolation Summary Report #1, Indigenous Groups expressed an interest in environmental planning in the Region, and requested to be informed of future, more detailed work being undertaken.

To that end, all Indigenous Groups were sent a Notice of Study Commencement for the Niagara Watershed Plan project in June 2020 and were sent a letter requesting feedback on the goals and objectives of the watershed plan in November 2020. To date, no specific feedback has been received in regard to either of those requests.

In addition, to further support engagement with Indigenous Groups on the N.O.P. a sharepoint site has been set-up and is maintained to facilitate the sharing on information. Region planning staff regularly update this site with new background reports and other information relevant to the preparation of the Official Plan.

Finally, Region staff met virtually with staff from the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations on December 11, 2020. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an update on the status of the Natural Environment Work Program and the new N.O.P in general.

15.0 Key Themes and Implications for the Natural Environment Work Program

Through the 2nd Point of Engagement there were a range of opinions expressed and comments made related to identification of the preferred options for the natural environment system. Additional comments were provided related to other aspects of the Natural Environment Work Program.

It is clear that the identification of the preferred option for the N.H.S and W.R.S is a polarized and contentious issues. There are differing land use planning priorities among the range of stakeholders consulted, and no consensus on the appropriate path forward.

Based on a review of all the comments, several themes emerged; these are presented below, in no particular order, with those that specifically inform the identification of the preferred option for the natural environment systems and those that can inform future aspects the Natural Environment Work Program.

15.1 Key Themes to Inform the Identification of Preferred Options

1. Balanced Land Use Planning: Protection of the Natural Environment and Opportunities for Growth

There is no clear consensus on what the N.H.S. and W.R.S. in the Region should look like. Many comments were explicit about the need to follow a systems approach to protect and enhance the natural environment in the Region, find opportunities to increase natural area cover, and protect and enhance groundwater and surface water quality. These comments spoke to the need to provide a policy framework that recognizes the ecosystem services, including benefits to human health, biodiversity and the economy, provided by the natural environment system, through natural environment protection. Conversely, there were many other comments related to concerns that increased natural environment protection would make achieving growth targets difficult and possibly result in the need for urban expansion (which then could result on impacts on the environmental systems and agricultural land base in the Region).

When taken together, the range of opinions and comments speak to the need for a natural environment system that goes beyond the minimum provincial standard to identify and implement a comprehensive N.H.S. and W.R.S., with a policy framework that limits restrictions on development and growth in settlement areas.

Implication: The implementation of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. must achieve not only protection of existing features and areas, it should result in an enhancement to the overall area and health of the natural environment; at the same time, the policy framework for the protection of the natural environment system must recognize and allow for the need to accommodate growth and development. This will require a shift in mindset and approach to natural environment planning that makes both the protection of the natural environment and potential for growth simultaneously achievable – the goal is for a balanced approach to land use planning.

Innovative planning for growth and development will need to ensure natural environment protection is achieved and vice versa. This will require integrating growth planning with natural environment mapping and protection that ensures growth targets can be achieved, as mandated by the Province, while protecting and enhancing the

natural environment. This protection and enhancement should identify ecologically appropriate linkages, buffers and enhancement areas and provide adequate flexibility to ensure growth, as required by the Province, can be achieved. The result will be a natural environment system that captures both significant features, and features and areas that support the resiliency of those features, with a policy framework that provides adequate flexibility to both achieve natural environment protection and growth and development. This policy framework would include restrictive policies for “significant” features and areas, and policies that guide management and development within supporting features and areas (e.g., linkages and enhancement areas) and adjacent to “significant” natural features and areas.

2. Recognize and Protect Agricultural Uses

Agriculture is an important part of the Region’s land base, economy, and historical fabric that must be recognized and protected as part of the policy framework for the protection of the N.H.S. and W.R.S.

Implication: Exemptions for a full range of agricultural uses should be clearly articulated in policy, including those policies and exemptions already provided through the P.P.S. and Provincial Plans. Policies should clearly identify mandatory restrictions (e.g., related to the Fisheries Act, etc.) and permission/exemptions for agricultural related uses of water resource infrastructure (e.g., agricultural drains, irrigation ditches, etc.), should they be included in the W.R.S. or N.H.S., to ensure the use of the agricultural infrastructure can continue unencumbered by Regional policy. Furthermore, exemptions for certain agricultural uses in areas of the N.H.S. or W.R.S., such as within buffers/vegetation protection zones, linkage and enhancement areas — whether mapped or not — need to be made clear.

3. Informed by Science and Guided by Goals and Objectives with Numerical Targets

There were numerous comments noting that the identification of the preferred options for the natural environment system should be informed by science and based on a clear understanding of the current natural cover, areal extent of the natural environment system, and impacts to the amount of developable area. Comments received suggested that the preferred option would then be informed by the ability of that option meet goals, objectives and measurable/numerical targets that will ultimately inform the development of policies and guide future implementation of policies. Furthermore, comments received suggested that developing goals and objectives with measurable targets will facilitate interpretation of policies related to the protection of the natural environment systems. The development of targets will also provide opportunities to measure success of the natural environment system policy framework against the goals and objectives.

Implication: The Region should undertake additional analysis of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. options to compare and contrast each to understand the implications of each option on growth and development potential. The statistics generated related to natural cover (e.g., woodland and wetland cover) could then be used to inform goals and objectives,

including measurable targets, that could be used to inform the policies of the Niagara Official Plan. These goals and objectives should be developed based on best practices and science/evidence-based data (e.g., current natural area cover). The goals should be specific (e.g., targets for natural area cover), relevant, attainable/realistic (i.e., based on current cover and potential for enhancement) and time-bound. Measurable targets should be developed using comprehensive and accurate datasets, such as the most current Ecological Land Classification dataset, to determine natural cover as a baseline of existing conditions. Ultimately, the preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S., including policies, should be developed with the intention of achieving the goals and objectives of the natural environment systems. It will therefore be important that the goals, objectives, and any related targets for the natural environment systems are considered when developing policies for the N.H.S. and W.R.S.; this will ensure that through implementation of the policies, the goals and objectives can be achieved.

That said, it is important to recognize that the identification and protection of a natural environment system is part of a broader land use planning and policy framework used to guide the physical, economic and social development of Niagara; this includes direction for managing growth and the economy, protecting the natural environment, resources and agricultural land, and providing infrastructure. The identification of a N.H.S. and W.R.S. and any goals, objectives and targets should not be undertaken without consideration of the overall land use planning framework. The new N.O.P., including goals and objectives, will need to be in conformance with Provincial requirements, including Provincial policies (i.e., of the P.P.S, Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan); these plans and policies include, for example, clear direction on what features and systems must be included, direction on how the systems must be implemented, and exemptions for certain land uses. Natural environment planning is not intended to function as an environmental conservation plan; rather it is intended to support the overall land use planning objectives of the Region's Official Plan, including those related to environmental protection. Therefore, in developing the goals, objectives and any targets for the natural environment system, this will need to be done with consideration of how the natural environment fits within the overall land use planning and policy framework in the new N.O.P.

15.2 Key Themes to Inform the Natural Environment Work Program

1. Accurate and Comprehensive Mapping of the Natural Environment Systems

Mapping is foundational to facilitating wise and informed decision-making. Mapping accuracy and completeness is vital to support the interpretation and application of N.H.S. and W.R.S. policies. Clear mapping also provides important information to the public and landowners related to natural environment resources in the Region.

Implication: It is first important to recognize that the policies are what determine the make-up of the natural environment system, as well as the restrictions, permission and

exemptions related to land use planning decisions in and adjacent to the natural environment features and areas. Mapping is solely intended to support the implementation of policies and guide land use planning decisions. That said, there have been a considerable number of comments pertaining to the need to have as complete and accurate a dataset as possible to comprehensively map the N.H.S. and W.R.S. components, where possible.

The mapping will need to reflect and be consistent with provincial requirements, be easily available and user-friendly, and be updated on a regular basis to reflect notable updates in the different features and areas. Features that are not mapped, but where some data exists, should be used as internal screening tools, as part of pre-consultation, and for review of studies; this internal dataset should be made available to local area municipalities to support reviews conducted at the local level.

It should also be recognized that datasets derived for use at a Regional-scale may not have the accuracy required for making property/site-specific planning related decisions. Therefore, policies will need to be clear regarding the identification of features and areas, and will need to allow for property/site-specific studies to refine mapping, through studies approved by the Region, without the need for an Official Plan Amendment.

2. Clear, Consistent Policies and Guidance for Implementation

Policies should be clear and recognize policies and regulations of other agencies for the same features to ensure either consistency or to avoid conflicting direction.

There is a need to provide more clarity on how linkages and supporting features will be identified, refined, and mapped through site-specific studies. Guidelines will be required for the identification of these features and areas.

Implication: The Niagara Official Plan should strive for greater consistency of its policies with those of other agencies. For features that have restrictions/prohibitions across multiple plans and regulations (e.g., wetlands, watercourses/fish habitat), there should be consistency with, or reference to these policies and regulations where applicable to ensure clear direction is provided and consistent interpretation is applied.

To support interpretation and appropriate application of policies, clear definitions and criteria will need to be developed in addition to detailed guidance documents (e.g., Environmental Impact Study Guidelines and W.R.S. Guidelines). This will be particularly important to ensure features and areas, such as linkages, enhancement areas and buffers are sufficiently studied and appropriately designed to achieve their intended function.

Furthermore, with the implementation of a comprehensive W.R.S. for the first time, there will need to be guidelines that direct the completion of appropriate studies to update and refine the mapping of the W.R.S. within a specific area; these guidelines should also provide direction for how policies are to be interpreted and implemented in order to achieve the goals and objectives for the W.R.S. Policies will also need to

include adequate direction for permitting refinements to mapping of the natural environment systems, as informed by appropriate studies approved by the Region, without the need for an Official Plan Amendment.

3. Build Trust Through Continued Engagement, Collaboration and Education

The community has been actively engaged in the Natural Environment Work Program expressing both a strong desire to protect the N.H.S. and W.R.S., and to ensure development is accommodated to meet the requirements for growth by the Province.

Members of the community have expressed a desire to continue to provide meaningful input to the identification of the natural environment systems and policy development. While there has been a high level of engagement through the Natural Environment Work Program, this does not necessarily translate into a high level of confidence about the anticipated outcome of the process to reflect the interests of the community. This may in part be due to the lack of understanding that natural environment planning needs to consider a range of land use planning matters when developing the N.H.S. and W.R.S. There continues to be some cynicism and skepticism about the process to identify preferred options for the natural environment system, and potential outcomes of implementing the policies of the natural environment.

Furthermore, consensus remains elusive: there are a range of expectations of what the natural environment policies should be or should emphasize which differ considerably among stakeholder groups — from calls for more flexibility and fewer restrictions, to much greater environmental protection.

Implication: The Region has developed a comprehensive engagement plan as part of the Natural Environment Work Program that exceeds typical consultation undertaken as part of municipal natural environment planning. Compared with other municipalities, the engagement with stakeholders and the public undertaken by Niagara for the Natural Environment Work Program is extensive. The Region recognizes the high level of interest from stakeholders and the public on matters related to the natural environment and values the contribution to the Natural Environment Work Program that will ultimately shape natural environment planning for years to come. Ongoing consultation will continue as part of identifying the preferred option for the natural environment system and policy.

16.0 Direction for the Selection of Preferred Options

The feedback received through the 2nd Point of Engagement included a wide range of opinions and preferences related to the identification of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. The opinions ranged from a desire to maintain flexibility and minimize additional restrictions on development (N.H.S. Option 1 or 2, and W.R.S. Option 1), to calls for a systems-based approach to identify connected and enhanced natural environment system with much greater environmental protection (N.H.S. Option 3C and W.R.S. Option 2B).

However, a consensus will not be reached on a preferred option that meets the expectations of the public and all other stakeholders.

Land use planning for the natural environment system, including the identification of the systems and related policies, will require taking a balanced approach that strives to protect and enhance the natural environment while ensuring development can occur to meet growth targets as required by the Province. Furthermore, as part of a broader land use planning exercise, the identification of the natural environment systems must take into consideration the other interests and needs in the Region.

A balanced approach to land use planning will be necessary to address the wide range of interests including the strong desire for protection of the natural environment, the requirement for growth and development, and to recognize the primacy of the agricultural system. In order to achieve this balanced approach, the policy framework for the natural environment system should:

- a) ensure strong protection of significant features and areas within the N.H.S. and W.R.S., as informed and supported by science-based goals and objectives with measurable and achievable targets;
- b) recognize Provincial requirements for growth and development by including permissions and exemptions, where appropriate, that still achieves the goals and objectives for the N.H.S. and W.R.S.; and
- c) recognize the primacy of agriculture and ensure consistent policies with Provincial plans that include exemptions and permissions related to existing and proposed uses and normal farming practices.

Based on the options developed in Technical Report #2 that were presented to the public and stakeholders as part of the 2nd Point of Engagement and subsequent comments received on the options, a N.H.S. and a W.R.S. that adequately protects significant natural features while providing flexibility for development should be carried forward as the preferred option. The selection of the preferred option should also be informed by more details about the options, particularly within urban areas, including statistics of areal cover of each option, and the policy intent of each option in order to better compare and contrast the options. Following a review of this more detailed information, it is possible that a blend of N.H.S. Options 3B and 3C, and W.R.S. Option 2A may achieve a natural environment system that both protects significant natural features and provides flexibility for development.

17.0 Next Steps

The input received through the 2nd Point of Engagement has provided direction to the Region and consultant team that will inform the development of a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. It is clear through the consultation and feedback received that there is no consensus on a preferred option for the natural environment systems. The framework for the identification of a N.H.S. and W.R.S. and the related policies identified in Technical Report #2 will need to be modified to reflect the direction provided

in this Consultation Summary Report. Furthermore, there have been requests for additional details related to the options that can better inform decisions on a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. As part of providing an update to Regional Council, Region staff had prepared a memorandum (CWCD 314-2020, dated November 20, 2020) noting that as part of addressing the request to provide more details on the options to assist with identifying a preferred option, the consultant team would undertake additional analysis on each of the options for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. within urban areas. This additional work will include establishing a preliminary methodology and criteria for each feature-type of the N.H.S. and W.R.S. and providing detailed statistics and comparison of each option. To accompany these detailed statistics, the policy intent of each option will also be explored in more detail to better compare and contrast the options. Following this additional analysis, a preferred option for the N.H.S. and W.R.S. mapping and policy framework will then be presented to Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee to seek their endorsement to move forward with the Natural Environment Work Program.

Following Council's endorsement of the preferred option for the natural environment systems, the detailed design of the preferred options will be undertaken in Phase 7 and documented in Technical Report #3, along with more detailed definitions and criteria and recommendations for the policies for the natural environment. Following the development of this third technical paper, the Region will commence with the detailed mapping of the systems and the policy development process; this will ultimately be followed by the 3rd Point of Engagement in Phase 8 of the Natural Environment Work Program.

Appendix A: Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee Presentation

- Staff Report PDS 26-2020
- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options. July 15, 2020 Presentation to Regional Planning and Economic Development Committee

Subject: Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, July 15, 2020

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 26-2020 be received for information;
2. That staff **BE DIRECTED** to initiate the 2nd point of engagement with the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups;
3. That staff **BE DIRECTED** to report back on the 2nd point of engagement, and that based on the incorporation of input received, staff **BE DIRECTED** to make a recommendation for the final preferred options for endorsement by Council; and
4. That Report PDS 26-2020 **BE CIRCULATED** to the Area Municipalities and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA).

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to present a summary of the options, evaluation process, and preliminary preferred options for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS) to be implemented as part of the new Niagara Official Plan.
- The preliminary preferred options are the recommendations of the Consultant team and are supported by the professional opinion of Regional Planning Staff. The preliminary preferred options still require the input of the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups. Following the incorporation of input received through the 2nd point of engagement, the preliminary preferred options will be finalized, and then recommended by Planning Staff for the endorsement of Council.
- The direction for the Natural Environment Work Program through PDS 18-2018 was to take an incremental approach to developing the policies and mapping for the new Niagara Official Plan, including a number of decision points of Council and opportunities for consultation and engagement. This report presents the results of

Phase 4, which was the identification and evaluation of options for the NHS and WRS.

- Phase 4 is the incremental step in the work program between the background reports and the mapping and policy development phases to follow. Phase 4 is based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were only developed to a level of detail that will be required to support the evaluation and engagement process. Once a direction has been established, detailed and region-wide mapping will be completed in conjunction with policy development during the next phase of the work program.
- There has been a strong desire expressed from the public, Councils, and other stakeholders to see the Region implement systems and policies beyond minimum provincial requirements.
- The full report entitled “Technical Report #2: Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s)” completed by the Consultant team is attached to this report.

Financial Considerations

The ongoing costs associated with the Natural Environment Work Program will be accommodated within the Council approved Regional Official Plan project budget.

Analysis

Background

The background reports for the Natural Environment Work Program are complete and were presented to Regional Council through PDS 32-2019:

- Mapping Discussion Paper
- Watershed Planning Discussion Paper
- Natural Environment Background Study
- Consultation Summary Report – 1st Point of Engagement

The reports are available for review on the website for the new Niagara Official Plan:

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/rural-and-natural-systems/default.aspx>

The background reports are extensive and reviewed a wide range of topics related to both the mapping and policy development process. Several of the key findings which are essential to understanding the identification and evaluation of options are:

- There is a Provincial requirement for the Region to have both a natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS). The requirement for a comprehensive WRS is new, includes surface and groundwater, and will be developed and implemented in the Region for the first time. Together the NHS and WRS will form the Region's natural environment system.
- The Province – through the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) has created a complicated framework for the protection of natural features, areas, and systems. There are different frameworks and policies that need to be considered in each geographic area of the Region (i.e. settlement areas, Growth Plan, Growth Plan NHS, Greenbelt Plan, Greenbelt Plan NHS, PPS, and NEP). This makes designing a system that meets the environmental protection objectives of the Region as well as being simple and flexible very difficult. For a system to be balanced and designed in consideration of the unique attributes of each geographic area of the Region, it will require detailed and well thought-out policies and other implementation tools.
- There is now a requirement for a 'systems-based' approach to natural environmental planning. The current framework in the Region is more reflective of a 'features-based' approach which was common in the late '90 and early 2000s. A 'system-based' approach requires the protection of areas adjacent to and connecting natural features in addition to the features themselves.
- Through the 1st point of engagement there was a strong desire expressed from the public, Councils, and other stakeholders to see the Region implement systems and policies beyond minimum provincial requirements.

Development of Options

The background studies identified a range of considerations that were reflected in the development of options. These considerations are documented in detail as part of the attached "Technical Report #2: Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s)". As there is a requirement for both a NHS and WRS, a separate process was undertaken to develop options for each.

It is important to note that given the ongoing changes in Provincial requirements, even the most basic options will result in changes in natural environment planning in the Region, in terms of both features and areas identified for protection, and restrictions to development. A brief overview of the options identified in Technical Report #2 is as follows:

Overview of NHS Options:

A range of options for the development of an NHS were designed – starting with those which would meet provincial standards to those which would exceed provincial standards as permitted by the PPS. All of the options identified would meet the test of conformity with respect to provincial requirements.

- NHS Option 1 – Minimum Standards – Overlay:
 - This option would simply implement the minimum standards of the PPS, Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and NEP.
 - This option relies on the Growth Plan NHS and Greenbelt Plan NHS to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach. Other geographic areas of the Region, including settlement areas, would continue to be reflective of a ‘features-based’ system.
 - Key features required to be mapped would be shown, other features would rely only on the policies of the Official Plan for protection.
 - Restrictive development and site alteration policies would rely on the provincial policies of the PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan.
 - All features, areas, and systems would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules.
- NHS Option 2 – Minimum Standards – Designation:
 - This option would be the same as Option 1 except that features would be a designation in the Official Plan as opposed to an overlay.
 - There are no policy differences between Option 1 and Option 2.
- NHS Option 3 – Going Beyond Minimum Standards: This option builds upon NHS Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and include an increasing range of additional components, linkages, and buffers/vegetation protection zones. There is specific consideration

given to the design of the system in settlement areas. Table 1 on page 24 of Technical Report #2 provides a more detailed overview of the options which are summarized as follows. Building on Option 2:

- Option 3A -
 - identifies additional features outside of settlement areas (e.g. key features that are required to be included in the Greenbelt Plan NHS but could be identified Region-wide, etc.);
 - includes large linkages outside of settlement areas ; and,
 - suggests policy minimum for buffers outside of provincial NHSs and outside of settlement areas.
- Option 3B -
 - identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas;
 - identifies supporting features outside of settlement areas (e.g. enhancement areas, etc.);
 - includes large and medium linkages outside of settlement areas; and,
 - suggests policy minimums for buffers outside of provincial NHSs, and both inside and outside of settlement areas.
- Option 3C -
 - identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas;
 - identifies supporting features in and outside of settlement areas;
 - includes large, medium, and small linkages outside of settlement areas;
 - includes small linkages inside of settlement areas where the potential area is in a natural state; and,
 - prescribes mandatory buffer minimums outside of settlement areas with suggested policy minimums inside of settlement areas.

Overview of WRS Options:

The identification of a WRS is relatively new in provincial planning. As such, there is limited guidance or existing examples from other jurisdictions to rely on for best

practices. Two primary options for the WRS have been identified, both of which would meet the test of conformity with respect to provincial requirements. Both options rely on watershed planning or equivalent to support the identification of features and areas as well as the policy development process. [Note: a watershed planning project is underway]

- WRS Option 1 – Minimum Standards: This option would implement the standards of the PPS, Growth Plan, Greenbelt Plan, and NEP. The WRS would be identified as an overlay in the new Niagara Official Plan.
- WRS Option 2 – Going Beyond Minimum Standards: This option includes all of the policy direction and components identified in WRS Option 1 as well as additional features and areas (such as headwater drainage features or ecologically significant groundwater recharge areas) which would be considered Regionally important, and are identified thorough watershed planning or equivalent. WRS Option 2 is divided into two sub-options:
 - 2A: would identify additional features and areas outside of settlement areas only.
 - 2B: would identify additional features and areas Region wide, including within settlement areas.

Evaluation of Options

Evaluation Criteria:

Preliminary criteria were identified through the Natural Environment Background Study, refined through discussion with the TAG and other stakeholders through the 1st point of engagement, and finalized in the attached Technical Report #2. A comprehensive set of criteria were developed that included a range of considerations including: ecology, land-use planning, stakeholder needs, and public input. As the Natural Environment Work Program is ultimately a land-use planning exercise, the evaluation criteria went beyond ecological considerations to ensure that an additional land-use planning exercise would not be required.

Evaluation Process:

A separate evaluation process was undertaken for the NHS and WRS options. The evaluation of options was a qualitative comparison of how each option achieves the criteria. The evaluation process was not a scoring, weighting, or quantitative analysis of each option, instead, it was largely a value-based exercise.

Preliminary Preferred Options

Following the evaluation of the options, preliminary preferred options were identified for the NHS and WRS. The preliminary preferred options are the recommendations of the Consultant team and are supported by the professional opinion of Regional Planning Staff. The preliminary preferred options still require the input of the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups. Following input received through the 2nd point of engagement the final preferred option will be recommended by Planning Staff for the endorsement of Council. The detailed design process for the NHS and WRS will then begin including detailed region-wide mapping and policy development.

NHS:

Option 3B was identified as the preliminary preferred NHS option. Technical Report #2 provides details of the rationale which is summarized as follows. Option 3B:

- Goes beyond minimum provincial standards for the identification of features and systems which in the long-term will support a more resilient and biodiverse NHS. This option has the added benefit of supporting a range of additional objectives such as helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
- Provides a balanced approach for the protection of the NHS by increasing the number of components and features outside of settlement areas and limiting additional constraints to development in settlement areas, thereby helping to support the desire to direct growth to settlement areas. This option is considered defensible from both an ecological and land-use planning perspective.
- Can be designed, mapped, and implemented within the constraints and timelines of the new NOP.
- Effectively considers input received through the 1st point of engagement.

WRS:

Option 2A was identified as the preliminary preferred WRS option. Technical Report #2 provides details of the rationale which is summarized as follows. Option 2A:

- Goes beyond minimum provincial standards for the identification of features and systems which in the long-term will support a more robust and resilient WRS. This option has the added benefit of support a range of additional objectives such as helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

- Provides a balanced approach for the protection of the WRS by identifying additional regionally-important areas and features outside of settlement areas and limiting additional constraints to development in settlement areas, thereby helping to support the desire to direct growth to settlement areas. This option is considered defensible from both an ecological and land-use planning perspective.
- Can be designed, mapped, and implemented within the constraints and timelines of the new NOP.
- Effectively considers input received through the 1st point of engagement.

Additional Considerations

In addition to recommending the preliminary preferred options, Technical Report #2 provides some additional direction towards moving the work program forward including:

- Further direction on which natural features are appropriate to be mapped for the new NOP, and which features are more appropriately protected through policy.
- Further direction on what the appropriate source of information and methods are for many of the features and areas that are recommended to be mapped.
- Recommendations on several of the key issues that have been important to the public and other stakeholders. For example, the report recommends:
 - that offsetting not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new NOP and,
 - that fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new NOP (although it would be fully protected by policies in the Official Plan as required by provincial policy). This is the approach taken by many of our comparator municipalities.

Next Steps

The next steps in the Natural Environment Work Program are to:

1. Undertake the 2nd point of engagement with the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous group (i.e Phase 5).
2. Incorporate input received through the consultation process and identify the final preferred option for the NHS and WRS.

3. Present the final preferred option for the NHS and WRS to Regional Council for endorsement.
4. Initiate Phase 6 of the work program which is the detailed design of the systems based on the final preferred options.

Alternatives Reviewed

Council could choose not to direct staff to initiate the 2nd point of engagement with the public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups. This is not recommended.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This report is being brought forward as part of the ongoing reporting on the new Niagara Official Plan. The Natural Environment Work Program aligns with Objective 3.2 Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship:

“A holistic and flexible approach to environmental stewardship and consideration of the natural environment, such as in infrastructure, planning and development, aligned with a renewed Official Plan.”

Other Pertinent Reports

- PDS 40-2016 – Regional Official Plan Update
- PDS 41-2017 – New Official Plan Structure and Framework
- PDS 3-2018 – New Official Plan Update
- PDS 6-2018 – Natural Environment Project Initiation Report
- PDS 18-2018 – Natural Environment – Project Framework
- PDS 9-2019 – New Official Plan Consultation Timeline Framework
- PDS 10-2019 – Update on Natural Environment Work Program – New Regional Official Plan
- CWCD 122-2019 – Agricultural and Environmental Groups – Draft Stakeholder Lists
- CWCD 150-2019 – Update on Official Plan Consultations – Spring 2019
- CWCD 179-2019 – Notice of Public Information Centres – Natural Environment Work Program, New Regional Official Plan
- CWCD 271-2019 – Update on Consultation for New Official Plan
- PDS 32-2019 – Natural Environment Work Program – Phases 2 & 3: Mapping and Watershed Planning Discussion Papers and Comprehensive Background Study
- PDS 1-2020 – New Niagara Official Plan – Public Consultation Summary

- PDS 3-2020 – Ecological Land Classification Mapping Update
- PDS 9-2020 – Niagara Official Plan – Consultation Details and Revised Framework
- CWCD 153-2020 – Natural Environment Work Program Update – New Niagara Official Plan

Prepared by:

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services

Recommended by:

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner
Planning and Development Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Karen Costantini, Planning Analyst – Regional Official Plan, and reviewed by Erik Acs, MCIP, RPP, Manager, Community Planning, Dave Heyworth, MCIP, RPP, Official Plan-Policy Consultant, and Doug Giles, Director, Community and Long Range Planning.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Natural Environment Work Program: Technical Report #2:
Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s) –
107 pages



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PDS 26-2020

Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options

**July 15, 2020 – Presentation to Planning and Economic
Development Committee**



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools



Overview of Phase 4

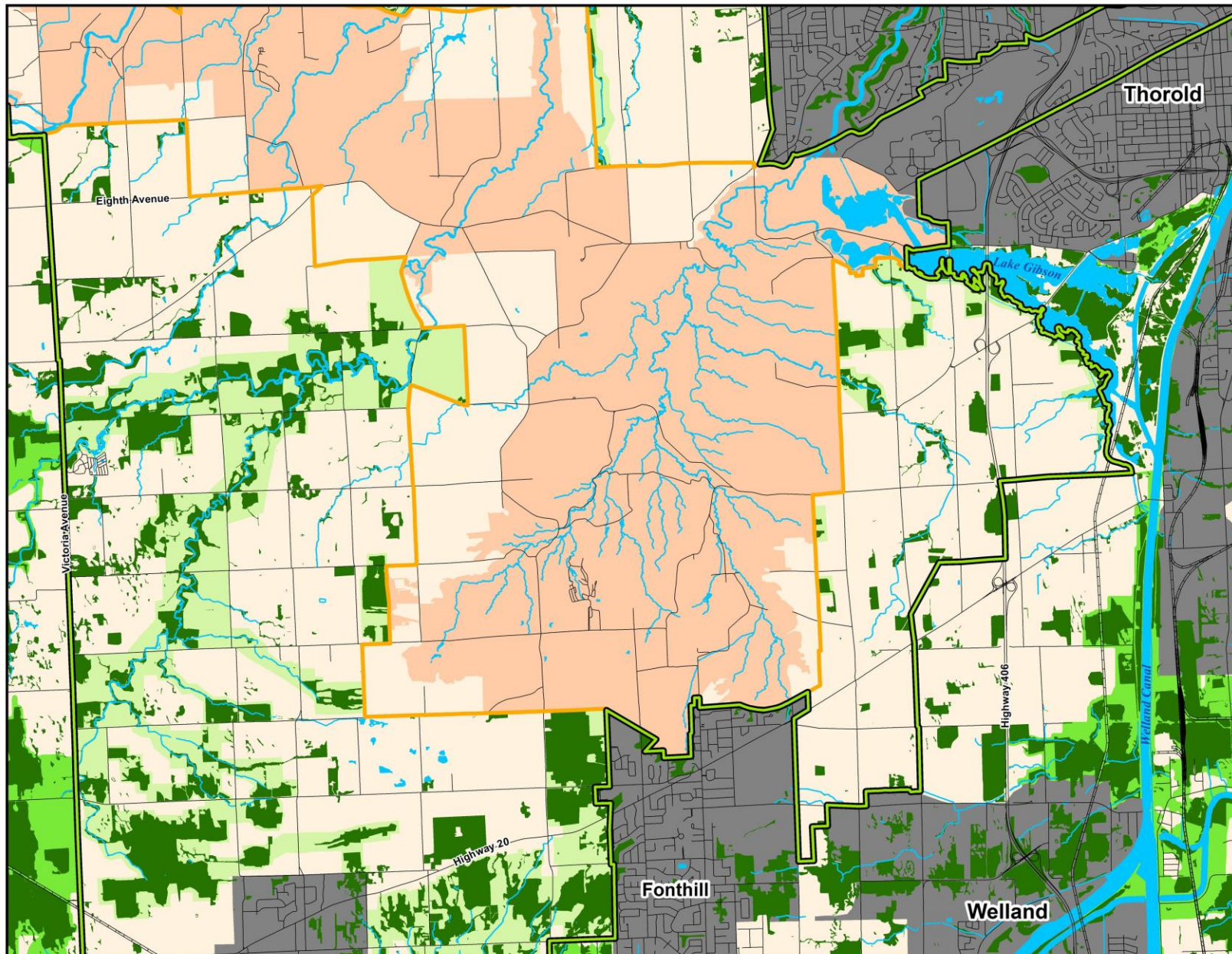
- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Identification & Evaluation of Options

- Separate process for the NHS and WRS
- Range of considerations needed to be reflected in the development of options
- All options would 'conform' with provincial requirements – some options would meet minimum provincial standards other options would exceed minimum standards
- Evaluation process was undertaken based on criteria that were established during the completion of the background studies and during the 1st point of engagement



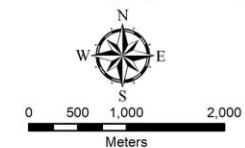


Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Conceptual Natural Heritage System Options 1 and 2

Legend

- Greenbelt Plan
- Niagara Escarpment Plan
- Escarpment Protection Area
- Key Natural Features
- Growth Plan NHS Outside of Greenbelt Plan Area
- Greenbelt NHS
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020

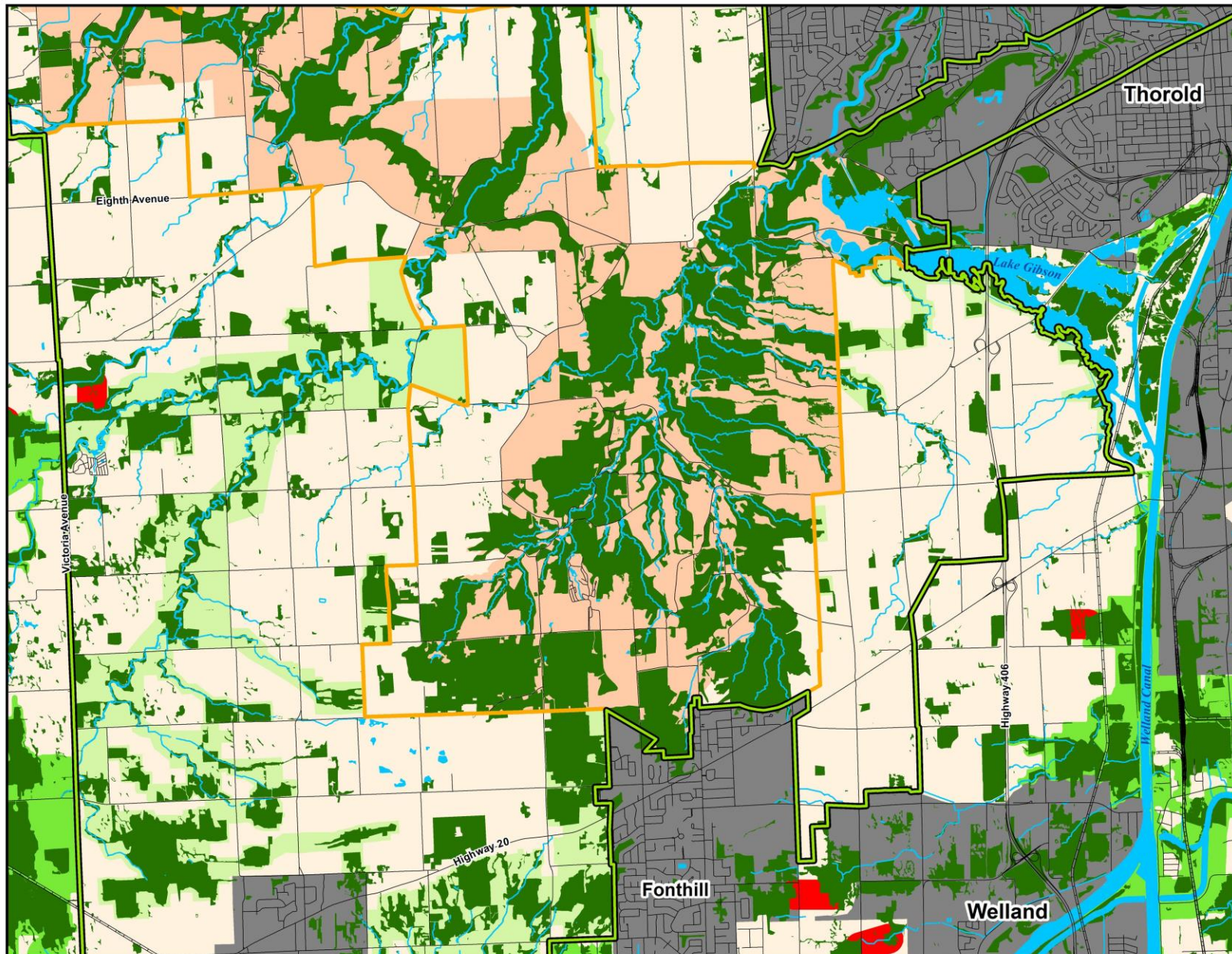


Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

Table 1. Overview of Natural Heritage System Options: 3A, 3B and 3C.

	N.H.S. 3A	N.H.S. 3B	N.H.S. 3C
Component Features and Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas • Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B • Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas
Connecting the System (linkages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas • Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state
Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas



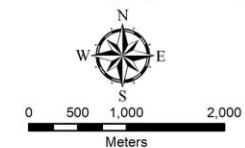


Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Natural Heritage System Option 3A

Legend

- Key Natural Features
- Large Linkage (400m Wide)
- Growth Plan NHS Outside of Greenbelt Plan Area
- Greenbelt NHS
- Greenbelt Plan
- Niagara Escarpment Plan
- Escarpment Protection Area
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only

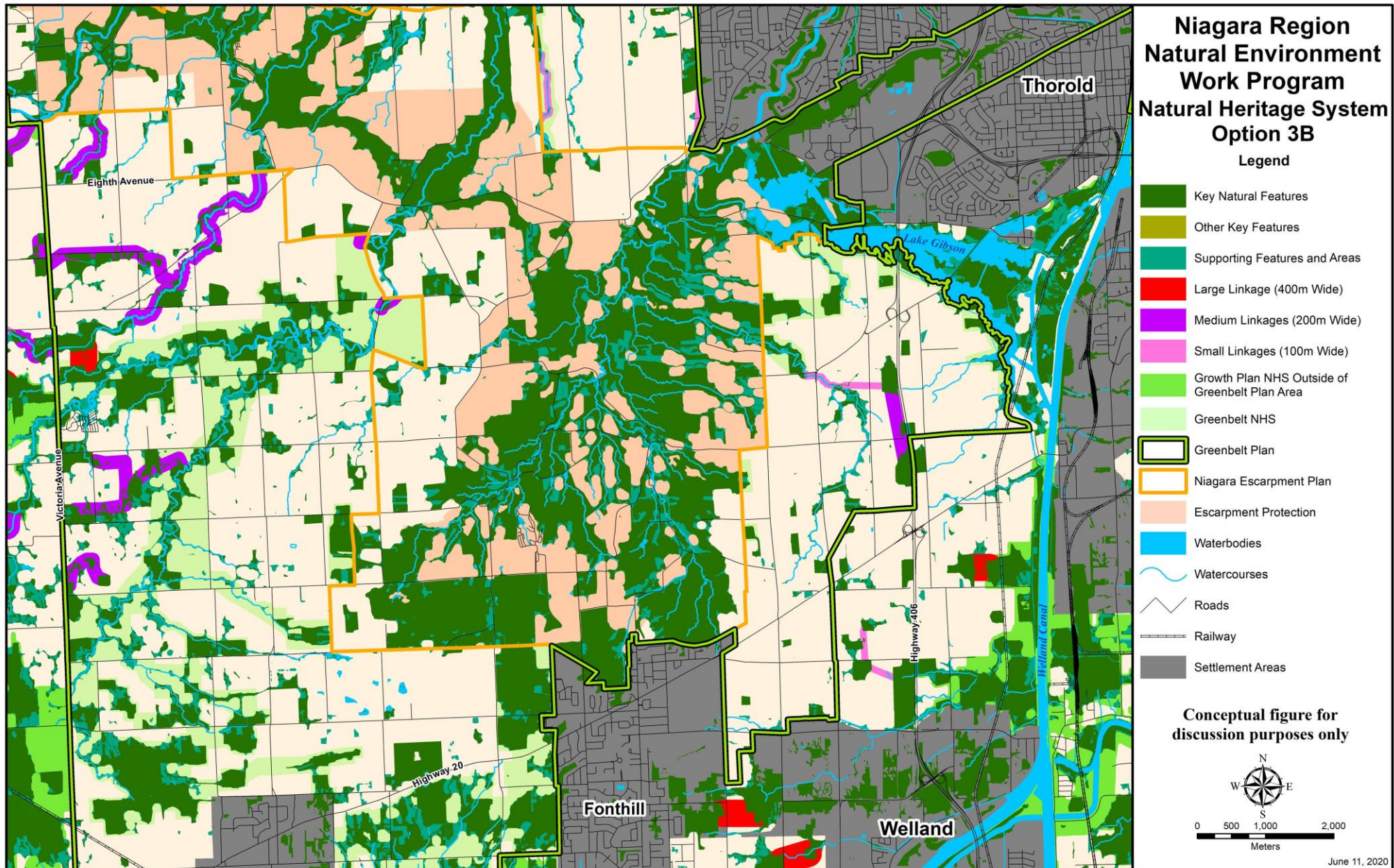


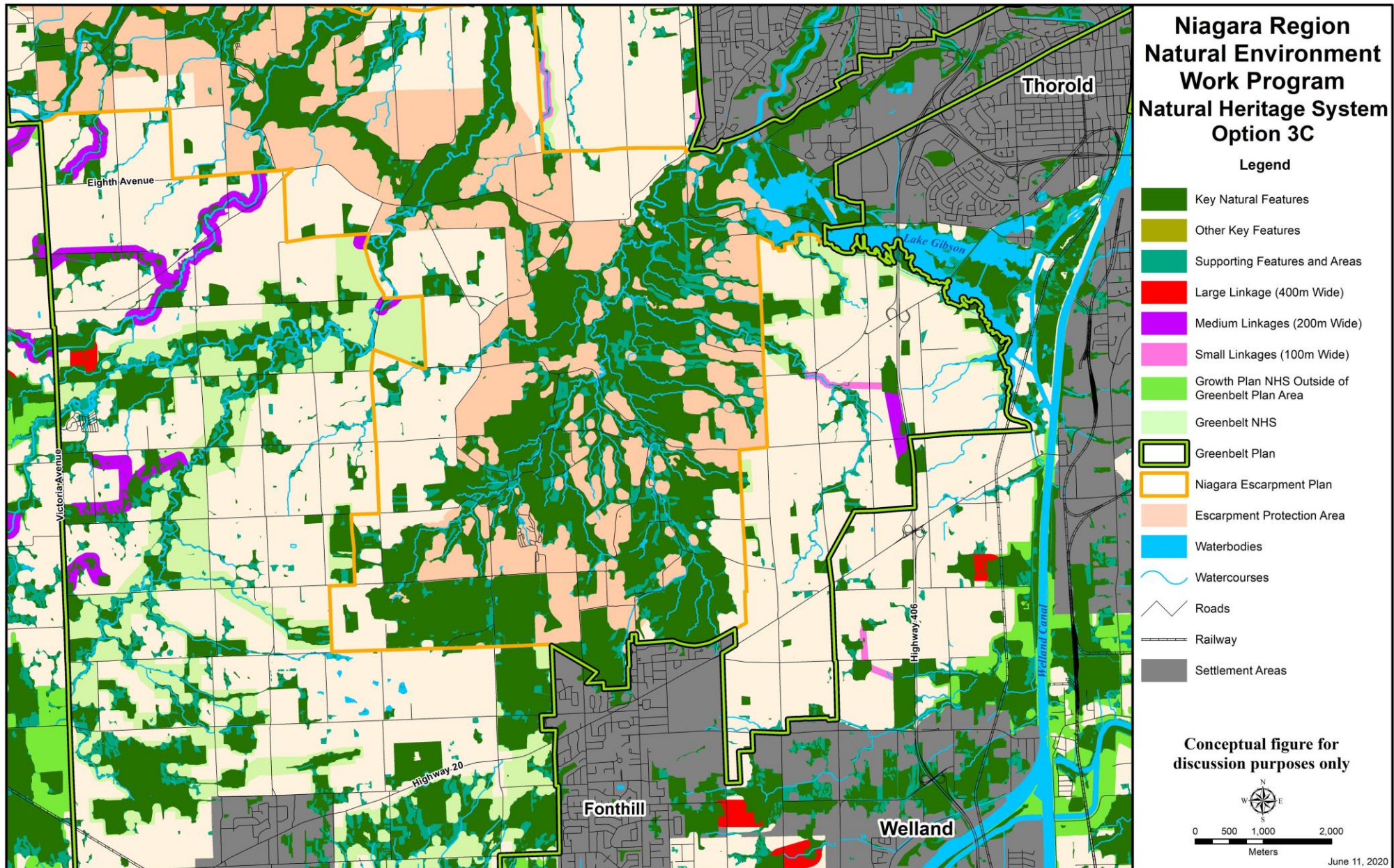
north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL

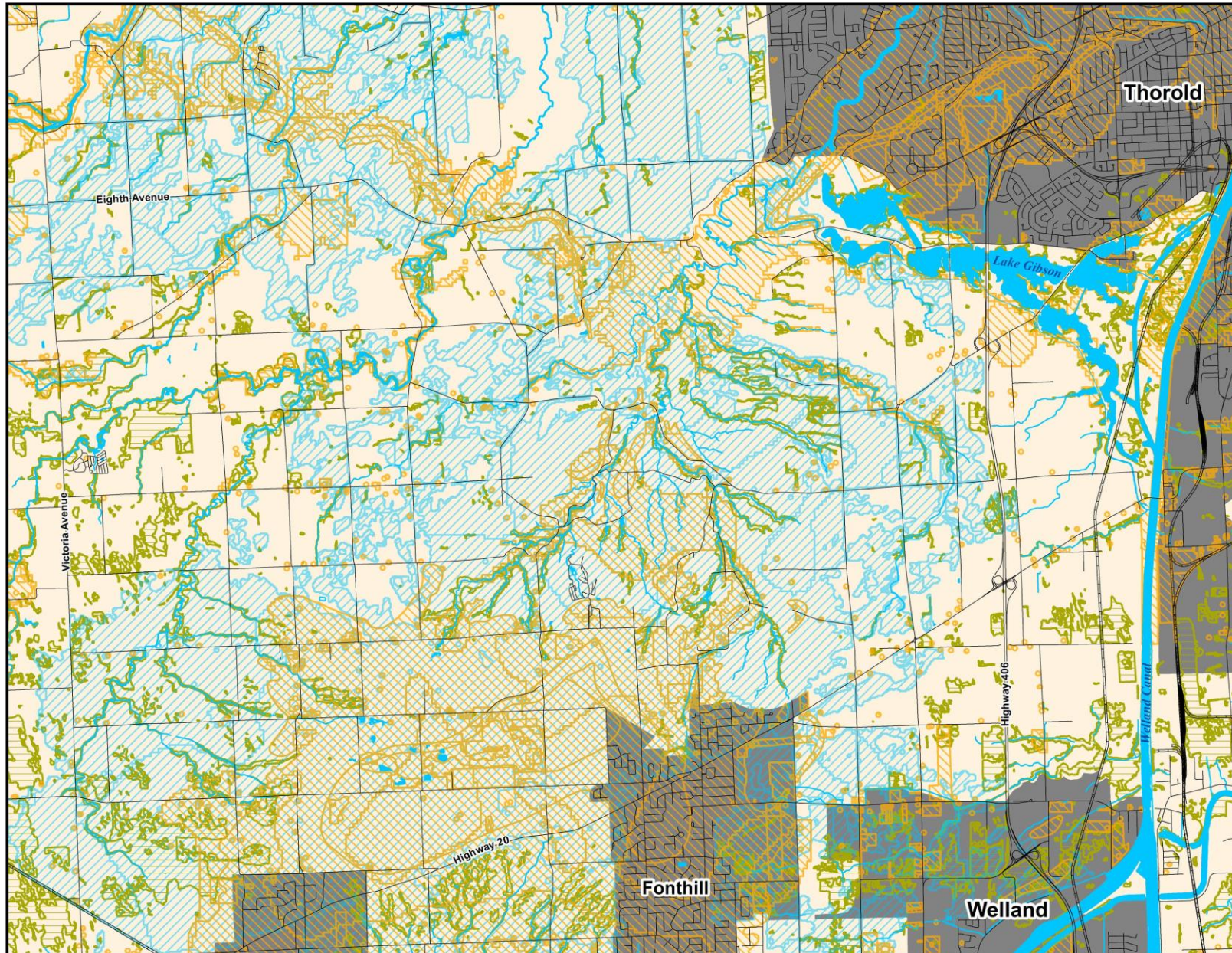


June 11, 2020









Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2 Legend

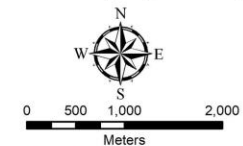
Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



north-south
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June 11, 2020



Preliminary Preferred Options

- Option 3B was identified as the preliminary preferred option for NHS
- Option 2A was identified as the preliminary preferred option for NHS
- Both options share similar characteristics:
 - Exceeds minimum provincial standards
 - Incorporates public and stakeholder feedback
 - Provides a balanced approach which directs optional components outside of settlement areas
 - Supports the Region in achieving other objectives such as mitigating the impacts of climate change



Next Steps



1. Initiate 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Incorporate the input received
3. Report back to PEDC with recommendation for final preferred option
4. Initiate the detailed design process



Appendix B: Presentation to Local Planning Staff

- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options. Presentation to Local Planning Departments (September 2020)



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Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options

Presentation to Local Planning Departments

September 2020



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools

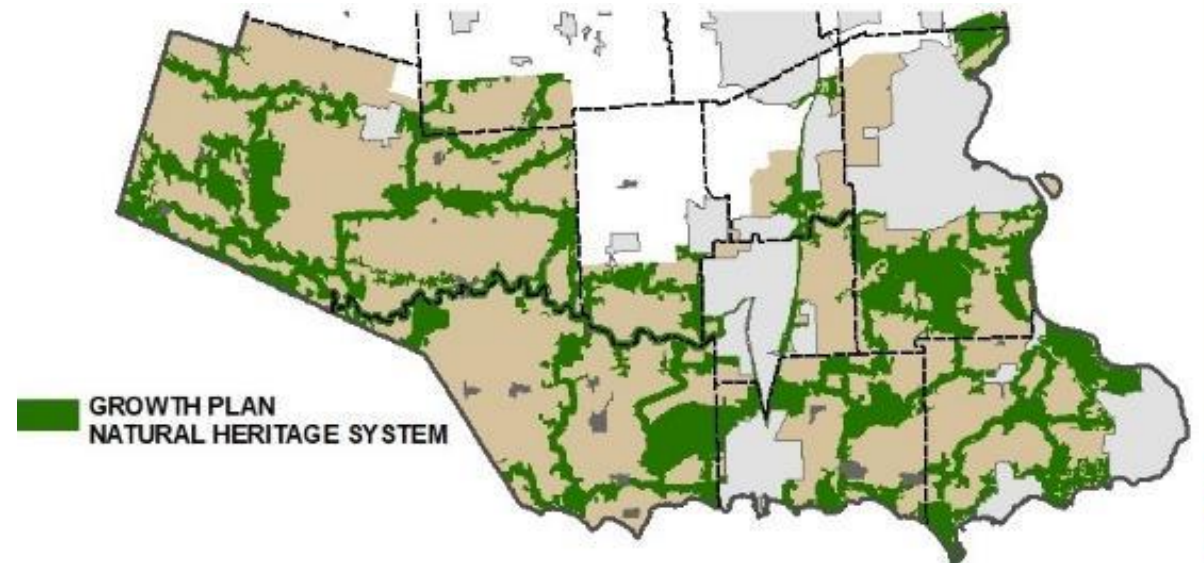
Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also requires that a water resource system be identified and protected.
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes



Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a WRS – however, the Growth Plan requires that a WRS be identified
- While some components of a WRS can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



Development of Options

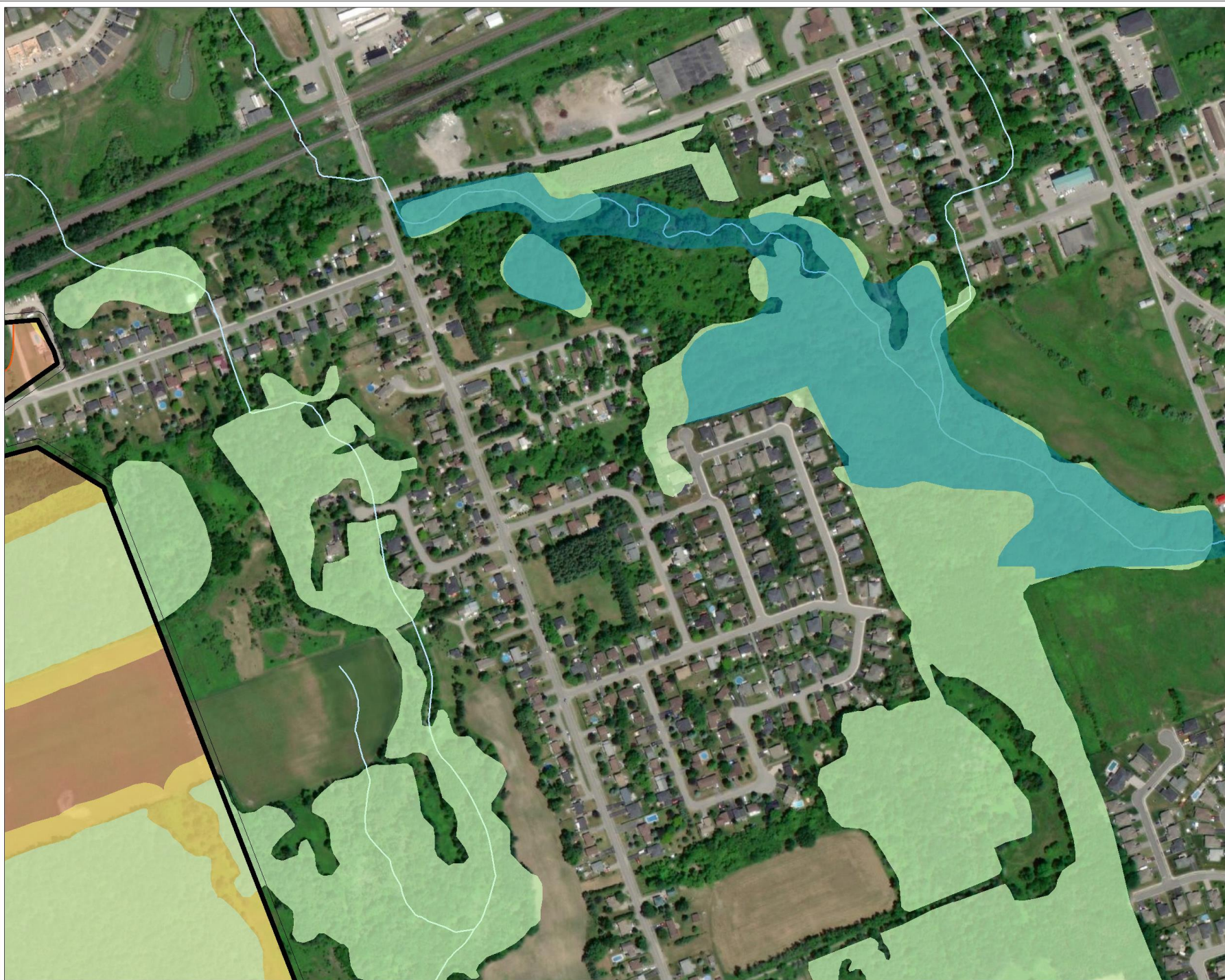
- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
 - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
 - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
 - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
 - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
 - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
 - Conform with provincial requirements
 - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
 - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
 - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS. outside of the Provincial NHSs
 - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
 - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend


 Settlement Area

Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



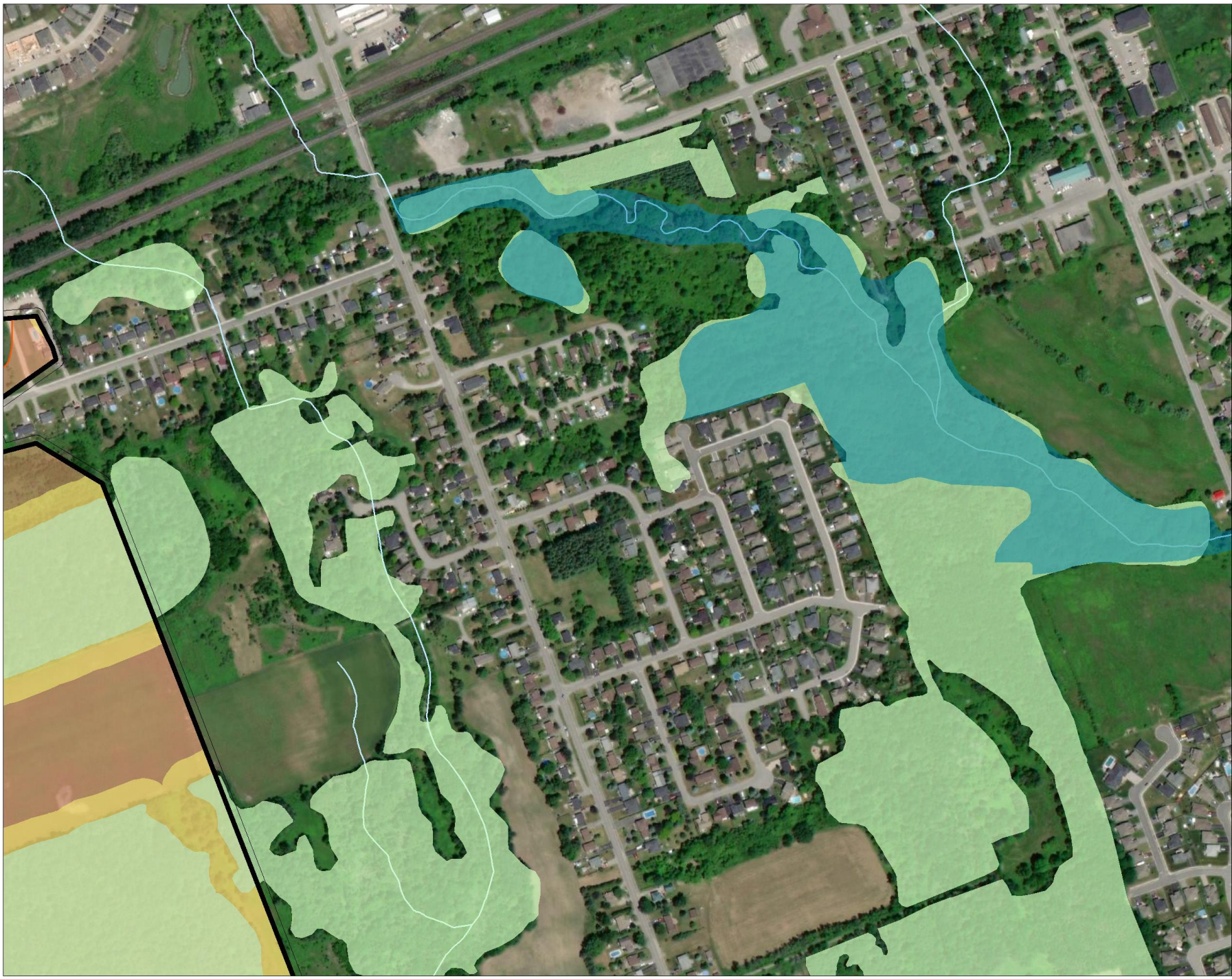
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Imagery: ESRI

north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

	N.H.S. 3A	N.H.S. 3B	N.H.S. 3C
Component Features and Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas • Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B • Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas
Connecting the System (linkages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas • Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state
Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas



Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-09	
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


Legend

Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number
20-1149

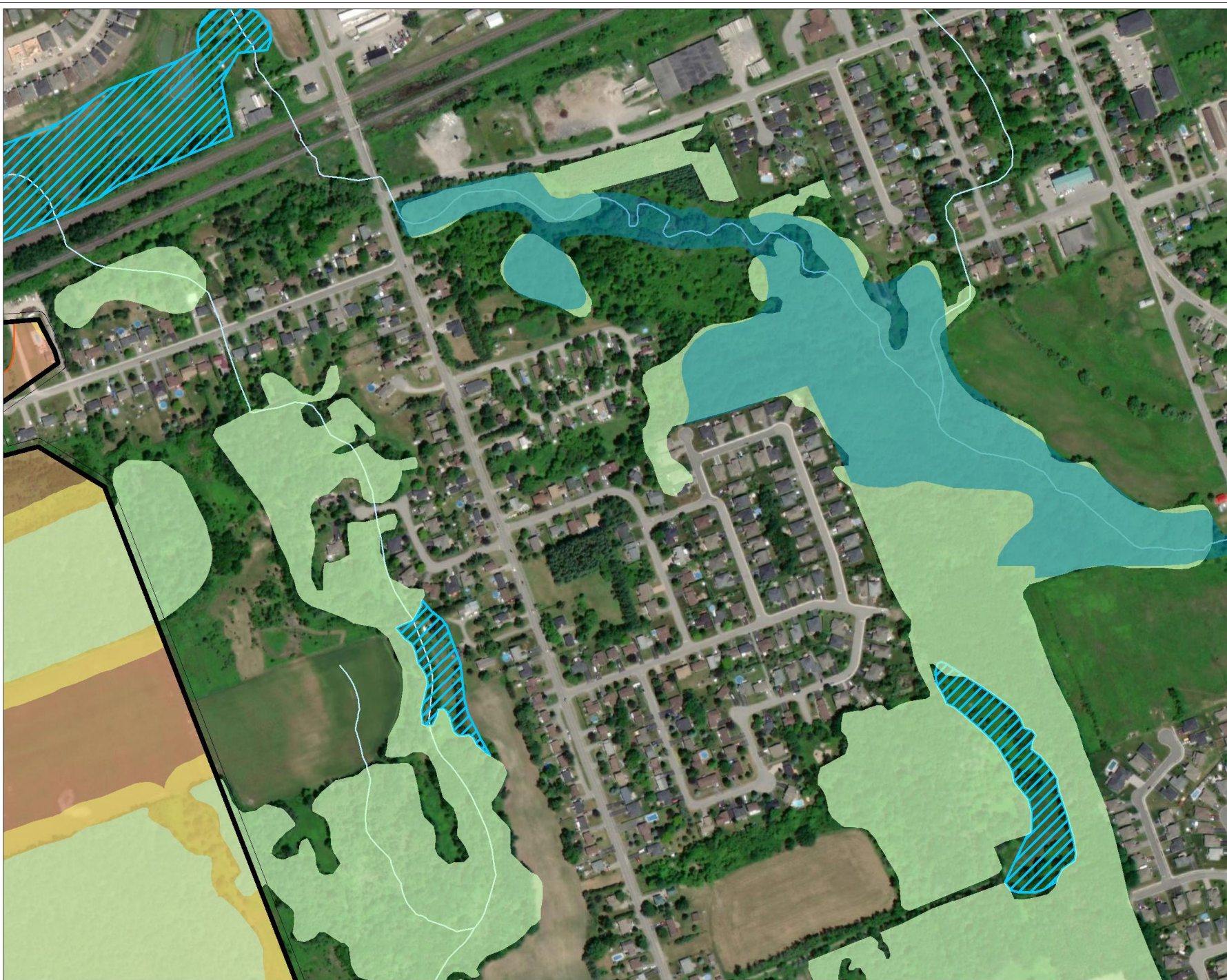
Date:
2020-09-09



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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

Legend


 Settlement Area

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

- Legend**
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetlands
 - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
 - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
 - Medium Linkage (200m)
 - Mandatory Buffers

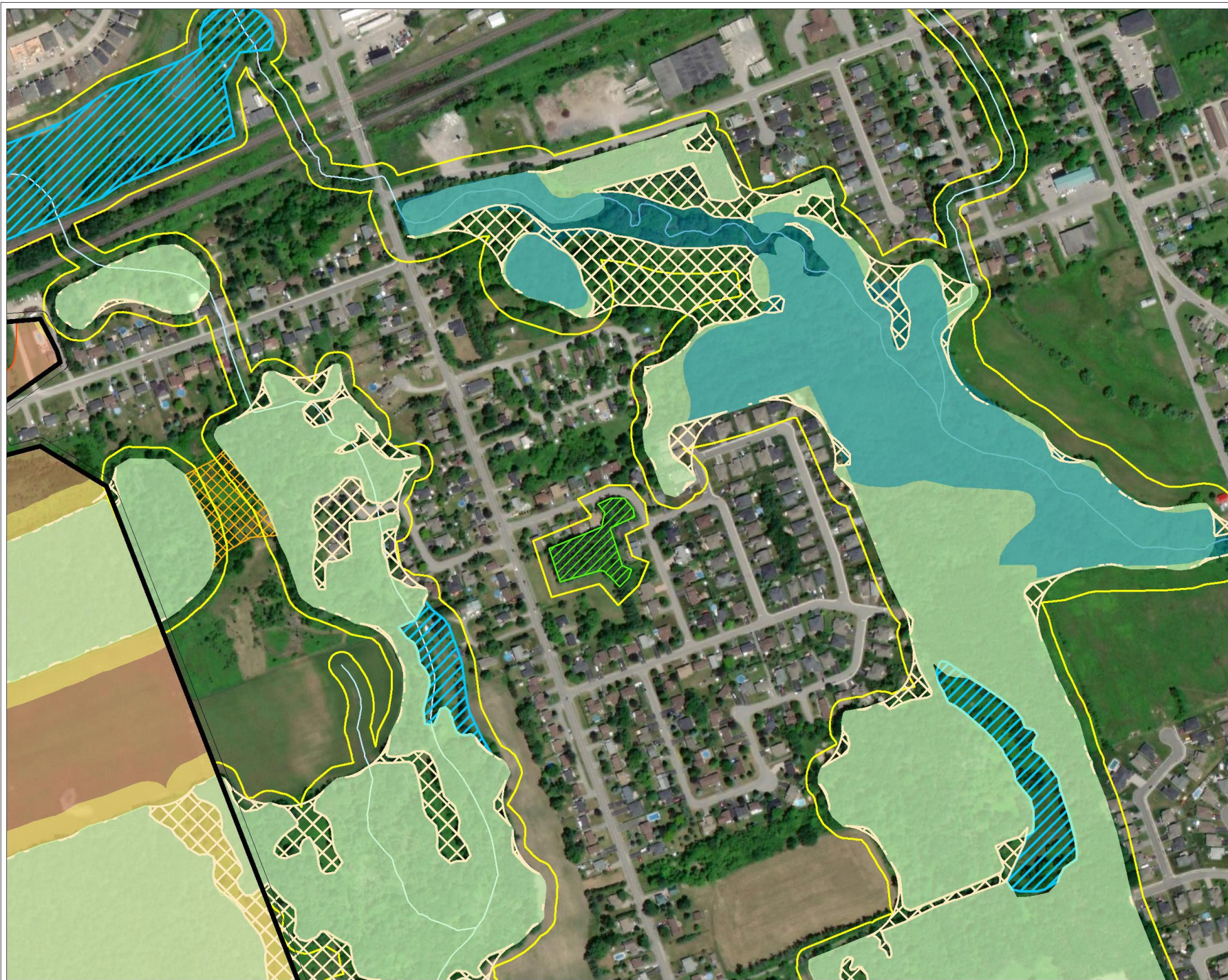
These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-09	N ↑
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

Legend

Settlement Area

Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Supporting Features and Areas

Other Woodlands

Enhancement Areas

Linkages

Small Linkage (100m)

Minimum Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number
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Date:
2020-09-09



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Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C


Legend

Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

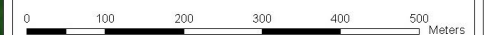
Supporting Features and Areas

-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Small Linkage (100m)
-  Minimum Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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Imagery: ESRI

north-south
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Water Resource System Options




- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
 - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
 - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
 - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas








Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

Legend

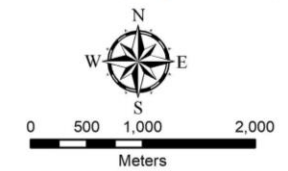
Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

-  Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
-  Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020



Your Feedback is Requested



Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan (although it would be fully protected by policies in the Official Plan as required by provincial policy and federal legislation).
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



Discussion Questions

- Do you require any additional information or clarification on the options presented?
- What do you like and/or dislike about the range of options developed?
- Which options do you think are appropriate for your municipality – given the range of competing land uses and other planning considerations?
- What is your vision for environmental planning in Niagara moving forward?



Appendix C: Virtual Stakeholder Workshops

- Invitation and Follow-up E-mails for Stakeholder Workshops
- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification Options. Stakeholder Workshop - Development Community + Planning Consultants and Ecological Consultants (September 18, 2020)
- Natural Environment Work Program –Phase 4: Identification Options. Agricultural Community Workshop (September 21, 2020)
- Natural Environment Work Program –Phase 4: Identification Options. Environmental Stakeholder Groups Workshop (September 22, 2020)
- Question and Response Matrix - Development Community + Planning and Ecological Consultants Virtual Stakeholder Workshop
- Question and Response Matrix - Agricultural Community Virtual Stakeholder Workshop
- Question and Response Matrix - Environmental Stakeholder Groups Virtual Workshop
- Questionnaires Distributed to Attendees of Workshops (3)
- Responses to Questionnaires (11)

Norman, Sean

Sent:
Subject:

You Are Invited -

Niagara Region Planning Staff are hosting an online workshop for members of the Development Community + Planning and Ecological Consultants to discuss the identification and evaluation of natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS) options that have been prepared as part of the Natural Environment Work Program for the new Niagara Official Plan.

Date: Friday, September 18, 2020

Time: 1:00 – 2:30 pm

Location: Online (please register using the following link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TlIf-E_oT4ueMig2gMMf3w)

Once you have registered, a link to join the workshop will be e-mailed to you. Please feel free to forward this invitation to others in your network who may be interested.

If you are unable to attend the workshops – we will also be hosting virtual Public Information Centres (PICs) for the project as follows:

Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System (NHS) Options
Wednesday, September 23, 2020 - 6:00 PM

Natural Environment - Water Resource System (WRS) Options and the Niagara Watershed Plan
Thursday, September 24, 2020 - 6:00 PM
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_10x3QK7wQFuv29y3nzXiSQ

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215
www.niagararegion.ca

Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Attachments:

Thank you again for taking the time to attend the workshop this afternoon.

Please see attached a copy of the presentation and a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback. We would appreciate if you could provide **comments to us by Friday October 2, 2020**.

As mentioned, I will be following-up with a matrix with all of the questions and answers from the session.

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

Norman, Sean

Sent:
Cc:
Subject:
Attachments:

Good Morning,

Please see attached the question and response matrix from the September 18 Natural Environment workshop.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted the questionnaire or other comments. If you are still planning on making a submission, please try to get it to us this week.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 4:19 PM
Cc: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Sept 18 Workshop Follow-Up - Presentation and Questionnaire

Thank you again for taking the time to attend the workshop this afternoon.

Please see attached a copy of the presentation and a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback. We would appreciate if you could provide **comments to us by Friday October 2, 2020**.

As mentioned, I will be following-up with a matrix with all of the questions and answers from the session.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

Norman, Sean

Sent:
Subject:

You Are Invited -

Niagara Region Planning Staff are hosting an online workshop for members of the agricultural community to discuss the identification and evaluation of natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS) options that have been prepared as part of the Natural Environment Work Program for the new Niagara Official Plan.

Date: Monday, September 21, 2020

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Location: Online (please register using the following link:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OpkAKkTKS1ygjjAEVt4v3A)

Once you have registered, a link to join the workshop will be e-mailed to you. Please feel free to forward this invitation to other members of the agricultural community who may be interested.

If you are unable to attend the workshops – we will also be hosting virtual Public Information Centres (PICs) for the project as follows:

Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System (NHS) Options

Wednesday, September 23, 2020 - 6:00 PM

Natural Environment - Water Resource System (WRS) Options and the Niagara Watershed Plan

Thursday, September 24, 2020 - 6:00 PM

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_10x3QK7wQFuv29y3nzXiSQ

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

www.niagararegion.ca

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Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Attachments:

Thank you again for taking the time to attend the Natural Environment workshop on Monday evening.

Please see attached a copy of the presentation and a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback. We would appreciate if you could provide **comments to us by Friday October 2, 2020**.

As mentioned, I will be following-up with a matrix with all of the questions and answers from the session.

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

Norman, Sean

Sent:
Cc:
Subject:
Attachments:

Good Morning,

Please see attached the question and response matrix from the September 21 Natural Environment workshop.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted the questionnaire or other comments. If you are still planning on making a submission, please try to get it to us by early next week.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 2:50 PM
Cc: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Sept 21 Workshop Follow-Up - Presentation and Questionnaire

Thank you again for taking the time to attend the Natural Environment workshop on Monday evening.

Please see attached a copy of the presentation and a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback. We would appreciate if you could provide **comments to us by Friday October 2, 2020**.

As mentioned, I will be following-up with a matrix with all of the questions and answers from the session.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

Norman, Sean

Sent:
Subject:

You Are Invited -

Niagara Region Planning Staff are hosting an online workshop for members of environmental stakeholder groups to discuss the identification and evaluation of natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS) options that have been prepared as part of the Natural Environment Work Program for the new Niagara Official Plan.

Date: Tuesday, September 22, 2020

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 pm

Location: Online (please register using the following link:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_NDw6lkCMTfOISCAU5Ywjng)

Once you have registered, a link to join the workshop will be e-mailed to you. Please feel free to forward this invitation to other members of environmental stakeholder groups who may be interested.

If you are unable to attend the workshops – we will also be hosting virtual Public Information Centres (PICs) for the project as follows:

Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System (NHS) Options
Wednesday, September 23, 2020 - 6:00 PM

Natural Environment - Water Resource System (WRS) Options and the Niagara Watershed Plan
Thursday, September 24, 2020 - 6:00 PM
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_10x3QK7wQFuv29y3nzXiSQ

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215
www.niagararegion.ca

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Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Attachments:

Thank you again for taking the time to attend the Natural Environment workshop on Tuesday evening.

Please see attached a copy of the presentation and a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback. We would appreciate if you could provide **comments to us by Friday October 9, 2020**.

As mentioned, I will be following-up with a matrix with all of the questions and answers from the session.

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

Norman, Sean

Sent:
Cc:
Subject:
Attachments:

Good Afternoon,

Please see attached the question and response matrix from the September 22 Natural Environment workshop.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted the questionnaire or other comments. If you are still planning on making a submission, please try to get it to us by early next week.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Friday, September 25, 2020 2:14 PM
Cc: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Sept 22 Workshop Follow-Up - Presentation and Questionnaire

Thank you again for taking the time to attend the Natural Environment workshop on Tuesday evening.

Please see attached a copy of the presentation and a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback. We would appreciate if you could provide **comments to us by Friday October 9, 2020**.

As mentioned, I will be following-up with a matrix with all of the questions and answers from the session.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215



making our mark

NIAGARA
OFFICIAL PLAN

Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification Options

Stakeholder Workshop - Development Community +
Planning Consultants and Ecological Consultants

September 18, 2020



makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools



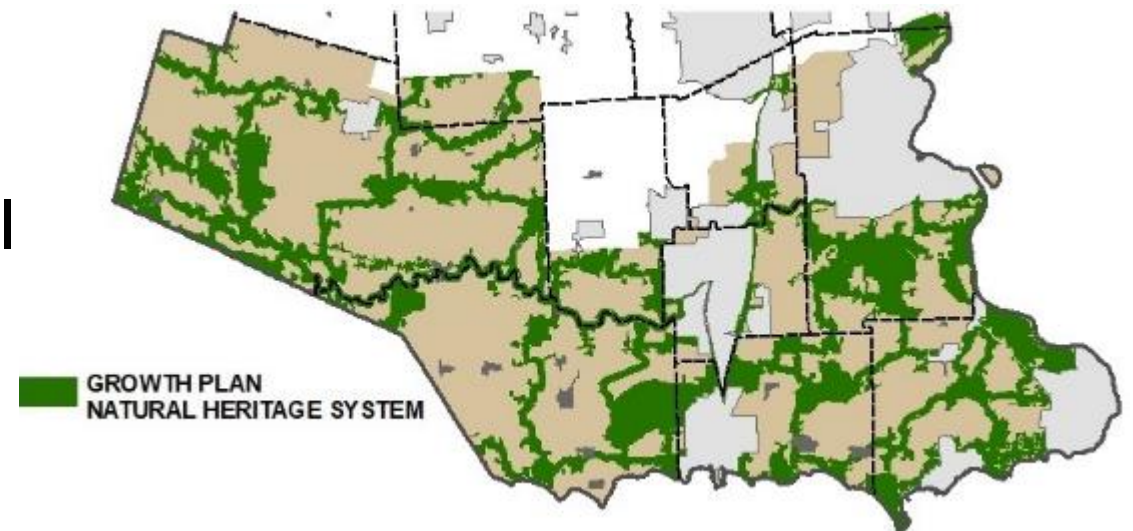
Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also require that a water resource system be identified and protected
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a W.R.S. – however, the Growth Plan requires that a W.R.S. be identified
- While some components of a W.R.S. can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



Developing Options for the Natural Environment System

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
 - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
 - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
 - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
 - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
 - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
 - Conform with provincial requirements
 - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



Planning Direction – Natural Heritage System Components

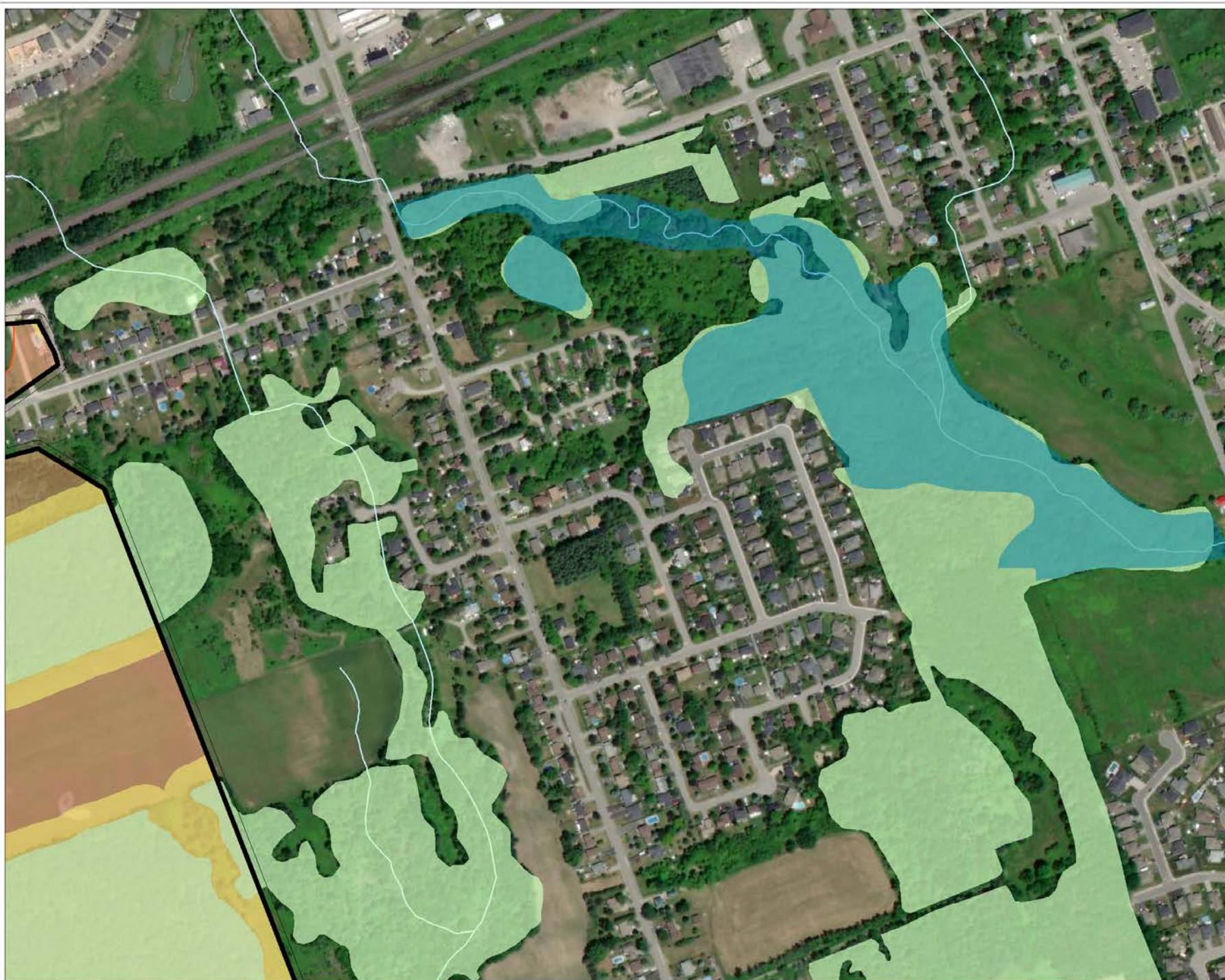
- Definitions of NHS in PPS and Provincial Plans provide direction for required and optional components
- Linkages
 - Included within Provincial NHSs
 - Optional to identify additional linkages beyond Provincial N.H.S.s
- Buffers / Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Requirement to provide to key features in Provincial NHSs
 - Optional to identify minimum or mandatory buffers outside of Provincial N.H.S.s, including within settlement areas



Natural Heritage System Options


- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
 - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
 - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS outside of the Provincial NHSs
 - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
 - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend


 Settlement Area

Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



Map Produced by North South Environmental (NSE) Inc.
This map is proprietary and confidential and must not be duplicated or distributed by any means without permission of NSE.
Imagery: ESRI

north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



Map Produced by North South Environmental (NSE) Inc.
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Imagery: ESRI

north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

	N.H.S. 3A	N.H.S. 3B	N.H.S. 3C
Component Features and Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas • Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B • Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas
Connecting the System (linkages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas • Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state
Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas




Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3A

Legend


 Settlement Area


Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

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0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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Imagery: ESRI

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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


Legend

Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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Project Number
20-1149

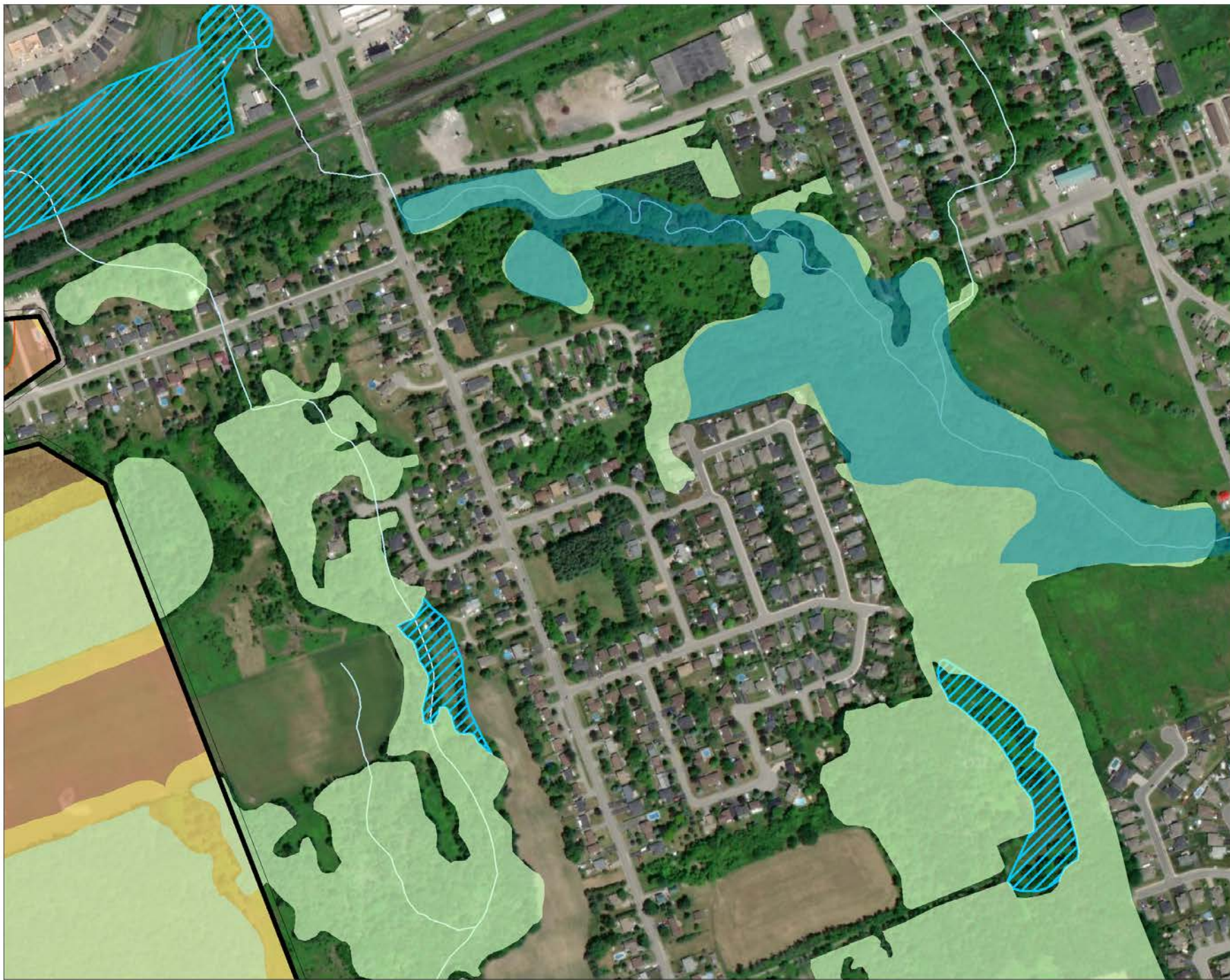
Date:
2020-09-09



Map Produced by North South Environmental (NSE) Inc.
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distributed by any means without permission of NSE.
Imagery: ESRI

north-south
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Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3B

Legend

Settlement Area

Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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Imagery: ESRI

north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Medium Linkage (200m)

- Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

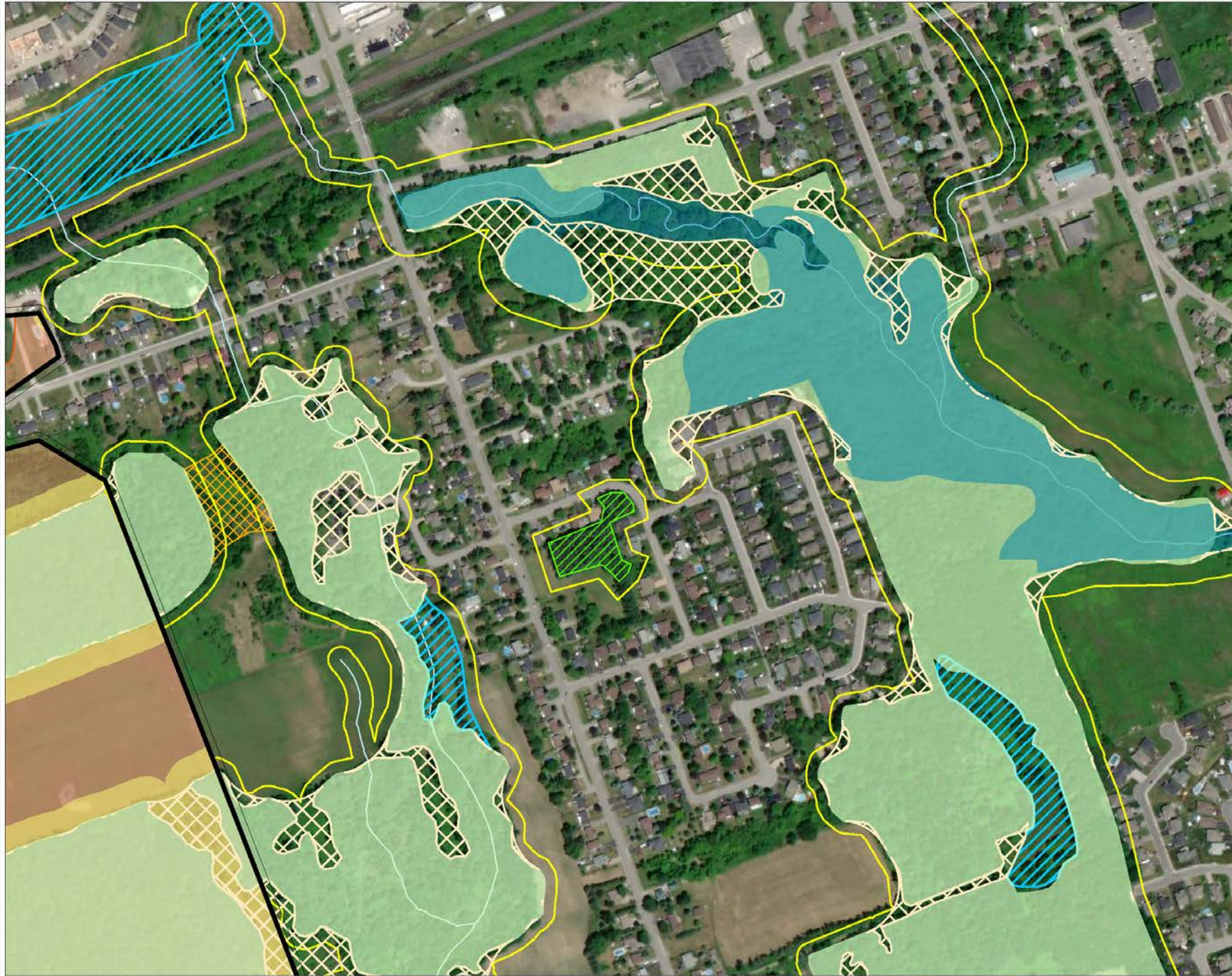
Date:
2020-09-09



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distributed by any means without permission of NSE.
Imagery: ESRI

north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL





Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3C

- Legend**
- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features**
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas**
- Other Woodlands
 - Enhancement Areas
- Linkages**
- Small Linkage (100m)
 - Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-11	
---------------------------	---------------------	--

Map Produced by North South Environmental (NSE) Inc.
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Imagery: ESRI





Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C

Legend

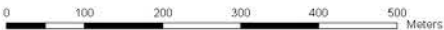
Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
 - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
 - Medium Linkage (200m)
 - Small Linkage (100m)
 - Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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Imagery: ESRI

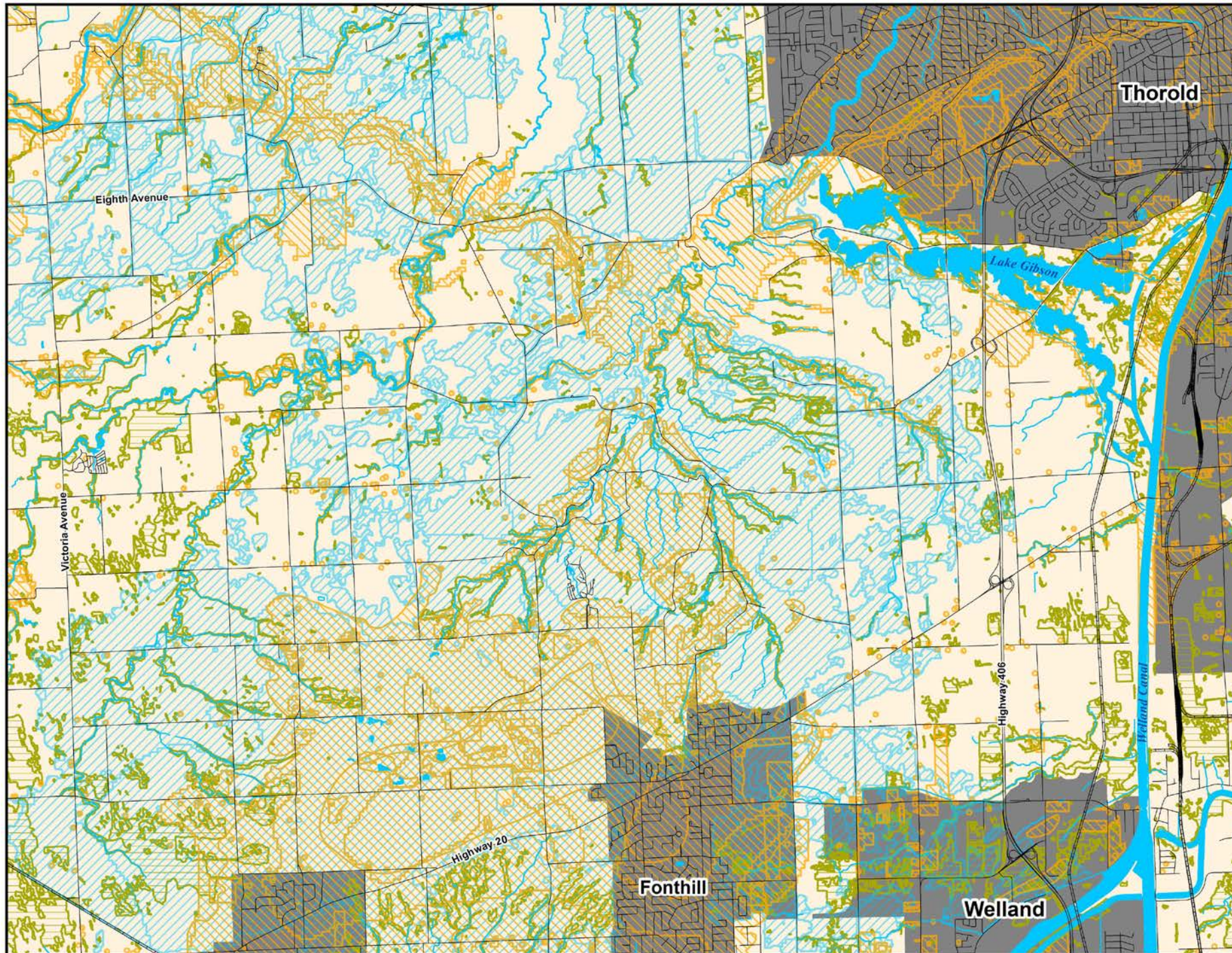
north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
 - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
 - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
 - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas





Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

Legend

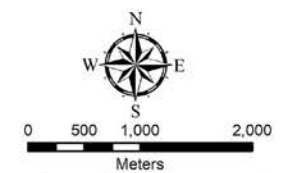
Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020

SUSTAINABLE REGION NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan (although it would be fully protected by policies in the Official Plan as required by provincial policy and federal legislation).
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines, and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
 - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
 - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
 - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
 - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives
 - Project will be introduced at the Public Information Centre on September 24



Your Feedback is Requested



Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



Discussion Questions

1. What, if any, additional information or clarification do you require on the options presented?
2. What do you like and/or dislike about the range of options developed?
3. How do the options fit with your vision for natural environment planning in Niagara?
4. What other information should we consider when identifying and selecting a final preferred option?





making our mark

NIAGARA

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Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification Options

Agricultural Community Workshop
September 21, 2020



makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools

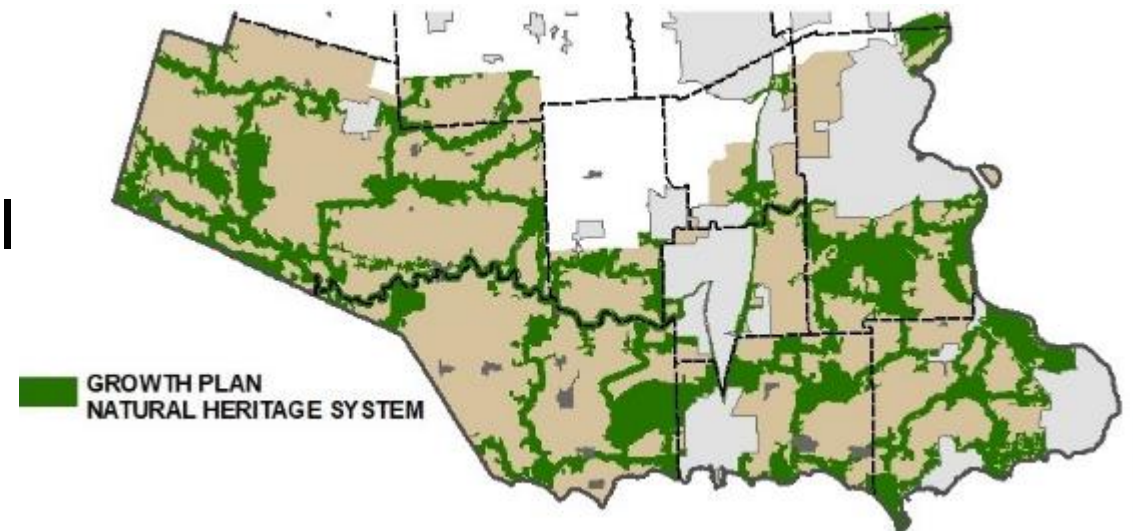
Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also require that a water resource system be identified and protected
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes



Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a W.R.S. – however, the Growth Plan requires that a W.R.S. be identified
- While some components of a W.R.S. can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



Developing Options for the Natural Environment System

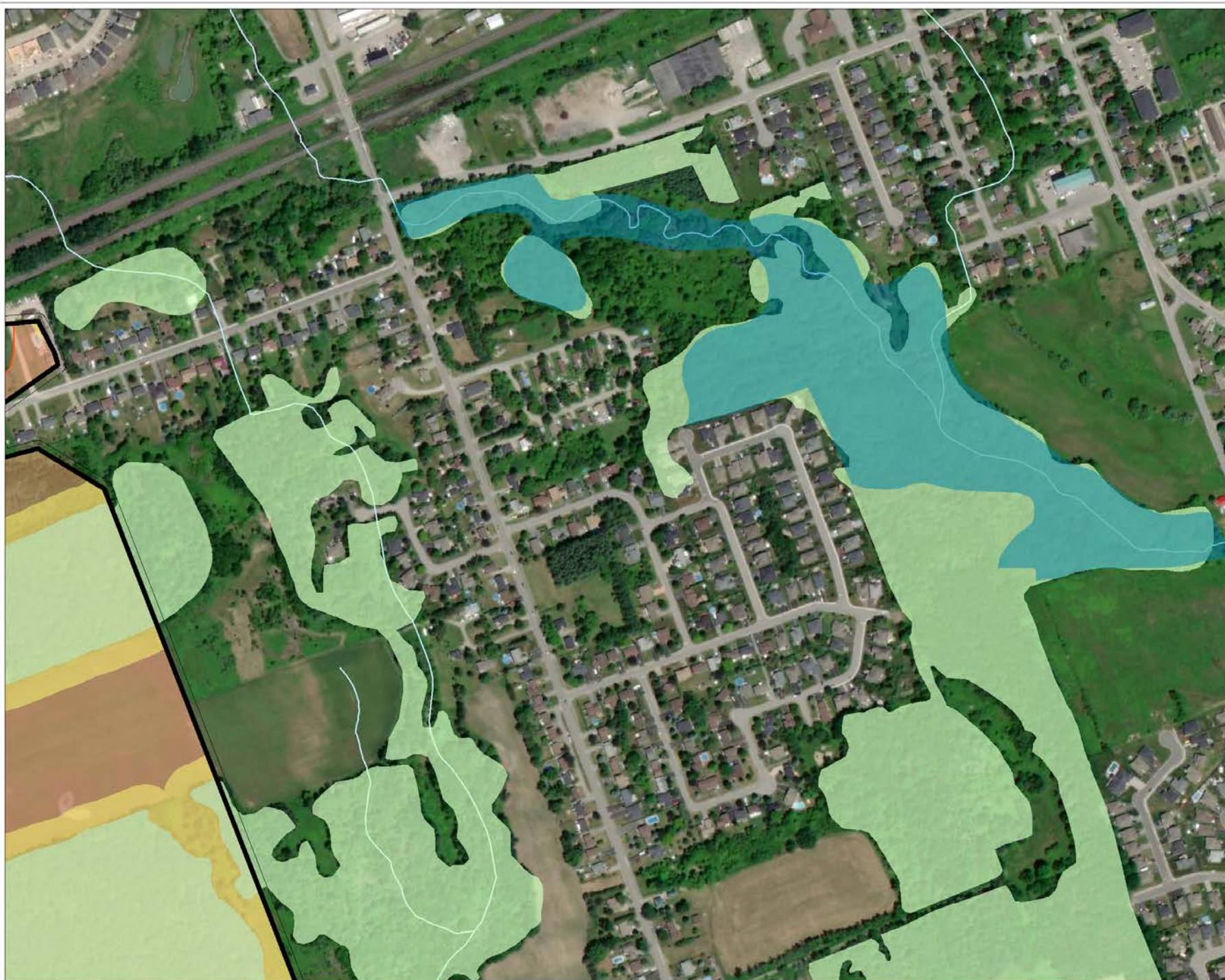
- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
 - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
 - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
 - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
 - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
 - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
 - Conform with provincial requirements
 - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



Natural Heritage System Options


- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
 - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
 - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS. outside of the Provincial NHSs
 - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
 - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend


 Settlement Area

Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

	N.H.S. 3A	N.H.S. 3B	N.H.S. 3C
Component Features and Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas • Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B • Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas
Connecting the System (linkages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas • Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state
Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum (prescribed) buffers outside of provincial N.H.S.s, no buffers inside settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum (prescribed) buffers outside of settlement areas, mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers inside settlement areas





Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3A

Legend

-  Settlement Area
- Required Components**
-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


Legend

Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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Project Number
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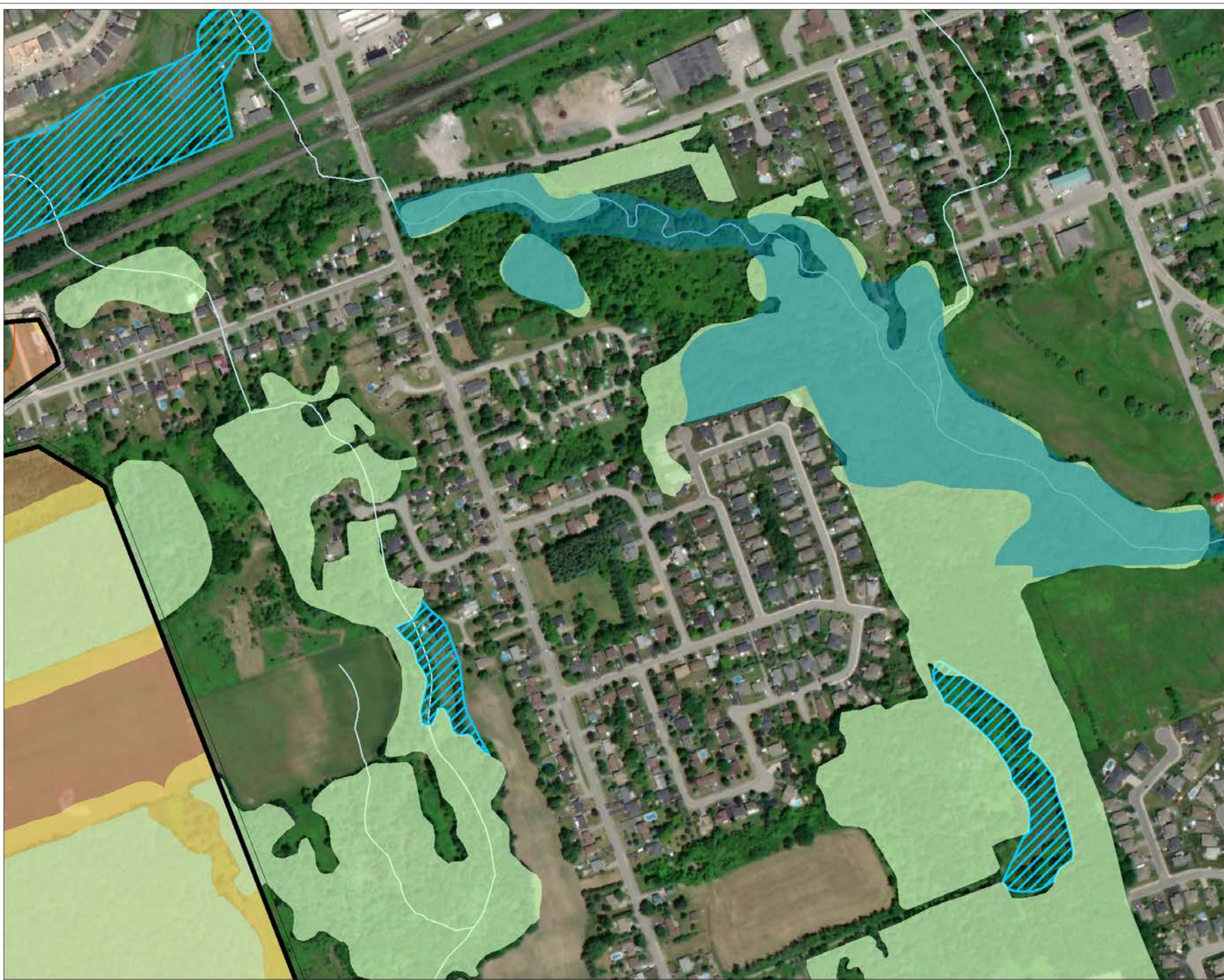
Date:
2020-09-09



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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

Legend

 Settlement Area

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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Project Number
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Date:
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Medium Linkage (200m)

- Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

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Project Number
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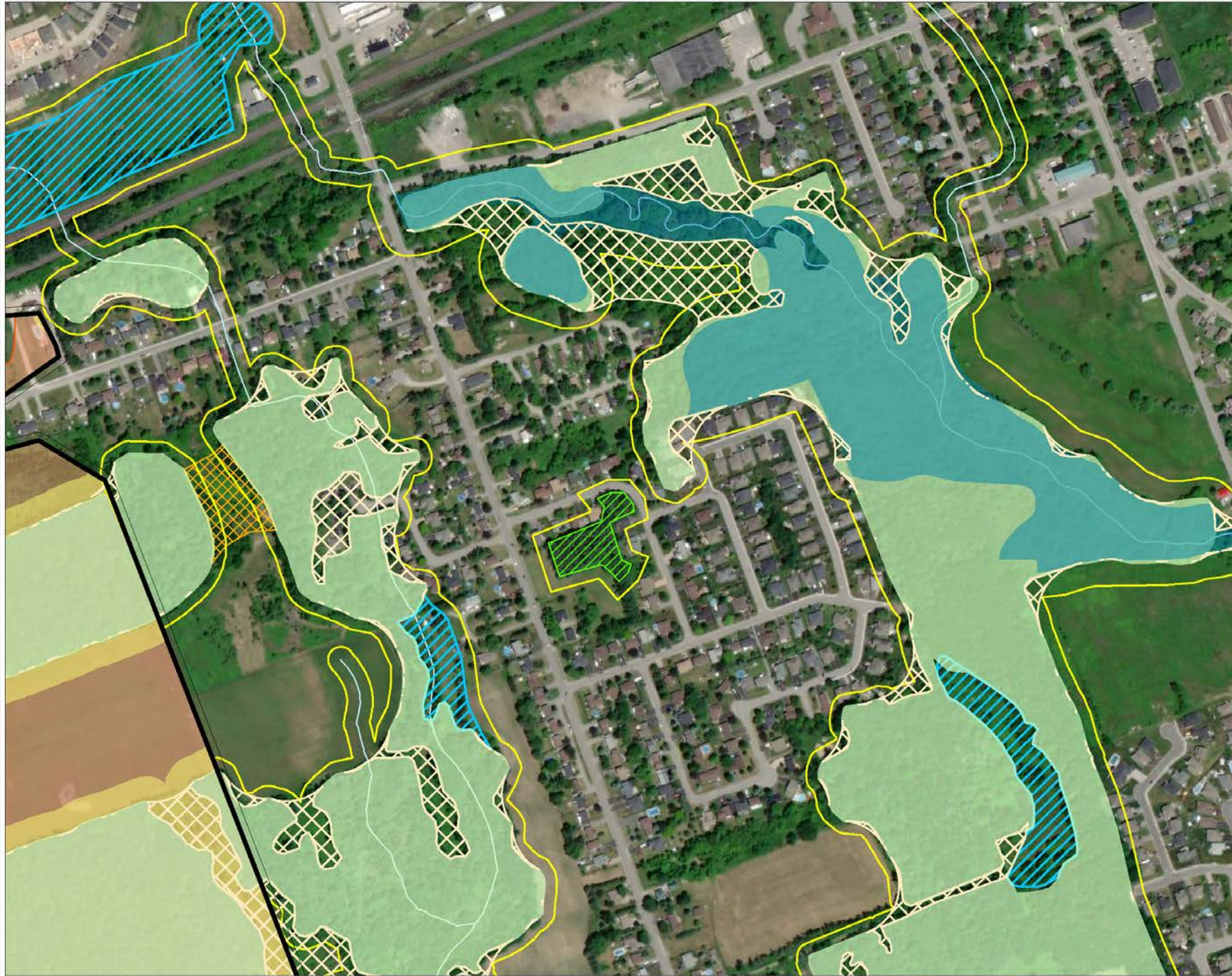
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

- Legend**
- Settlement Area
 - Required Components**
 - Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Watercourses
 - Optional Components**
 - Other Key Features
 - Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
 - Supporting Features and Areas
 - Other Woodlands
 - Enhancement Areas
 - Linkages
 - Small Linkage (100m)
 - Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-11	N
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C

- Legend**
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetlands
 - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features**
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas**
- Enhancement Areas
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- Linkages**
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Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-09	N
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Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
 - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
 - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
 - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas





Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

Legend

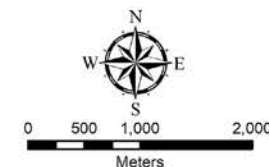
Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



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June 11, 2020



Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

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- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan (although it would be fully protected by policies in the Official Plan as required by provincial policy and federal legislation).
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines, and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



Supporting Projects

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 - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
 - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives
 - Project will be introduced at the Public Information Centre on September 24



Your Feedback is Requested



Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



Discussion Questions

1. What, if any, additional information or clarification do you require on the options presented?
2. What do you like and/or dislike about the range of options developed?
3. How do the options fit with your vision for natural environment planning in Niagara?
4. What other information should we consider when identifying and selecting a final preferred option?





making our mark

NIAGARA

OFFICIAL PLAN

Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification Options

Environmental Stakeholder Groups Workshop
September 22, 2020



makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools



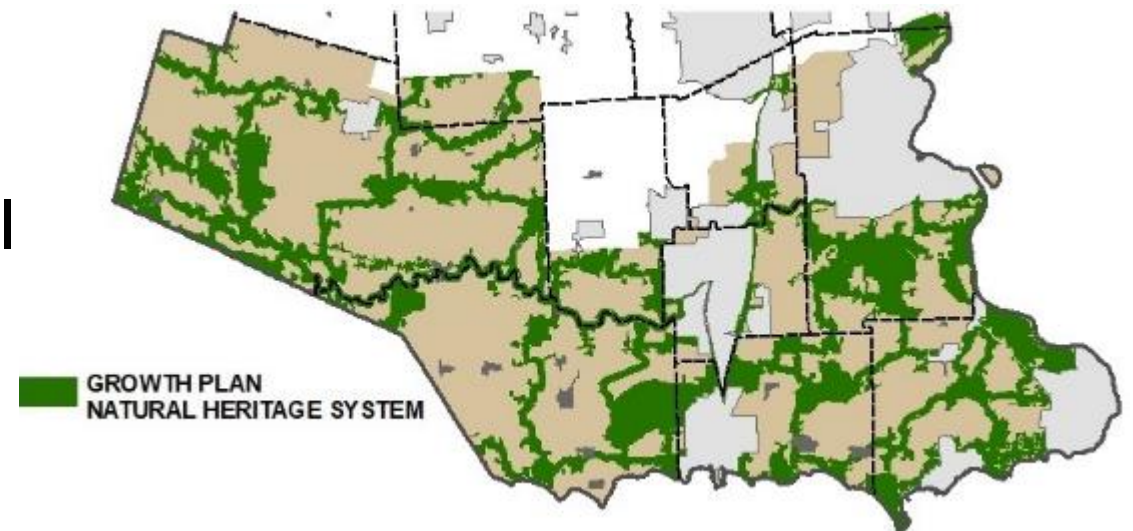
Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also require that a water resource system be identified and protected
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a W.R.S. – however, the Growth Plan requires that a W.R.S. be identified
- While some components of a W.R.S. can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



Developing Options for the Natural Environment System

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
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- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.



Components of Natural Heritage System

- **Key Natural Heritage Features and Areas**

- Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW)
- Non-PSW wetlands (In Greenbelt NHS)
- Significant Woodlands
- Significant Valleylands
- Significant Wildlife Habitat
- Fish Habitat
- A.N.S.I.s
- Habitat of Threatened and Endangered Species
- Permanent and intermittent streams
- Inland lakes and their littoral zones
- Seepage areas and springs

- **Other Key Natural Features and Areas**

- Non-PSW

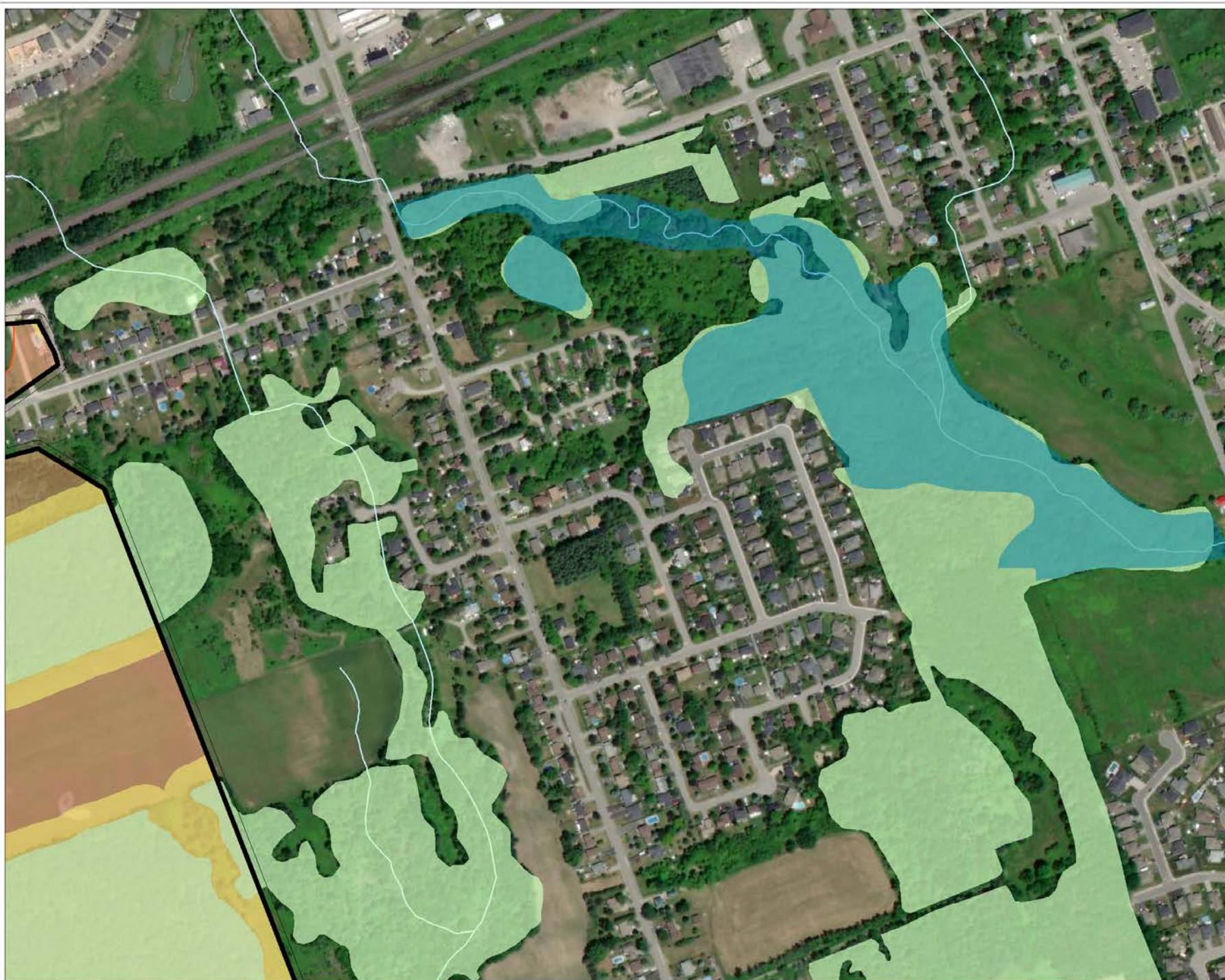
- **Supporting Features and Areas**

- Enhancement Areas
- Other natural heritage features
 - Other woodlands
 - Grasslands/meadows
 - Other wildlife habitat
 - Other valleylands

- **Linkages**

- **Buffers/Vegetation Protection Zones**





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Settlement Area

Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

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Date:
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

	N.H.S. 3A	N.H.S. 3B	N.H.S. 3C
Component Features and Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas • Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B • Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas
Connecting the System (linkages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas • Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state
Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum (prescribed) buffers outside of provincial N.H.S.s, no buffers inside settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum (prescribed) buffers outside of settlement areas, mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers inside settlement areas





Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


Legend

Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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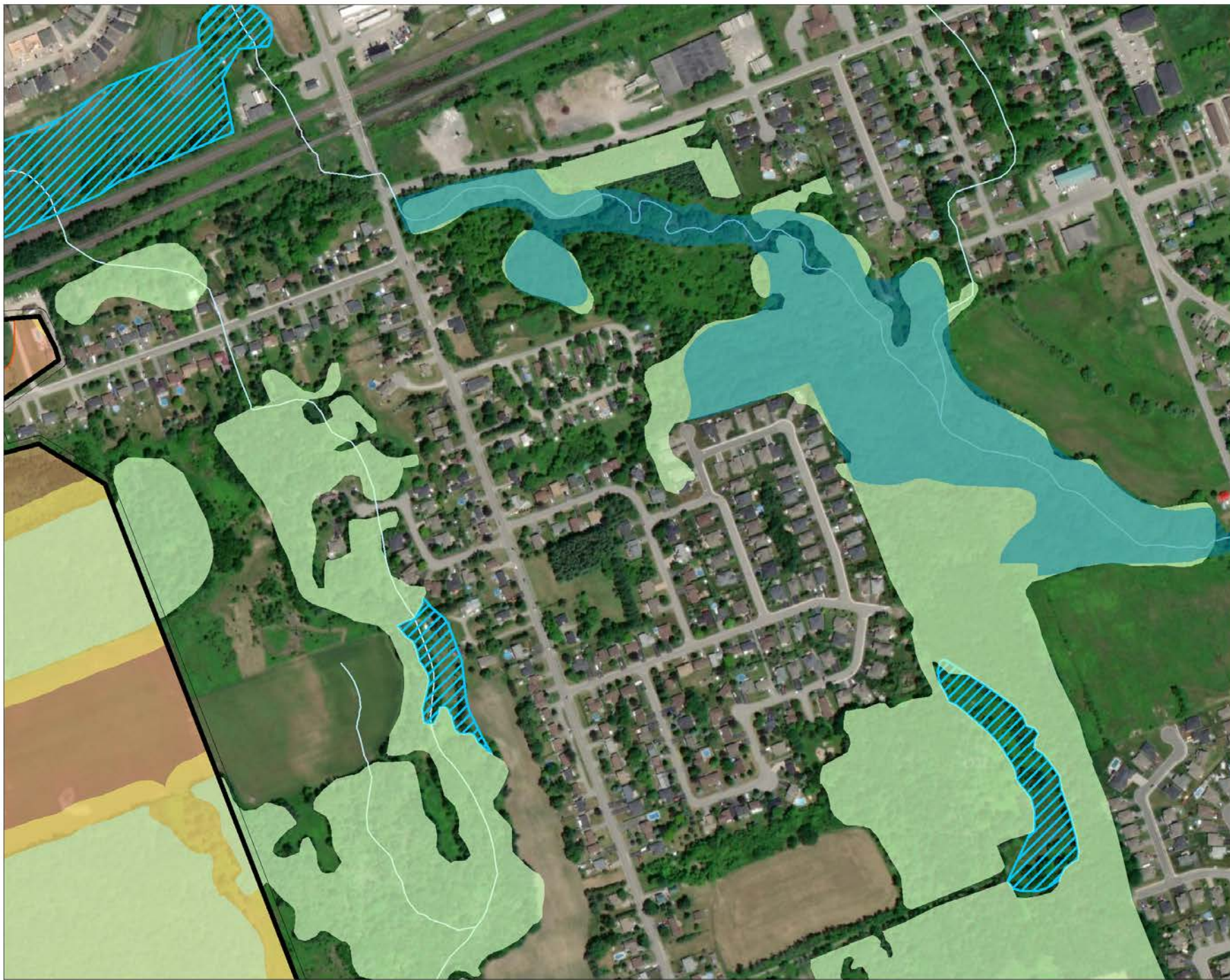
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Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3B

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features**
- Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Medium Linkage (200m)
- Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

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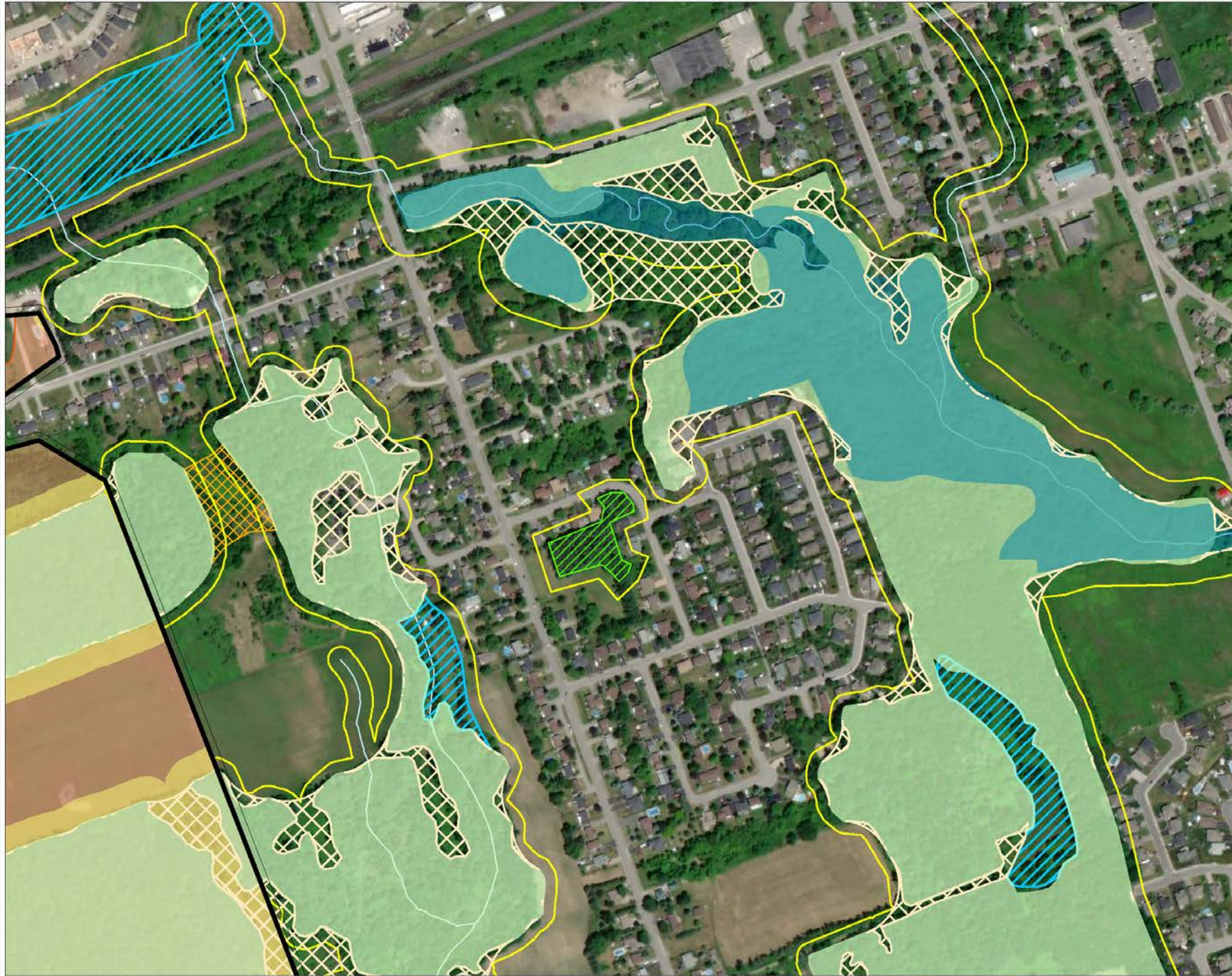
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

- Legend**
- Settlement Area
 - Required Components**
 - Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Watercourses
 - Optional Components**
 - Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
 - Other Key Features**
 - Other Woodlands
 - Enhancement Areas
 - Supporting Features and Areas**
 - Small Linkage (100m)
 - Linkages**
 - Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Medium Linkage (200m)
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Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
 - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
 - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
 - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas



Components of Water Resource System

- **Key Hydrologic Features (required)**

- Provincially Significant Wetlands and other wetlands
- Permanent and intermittent streams
- Inland lakes and their littoral zones
- Seepage areas and springs

- **Key Hydrologic Areas (required)**

- Significant ground water recharge areas
- Highly vulnerable aquifers
- Significant surface water contribution areas

- **Shoreline Areas**

- **Hydrologic Functions****

- **Ground water features****

- Recharge/discharge areas
- Ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Water tables
- Aquifers and unsaturated zones

- **Surface Water Features****

- Headwaters
- Recharge/discharge areas
- Associated riparian lands
- **Vegetation Protection Zone**

** Denotes a component to be informed by watershed planning or equivalent





Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

Legend

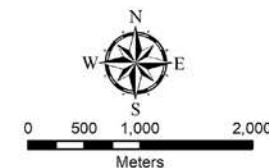
Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



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June 11, 2020



Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
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Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



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 - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
 - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives
 - Project will be introduced at the Public Information Centre on September 24



Your Feedback is Requested



Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



Discussion Questions

1. What, if any, additional information or clarification do you require on the options presented?
2. What do you like and/or dislike about the range of options developed?
3. How do the options fit with your vision for natural environment planning in Niagara?
4. What other information should we consider when identifying and selecting a final preferred option?





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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Question and Response Matrix
Development Community + Planning and Ecological Consultants
Virtual Stakeholder Workshop
September 18, 2020 1:00 - 2:30pm



Question and Response Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents the questions and comments received at the September 18, 2020 stakeholder workshop for members of the development community + planning and ecological consultants. The project team response is included. The matrix includes questions that were answered live and other comments that were received.

Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
Jennifer Vida	municipalities will lose more settlement area lands for development to accommodate future growth with enhanced options. Where will the growth targets be accommodated?	The natural environment work program is a land use planning exercise as part of the overall OP. We have responsibility to develop and evaluate a range of options. There are of course competing land uses both inside and outside settlement areas. As part of the evaluation process for the natural environment options an important consideration is the need to accommodate Provincial growth allocations. We are working closely with the growth management work programs to ensure that this is taken into consideration.
Jennifer Vida	how much developable lands are lost with each of these scenarios?	At this stage in the process we are looking at options only. Detailed region-wide mapping of the Region will follow in the next stages of the work program. It should be noted that even when detailed mapping is completed, it is not possible to provide an exact percentage of the Region that is included in the NHS or WRS, because there are several features that are not mapped and only identified through site-specific study.
John Henricks	How does the Region plan to communicate with the agriculture community the three scenarios under Option 3 NHS, including the approach to implementation?	Consultation with the agricultural community has been an important part of the project since commencement. Specific activities as part of this point of engagement include: a workshop for the agricultural community on September 21; a presentation to the Region's Agricultural Policy and Action Committee (APAC) on September 25; as well as presentations to both the Region's Planning Advisory Committee (Sept 16) and the NPCA's Public Advisory Committee (Sept 24) which both include representatives from the agricultural community.
Amanda Kosloski	wrt Offsetting not being considered as part of policy framework; can you clarify.	Following an objective review of scientific literature on the topic, best practices, a review of other compactor public agencies use of offsetting; and following feedback received through the 1 st Point of



Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	will it be supported as part of development ore redevelopment?	Consultation, offsetting will not being considered as part of the policy framework. This includes both development and redevelopment projects.
Matt Kernahan	I am wondering how staff are calculating/addressing lost designated greenfield lands rendered undevelopable by the corridors, in options 3b and 3c? Isolated pockets created through these restrictions may be sterilized as well.	This consideration is part of the evaluation process. It should be noted that regardless of which option is selected, studies would need to be completed to assess features and impacts on those features. If linkages are identified in the ROP, their function would have to be addressed in the design of the new development area.
Margot Ursic	I am curious about the rationale for deciding not to consider offsetting through the ROPR. Is this for all features?	The Natural Environment Background Study prepared as part of an earlier phase of the project completed a detailed review of the role of offsetting in planning in Ontario. In addition, while we heard some support for considering offsetting as an approach in natural environment planning, we heard significant feedback during the 1 st Point of Engagement that indicated there was no desire to see offsetting used as a tool in Niagara. Yes, that is correct, offsetting will not be considered for any feature in Niagara.
Matt Kernahan	I am wondering what the philosophy is behind policy restrictions that duplicate NPCA regulations?	<p>It is assumed that this question refers to the fact that Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) are regulated by the NPCA in accordance with the Conservation Authorities Act, and are in addition proposed to be included as part of the Region's NHS and WRS.</p> <p>The NHS and WRS are being designed in accordance with provincial requirements. S. 2.1.3. of the PPS requires an NHS to be identified. S. 2.1.4 of the PPS requires that development and site alteration not be permitted in significant wetlands. Similarly the definition of Key Hydrologic Features and Key Natural Heritage Features in the Growth Plan includes wetlands. It is clear that Provincial direction requires PSWs to be included in municipal NHSs and WRSs and protected through Official Plan policies.</p>



Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
Jennifer (Mcphee) Dyson	Would a buffer from a NHS outside of settlement extent into the settlement area if the feature is at the boundary line?	The Growth Plan NHS does not extend into settlement areas.
Kim Logan	along with the Q&A will the a copy of the presenation be sent as well	Yes it will. A copy of the presentation was sent to all participants that attended the workshop on September 18.
David Stephenson	The work done to date seems to be very high-level. The anlayis is nothing beyond what is in the PPS. In fact, the work is overly simplistic and does in no way consider the coarse-level assessment that is in the PPS verus the restrictive policies that is being piorposed.	Comment noted, thank you for your input.
Margot Ursic	I have not read the discussion paper but understood through the presentation that mandatory prescribed buffers are not being considered within settelment areas for any of the options. Can you please confirm or clarify?	Technical Report #2 provided a suggested approach for the identification of buffers across Options 3A, 3B and 3C. The report did not clearly represent the intent of increasing components and protection across the options; as such the presentation provided clarification on how buffers are being proposed across the options. In settlement areas, buffers are not proposed in Option 3A and 3B; mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers (to be determined through detailed study) are included in Option 3C. Outside of settlement areas, mandatory (non-prescribed buffers) are introduced in Option 3A, while Option 3B and 3C have minimum (prescribed) buffers.
Matt Kernahan	I am curious about what scientific analysis has been undertaken to arrive at the mandated buffers?	The Natural Environment System Background Study provided a comprehensive review of policy requirements, a review of comparator municipal approaches to identifying and implementing buffers, and best practices to identifying buffers. Several of the documents reviewed included a scientific analysis of ecologically appropriate buffers. Based on this review, preliminary recommendations for buffer types (i.e., minimum, or mandatory) were proposed in the options. At this stage no specific buffer width is being proposed for any of the options.

Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
Jennifer Vida	Long-term ownership and maintenance of these features is always a problem when development applications are submitted. The NPCA, Region and Municipalities have not wanted to take ownership of environmental Lands which leaves private land owners to keep ownership as remanant parcels, which is not in the best interest of the long term protection of these features. More exploration on future ownership of these features needs to be undertaken.	Comment noted, thank you for your input.
Matt Kernahan	Based on the preliminary recommendations on other portions of the update to the Region Official Plan (i.e. Growth management), how do options 3B and 3C align with anticipated growth projections? Are we setting ourselves up for undue urban expansions?	We agree that unnecessary settlement area boundary expansions should be avoided. A settlement area expansion will have impacts on the natural heritage system and agricultural land base in the region. This is an important consideration that is being addressed as part of the evaluation of the options. We are working closely with the growth management work programs of the Official Plan to understand the implications of growth projections and allocations.
David Stephenson	That response re buffers is not consistent with the presentation!	<p>The Natural Environment System Background Study provided a comprehensive review of policy requirements, a review of comparator municipal approaches to identifying and implementing buffers, and best practices to identifying buffers. Technical Report #2 carried the recommendations from that review forward in order to provide suggested approaches to applying buffers in settlement areas vs. outside of settlement areas as part of allowing an evaluation of options for the natural heritage system framework. Through developing conceptual mapping for the natural heritage system for this presentation it was necessary to revisit the suggested approaches described in Technical Report #2. As noted above:</p> <p>In settlement areas, buffers are not proposed in Option 3A and 3B; mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers (to be determined through</p>



Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
		detailed study) are included in Option 3C. Outside of settlement areas, mandatory (non-prescribed buffers) are introduced in Option 3A, while Option 3B and 3C have minimum (prescribed) buffers.
David Stephenson	Why did you skip over my question?	Please see responses above. We have attempted to provide additional clarification regarding buffers.
John Henricks	How many were on this call?	There were approximately 40 participants in the workshop.





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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

**Question and Response Matrix
Agricultural Community
Virtual Stakeholder Workshop
September 21, 2020 6:30pm- 8:00pm**





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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

**Question and Response Matrix
Environmental Stakeholder Groups
Virtual Workshop
September 22, 2020 6:30pm- 8:00pm**



Question and Response Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents the questions and comments received at the September 22, 2020 stakeholder workshop for members of Environmental Stakeholder Groups. The project team response is included. The matrix includes questions that were answered live and other comments that were received.

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
Marcie Jacklin	The real problem is designations don't matter. A developer can produce a report that shows no endangered species or no negative impact and can develop. Other than Option 3C, what permanent protection is given to any of these areas?	Both the Growth Plan NHS and Greenbelt Plan NHS policy framework require that key features within these plan areas be protected from site alteration and development. There is no ability to develop in a key feature with a Provincial NHS. For the Growth Plan NHS this is a new requirement which is being implemented by the Regional Official Plan for the first time. There are also restrictions on what you can do adjacent to those features. Even vacant lots may be impacted by these Growth Plan policies. There are also prohibitions for development in Provincially Significant Wetlands throughout the Region. Outside of the Provincial NHSSs, all options require the identification of significant features, including significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat, significant valleylands, fish habitat, significant areas of natural and scientific interest and coastal wetlands that have not been identified as Provincially Significant Wetlands. However, the PPS does permit development in these features if it is demonstrated that there will be no negative impact to the features or ecological functions as per the definition provided in the EIS. The onus is on the landowners to demonstrate they have met the test of no negative impact through an approved study (i.e. Environmental Impact Study). Environmental Impact Studies are reviewed and approved by Regional and NPCA staff to ensure conformity with Regional and Provincial Policies.
Ryan Forster	Given that Environment Canada asserts that a bare minimum of 30% forest cover is required to maintain any semblance of ecological stability, and given that the	The Environment Canada report 'How much habitat is enough' provides guidance on this topic, woodland, wetlands, and cultural meadows for example. The Report provides and recommends percentages that would achieve a certain goal or have a certain



Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
	Region has stated its aim to work towards 30% (from current 17.5% coverage) is it feasible to expect forest cover restoration to achieve this minimum (and go beyond this) with anything short of Option 3C for the NHS? It seems to me that Option 3C is the minimum that is required to grow forest cover, improve woodland ratings, and protect water resources (which rely intimately on the preservation of natural features). If you hold that Option 3A and 3B are in fact capable of reaching these important goals please elaborate and justify your position.	level of confidence or resiliency in the system. For woodlands, 30% is the number that is recommended as the minimum. This report is one of documents that we looked at as part of the background study. We have not looked at how the system of any of the options could achieve 30% forest cover, or even if this is an achievable goal for any of the options given the existing land uses in the Region. Furthermore, there are other habitat types that need to be considered in the NHS, including open habitats that are not treed cover. The representation of these open habitat types should not necessarily be reduced at the expense of achieving a higher forest cover – this could be counter productive to increasing biodiversity in the Region. It should also be recognized that that part of the solution to increasing tree cover will be restoration and tree planting, whether a requirement of development applications or as part of municipal or conservation authority led efforts. None of the options that have been proposed will limit or restrict tree planting in the Region.
Lucy Sardella	Sal. In your presentation for the NHS you described section 3C to be most restrictive (to development) but I see it as being the most protective of these natural areas. Perhaps this is how it should be presented.	Thank you for the comment. This will be noted.
Deanna Lindblad	Do you have an estimate on what percentage of the overall land mass would be represented by each of the options? For example, Option 1 minimum standards vs. Option 3C? and what about the WRS?	We don't have an answer to that yet because we're talking about concepts and the approach the Region should be taking to develop a NHS and WRS.
Joyce Sankey	Option 3C would provide the greatest resilience to climate change and other impacts that we know are coming, so why is the Region of Niagara not recommending	To be clear, a final recommendation has not been made by either by Region staff or the Consultant. A decision has not been made by Regional Council.

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
	Option 3C? Why not choose the best option?	The natural environment work program is a land use planning exercise. All of the land use considerations, including the identification of the natural environment systems, require consideration of the other land use planning matters, including the need to accommodate growth in the region and protect the agricultural land base. We are given growth targets from the Province that the Region must allocate as part of the Official Plan. If we are not able to allocate the growth into our urban boundaries, we may have urban boundary expansions that were not anticipated. This would have impacts on the natural environment and agricultural land base in the Region.
Valerie Grabove (Trout Unlimited Niagara Chapter)	Sal S. states that fish habitat will not be mapped. I am curious why not? Organisms living in the water indicate the health of the water. I have not heard any mention of “healthy” natural water resources. Is that not one of the key objectives of establishing policies re sustainability?	To be clear – just because it’s not mapped it doesn’t mean it’s not fully protected through policy. Both provincial policy and federal legislation require the protection of fish habitat. This topic was something we looked at closely in the background study - we looked at comparator municipalities and we’re looking to implement an approach that other municipalities have taken. A change in land use requiring a Planning Act approval will require an EIS, which will identify the need to assess fish habitat and address policy and legislative requirements at that point.
Marcie Jacklin	Who will determine no negative impact? Right now it seems to be developers	The majority of the EISs which are completed in the Region are part of a Planning Act application (i.e. where a change in land use is proposed). Although those studies may be paid for by the developer, they are completed by qualified consultants. Those studies are reviewed and checked by Regional staff and Conservation Authority staff. There are checks and balances to ensure the studies are completed properly and the requirement to meet the test of no negative impact is met.
Liz Benneian	Features can’t be protected over the long term if they don’t have sufficient protective buffers and linkages between them. So how	It is important to note, that regardless of what option is selected there is still the requirement to demonstrate no negative impact if you’re developing adjacent to a significant feature; this includes

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
	do you see features in settlement areas surviving over the long term if you recommend anything less than Option 3C for the NHS?	considering the need for buffers and if linkages are necessary to ensure the test of no negative impact is met.
Marcie Jacklin	Should a target of forest cover be a component of this process?	Increasing forest cover is one component of the development of a resilient NHS, we want to make sure that the Regional Natural Heritage System is balanced in terms of habitat types to ensure the greatest function. When having a discussion regarding forest cover in the Region, it's important to also think about where that increase is going to come from. Much of the region is actively being farmed and the urban areas are highly developed. That number of 17.5% is more reflective of the highly intensive nature of agriculture in the region as opposed to any other factors. It's the policies and system that will have a much larger impact on protecting the features. Targets are important as they guide us in our decision making, but good policies and a well thought out and designed system is going to go a lot further. To increase forest coverage in the region, some of it will be achieved by protecting areas, but certainly, there would need to implement active restoration and tree planting. We support increasing forest cover, especially through private land owner stewardship, volunteering, education, funding considerations etc.
Dahlia Steinberg	Seeing as agricultural lands/landowners have been exempt from infringing on NHS and WRS are there not requirements placed on them to ensure their practices are protective of the natural environment around them?	In addition to the NHS policy framework, we also have to take into account what the Province said about agriculture. You are right, the Growth Plan NHS and Greenbelt Plan NHS exempt agricultural uses. There are some checks on this, for example, if there were an expansion to a building they would have to demonstrate that there is no other place to do it. Many or most of the farmers in the region are excellent stewards of the land, are using the land appropriately, and using BMP to a large extent. This should be taken into account. Lastly, the Greenbelt Plan in particular does not allow for a municipality to be more restrictive

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
		than the Greenbelt Plan when it comes to agriculture. The policies are what they are for agriculture; they have been written deliberately in this manner.
Lucy Sardella	My question is why would you not recommend that the small linkages inside and outside of the natural areas be included because there are interconnecting strip between protected areas allow these natural areas to function as larger systems rather than isolated units. Also, why would you not include all three sizes of linkages between natural areas as you said in your presentation?	Ultimately the intent of a linkage is to provide connectivity between the features to maintain connectivity and ecological functions when there is a change in adjacent land use. We don't know the function until the feature is studied as part of a proposed change in land use for that area. There could there be multiple linkages, if determined necessary as part of a site-specific study and in consideration of the change in adjacent land use. The more connections to a larger feature makes it more resilient. When we're looking at coming up with options, the point was to show what various linkages would look like. Keep in mind that settlement areas are highly developed. There are very few opportunities to add linkages onto the landscape (e.g. it would not make sense to show a linkage across houses in a developed subdivision, etc.). The effectiveness and practicality of the development of linkages within our built up areas need to be considered. To weigh and compare and evaluate options based on interests, we did not show linkages until option 3C in settlement areas. Whether that becomes a preferred option through this process in part depends on the feedback we receive through this 2 nd point of engagement. At this time looking at it from a balanced perspective, linkages perhaps don't achieve what settlement areas are intended to do: allow the Region to accommodate provincial growth allocations, develop complete communities, focus growth in settlement areas, and to avoid urban boundary expansions to the extent possible.
Miriam Richards	Given that the Natural Areas Inventory update is not yet complete, yet regional staff have already made recommendations on which options to choose, how can we trust	To be clear, a final recommendation has not been made by either by Region staff or the Consultant. A decision has not been made by Regional Council.

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
	that there will be a significantly objective evaluation of natural heritage features? Will there not be pressure to make the landscape assessment justify the preferred alternative?	The ELC mapping project that is wrapping up is being completed in accordance with the ELC methodology; we have retained certified consultants to complete the project. That project then becomes a base for the natural environment mapping. The ELC work is in no way being driven by the evaluation of options. Detailed mapping obtained through the ELC mapping project will be used to inform the mapping of the preferred option.
Marcie Jacklin	Ask the nature clubs about significant wildlife habitat	Thank you for the comment. This will be noted.
Desmond Sequeira	Re Discussion Question #3- it seems to me that the presentation begs a fundamental question which I expect to be ignored and is as follows: given that over 90% of Niagara's land has been usurped from nature and is thereby directly contributing to climate and biodiversity collapse, why does the Region not limit all further so called "Development" to the abundant brown fields of the region? I am calling for an end to further destruction of Nature and for a drive for Green Growth.	The Province requires all municipalities to do a better job of directing growth and development to settlement areas. An important part of the new Official Plan is to determine how to best accommodate growth in the Region. An important component of provincial direction that should be kept in mind is that there is direction that employment areas and lands should be protected for employment uses. Residential growth cannot be directed into employment areas.
Liz Benneian	Is all the land within the settlement areas already zoned for residential/commercial/industrial or is some of the land still zoned as agricultural?	The quick answer is no. The implication being made in this question is that once land is zoned, it's lost. Even if zoned, there are a number of planning act approvals that are required, for example plans of subdivision.
Lynda Goodridge	If Option 3C is considered too restrictive, why was it offered in the first place?	This is a planning exercise and we wanted a range of options as part of the evaluation process. We would not make the assumptions on the acceptability of any of the options in advance of the evaluation process, except for that all of the options developed needed to be able to meet the test of conformity with Provincial requirements. This is part of the evaluation process,

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
		which includes receiving feedback on the full range of options through this 2 nd point of engagement.
Lucy Sardella	Rather than recommending growth by using non-developed area, why not redevelop areas in urban areas? There are many empty buildings and businesses in the cities in our area that can be redeveloped. Also, start to utilize green infrastructure into the planning for redevelopment.	That is an important consideration. The Province does give us growth targets that we are to accommodate in our urban areas - they tell us what percentage of growth must go in existing settlement areas and where else can growth go. They've added pressure and want higher redevelopment rates in existing urban areas. This feeds into the planning exercise - if we think about the desire to redevelop settlement areas and focus growth there; this is something we're thinking about for competing land uses and the planning process. An important component of provincial direction that should be kept in mind is that there is direction that employment areas and lands should be protected for employment uses. Residential growth cannot be directed into employment areas.
Jackie Oblak	Is there a timeline for the completion of the Watershed plan? How will it inform the WRS?	The watershed plan is underway. The watershed plan was introduced at the PIC on Sept 24. We are hoping to wrap up the project in 6-8 months. The direction that the WRS is to be informed by watershed planning comes from the Province. Unlike the Growth Plan NHS and Agricultural System, the Province has not given municipalities a mapped WRS to implement. There are some aspects we know need to be protected, but there are other aspects we don't know and are seeking data sources and more information. A watershed plan talks about existing conditions, local conditions, and informs us on the various water features and systems that are on the landscape in the region. This then provides direction on the important features and how they're connected and the appropriate policies we need to have in place.
Marcie Jacklin	What will happen with these options when the region and NPCA don't follow their own policies? This happened in 2017 and is	The LPAT is the mechanism for appeals to be made on Planning Act application decisions.

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
	costing citizens thousands of dollars. Will citizens be able to appeal?	
Marcie Jacklin	In regards to 17.5%, Oakville is highly developed and they have achieved over 30%. Why can't we model their success?	Oakville was reported as having an urban forest cover of 27.8% as of 2015. This percent includes both woodlands and smaller groups of trees such as street trees. Approximately 90% of the forest canopy cover in Oakville is considered woodlot (or forest); as such, Oakville has approximately 25% forest cover. This is considered quite good for a municipality in southern Ontario that is largely urbanized. It is important to recognize that the majority of the forest cover in Oakville is contained within three major valley systems; due to their topography and hazardous nature, these areas were not urbanized and have remained largely vegetated/forested. While in other municipalities, such as Niagara, much of the land was suitable for farming and urban development. So, compared with Oakville where their success of maintaining and increasing forest cover is largely a result of the biophysical landscape, Niagara has a smaller area of remaining forest cover. The goals and objectives established by Oakville to increase forest cover can be considered in Niagara; and goals and objectives specific to Niagara must be achievable and consider the current forest cover in Niagara, irrespective of forest cover estimates in other municipalities.
Marcie Jacklin	Who is doing the ELC mapping?	The Region has retained Aboud & Associates Inc. to complete the ELC mapping project. The project received partial funding from the Greenbelt Foundation and we are working collaboratively with NPCA staff on the project.
Carol Nagy	So far, there is no requirement to consult with people - living near, on, around or impacted, regarding any of the specific planning, impacts, determinations, linkages, significant features etc. Are consultation	This is the 2 nd point of engagement for the natural environment work program. During our 3 rd point of engagement we will be consulting on criteria, policies, and mapping. Consultation with Indigenous Communities has taken place and we will have ongoing consultation as the project moves forward.

Received From	Question/Comment	Project Team Response
	processes. going to be improved in mapping, new policies? And will it include Indigenous consultation, as excellent stewards of land. We all loose, but the environment more so, when there is not enough specific, timely consultation when determining future of specific parcels.	
Marcie Jacklin	What if some areas don't have secondary plans?	Not all areas currently have secondary plans. The Region encourages local municipalities to plan proactively and to use secondary plans for major development and redevelopment areas, and provides support for these secondary plans in various forms.
Liz Benneian	When do you anticipate NHS mapping to be complete and will you be using the data acquired through the NPCA's Natural Heritage inventory work of 10 years ago?	The NPCA work from 10 years ago is based on 2006 aerial imagery. That is why we are currently in the process of updating it using up-to-date 2018 aerial imagery (this is the ELC Mapping project that has been referenced several times). This up-to-date ELC information will provide an important base for the NHS mapping which we plan on having completed in mid-2021.
Marcie Jacklin	Thank you! Many more questions!	We look forward to providing a response to any additional questions that you might have.



Question and Response Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents the questions and comments received at the September 21, 2020 stakeholder workshop for members of the Agricultural community. The project team response is included. The matrix includes questions that were answered live and other comments that were received.

Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
Sarah Marshall	What is the plan for classification of the open ditch irrigation in NOTL?	<p>The project team is aware that there is concern regarding the mapping of irrigation ditches, in particular as it relates to fish habitat. It is our recommendation that fish habitat not be mapped (although it must be protected in accordance with federal legislation). In addition, and regardless of whether it is mapped or not, fish habitat is considered to be a key natural heritage feature by the Growth Plan and the Greenbelt Plan and is subject to specific policies in both of these Provincial Plans. The classification of watercourses and how these will be mapped as part of the natural heritage system and water resource system will be determined through the next phase of the work program where definitions and criteria become developed. We recognize the challenges and concerns with mapping watercourses and will take the issue of irrigation ditches into consideration.</p> <p>We would be interested in any thoughts on how we can support the agricultural industry in the Region through policies.</p>
Sarah Marshall	If the irrigation system is considered fish habitat with the new federal act in place, who is responsible for any liability? Is there a way to exempt the irrigation system?	<p>The definition of and protection for fish habitat is provided through federal legislation (The Fisheries Act) and the protection of fish habitat is required Provincial plans and policy as well. Niagara Region has no authority to change how fish habitat is defined. To conform with Federal legislation, be consistent with the PPS and conform with provincial plans the Region must protect fish habitat. In our experience there is no mechanism to provide an exemption for the entire irrigation system or any component of it.</p>



Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
		It should be noted that there is a guidance document in regards to municipal drains and fish habitat. While this does not exempt agricultural drains from the Fisheries Act, it does provide guidance for management and maintenance of agricultural drains to ensure activities do not contravene Federal legislation.
Kai Wiens	If agriculture takes primacy, does Option 3C not put natural heritage back in first place above ag?	As you move to Option 3C, more land is identified, however the specific and somewhat complex exemptions that apply for existing and new agricultural uses and existing, expanding and new agricultural buildings in the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan would apply in Option 3C, as they would in all the other options. The impact is expected to be minimal for agriculture, even if option 3C was selected.
Albert Witteveen	It would be good if we could get a copy of the presentation, then we could take it back to generate further comment on what option would function best for agriculture producers.	A copy of the presentation will be e-mailed to everyone who participated in the session as well as a questionnaire seeking more detailed feedback.
Kai Wiens	Would agriculture or an ag land owner need to pay for a study to bring it back to primacy?	No, there is no expectation that a study is required to bring agricultural back to primacy.
Cathy Mous	I have a creek going through my property which is filling in with vegetation. Because of this, I am losing more land to flooding. This is land that should be used for producing food. What are your thoughts?	Watercourses will undergo changes in form and function as the hydrology in the system changes. With these changes in hydrology vegetation can become established, sediment can accumulate, and floodplain extents can change. Modifications to floodplains and watercourses, including form and function would typically be under the jurisdiction of the NPCA. It is recommended the NPCA be contacted to address this question.
Cathy Mous	I am confused about the linkages between natural heritage plan. Is it	The intent of a linkage is to function as a wildlife corridor. It is intended to allow for a naturally vegetated area for wildlife to move between features. It is not expected that wildlife would stay only



Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	expected that nature such as deer will stay in the linkages	within the linkage, however it is intended to ensure that over the long-term a connection or corridor remains or is created as a means of mitigating the impact of changes in surrounding land use, which can occur when changing from a relatively permeable agricultural landscape to a less permeable developed area such as a residential subdivision.
Joyce Sonneveld	Will the landowner that is impacted be able to review the maps and overlays and provide first hand comments before I becomes final the maps become final?	The simple answer is yes there will be an opportunity for review and comment. This is the incremental step in the work program to set that higher level direction. The next part of the project is to prepare the mapping and policies. The 3 rd point of engagement is when we will have the draft mapping available.
Sarah Marshall	When will you expect to complete the mapping? Will you provide opportunity for comment on mapping designations?	We expect draft mapping to be completed in mid-2021, there will be an opportunity for review and comments.
Joyce Sonneveld	How will a landowner be aware of changes, will they be notified?	Draft policies and mapping will be presented during the 3 rd Point of Engagement. Everyone who has expressed an interest in the project will be notified. We will also be advertising more broadly through newspapers and other forms of media.
Sarah Marshall	Will man-made swales be mapped?	This is a complex issue that the project team is well aware of. Some agricultural infrastructure is man-made, some is channelized, some is an altered natural system, and some is completely natural. Clearly, the agricultural system serves many purposes: it contains agricultural infrastructure such as man-made swales and ditches that are also part of the water resource system. It will just depend on how we include it in the water resource system. Agricultural swales are often shallow surface water drainage features. It is important to recognize that Key Hydrologic Features identified in the NHS and WRS are features with permanent or intermittent flow. There is direction for the water resource system to be informed by watershed planning, which is what we are working on right now. The watershed planning project



Received From:	Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
		may provide additional direction for mapping of watercourse features, including man-made swales.
Sarah Marshall	Ok thanks I will certainly provide comments on that.	The project team looks forward to receiving any additional comments.



Niagara Region

Planning & Development Services

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way,
PO Box 1042, Thorold, ON L2V 4T7
Tel: 905-980-6000 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215
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niagararegion.ca

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Development Community + Planning and Ecological Consultants Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 18, 2020 – 1:00 - 2:30

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 2, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:
 - a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

 - b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges and/or opportunities with implementing policies for the natural heritage system and water resource system — and how might these be addressed or realized?

3. How can definitions, criteria and/or guidance documents be improved to support the identification of the components of the water resource system and natural heritage system?

4. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

5. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

6. Additional comments/feedback.

Niagara Region

Planning & Development Services

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:
 - a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

 - b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

a. What do you like about the options — what are the 'positives' and 'advantages'?

b. What don't you like about the options?

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

5. Additional comments/feedback.

Niagara Region

Planning & Development Services

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Agricultural Community - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 21, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 2, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:
 - a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

 - b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agricultural activities in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

- a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?

- b. What don't you like about the options?

- c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

- 3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

- 4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

5. Additional comments/feedback.



Niagara Region
Planning & Development Services

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**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA
OFFICIAL PLAN**

**Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop
September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00**

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Miriam Richards, PhD **EMAIL:** richardsmiriam1@gmail.com, mrichards@brocku.ca

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by October 9, 2020

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

I assume that forward-thinking means planning for the future, such that future residents of Niagara, including our children and grandchildren, live in a place with functioning ecological systems that supported woodlands, wetlands, meadows and prairies, and other natural features. I assume that forward-thinking means a future in which Niagara residents do not need to get into their cars and drive somewhere to experience and interact with their natural heritage, because it will be available in both urban settlement areas and in rural areas. People will be able to go for walks or bike rides in natural areas close to home, reaping the physical and mental health benefits of easy access to natural heritage.

as it is the only option that considers designating and mapping significant natural heritage features in ways that would actually confer protection from development. It is also the only option that would include linkages between significant NHS features within settlement areas. Currently, settlement areas in Niagara Region include very little green space that can be considered to include relatively intact woodland or grassland/prairie habitat. What little there is needs preservation and enhancement through better linkages.

1b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

I assume that forward-thinking means a future in which settlement areas are denser, preserving the little natural space that remains. Denser populations with more efficient transportation services and essential services like water systems, sewer systems, and roads are only likely to happen if there are restrictions on development outside of settlement areas. Niagara needs fewer new neighbourhoods in agricultural and natural areas, and more new neighbourhoods within the old city cores. [REDACTED]

1c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

[REDACTED] Agriculture is already heavily protected by multiple pieces of legislation, as documented in the document *Natural Environment Work Program: Technical Report #2: Identification and Evaluation of Options for Regional Natural Environment System(s)*.

1d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

[REDACTED] However, it will not achieve and appropriate balance between environmental protection and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. We are long past finding a balance point. Niagara's remaining woodland cover stands at only 17.5%, far less than the minimum 30% noted by Environment Canada that is needed even to achieve the high risk scenario in which half of native species can be supported in marginally healthy ecosystems. We have already lost most of our natural heritage, so "balance" is no longer achievable.

2a. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

a. What do you like about the options — what are the 'positives' and 'advantages'?

[REDACTED]

The current pandemic has demonstrated beyond all doubt that Niagara residents need more access to green space and natural areas to maintain their own physical and mental health and to provide social interactions. Many of us have only been able to meet loved ones outdoors over the last 6 months. For many people, parks and natural areas have provided major and much-needed relief from the stresses of social and physical isolation. This is unlikely to be the last pandemic in our lifetimes. One way to prepare for the next pandemic is to create and maintain more green space and natural heritage.

Option 3c is also the only option that even slightly addresses the issue of climate change. The scientific evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that as climate heating exerts stronger and stronger effects, the worst affected ecosystems will be those encountering the greatest numbers of stresses. All ecosystems are being affected by climate change, but where habitats are large enough and have sufficient linkages, the likelihood of adaptation to new climate realities is much higher. Being forward-looking means planning for resilience, which is strongly dependent on the size of natural heritage features and linkages among them.

2b. What don't you like about the options?

Most options discount the importance of linkages among natural heritages area. Option 3b allows for linkages in non-settlement areas, but only 3c would allow for linkages in both settlement and non-settlement areas.

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?



5. Additional comments/feedback.

The meeting held on 22 September 2020 was disappointing, and I believe that it was deliberately uninformative. Staff talked repeatedly about “overlays” without clarifying the differences between mapping NHS features and overlaying them. I suspect this is because when features are mapped, they receive a particular designation which is then more difficult to change, whereas “overlays” support “flexibility”, a term that seems to be used mainly in the context of making development easier, rather than making environmental protection easier.

Staff at this meeting also stated repeatedly that none of the options had yet been recommended, despite the fact that the recommendations are clearly set out in *Natural Environment Work Program: Technical Report #2* and in the July 13, 2020 Presentation to the Planning and Economic Development Committee (PDS 26-2020). It does not improve public trust or confidence to repeatedly deny information that is posted publicly available on Niagara Region's website.

Natural Environment Work Program: Technical Report #2 repeatedly conflates agricultural and natural land uses. What these two types of land have in common is a lack of buildings and pavement. What they do not have in common is that they are both natural. Agriculture is essential to Niagara, but that does not justify the implication that agricultural areas are in any way ecologically equivalent to natural heritage areas. In Niagara, most agriculture is intensive, heavily dependent on pesticide and herbicide use, often uses a great deal of water, and employs methods that lower soil quality and enhance erosion. *Natural Environment Work Program: Technical Report #2* suggests that agricultural land should count as linkages between natural areas. This is true only in the most limited sense for relatively large mammals and birds that can travel across agricultural areas. Agricultural areas do not provide linkages for native vegetation, invertebrate fauna, or most small vertebrate populations.

The fact that the Natural Heritage Survey was not completed prior to staff making recommendations about which options are best is problematic. Claiming that decision-making must be flexible yet defensible in the absence of information about the impacts of decision-making, is unlikely to inspire public confidence that the planning process is indeed science-based, as claimed in multiple documents on Niagara Region's websites. Science proceeds by evaluating evidence first, whereas the process here will map the natural heritage after planning decisions have been made. Undoubtedly, this will influence the mapping outcomes.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Marcie Jacklin

EMAIL: mjacklin@brocku.ca

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

- a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Although this is a great first step more mapping and tighter controls need to be implemented. Option 3C and 2B come close but there is no assurance that any of these areas will be protected. Slide 9 showing the components of a Natural Heritage System are good but all of these areas require 100% protection including linkages and buffers to ensure a healthy environment and climate change mitigation for Niagara residents. I was very excited when I saw Slide 17, the Natural Heritage Systems for Settlement Areas (3C). I thought this was very forward thinking but again all the components within and outside Settlement Areas required 100% protection.

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

A more inclusive 3C and 2B would still allow for smart growth in the most appropriate places in the Region. There are plenty of areas available for development along main corridors, brown fields, infilling etc. that will last for decades of development. From what I understand from attending meetings about the Growth Plan given by experts the population growth estimates are over inflated and too far in the future to be accurate. The citizens of Niagara have shown during these past 7 months of COVID that more beach access, woodlands and other natural areas are highly desirable by Niagara residents and especially for young families. The community deserves better than a plan for developers, they deserve a plan for healthy and resilient communities.

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Options 3C & 2B are headed in the right direction, however without 100% protection of all the components of a NHS for Settlement areas listed in Slide 9, an appropriate balance will not be achieved. I have been studying the natural environment in Niagara for over 30 years & the planning process for 3 years. One of the biggest barriers to achieving a balance is the use of the developer's Environmental Impact Study to demonstrate "no negative impact." The EIS is automatically biased. An example is the multitude of EIS's submitted which state there are no Endangered Species on the site where in fact there are Endangered Species. Another example is the EIS evaluates or changes the status of wetlands when they have no authority to do so. And several people have told me that one consultant has handed in the same EIS for multiple properties. What happens when there aren't any experts at NPCA or the Region? Also developers have cut down old growth forests on the weekend or plowed wetlands or inappropriately removed trees and/or undergrowth etc and are never fined or punished.

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Even an increase in protecting the natural environment will still allow for growth & development. More natural environment protection will increase growth & economic development because that is what people are looking for to locate businesses, raise families and weekend recreation. It always surprises me that the economic value of nature is never considered in any of this. For instance with many companies now allowing their employees to work at home, communities that offer a healthy natural environment will be more desirable. That is what the people from Toronto who are moving here tell us. Without the balance our competitive edge will be lost forever. Within the last month, I have been involved with both the Disney channel and Smithsonian channel who wanted me involved because of bird watching tourism which is a growth industry and Niagara has a tremendous amount of potential. As Chair of the Niagara Bird Conservation and Tourism Collaboration we have recognized the economic value of this billion dollar industry and with an effective new Regional Official Plan we can promote Niagara as a premier worldclass birding location.

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

- a. What do you like about the options — what are the 'positives' and 'advantages'?

The positives and advantages are that 3C and 2B are attempts to do the right thing for the community however they lack in commitment. A Natural Heritage System that is set in stone will allow the community to grow in a positive direction rather than the decades of chipping away at nature that has occurred. If there is a way to circumvent policies or influence staff or councils the developers will do it because that is how they do business. We are rapidly reaching the tipping point in terms of having a natural environment in Niagara. This will result in severe flooding issues, higher temperatures, poor water quality, damaging storm events, etc. The options need to go that one step further to insure that the Natural Heritage System will be adequate for the future. The options need to ensure that our children and grandchildren will be able to experience nature as complete ecosystems. Our children and grandchildren also need to be able to benefit from the priceless value of a healthy Natural Heritage System that provides oxygen, climate change mitigation, flood control etc.

b. What don't you like about the options?

I'm disappointed that mapping isn't more important. How can you designate significant areas, buffers, linkages etc? The options don't go far enough to ensure that what we have designated won't be protected especially in Settlement areas where they are needed the most. I feel like these options were written by developers and not for the benefit of the community. Why doesn't Niagara Region have any Environmental Planners on staff? It should also be a requirement of the municipalities. There are no or not enough experts at NPCA or the Region to be able to analyze the EIS's. The Ministry of Natural Resources including NHIC have been gutted and are unable to do the jobs required to provide the correct information. The entire process is biased in favour of developers and that has to be corrected. None of these options address these on going problems but in fact endorse them. Basically nothing is protected. The 'no negative impact' is bogus. It allows the developers to submit an inadequate Environmental Impact Study and destroyed woodlands and wetlands.

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

How will 3C and 2B insure that there won't be any negative impact? Relying on an Environmental Impact Study paid for by the developer has proven to be a bad way of doing business. It is common to submit EIS's without any Endangered Species reported even though it was well known that they were there. Another trick is to acknowledge there won't be any negative impact but in the same document indicate that the Endangered Species will no longer exist on the property. The EIS's deny that wetlands exist on a property. Independent peer-reviewed assessments need to be done that are credible. What about areas that don't have secondary plans? We have an issue right now where this is happening and a wetland is about to be destroyed. How can you have options when you don't have goals? Shouldn't you have goals (30% canopy cover; improving water quality) and then set the options to achieve these goals?

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

This is a real opportunity to do what is right for the community. I would like to see an enhanced 3C and 2B that actually provides protection especially in Settlement areas. I really liked Slides 9 and 17. They should be a starting point for enhancing 3C and 2B. I would like to see all the linkages and buffers written in stone, i.e. they are protected 100% and can't be developed even if there are changes to the habitat. They can be rehabilitated but not destroyed but for example putting in drains on adjacent properties to remove the wetlands.

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

Have a look at what Oakville and other communities have done with Natural Heritage Systems and Water Resources Systems and do the best for the citizens of the Niagara Region.

Niagara residents deserve better for their communities.

5. Additional comments/feedback.

The real problem is that the community has seen what happens when corruption is involved. Please read the Auditor General's report on the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. Also have a look at any newspaper articles about the Niagara Region Council from 2009 to the present time. There is a lot of concern and discussion on social media about this problem. Residents are grateful that the new Regional Council and Board of NPCA are doing a much better job than the previous council and board however some of the people involved in the corruption still work, represent or volunteer for the NPCA or the Region. The EIS process is broken and it needs to be fixed. With a strong new Regional Official Plan it will reduce the corruption, remove the problem of inadequate Environmental Impact Studies, and reduce the inappropriate decisions at the municipal level. This is a real opportunity to recover from this scandal, fix what is broken, obtain and empower real experts at the NPCA, and provide a healthy environment for the citizens of the Niagara community.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Lucy Sardella EMAIL:

lucy.sardella@gmail.com Would you like to receive email updates about the

new Official Plan? X YES Please submit comments to Sean Norman at

Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by October 9, 2020

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

A. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

I feel most confident suggesting option 3C for the Natural Heritage System and 2B for the Water Resource System and my choices are supported by the following rationale. It is crucial that we protect all size linkages inside and outside of settlement areas because these interconnecting strips allow the protected areas to function as larger systems rather than isolated units. Environmental degradation most often occurs along edges of protected areas and even though minimum buffers may be mandated, often they are not sufficient to prevent environmental degradation. Environmental degradation leads to a decrease in species diversity and eventually will diminish the health of the ecosystem. At present, we have only 56.4% of the minimum threshold necessary for a functioning ecosystem. Nothing you have presented even preserves what we have. Therefore, we need to adapt the choices that provide the best protection for the Natural Heritage System and the Water Resource System, which are options 3C and 2B, respectively.

The options suggested above will at least try to maintain what we have even though it makes no attempt to address the problems associated with Climate Change. City bylaws should adopt a policy which requires one tree planted for every tree removed. We need more trees to help sequester carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to help improve air quality and also provide the cooling effects that are demonstrated by tree cover. Increasing tree cover in neighborhoods has been shown to decrease heat stress from “strong” to “moderate” (Berardi et al, 2020).

B. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

By Mapping out the Natural Heritage System and the Water Resource System the City councils can use this as a tool when developers approach them for building permits. If we know where you can and cannot develop this would make it easier for city councils to make decisions. It

gives the mayors something to negotiate when he/she is approached by a developer. Incorporate green infrastructure whenever possible to help control some of the environmental concerns we are already seeing as a consequence of climate change. Therefore, we need mapped buffer zones and minimum interconnecting linkages identified inside settlement areas. This change will allow cities to do development better. Also, it will give them a chance to request green infrastructure to benefit the environment for both the city and the residents. Greater than twenty percent of Niagara's landscape is settlement areas and this will increase with the current development that is planned to take place in Welland and Niagara Falls. We need to protect natural areas inside and outside of settlement areas to maintain what is left and to prevent further degradation of this essential natural habitat and the biodiversity which it employs. When protected areas become too small, habitat is degraded and biodiversity decreases at an alarming rate.

With the loss of many manufacturing jobs in Niagara, there are a number of properties which would benefit from redevelopment. These sectors of land should be developed for high density housing and they should utilize green infrastructure to make these areas beautiful and appealing to the future inhabitants. Access to green spaces and treed walking and hiking areas are a must. Treed areas will help with urban cooling and have been shown to minimize visits to the emergency department by elderly residents that live in these areas (Berardi et al, 2020).

C. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

D. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

People want to live and breathe in a healthy environment. They need access to green spaces to elevate their mood, exercise, and have access to recreational activities. We need to integrate green development into our city landscapes. Development and sustainable living can work in harmony with one another if we take the time to incorporate green infrastructure into the planning process. Things like permeable pavements, green roofs, swells, planting native plants, treed corridors and community gardens are only a few ideas that elevate the livability and comfort of high-density-living spaces. All of this could be redeveloped on the abandoned factory properties around Niagara. There are many examples of smart development which demonstrates good high-density planning. We have an aging population in Canada. Many seniors may be looking to downsize from their larger homes to condo living with the amenities that cater to their needs.

2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

A. What do you like about the options — what are the 'positives' and 'advantages'?

B. What don't you like about the options?

The options presented in the Natural Heritage System and the Water Resource System do not go far enough. They do not address any of the changes we are seeing as a result of climate change. We should be looking at planting more trees and producing treed corridors. These have been shown to mediate the effects of increases in temperature. Also, trees produce habitat and food for many insects, animals, and birds and help maintain biodiversity. We should have bylaws in place that require homeowners as well as developers to plant native

trees if trees are cut down. Planting native plants when landscaping these areas would also support species diversity. Plants have been shown to help purify our air and of course they produce the needed oxygen which we could not live without. The residents of our cities understand this. With the stresses we are experiencing with Covid-19 more people are searching out natural areas where they can implement social distancing and enjoy what benefits and activities these areas provide to help them maintain good health. Climate change is happening and if we don't act now to maintain and try to improve our natural areas, they will disappear.

C. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

According to the region's Healthy Landscape Policy, none of their goals have been put into practice. There has been no environmental restoration nor stewardship activities. They are not being a leader in protecting biodiversity nor have they shown any leadership in the area of accommodating or mitigating the effects of climate change.

We are not against development, but it must occur in an environmentally responsible and sustainable way such that it protects species diversity, protects natural habitats and allows for the people to live healthy fulfilling lives in harmony with nature. Access to natural areas is a healthy alternative to antidepressants.

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

I feel most confident suggesting option 3C for the Natural Heritage System and 2B for the Water Resource System for the reasons explained above.

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

Live up to the guidelines set out by the regions Healthy Landscape Policy and put them into action.

Redevelop abandoned manufacturing or industrial sites and apply remediation if needed and implement green infrastructure to mediate further climate change effects that the future will bring.

Invest the money in mapping the NHS and WRS. This way cities and planner know where development can occur and they can approve a design which accommodates high-density compact living which has access to transit, greenspaces and where residents can live healthy lives in harmony with nature.

Plant more trees and implement bylaw changes that would support this effort.

Use native plant and animal species when remediating or beautifying public lands and encourage the public to do the same. By doing this, greenhouses would make these plants more available to the public.

Install trees corridors into city development plans to provide cooling effects that they provide as well as carbon sequestering which is necessary to remediate the rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere as a result of climate change.

Offer workshops to the public to help them understand the need for buffers and interconnecting strips and planting trees in settlement areas to protect our natural areas from biological degradation and the effects that will result as climate change progresses.

Foster volunteer involvement in remediation projects.

5. Additional comments/feedback.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Lynda Goodridge

EMAIL: lgoodridge219@gmail.com

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

- a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3C for the NHS and Option 2B for the WRS

These options include the settlement areas. Not including these areas would leave out 20% of our land mass in Niagara. Preserving natural areas in settlement areas is essential for creating healthy, livable communities. COVID-19 has shown us how important these areas are to our health and well-being. Preserving these natural areas is also essential for mitigating climate change and maintaining environmental sustainability & biodiversity.

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3C & 2B ensures that development does not overtake green areas that are essential to human health and well-being. People need natural areas where they live, i.e. settlement areas. People want to live in communities where they have access to natural areas, so this is a draw for those looking to buy homes in Niagara. There is also the potential to promote ecotourism, which is a growing industry.

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

We were told during the presentation that agricultural lands are already protected and would not be affected by the NHS/WRS.

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Choosing 3C and 2B would give municipalities more control over where development can take place.

These options can help achieve higher density, compact, transit-friendly communities without compromising our green space. There are properties and open areas in most settlement areas that can be re-purposed and developed. Protecting natural areas will ensure that development takes place in the right places. It is another tool in the toolbox for decision-makers. As mentioned in 1b, having green areas where people live is a draw for potential residents. A focus on ecotourism could bring new opportunities for economic growth.

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

- a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?

The opportunity to protect our natural heritage and to maintain biodiversity. We have lost so much already and we need to preserve what we have. This will also help us to achieve our goals in mitigating climate change.

b. What don't you like about the options?

Options 3C and 2B are the only options that include the settlement areas. We need natural areas where people live to provide a healthy environment and climate change mitigation (flood control, erosion, carbon sequestering, etc.). We have already lost so much to development and leaving out the settlement areas amounts to over 20% of our land mass.

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

I did not feel that the WRS presentation was very clear about the goals and objectives and how they would be fulfilled.

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

I emphatically recommend Options 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS. This is our one opportunity to save our natural areas for future generations, so we need to choose the best options for Niagara. Our residents, both current and future deserve to have the best.

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

For many of the questions raised, the provincial growth plan was used as a reason for not including settlement areas. There are several studies that question the future growth stats that the plan includes:

Greenbelt Council Report, Growth Plan 2020

Population Forecasting in the GGH-EBY GMPS- March 26, 2020

Growth Plan ERO Submission Ontario Nature- July 2020

5. Additional comments/feedback.

Work done by the NPCA during the Nature for Niagara natural heritage inventory work (2006-2009) showed that Niagara had only 56.4% of the natural systems left that are needed for a science-based, functioning ecosystem that promotes sustainability. That percentage is, no doubt, even lower today, given the amount of development that has taken place since. Options 3C & 2B are the only options that will address this issue and protect these natural areas for future generations. Niagara residents need and deserve the best NHS/WRS available.

We were told that climate change was not considered separately but was included throughout the NHS/WRS. I don't feel that this was discussed very much during the 3 sessions I attended, yet it is one of the most important challenges we are facing. We need the best options if we are to mitigate this in any way. Niagara can and should be a leader in protecting biodiversity. We are part of the Carolinian zone and have species that are only found in this part of Ontario. It is our duty to protect them.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: KLARA YOUNG-CHIN EMAIL: KlaraMYC@gmail.com

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☒ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3C for NHS and option 2B for WRS are the best options as presented, however neither of these options contain sufficient details of proposed specifications to make them viable as part of a forward-thinking approach.

First, the proposal for the Natural Heritage System (NHS) / Water Resources System (WRS) does not mention the objectives for managing these systems. The Goal stated in the proposal is simply to meet or exceed Provincial standards, but it is unclear if by meeting standards which Natural Heritage objectives of the Official Plan can be achieved.

A truly “forward-thinking approach” would include the objectives laid out in the Region’s current Official Plan under “Objectives for a Healthy Landscape”

7.1 To maintain a healthy natural environment for present and future generations.

7.2 To conserve Niagara’s distinctive natural character.

7.3 To apply an ecosystem-based approach to planning and decision-making.

7.4 To support and encourage environmental stewardship and restoration.

I was disappointed to see that the Consultant team recommendations of “Preliminary Preferred Options” are “supported by the professional opinion of Regional Planning Staff” on page 23 of the agenda package PEDC 6-2020 presented to the Planning & Economic Development Committee on July 15, 2020. This support should not have been given prior to the required review of input from the public, stakeholders, and indigenous groups.

Consultant’s Preferred NHS Option 3B, and WRS Option 2A cannot meet the objectives in the current Official Plan as they exclude settlement areas which are integral parts of Niagara’s functional ecosystem.

NHS Option 3C should be selected and enhanced with specific mention of mandatory minimum buffers, and small linkages, particularly in settlement areas in a natural state.

WRS Option 2B should be selected as it would identify additional features and areas Region-wide, including within settlement areas.

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?**

NHS Option 3C enables the Region to better manage growth in settlement areas, while restricting urban sprawl.

1

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?**

None of the options has an impact on agricultural land which has adequate protection under provincial policies. The NHS Option 3C enhances the Region's ability to identify features for potential enhancements that could benefit agriculture.

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?**

There is no question of "balance" for protection and enhancement of the Region's degraded natural environment.

NHS Option 3C give planners in our municipalities more tools for negotiating what is deemed "appropriate" growth and economic development.

PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NIAGARA'S NATURAL HERITAGE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...**

a. What do you like about the options — what are the 'positives' and 'advantages'?

b. What don't you like about the options?

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

THIS IS ANSWERED ABOVE.

- 3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?**

THIS IS ANSWERED ABOVE.

- 4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?**

THE NEED TO INCLUDE STATED OBJECTIVES IN THE OFFICIAL PLAN IS EXPLAINED ABOVE.

- 5. Additional comments/feedback.**

I would like to encourage our elected officials to consider supporting NHS Option 3C and WRS Option 2B as this will give us a stronger fighting chance for conserving and enhancing Niagara's unique natural heritage for economic prosperity now and for future generations to come.

Niagara Region

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Joyce Sankey

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Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

- a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3C NHS and option 2B WRS are far superior to the other options. These options extend the natural heritage system into settlement areas.

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Options 3C NHS and 2B WRS help ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places. These options will help to protect natural areas and natural features with linkages and buffers within settlement areas. This will make it clear where development can take place with the least amount of damage to our natural heritage. Developers can then design developments in brownfields and other areas where the development will help make a compact community with transit, retail, health and community services available. Many areas in Niagara Falls would be excellent candidates for re-development.

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Agriculture is secure in the Niagara Region and there should be no pressure on the natural environment to support it.

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Giving up protection of the natural environment to support growth and economic development will not be of benefit to any of these goals. The natural environment gives us many benefits including flood protection, cleaner air, water, and healthy recreational activities. Destroying the natural environment for residential homes, shopping centres and more highways increases stress, pollution, health problems and results in reduced quality of life.

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

- a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?

3C NHS and 2B are so obviously the best alternatives that I wonder why we must consider alternatives that will offer natural areas and water quality less protection.

The positives or advantages are that these options will help protect wetlands, woodlands, meadowlands and water courses in our settlement areas where most of us live. More natural areas that are desirable to visit in settlement areas will benefit so many people who cannot get out to natural areas out of town. Children will learn about wildlife and enjoy being among trees and streams and the people who visit will have enjoy the physical and psychological benefits of being out in nature.

- b. What don't you like about the options?

Many of the options seem to be promoted just to make it easier for developers to build more expensive homes subdivisions that people working in Niagara Falls could not afford. It is cheaper for developers to build in areas that are now natural, but it does not benefit the residents of the settlement areas.

- c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

Why not outline our goals for achieving a sustainable natural heritage system that will lead to a healthy ecosystem and mitigate climate change first?
Why not complete the mapping first?

- 3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

The preferred option should definitely be 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS.

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

Between 2006 and 2009, I was a member of a team of volunteers who surveyed properties for the Natural Areas Inventories under the aegis of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. This work should be updated and considered when working on the natural environment program of the Niagara Official Plan. Since unfortunately, this data led to the conclusion that Niagara does not have sufficient natural areas to ensure a functioning sustainable ecosystem, how can we leave out any natural areas that still exist in Niagara to be subject to destruction?

Carolinian Canada is spearheading an initiative titled "In the Zone" where settlement residents are encouraged to plant native species in their yards to provide wildlife habitat and attract pollinators. More natural areas and linkages in settlement areas would complement this program.

5. Additional comments/feedback.

I heard during the workshops many comments about how we must balance growth with the goal of preserving our natural areas. Niagara is already far, far out of balance with the natural areas being lost and many native species experiencing a sharp decline in numbers.

Will we build subdivisions forever? Must we pave that which we love most on the altar of growth of tax dollars? How it is that subdivision after subdivision has been built but the average resident of Niagara does not pay fewer taxes and now may not be able to ever afford a house here?

We have lost our balance; my hope is that the Niagara Official Plan can help us find a way back.



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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Dennis Edell EMAIL: dennisedell@gmail.com

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at **Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca** by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:
 - a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?
 - b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

- a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?

b. What don't you like about the options?

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

We would like the Region WRS planning to integrated water balance and to adopt concepts such as Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development. Population growth and uncontrolled development is destroying our watersheds.

5. Additional comments/feedback.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Christine Knighton

EMAIL: jcknighton53@gmail.com

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

- a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Option NHS 3C and WRS 2B I am in favor of the options that most vigorously defend the natural systems in the Niagara Region and I believe that is 3C and 2B

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

I believe 3C is the best option to ensure growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the region because it identifies and supports features and linkages within the settlement areas and prescribes mandatory buffers outside of the settlement areas. Features in settlement areas cannot be protected long term unless they have buffers and linkages. Features that are not protected become developed. As a 15 year resident of Fort Erie I am appalled at the out of control development with a lack of consideration for protection of our natural systems. In the age of heightened acceptance of the mistakes that have been made in the past that contribute to our lack of resiliency in the face of climate change, and all of the environmental threats that come with it.

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

3c and 2B I believe strongly that protecting our Natural Heritage Systems and our Water Resource System with the most robust options should not be at odds with agriculture. These two things should be supporting each other.

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

3c and 2B Again, I believe that the options that best protect our natural systems are the ones that ultimately protect the economy. The world is starting to realize that infinite growth is unsustainable as we have finite land and resources. If we are going to be successful as a species we have to protect our environment and move towards a more circular economy. You may think this is an over-the-top answer to this question but I am very concerned that this idea of the economy and growth being top priority create a very dystopian future for our children and grand children. We have to be forward thinking and do everything we can to protect our environment for future generations.

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...

- a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?

I like that 3C identifies and protects features and systems within settlement areas. This leaves the possibility that some green spaces will be left undeveloped in our communities. Not only is important environmental health, studies have shown that humans require access to nature for mental health. We are not apart from nature; we are a part of nature. We cannot separate ourselves from the natural world and maintain our equilibrium.

b. What don't you like about the options?

This is a hard question to answer. I feel like 3C and 2B would be good options but I'm not sure any of the options rise to the level needed to ensure healthy, resilient eco-systems that are sustainable over the long term. This is why I am in favour of the best possible option of the ones presented.

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

I was unclear about a lot of things during the presentation. I appreciate that there is a lot of work that goes into this kind of thing and it's very important to have accurate mapping and inventories of what is currently there but I'll wager that most of the public that was participating in this had a hard time understanding all of the jargon and details. Despite that, I was both horrified that this kind of thing was not done decades ago and reassured that it's being done now.

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

3C and 2B

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

5. Additional comments/feedback.

The Niagara Region has, until recently, been seemingly oblivious to the effects of Climate Change and only slowly coming to realize that Climate Change concerns should be woven into every decision that is made and every development that is approved. We don't have a lot of time to ruminate about what needs to be done. We should be protecting our environment to the very best of our ability so that the generations that come after us can enjoy the same beauty and diversity that we have been privileged to enjoy. Growth should not be the primary concern, it should be sustainability. Economic growth now means nothing if it is at the cost of our natural world. Options 3C and 2B appear to be the best options to achieve that goal

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Environmental Stakeholder Groups - Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 22, 2020 – 6:30 - 8:00

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Bob Highcock EMAIL: bob.jean@sympatico.ca

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 9, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:
 - a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

 - b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Agricultural lands are not impacted by any of the options. I believe growth and economic development are a threat to agricultural areas within the Region. We need to maintain agricultural zones in Niagara but providing the best option for the natural environment will not impact agriculture.

- d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

When protecting the environment, going above and beyond option 3 should be considered. Supporting growth and economic development and protecting the environment can still be achieved when considering environmental sustainability, biodiversity protection and climate change.

- 2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...
 - a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?

b. What don't you like about the options?

c. What are any outstanding questions you have about the options — that is, things that are unclear or not fully addressed?

3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

An option that is the most protective of the Niagara Region's remaining natural heritage.

4. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

5. Additional comments/feedback.

I would like to see the Niagara Region take a stronger stance on protecting the natural environment and agricultural lands. Yes, growth is needed but not at the expense of reducing natural heritage and agriculture. There are other options.

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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Development Community + Planning and Ecological Consultants Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 18, 2020 – 1:00 - 2:30

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Kim Logan

EMAIL: kim.logan@gemservicesinc.com

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca by **October 2, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

- a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Option 2 because it allows to plan for development while protecting the natural heritage system and providing enhancement opportunities.

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Option 2 as noted above. By limiting development to settlement areas the most appropriate places are already established and natural heritage features remain protected.

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Option 2 see above.

- 2. What do you see as the biggest challenges and/or opportunities with implementing policies for the natural heritage system and water resource system — and how might these be addressed or realized?

By expanding and bettering the plan beyond the minimum standards it allows for support and compliance by landowners and developers. It provides recognition to the natural heritage system throughout the Region beyond what is currently in place. We see this as an opportunity rather than a challenge but recognize that too many drastic changes would create challenges and confrontation with landowners.

- 3. How can definitions, criteria and/or guidance documents be improved to support the identification of the components of the water resource system and natural heritage system?

Definitions are always useful for the lay person reading the official plan but for technical persons there are many definitions of one word or phrase so detailing how the Region defines a feature is useful for planning and consultation. Criteria and guidance also provides an outlined process for planning and needs to be less vague and contradictory - state the facts and expectations. Clear, concise and user friendly sources such as interactive mapping are the most beneficial and useful resources. Many official plans cross reference and break down sections in a manner that does not intuitively lead to a clear direction for protection and growth.

4. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

Option 2 and Option 2B.

5. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

More endangered species information and data collection considered within the planning and protection process. Locations and species specific information is not necessary but areas should be flagged for species at risk based on more recent information to ensure that landowners and developers are aware of restrictions regardless of natural heritage and water resource systems.

A classification of watercourses for water resources (i.e. cold, cool and warm water systems).

6. Additional comments/feedback.

It is appreciated to provide feedback and be involved as a stakeholder being the ones who work with the policies on a regular basis and help landowners and developers navigate the process.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Development Community + Planning and Ecological Consultants Virtual Stakeholder Workshop September 18, 2020 – 1:00 - 2:30

CONTACT INFORMATION:

NAME: Anne McDonald

EMAIL: aemcdonald@eesn.ca

Would you like to receive email updates about the new Official Plan? ☐ YES

Please submit comments to Sean Norman at **Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca** by **October 2, 2020**

1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:

- a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3A provides a forward thinking approach because it still allows for development and proper planning to be focused inside the urban areas without creating a premature need to expand the urban boundaries (ie. unnecessary sprawl).

- b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3A. Same reasons as above. Freezing all natural features (regardless of state/significance) plus a mandatory buffer around those areas shrinks the existing development land inside of the urban areas and will push development outside of these urban areas too soon. It also undermines the current Environmental Impact Study Process.

- c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?

Option 3A. Same reasons as above.

- 2. What do you see as the biggest challenges and/or opportunities with implementing policies for the natural heritage system and water resource system — and how might these be addressed or realized?

Biggest concern is the duplication of policies for features which are currently regulated by other agencies. In the discussion it sounded like specific policies were being created around wetlands (provincially significant, locally significant, or other). The NPCA has clear policies around these features and having a second set of policies is likely to cause confusion, a difference policy interpretation between agencies, or delays in approvals/permits/feedback if both agencies are commenting on the same features. Regional policies should back up the NPCA policies without re-writing them to ensure that the two organizations are not seen as being in conflict, but rather address natural heritage with a united front.

- 3. How can definitions, criteria and/or guidance documents be improved to support the identification of the components of the water resource system and natural heritage system?

It is unclear in options 3B and 3C how significant woodlots differ from other woodlots, as far as designation as part of the natural heritage system. Similarly, it is unclear how Significant Woodlots would differ from PSWs from an Environmental designation perspective (ie. would all EC-woodlands be upgraded to EP-designation regardless of environmental studies). The proposed changes in 3B and 3C are quite confusing from the perspective of an environmental professional whose job is to evaluate significance of the features.

Another MAJOR concern with definitions: The 3C option lists "Supporting Features and Areas" both inside and outside of the settlement areas as component features which would be protected in this option. In the public open house (Sept 23), there was a slide in the presentation which stated that these "Supporting Features and Areas" could include "other woodlands", "other grasslands" and "other wildlife habitat", which would be all of those features that have otherwise not been identified as Significant according to criteria defined by multiple agencies. Those criteria have been developed for a reason - just about anything can provide wildlife habitat, so to say "other wildlife habitat" is protected provides a huge grey area for environmental consultants in their analysis and undermines the EIS process.

4. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

Option 1, 2 or 3A are the only ones which will allow for balance in the Region and prevent premature urban sprawl.

5. What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?

The environmental policies are there in Options 1, 2, and 3A to protect those features which are significant according to Environmental Studies. The purpose of an EIS and the role of an environmental consultant is to identify and protect what is significant and provide the balance necessary as the Region and Municipalities aim for growth.

Option 3B and 3C are both near-sighted and will have implications on environmental planning that I feel have been overlooked. For example, premature urban sprawl. These options have also not taken into consideration the implications that urban expansion would have on the agricultural community or the taxpayers.

6. Additional comments/feedback.

The slide I mentioned in response to question 3 was not included in the presentation for those in the industry and I think it provides some very telling information which is critical for professionals in the field to truly understand the implications of these proposed policies. I suppose I am curious as to why the slide listing all of those components of a natural heritage system was left out of the presentation for the Development community, but was included in the presentation to the general public.

Appendix D: Virtual Public Information Centres

- Notice of Public Information Centres
- Virtual Public Information Centre, Wednesday, September 23, 2020. Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System
- Virtual Public Information Centre, Thursday, September 24, 2020. Natural Environment - Water Resource System & Niagara Watershed Plan
- Comments and Unanswered Questions Matrix - Virtual Public Information Centre – Natural Heritage System Options
- Comment Matrix - Virtual Public Information Centre – WRS Options and Watershed Planning

ADD YOUR VOICE TO NIAGARA'S OFFICIAL PLAN

NIAGARA IS GROWING!

The region is forecasted to grow to a minimum of 674,000 people and 272,000 jobs by the year 2051. To guide this growth, Niagara Region is creating a new Official Plan.

The Niagara Official Plan will set out objectives and policies to shape Niagara's physical development, while protecting what's valuable. It will cover topics like: Niagara's natural environment, land needs, growth allocations, housing, transportation, urban design, employment lands, agriculture and more.

YOU'RE INVITED

Attend a series of virtual public information centres to learn more about key directives and core policy information that will inform the Niagara Official Plan. Get informed, ask questions to the project team, and provide your input on how Niagara should grow.

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend and participate in meetings or events, contact the Niagara Region's Accessibility Coordinator at 905-685-4225 ext. 3252 or accessibility@niagararegion.ca.

Information will be collected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

STAY INFORMED

To provide input or ask questions, email makingourmark@niagararegion.ca. Or contact **David Heyworth**, Official Plan Policy Consultant at 905-980-6000 ext. 3476

VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES

Register for each of the following session at niagararegion.ca/official-plan. Video recordings will also be available online following the sessions.

Wednesday, Sept 23 | 6:00 p.m.

Topic: Natural Environment -
Natural Heritage System

Thursday, Sept. 24 | 6:00 p.m.

Topic: Natural Environment -
Water Resource System

Wednesday, Oct. 7 | 6:00 p.m.

Topic: Growth Management - Growth
Allocations, Settlement Area Boundary
Review, Regional Structure, Land
Needs, Housing

Thursday, Oct. 8 | 6:00 p.m.

Topic: District & Secondary Plans, Urban
Design, and Employment Lands

Tuesday, Oct. 20 | 6:00 p.m.

Topic: Rural & Agriculture, Mineral Aggregate
Resources, Archaeology & Culture

Wednesday, Oct. 21 | 6:00 p.m.

Topic: Infrastructure, Water and Wastewater,
Stormwater, Transportation



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NIAGARA

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Virtual Public Information Centre

Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System

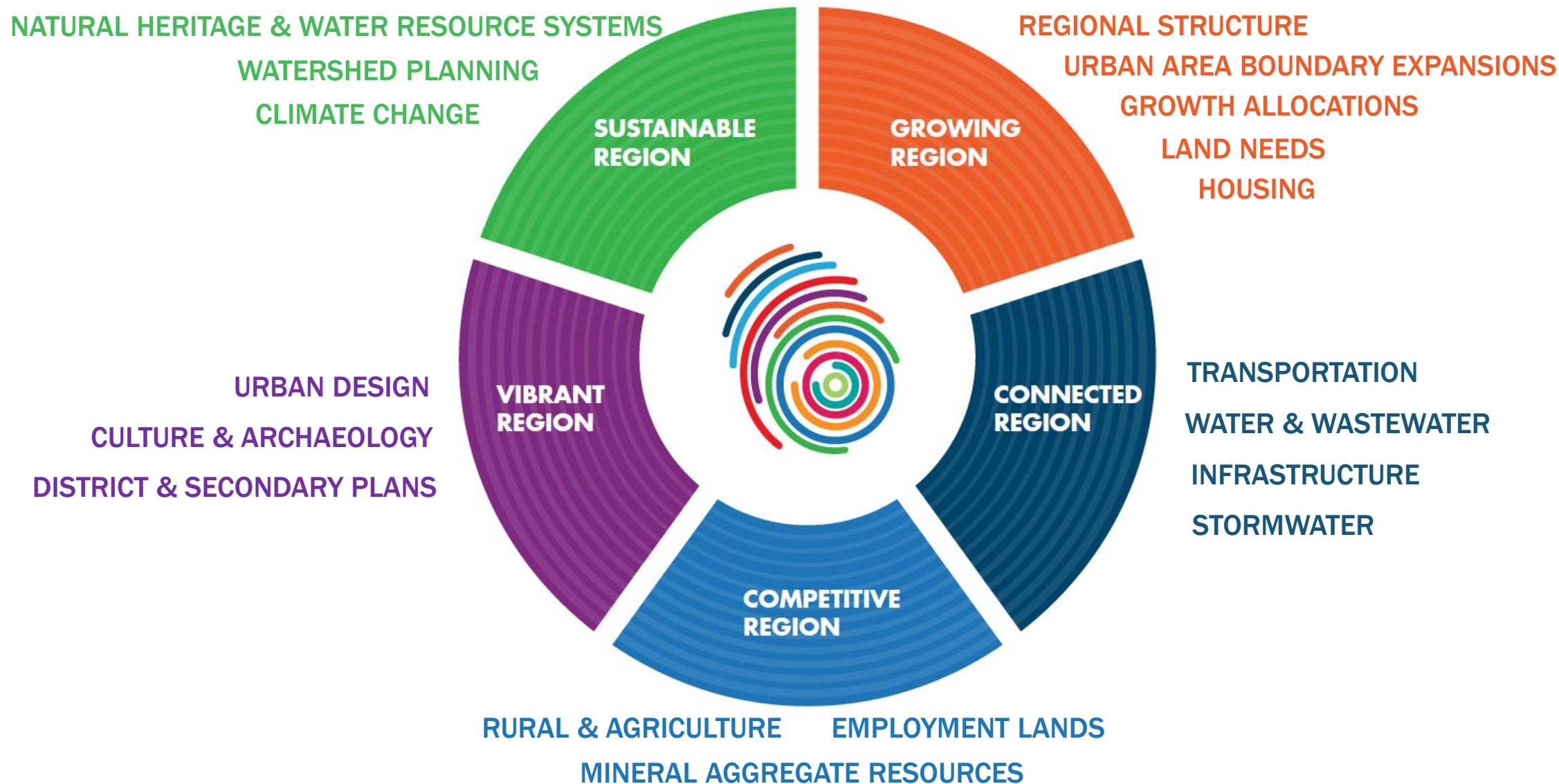
makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Planning Hierarchy in Ontario



Niagara Official Plan



Natural Environment – Natural Heritage System



makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools



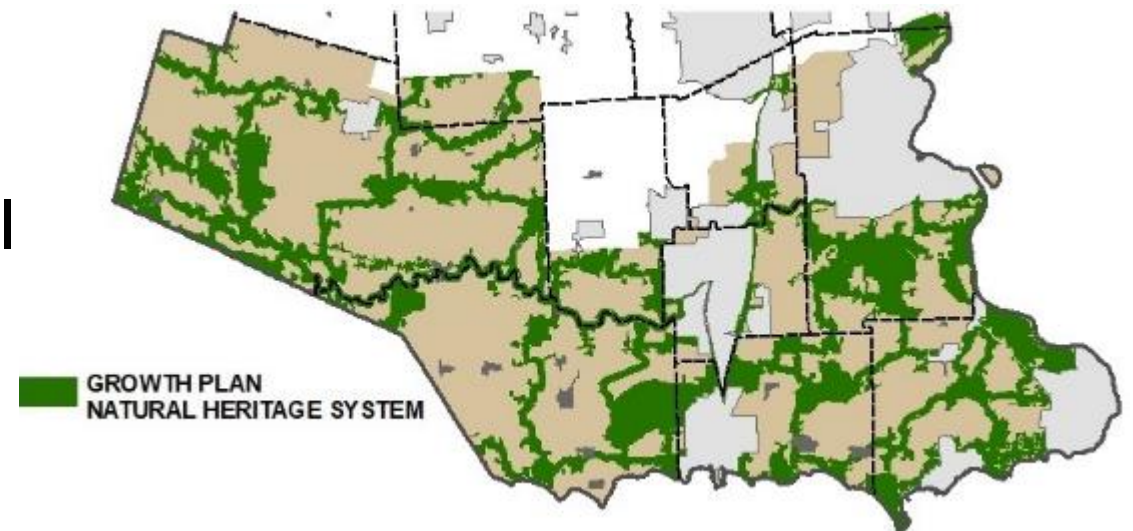
Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also require that a water resource system be identified and protected
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes



Developing Options for the Natural Environment System

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
 - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
 - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
 - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
 - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
 - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
 - Conform with provincial requirements
 - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



Planning Direction – Natural Heritage System Components

- Definitions of NHS in PPS and Provincial Plans provide direction for required and optional components
- Linkages
 - Included within Provincial NHSs
 - Optional to identify additional linkages beyond Provincial N.H.S.s
- Buffers / Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Requirement to provide to key features in Provincial NHSs
 - Optional to identify minimum or mandatory buffers outside of Provincial N.H.S.s, including within settlement areas



Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
 - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
 - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS outside of the Provincial NHSs
 - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
 - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers



Components of Natural Heritage System

- **Key Natural Heritage Features and Areas**

- Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW)
- Non-PSW wetlands (In Greenbelt NHS)
- Significant Woodlands
- Significant Valleylands
- Significant Wildlife Habitat
- Fish Habitat
- A.N.S.I.s
- Habitat of Threatened and Endangered Species
- Permanent and intermittent streams
- Inland lakes and their littoral zones
- Seepage areas and springs

- **Other Key Natural Features and Areas**

- Non-PSW

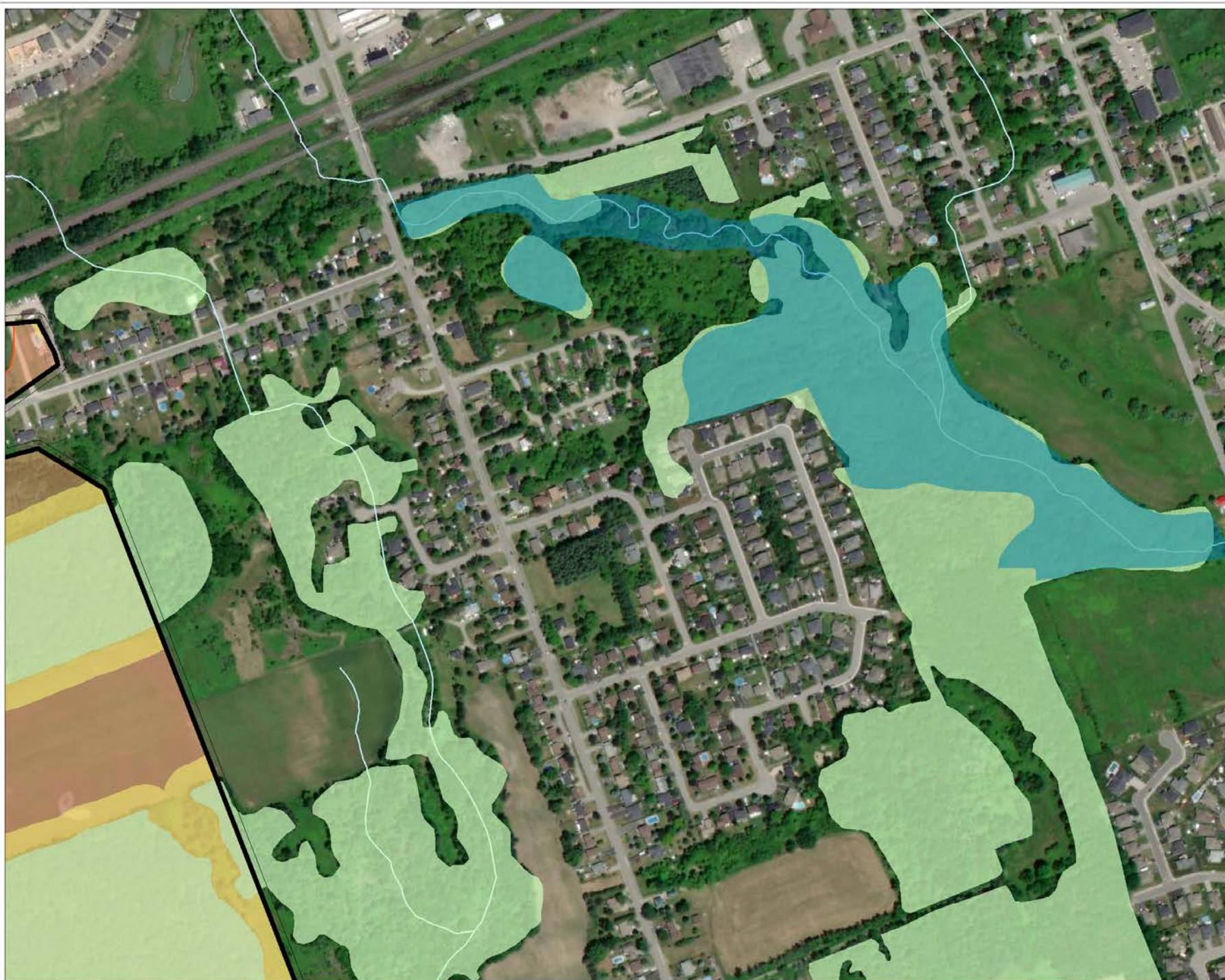
- **Supporting Features and Areas**

- Enhancement Areas
- Other natural heritage features
 - Other woodlands
 - Grasslands/meadows
 - Other wildlife habitat
 - Other valleylands

- **Linkages**

- **Buffers/Vegetation Protection Zones**





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Settlement Area

Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09

N

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Imagery: ESRI

north-south
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number
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Date:
2020-09-09



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Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

	N.H.S. 3A	N.H.S. 3B	N.H.S. 3C
Component Features and Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas • Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B • Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B • Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas
Connecting the System (linkages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas • Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state
Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum (prescribed) buffers outside of provincial N.H.S.s, no buffers inside settlement areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum (prescribed) buffers outside of settlement areas, mandatory (non-prescribed) buffers inside settlement areas





Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

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Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-09	
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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Project Number
20-1149

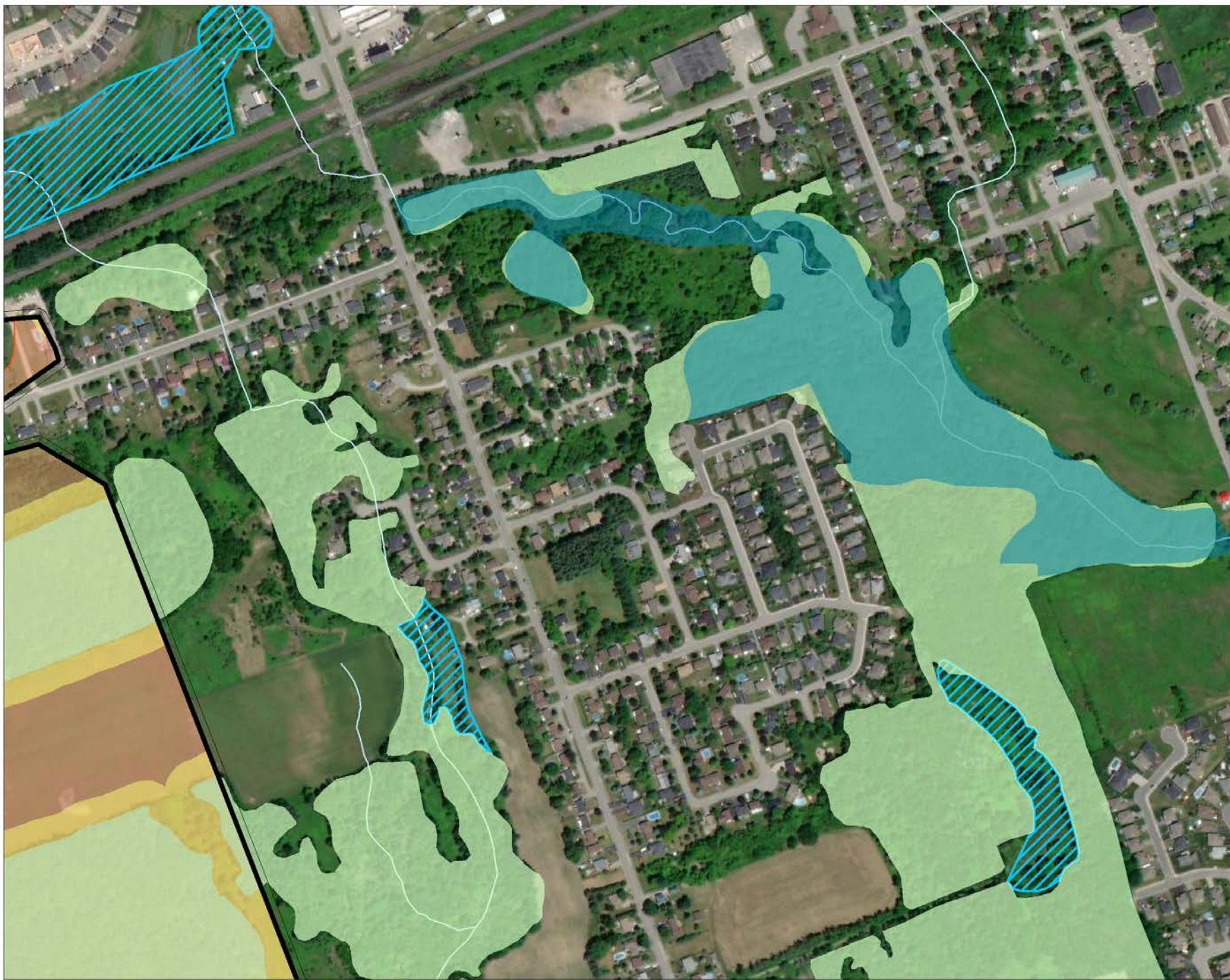
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Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3B

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features**
- Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-09	N
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

- Other Key Features
 - Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
 - Enhancement Areas
 - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
 - Large Linkage (400m)
 - Medium Linkage (200m)
 - Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number
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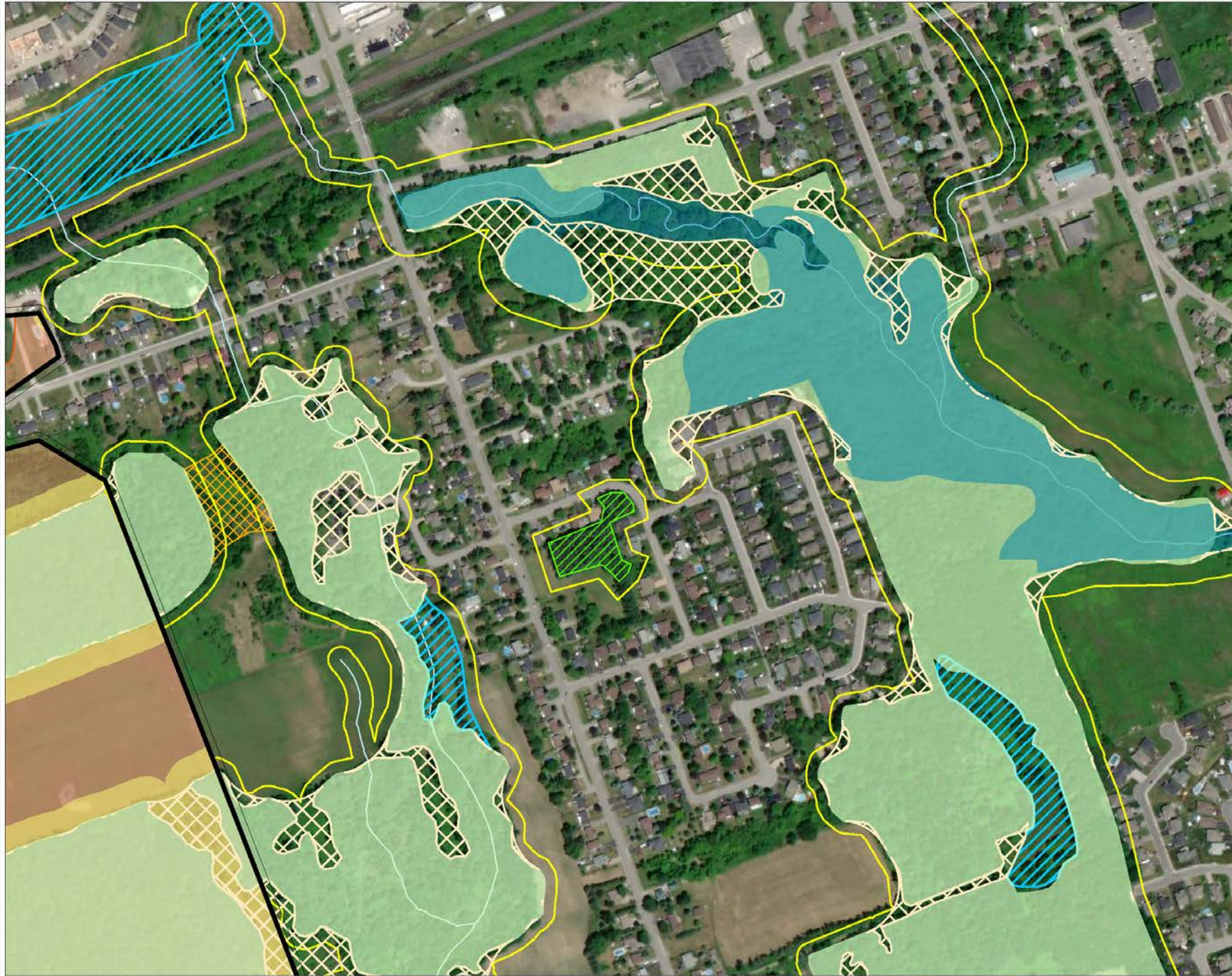
Date:
2020-09-09



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Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3C

- Legend**
- Settlement Area
 - Required Components**
 - Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
 - Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Significant Woodlands
 - Provincially Significant Wetland
 - Watercourses
 - Optional Components**
 - Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
 - Other Key Features**
 - Other Woodlands
 - Enhancement Areas
 - Supporting Features and Areas**
 - Small Linkage (100m)
 - Linkages**
 - Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number 20-1149	Date: 2020-09-11	
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C

Legend

Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

Optional Components

- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
 - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
 - Medium Linkage (200m)
 - Small Linkage (100m)
 - Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number
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Date:
2020-09-09



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Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan (although it would be fully protected by policies in the Official Plan as required by provincial policy and federal legislation).
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines, and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
 - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
 - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
 - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
 - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives
 - Project will be introduced at the Public Information Centre on September 24



Your Feedback is Requested



Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



Discussion Questions

1. What, if any, additional information or clarification do you require on the options presented?
2. What do you like and/or dislike about the range of options developed?
3. How do the options fit with your vision for natural environment planning in Niagara?
4. What other information should we consider when identifying and selecting a final preferred option?





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Virtual Public Information Centre

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Natural Environment - Water Resource System & Niagara Watershed Plan

makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Planning Hierarchy in Ontario

PLANNING MANDATE FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN NIAGARA

ONTARIO HOUSING SUPPLY ACTION PLAN

PLANNING
ACT

PROVINCIAL
POLICY
STATEMENT



NIAGARA ESCARPMENT PLAN



GROWTH PLAN FOR THE GGH



GREENBELT PLAN



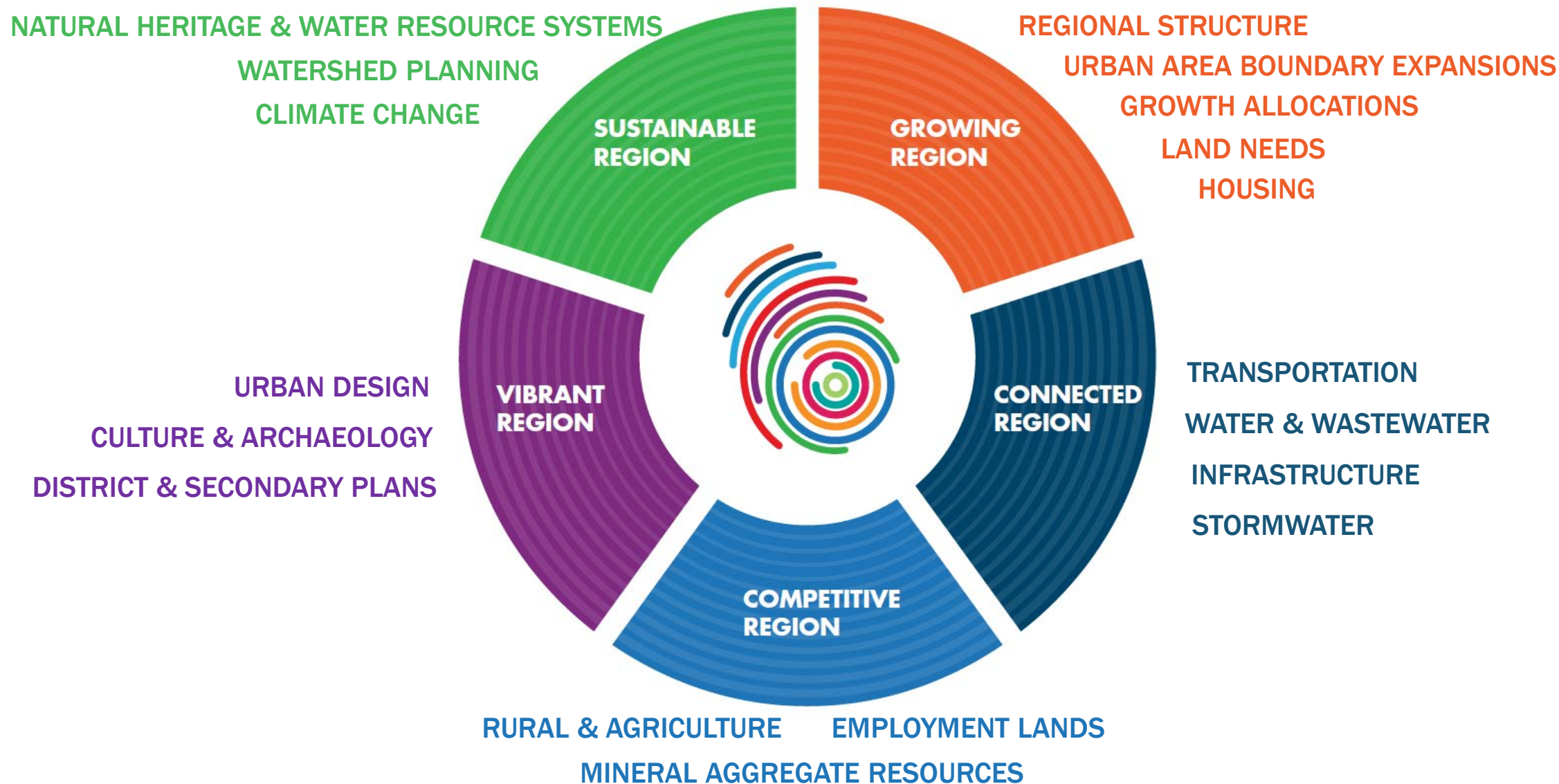
PROVINCE-WIDE POLICIES

AREA SPECIFIC POLICY PLANS

NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN



Niagara Official Plan



Part I

Natural Environment - Water Resource System



Project Overview – Natural Environment

Project Phase	Activities
1	Project Initiation and Procurement
2	Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas
3	1 st Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study
4	Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)
5	2 nd Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)
6	Develop Regional Natural System(s)
7	Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping
8	3 rd Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules
9	Other Implementation Tools



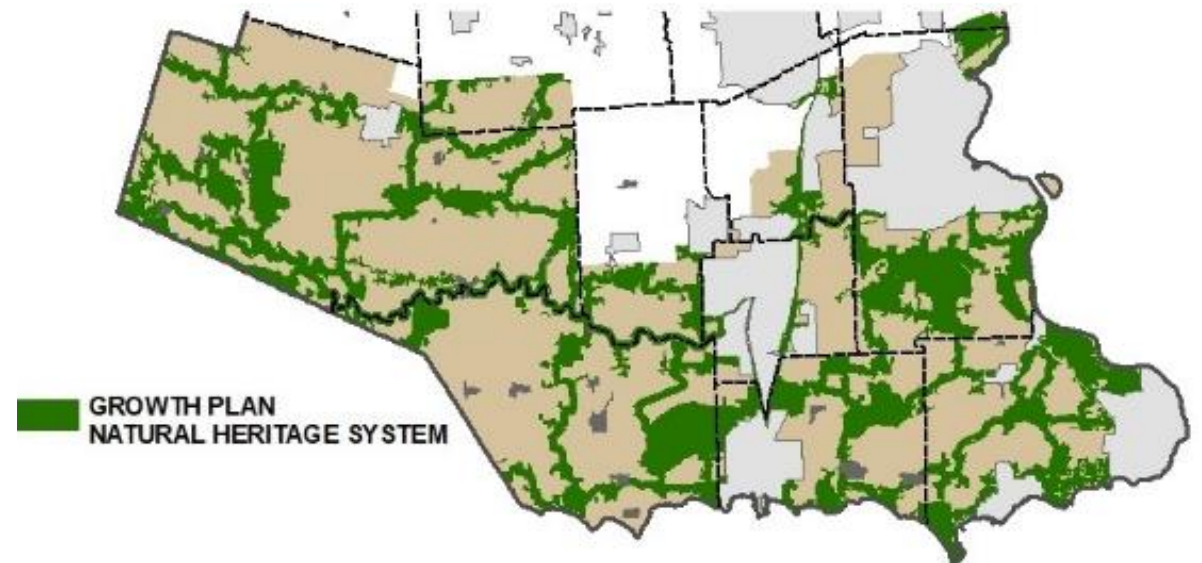
Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports, mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also requires that a water resource system be identified and protected.
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a WRS – however, the Growth Plan requires that a WRS be identified
- While some components of a WRS can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study

“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



What is a Water Resource System?

- “A system consisting of ground water features and areas and surface water features (including shoreline areas), and hydrologic functions, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption. The water resource system **will** comprise **key hydrologic features** and **key hydrologic areas**”. (Growth Plan 2019)



Components of a Water Resource System

- Key Hydrologic Features (required)
 - Provincially Significant Wetlands and other wetlands
 - Permanent and intermittent streams
 - Inland lakes and their littoral zones
 - Seepage areas and springs
- Key Hydrologic Areas (required)
 - Significant ground water recharge areas
 - Highly vulnerable aquifers
 - Significant surface water contribution areas
- Hydrologic Functions
- Groundwater features
 - Recharge/discharge areas
 - Ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
 - Water tables
 - Aquifers and unsaturated zones
- Surface Water Features
 - Headwaters
 - Recharge/discharge areas
 - Associated riparian lands
- Shoreline Areas
- Vegetation Protection Zone



Development of WRS Options

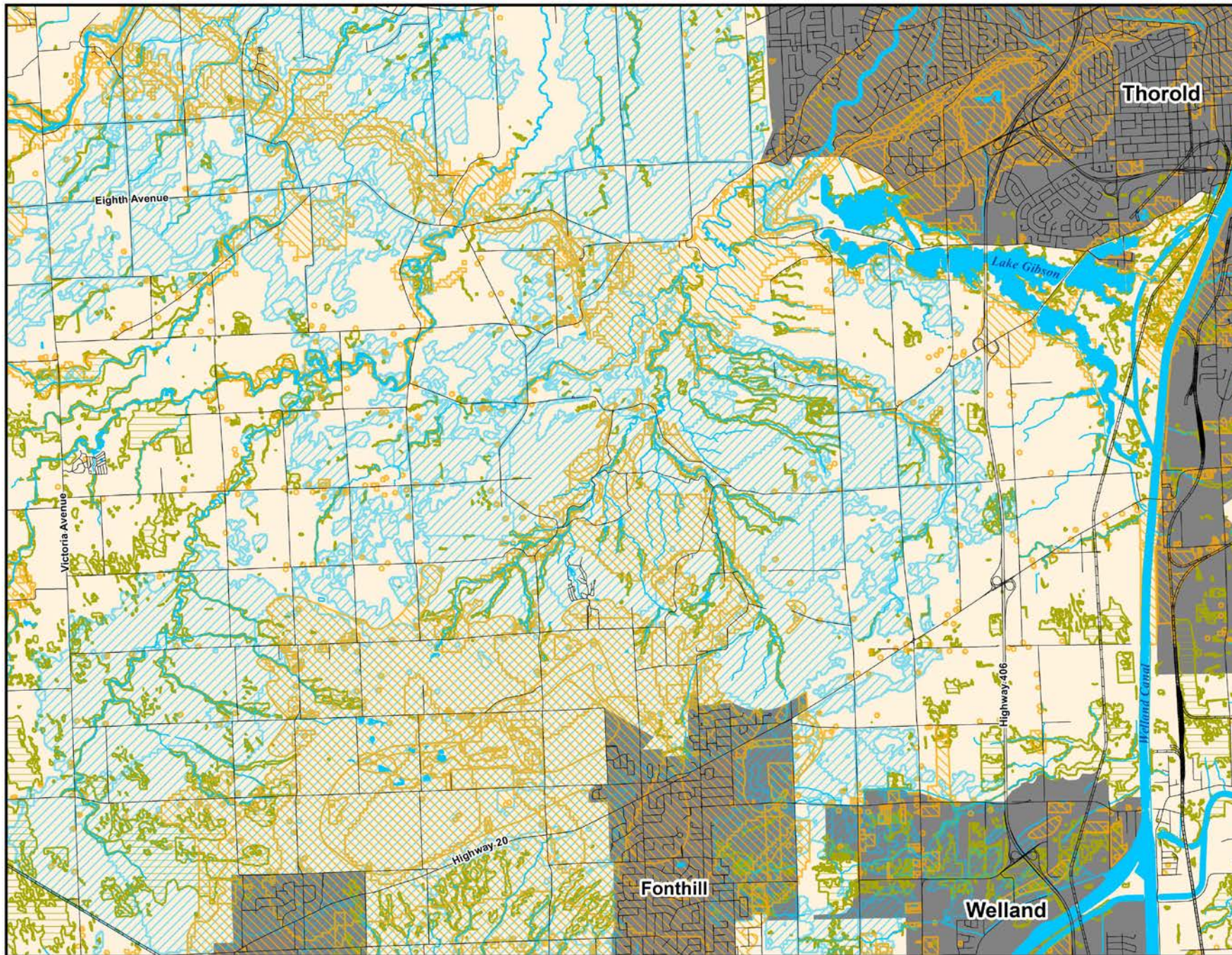
- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
 - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
 - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
 - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change
 - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
 - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
 - Conform with provincial requirements
 - Represents a new comprehensive system in the Region



Water Resource System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
 - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
 - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
 - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
 - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas
- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”





Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2 Legend

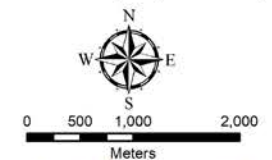
Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



June 11, 2020



Your Feedback is Requested



Implications for Water Resource System Planning

- Flexibility will be required in policy
- More fully developed definitions and criteria will be required
- Water Resource System components and policy to be informed by 'Niagara Watershed Plan' Equivalent project
- Guidelines to support the appropriate identification and/or refinement of W.R.S. component features will be required (i.e. similar to EIS guidelines)



Next Steps - WRS



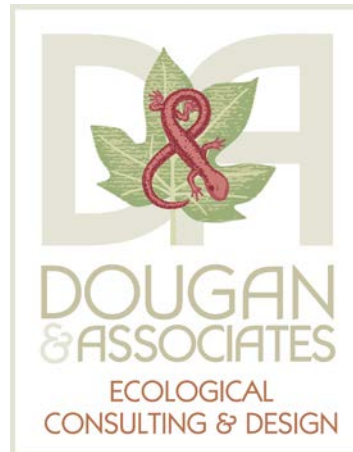
1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek Regional council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Refine W.R.S. based on input from the Niagara Watershed Plan equivalent project to provide input to the detailed design of the preferred option and policy recommendations for the OP



Part II

Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent Project

wood.



north-south
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Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: What is it and why is it important?

- Purpose is to inform the new Niagara Official Plan in accordance with Provincial direction including the identification of a water resource system and decision on the allocation of growth
- Provides a framework for future watershed planning in the Region, that will:
 - Protect water resources
 - Manage human activities, land, water, aquatic life, and resources
 - Assess cumulative, cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts

What is an Equivalent Watershed Plan (WP)?

The Province allows for the development of an Equivalent WP informed by existing desktop material (i.e., no new fieldwork or modelling) to support official plans.



Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: What is it and why is it important?

- Focuses on priority areas of known concern related to:
 - Heightened development or resource pressure
 - Management needs for water quality and quantity
- Informed by review and evaluation of existing work on:
 - Natural Heritage System
 - Water Resource System
 - Natural Hazards
- Provides guidance on issues identified by Niagara community

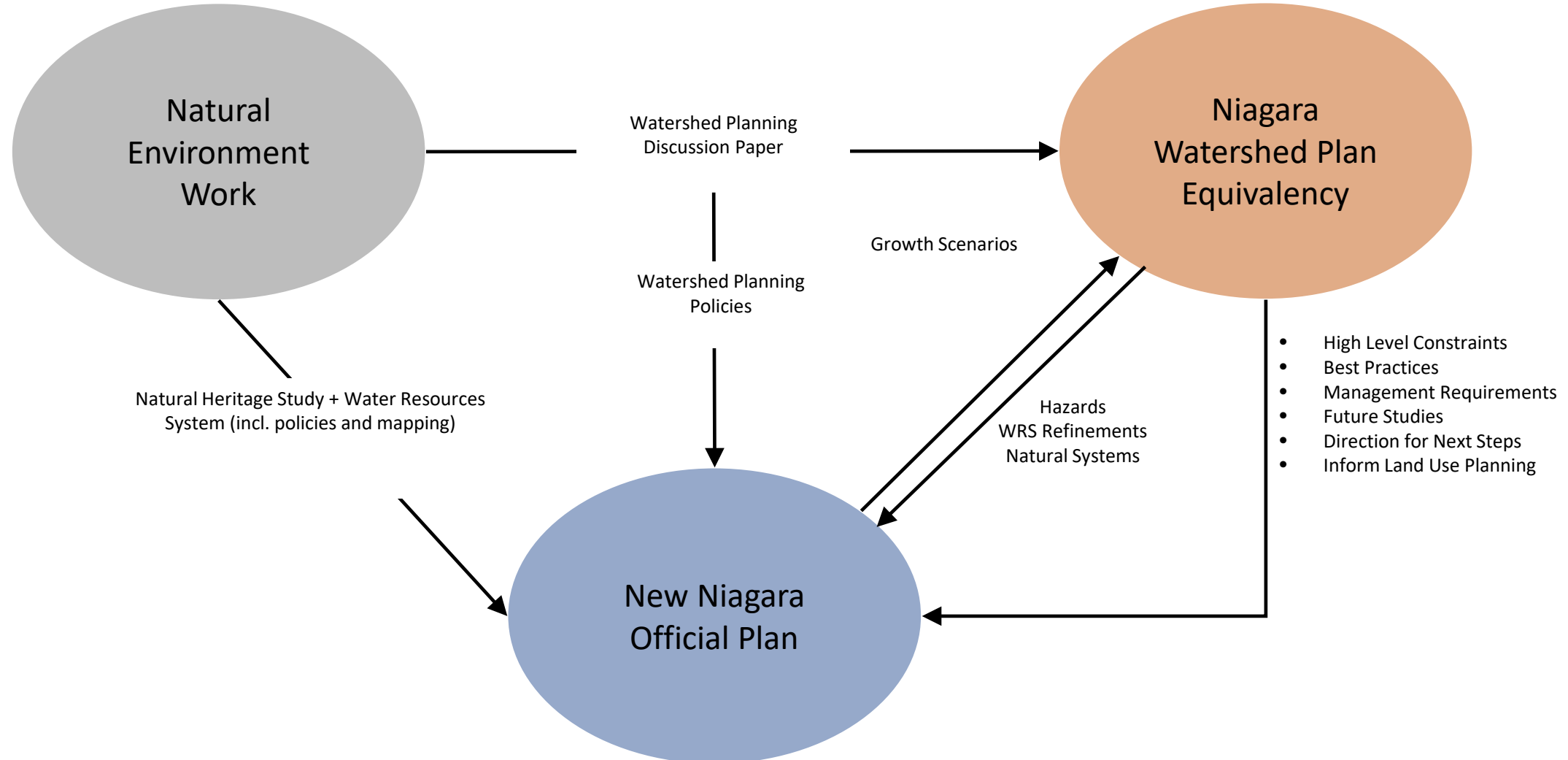


Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: Key Activities

1. Confirm Study Boundaries and Establish Priorities
2. Develop Watershed Planning - Goals and Objectives
3. Characterize Existing Conditions (Desktop)
4. Integrate Natural Heritage System (N.H.S.) and inform the Water Resource System (W.R.S.)
5. Define Watershed Elements and Best Practices & Provide Guidance for Future more Detailed and Local Studies



Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: Role



Niagara Region Watersheds

Watersheds are areas of land that drain rainfall runoff and snowmelt into waterways toward a single, common outlet.

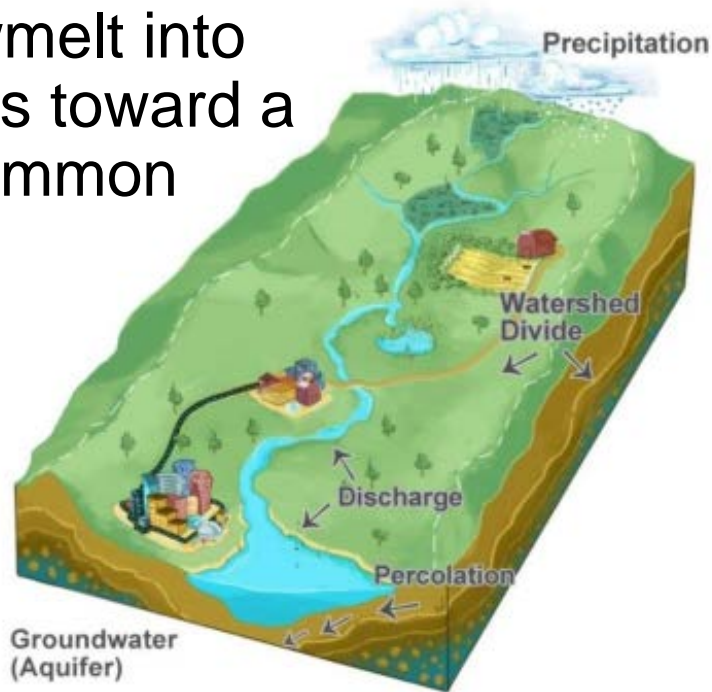
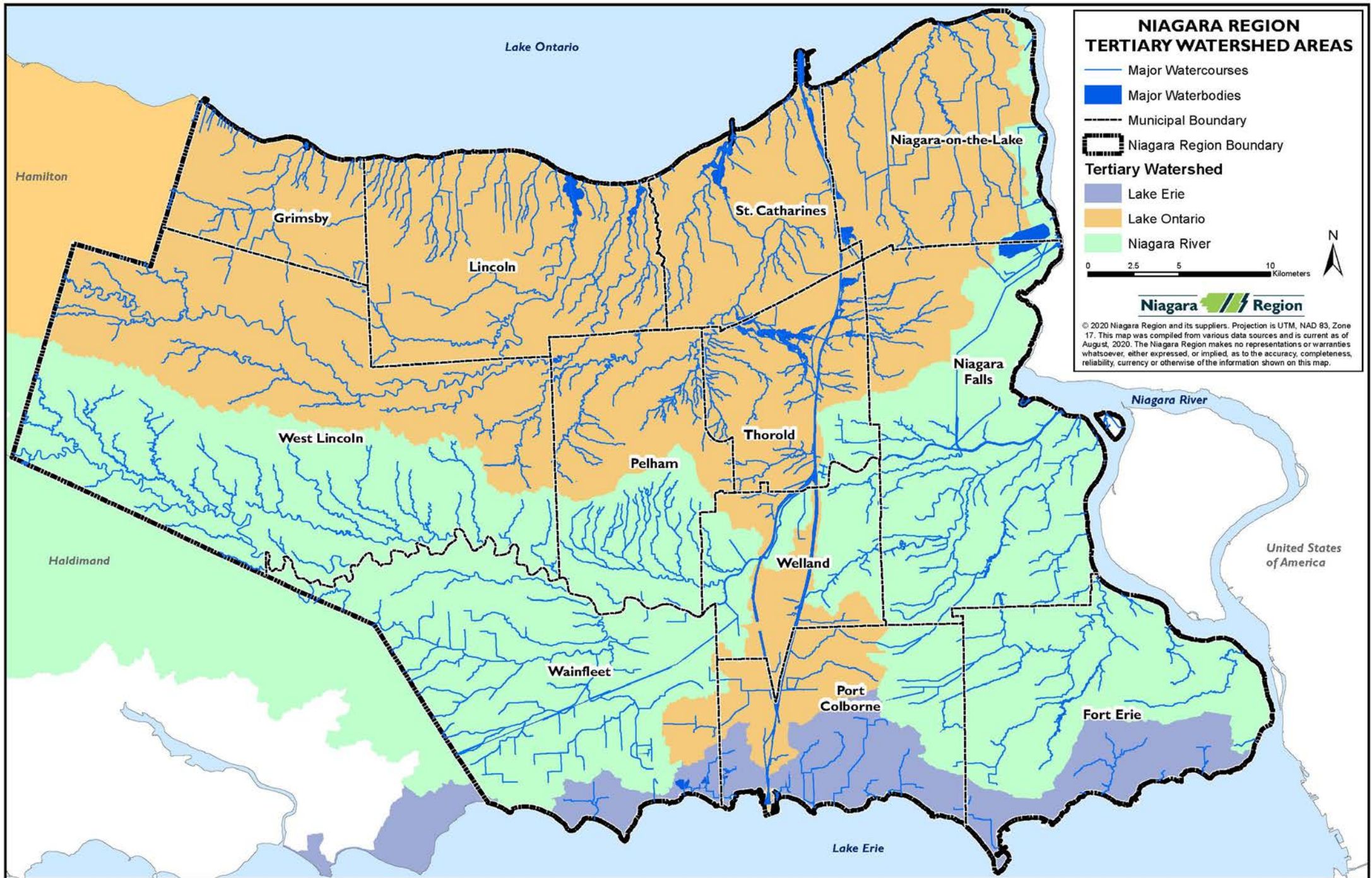


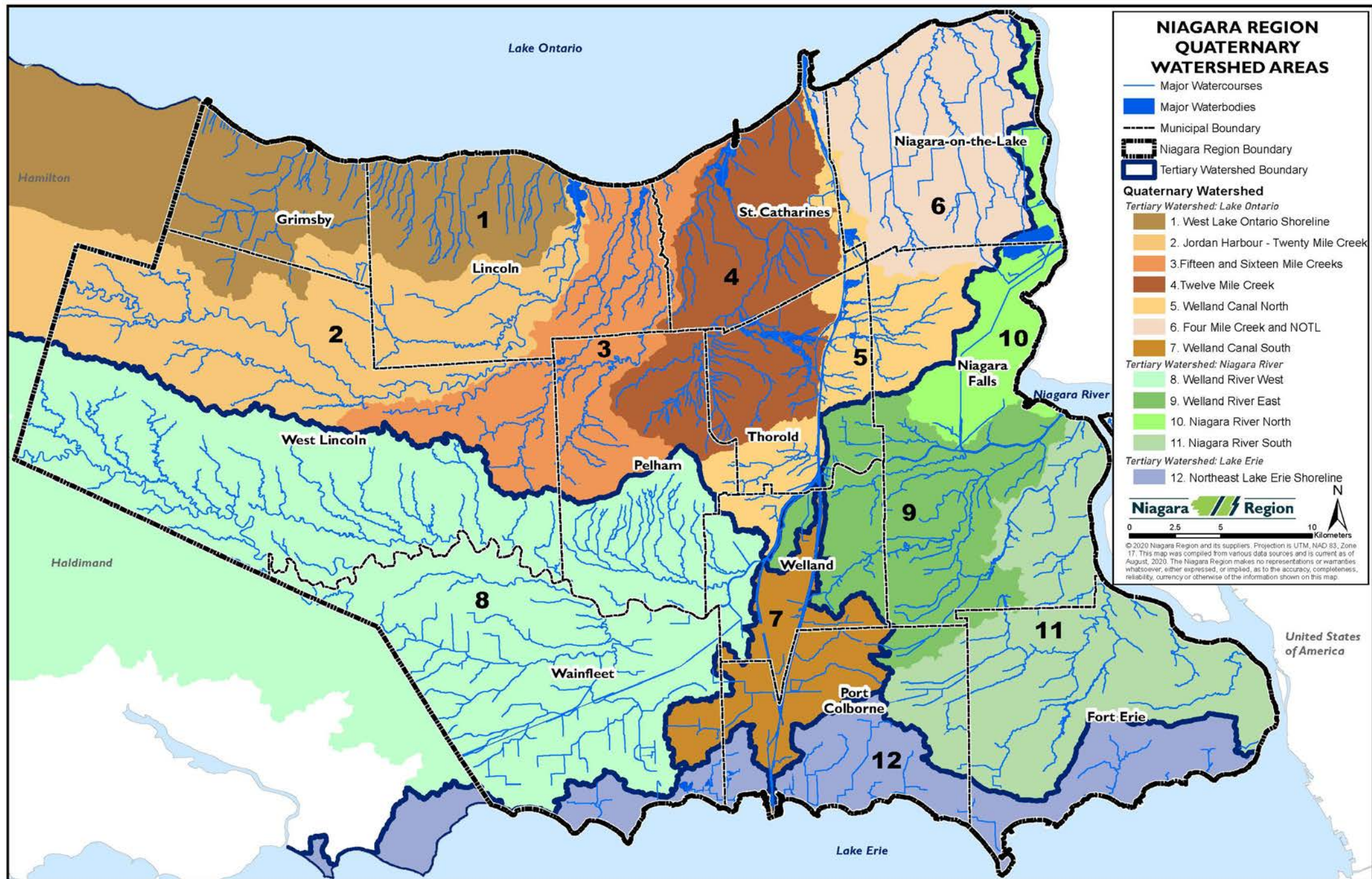
Figure 1 - A simple watershed with the boundary determined at the watershed divide



Watersheds in Ontario are categorized as primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. Niagara Region is responsible for watershed planning at the tertiary and quaternary level. The Region will work with local area municipalities (LAMs) to complete subwatershed planning to support growth through Secondary Plans or similar planning exercises.







SUSTAINABLE REGION NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Map prepared by: ANKIT JOSHI,
Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions

Goals & Objectives

1

Establish and Maintain Contemporary and Accurate Understanding/Mapping of the Watershed

- Define and map the Water Resource System
- Identify watershed and subwatershed boundaries
- Describe existing conditions
- Map key natural and developed water features



Goals & Objectives

2

Protect Water Quality and Water Quantity

- Develop a water budget
- Identify best practices for water conservation and quality management



Goals & Objectives

3

Adaptively Manage and Monitor the Watershed

- Identify existing monitoring programs and gaps
- Develop holistic monitoring framework
- Define guidelines and terms of reference for future monitoring for subwatershed studies
- Recommend approach to filling data gaps and prioritization of future studies



Goals & Objectives

4

Protect and Enhance Interactions between the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System

- Define/acknowledge the Natural Heritage System (existing conditions; gaps and deficiencies)
- Define interactions between the systems
- Identify restoration and protection targets
- Identify best practices for invasive species, buffers and management of specific land use water features and practices



Goals & Objectives

5

Ensure Land Use Planning is Informed by Watershed Planning

- Review growth scenarios and assess for potential change in relation to Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System
- Identify best practices that support protection, restoration and enhancement of water resources
- Recommend approach to filling gaps and prioritization of future work



Goals & Objectives

6

Create Resilient Communities to Protect Human Health and Safety, and the Natural Environment

- Review and incorporate natural hazard mapping
- Identify and consider potential impacts related to climate change
- Identify flood vulnerable areas
- Identify best practices and provide recommendations regarding environmental indicators and thresholds for cumulative impact assessments



Goals & Objectives

7

Engage the community to ensure the Watershed Plan Equivalent reflects community-identified priorities & local conditions

- Consider input received from the community through previous and current engagement
- Engage with Indigenous communities to identify interests and knowledge
- Define future outreach and engagement opportunities



Key Activities & Next Steps

1. Confirm Study Boundaries and Establish Priorities - **complete**
2. Develop Watershed Planning - Goals and Objectives – **draft: seeking feedback**
3. Characterize Existing Conditions (Desktop) - **ongoing**
4. Integrate Natural Heritage System and Inform Water Resource System
5. Define Watershed Elements and Best practices & Provide Guidance for Future more Detailed and Local Studies



Questions and Feedback - NWP:

1. Are there Goals and Objectives which you do not support?
2. Are there Goals and Objectives that you would like to see added or changed?
3. Are you aware of specific issues or opportunities which you would like to see considered as part of the current or future watershed planning efforts?
4. Do you have resource information about Niagara's watersheds which you think would be beneficial to this process?





Niagara Region

Planning & Development Services

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way,
PO Box 1042, Thorold, ON L2V 4T7
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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

**Comments and Unanswered Questions Matrix
Virtual Public Information Centre – Natural Heritage System
Options September 23, 2020 6:00 - 8:00pm**



Question and Response Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents all input received in comment form and the unanswered questions from the September 23, 2020 Virtual Public Information Centre. The project team response is included. For a record of all questions that were asked and answered - a recording of the PIC is available on the website for the new Official Plan.
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>

Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
Dave Nicholson	Sometimes an area used for recreation and/or active transport may not include key natural heritage features and so not acquire planning protection. I would suggest that such areas should be added to the list	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
Cindy Niceforo	Given that the provincial standards are inadequate and constantly are being loosened in a time when the concerns and need for environmental action are increasing, how could any option other than 3c be a serious consideration? I see with my own eyes in Thorold the massive development taking place. For example, there is a proposal to develop 77.9 hectare parcel of land on the northside of Chippawa Parkway. I see development taking place on Beverdams road which is in the middle of wetlands. When do we get to hear the take of the indigenous community. Our canopy is only 17.5%. We need to do better and that must take priority over development especially in green field spaces.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
Derek Jones	I believe there is an oversight in not recognizing the Province's Growth plan	Comment received. Thank you for your input.



Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	<p>is significantly flawed. It's a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to recognize regional geography, and limitations. Niagara Region is a perfect example that crystallizes the Province's Growth plan's deficiencies. Geographically, we are an island, surrounded on three sides by Water, which constricts, and conflicts with our ability to grow responsibly, as it pertains to rapid real estate growth, and population growth. This puts enormous pressure on local Environment features, and is currently being realized in Niagara.</p> <p>How do you mitigate Municipalities with independent agendas? Who have no climate plan, and who are willing to work to overrule PPS and best practices?</p> <p>I appreciate the amount of time and effort that has gone into this. But why are these the only options presented? From the perspective of Environmental Conservation during a Climate Crisis, and with all due respect, none of these options are optimal or acceptable. I humbly request that staff go back to the drawing board and present a plan that more effectively addresses the urgency, and imminent impact of climate change. I cannot stress enough, that first and foremost, this needs to be visualized</p>	



Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	through the lens of climate change with applicable sense of urgency. This must be the top priority to preserve what we all love about Niagara. We cannot blunder our way through this, as recent Developer Violations at Thundering Waters clearly demonstrate. The options currently being presented and recommended by staff are not the best options for the Environment. And the most protective options offered, are at best a weak compromise, if our Natural Heritage is to be properly protected for future generations.	
John Bacher	Not just regarding fish habitat there is a lot of problem with lands which could be corrected through Significant Wildlife Habitat designations. Mapping of these lands right now is largely limited to deer wintering areas. It seems that a lot of work has to be done.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
William Rapley	the city of Toronto has a very good approach and it posted on the website. Hamilton is working on a Biodiversity plan. can this approach be	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
John Bacher	regarding forest cover the NPCA did a study which should a large area in agriculturally zoned lands which is actually reverting to forests naturally. I don't know what the actual percentage of the landscape this is. From looking at these maps it seems quite substantial. If this area was known the goal of 30 per cent might seem more realistic. These	Comment received. Thank you for your input.



Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	lands will likely become mature forests eventually if the agricultural designations are maintained and the land is not urbanized.	
Dorothy Bothwell	Bill 68 requires municipalities to demonstrate how they will maintain, protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality. The option that best meets this (3C) should be strongly considered by the Region.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
Dorothy Bothwell	Please ensure that all questions and answers, and those that cannot be answered within the time allotted, are answered and posted on the Region's website with the PIC background documents for full transparency.	This document is a record of all the question that were not answered as well as the project team's response. This document is also a record of all input that was made in comment form. The entire PIC was recorded and will be made available on the website for the new Niagara Official Plan. All of the PIC slides will be posted on the Official Plan website. All of the background studies, staff reports, and previous presentations are also available on the website. https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/
John Bacher	Regarding Peer review the current system on relying on provincial agencies has recently been weakened by the reduction in the commenting role of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. (MNRF) Also two letters by MNRF which were critical of environmental work by developer proponents in the case of Thundering Waters were never released to council or the public. I also received them with the help of the now disbanded Local Planning Review Support Center. This pattern would seem to show that a stronger provision in the regional plan	Comment received. Thank you for your input.



Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	needs to be added regarding peer review.	
John Bacher	Regarding claims that protection of natural areas would create pressures to expand urban boundaries most of these lands are already protected to some degree and excluded from development potential. The exclusion of lands as enhancement areas would likely be limited in scale. The urban boundaries are quite large, especially because of the expansion in Fort Erie just south of Niagara Falls (Douglas Town) which came out of a judicial battle and has yet it seems to be recognized in urban boundary capacity.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
John Bacher	Paradise Grove is a good example of a savannah habitat. These need to be recognized and protected in the official plan review. Right now protected ECA lands are all forests.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
Robert Carson	How will cumulative effects be considered as proposals are assessed over time?	Currently, the Region's Environmental Impact Study (EIS) Guidelines require cumulative environmental impacts be assessed as part of an EIS being completed in support of a proposed development. These studies generally consider impacts, including cumulative impacts at a large scale (or within an adjacent to the site). We will be making recommendations that the Region and agency partners monitor the state of the Natural Heritage System to ensure the NHS is achieving its intended purpose, which includes assessing cumulative impacts (both positive and negative) over time.
	In the Technical report, under the evaluation criteria Ensure protection of the natural environment system,	The natural environment work program is a land use planning exercise. There is a need to evaluate the options from a range of perspectives. In addition to protecting the NHS and identifying a



Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
	you state that Option 3C best ensures the protection of a region-wide N.H.S, including within settlement areas. If there is an option that ensures the best protection and provides a resilient and I would add healthy and sustainable natural environment why shouldn't we pursue that option (i.e Option 3c)?	Region-wide system, there is a need to accommodate growth in the region and protect the agricultural system. We are given growth targets from the Province that the Region must allocate as part of the Official Plan. If we are not able to allocate the growth within our existing urban boundaries, we may have urban boundary expansions that were not anticipated. This would have impacts on the natural environment and agricultural land base in the Region. So while Option 3C results in the largest area identified as part of the NHS, it reduces opportunities to direct growth to urban areas and increases potential for urban area expansion, which we want to avoid.
Ken Kawall	In section 5.0 (page 53) of the technical report you identify preliminary preferred options based on the criteria noted on the prior pages. I assume the coloured circles are your recommendation for each specific evaluation criteria. Option 3C has 3 green circles and option 3B only has 2 and $\frac{3}{4}$, so can you help us understand the rationale for recommending Option 3B as a preliminary preferred option?	The circles do not represent weighting or scoring, the circles should not be translated into a scoring evaluation. The evaluation of options itself was a relative qualitative comparison of how each option achieves the criteria. The evaluation is not a scoring, weighting or quantitative analysis of each option; it is largely a value-based exercise, informed by a the review of best practices, consideration of feedback received from the 1st Point of Engagement, and professional opinion, that is intended to identify the option(s) which best fulfill the criteria, and ultimately satisfy the desire of the Region, stakeholders, and the public to provide policies and mapping that will achieve the goals and objectives for the natural environment system.
Kostyn Petrunick	Reagarding Discussion Question #2: Why are we provided with two non-option options (1 and 2), two bare minimum options (3a and 3b) and only one substantial option (3C)? Why are there not more options that do more than the bare minimum?	NHS Option 1 & 2 were developed based on the minimum provincial standards in accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans – they represent real options that confirm with Provincial requirements. NHS Options 3A, 3B, & 3C present 3 scenarios that exceed minimum standards. The intent of providing a range of options was to allow for feedback on those options and ultimately determine which option best fits with the Region's (including the public and other stakeholders) desire to identify a NHS.



Received From:	Unanswered Question/Comment:	Project Team Response:
Ashley Pollock	How do I get on this committee (committees)? You seem to not have a member-of-the-public (or members). Despite the importance of experts, the public probably needs to be involved here - not just at public meetings like today.	The Committee that was referenced during the presentation and the Q & A session was the Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee. This is a Committee of Regional Councillors, and is not open to the public. A public committee was formed for the new Official Plan project called the 'Planning Advisory Committee'. The application process was in 2018.
Marcie Jacklin	Great discussion. Thank you.	Thank you for participating.
Ashley Pollock	Thank you - a good & informative meeting.	Thank you for participating.
Marcie Jacklin	Where can we find the provincial NHS mapping?	Provincial NHS mapping is available from the following website: <u>https://www.ontario.ca/page/make-natural-heritage-area-map</u>





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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Comment Matrix
Virtual Public Information Centre – WRS Options and Watershed Planning
September 24, 2020 6:00 - 8:00pm



Comment Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents all comments received at the September 24, 2020 Virtual Public Information Centre. The project team response is included. For a record of all questions that were asked and answered live a recording of the PIC is available on the website for the new Official Plan. <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>

Received From:	Comment:	Project Team Response:
Ashley Pollock	Comment - not question: Ontario government has a watershed flow assessment tool - https://www.ontario.ca/page/watershed-flow-assessment-tool as does Brock University as does Ministry Northern Development and Mines, Ontario Geological Survey	Thank you for the comment! As part of our background review we are considering all sources of data, including some of the Provincial data and tools you have mentioned.
Ashley Pollock	Sidestepping drinking water, wastewater management, etc & their infrastructure ... How good are our water resources in Niagara region? Will the following be considered? - as in recreation - fishing, swimming, shorelines/beaches, etc - as in flood control, water table - as in utilization by agriculture, industry, the Welland Canal, and urban developers - as in utilization by the indigenous population (hunting, fishing rights) - as in "how many exceptions?" - particularly ones that aren't efficient or safe or climate-friendly and so on.	Thanks for your input. If you have any further comments about the goals and objectives after the presentation. Please let us know.



Received From:	Comment:	Project Team Response:
	It seems we haven't had a good report card score for a long time - we're pretty polluted. Really like the Goals & Objectives.	
Robert Carson	Reference material suggests that 2B is the better choice for water resources system for region-wide features because it includes settlement areas. It is essential to choose the best Option 2B which includes linkages in the settlement areas, appropriate for a continuous hydraulic/hydrologic WRS 2B provides better protection for small linkages and features in and out of settlement areas as well as buffers.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
John Bacher	I am concerned about the orange coloured areas marked for watershed studies based on future urban expansions. This is the first time I have learned of any urban expansions being considered through this plan review. On a need basis there is no reason for any urban expansions since this is supposed to be calculated on a regional basis. An attempt a few years ago to have an urban expansion in the Smithville area was rejected by the province since the rationale of a separate western need area was rejected by the province as a violation of both the Growth Plan and the PPS.	Thank you for your comment. Please attend our Growth Management webinar on October 7th to learn more about the settlement area boundary review process.
Lorie Tokola	We NEED Niagara Region to protect our drinking water. Without CLEAN	Comment received. Thank you for your input.



Received From:	Comment:	Project Team Response:
	drinking water there is no reason for jobs...	
John Bacher	The one area that I see an urban expansion concern is the Douglastown area of Fort Erie. This is because this area was essentially imposed by the province through the courts. A watershed plan re urban growth would be a helpful form of damage control.	Thank you for your comment on UAB expansions. As mentioned our Oct. 7th webinar will discuss this process in more detail.
Josef van Ruyven	Please suggest possible responsible uses for exhausted aggregate quarries where quarrying has been done into an aquifer.	Aggregate quarries generally operate in accordance with a Provincial licence which provide rehabilitation requirements.
John Bacher	I was also shocked to see urban expansion areas proposed for north west Niagara Falls. Urban needs could be served within the urban boundaries in the Chippawa area. This is one of the reasons that the region is going ahead with the new sewage treatment plant here, so that infrastructure capacity problems in south Niagara Falls do not stop growth on lands which are appropriately zoned.	Comment received. Thank you for your input.
John Bacher	There was no discussion of strategies to clean up ground water contamination. This is a serious problems. Such situations on lands such as the former General Motors site are a big barrier to needed intensification. Seeing clean up costs as part of a strategy to curb ground water pollution is an important way to get action on this problem	Thank you for the comment on groundwater. We will consider this and note your comments.



Received From:	Comment:	Project Team Response:
Ashley Pollock	How polluted are we?	Part of the work of the watershed plan is to characterize existing conditions. That work is still ongoing.
Chuck McShane	appreciated you bringing forth my questions , however i never recieved an answer or commitment of when the mapping would be availble. and to blame the provincial government is certainly a kop out!!!	It is our goal to have draft mapping completed in 2021.
John Bacher	I witnessed illegal dumping in Niagara Falls. This is known to the city council but nothing seems to be done about it. Could stopping such actions be part of a strategy to protect ground water.	Thank you for the comment and suggestion, we will note this.
Jessica Abrahamse	It is excellent that the Region is taking a progressive stance with respect to meeting the policies outlined in the PPS 2017 for the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan. Thank you for acknowledging the NPCA and the RAP program as a valuable partner. Karst formations were mentioned an area of potential future study, as a hazard area will the NPCA be involved with this study? Will a copy of the slide presentations be available after the meeting?	A copy of the presentation as well as a recording of the PIC will be posted on the website for the new Official Plan. https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/
John Bacher	There are streams that go through car wreckage yards in Niagara Falls and Fort Eire. Should not these streams be diverted from these areas to avoid future contamination?	Thank you for the comment and suggestion, we will note this.
Ashley Pollock	I think that because contamination / pollution seems to be quite a concern, this portion of planning should address	Comment received. Thank you for your input.



Received From:	Comment:	Project Response Team:
	this issue. Please don't ignore your public.	



Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Thank you again for registering for our virtual Public Information Centre on September 23 (Natural Heritage System Options)

We now have all of the material from the session posted on the website for the Niagara Official Plan including:

- A recording of the session
- A copy of the presentation
- A table with all of the input submitted in comment form and the answers to questions that we did not get to live

The information can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/public-information-centres.aspx>

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Thank you again for registering for our virtual Public Information Centre on September 24 (Water Resource System Options and Watershed Plan)

We now have all of the material from the session posted on the website for the Niagara Official Plan including:

- A recording of the session
- A copy of the presentation
- A table with all of the input submitted in comment form and the answers to questions that we did not get to live

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Regards,

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Senior Planner

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Appendix E: Additional Feedback

- E-mails and online submissions (61)
- Letters from Organizations and Groups
 - Grape Growers of Ontario
 - Niagara Federation of Agriculture
 - Ontario Tender Fruit Growers
 - Niagara Home Builders' Association
 - Joint Letter from Environmental Groups

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Friday, June 19, 2020 1:59 PM
To: 'lizcdn@yahoo.com'
Cc: Acs, Erik; Heyworth, David; Giles, Doug; Making Our Mark
Subject: FW: Update on NHS as part of OP Review

Hi Liz,

I am happy to provide an update on our natural environment work for the new Niagara Official Plan -

I was wondering if you could provide me with a brief update about where the team is at re. the Natural Heritage work for the OP.

We are currently on Phase 4 of the work program which is the identification and evaluation of options for regional-scale natural heritage and water resource systems. We are tentatively scheduled to present a staff report and consultants report to the Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee on July 15. Those reports will be available as part of the meeting's agenda package about 1-week in advance. I invite you to watch my presentation online. (Wednesday July 15, 1:00 pm – link available on the Region's website). Many of your questions below will be addressed in more detail through the Options report and presentation on the 15th.

In our staff report we are requesting direction from Regional Council to start the consultation process with the public and stakeholders. There will be opportunities to provide feedback on the various options we are looking at before a decision on the preferred NHS and WRS option is made.

I understand funding was received to help with mapping and data collection. When do you expect that work will be complete and a tentative map of an NHS available?

That is correct. We have partnered with the Greenbelt Foundation and NPCA and retained a consultant to update the ELC (ecological land classification) mapping region-wide. We hope to have that work done later in 2020. The ELC mapping is just one of the many layers that we need to complete the NHS mapping (which we intend to have completed in draft by about mid-2021). The Options report that we are presenting in July has some high-level and conceptual mapping which we use to illustrate the various options.

In reading the documents, It seems that you will be identifying 30 m buffers from identified natural features but not tentative linkages between them, is that correct?

No that is not correct. The 30m buffer is a requirement of certain key features in the Provincial Growth Plan NHS and Greenbelt Plan NHS. The Growth Plan NHS and Greenbelt Plan NHS also require significant number of 'linkages' across the Region which we will be implementing through the new Official Plan. In addition to this, the Options report that we are presenting in July looks at a range of options for the development of Regional linkages outside of the Provincial NHS's. We are considering different options for buffers as well.

Also, that at this stage, there is no plan to actually zone the mapped areas as NHS in the way that Halton has. Is that correct?

No that is not correct. "Zoning" is the responsibility of local municipalities through local zoning by-laws. Generally, the local Official Plans will need to conform with the Regional Official Plan and Provincial policy. Local zoning by-laws will then implement local Official Plan designations and policy.

Through the Regional Official Plan we are typically using either a "designation" or "overlay". The Options paper that we are presenting in July looks at several options and combinations of the use of designation and

overlay for the various components of the NHS. (You are correct that Halton currently has many parts of it system as a designation – although it is our understanding this is something that they have to look at again as the Province is now requiring that the agricultural system be ‘designated’ as well, and there are issues with overlap)

Furthermore, any features/buffers identified will be subject to "refinement" through developer funded ESRs as part of the development application process. Is that correct?

At this point we are still working to make a decision on the preferred option and direction for the NHS. We have not made any decisions on the refinement of features or buffers through the EIS process. That will come later in the process as we start to look at writing policies and updating our EIS guidelines.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Liz B. <lizcdn@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, June 19, 2020 11:49 AM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Cc: Giles, Doug <Doug.Giles@niagararegion.ca>; Savage, Lindsey <Lindsey.Savage@niagararegion.ca>; Costantini, Karen <Karen.Costantini@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Update on NHS as part of OP Review

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Dave:

I was wondering if you could provide me with a brief update about where the team is at re. the Natural Heritage work for the OP.

I understand funding was received to help with mapping and data collection. When do you expect that work will be complete and a tentative map of an NHS available?

In reading the documents, It seems that you will be identifying 30 m buffers from identified natural features but not tentative linkages between them, is that correct?

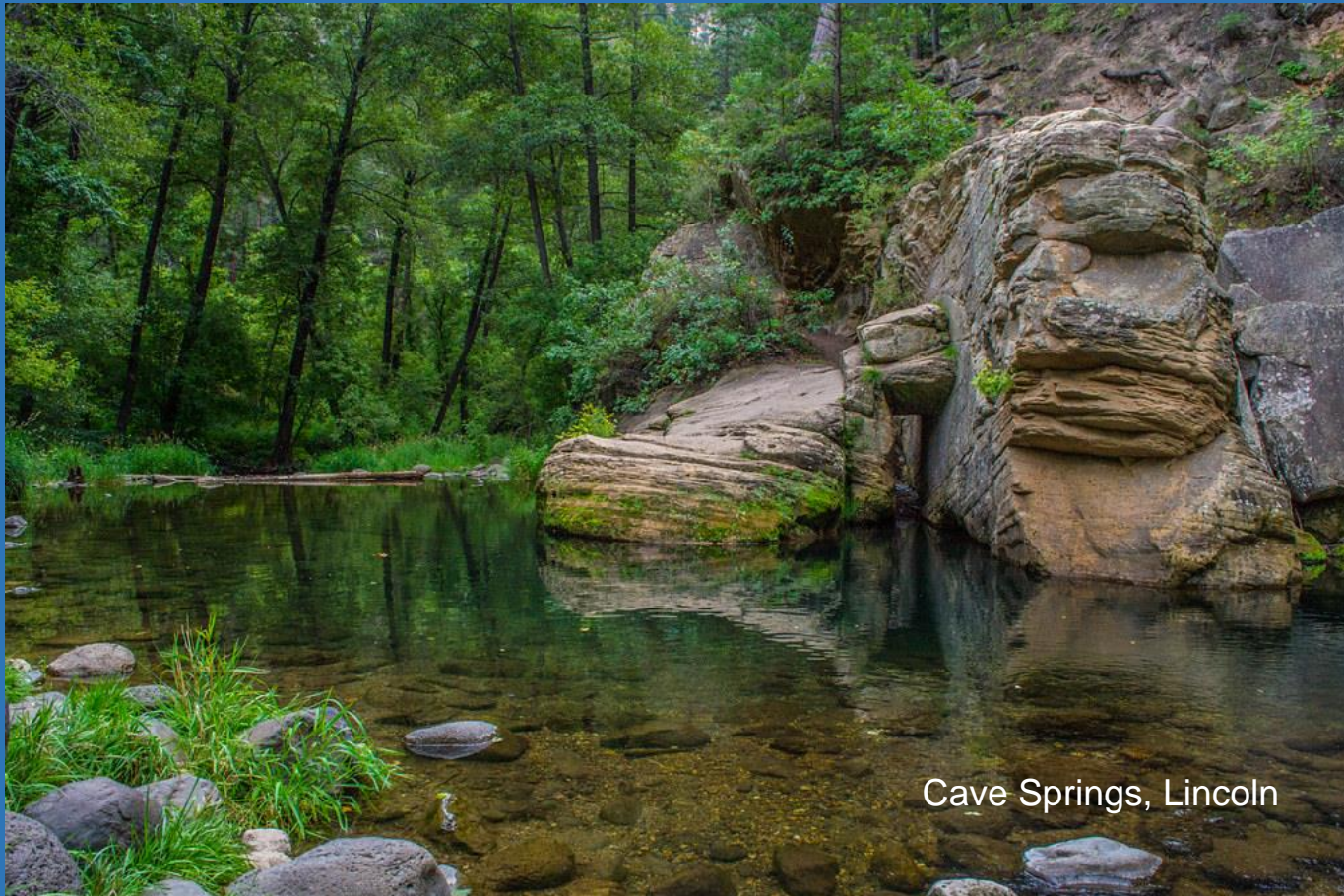
Also, that at this stage, there is no plan to actually zone the mapped areas as NHS in the way that Halton has. Is that correct?

Furthermore, any features/buffers identified will be subject to "refinement" through developer funded ESRs as part of the development application process. Is that correct?

Thanks for any information you can provide.

All the best,
Liz Benneian

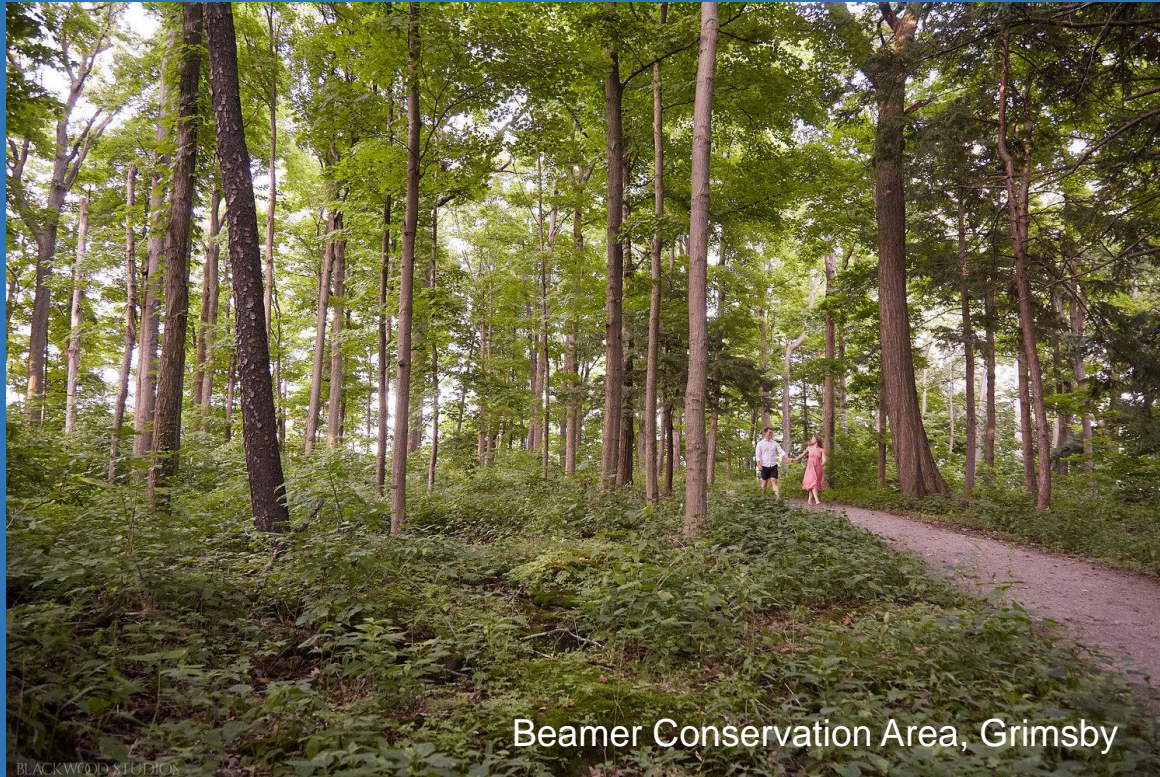
Creating Niagara's Natural Heritage System



Cave Springs, Lincoln

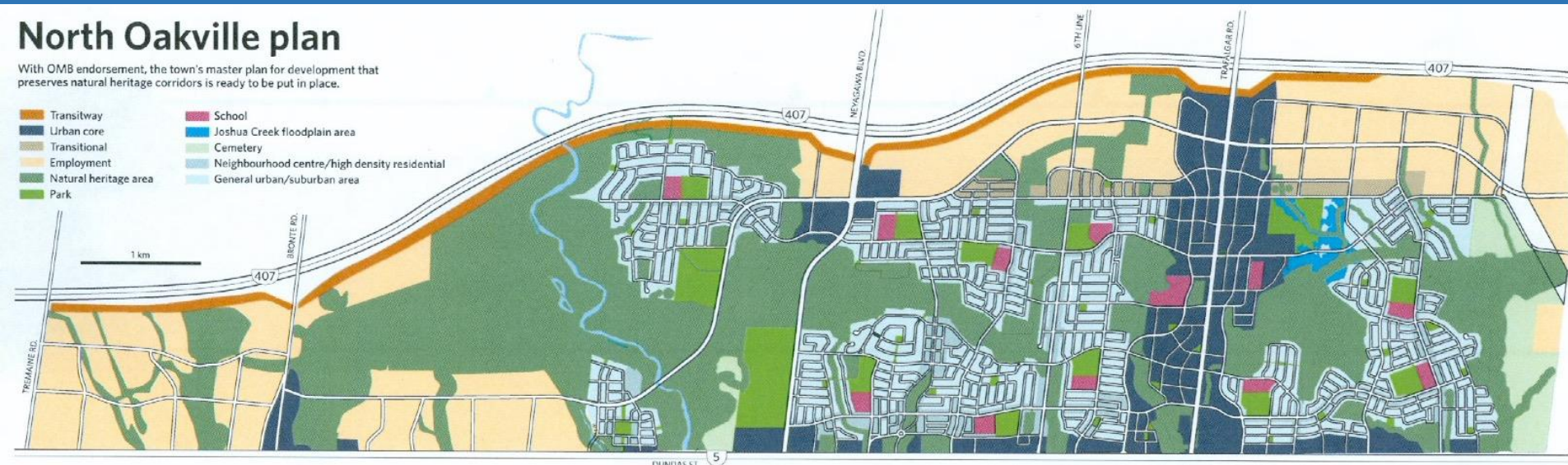
Liz Benneian

Thank You For Taking A Natural Heritage System Approach



The decisions Council will make on what Natural Heritage System option to support may be the most important decision this Council makes — one that will either protect Niagara's natural legacy for future generations or lead to its inevitable loss.

Oakville's Natural Heritage System



The dark green areas are the land designated as Natural Heritage System (25+% of the area).

The system preserves ecological integrity over the long-term and allows only passive human use.

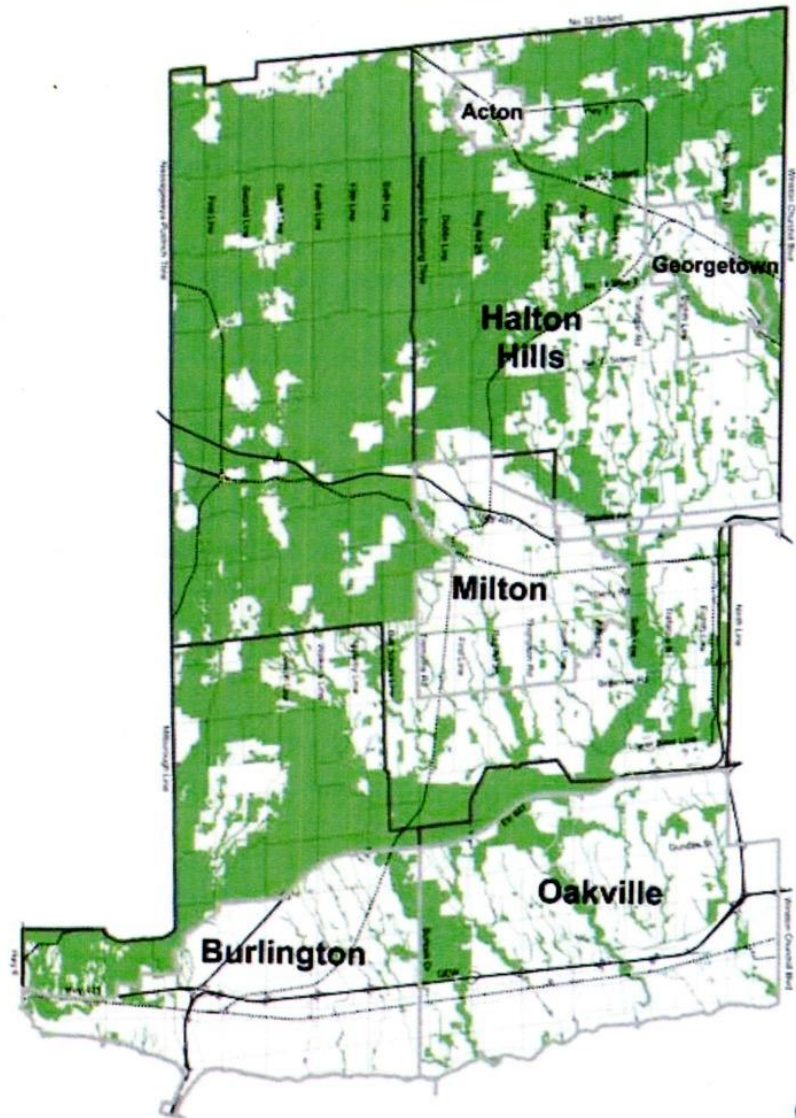
The light green areas are neighbourhood parks and sports fields.

Halton Region's Natural Heritage System

The plan protects 33% of Halton Region's land.

The system includes Greenbelt and Escarpment lands, woodlands, wetlands and floodplains, core and linkage enhancement areas as identified by municipalities.

Designating NHS does not preclude agricultural uses.



Natural Heritage System

Municipal Boundary

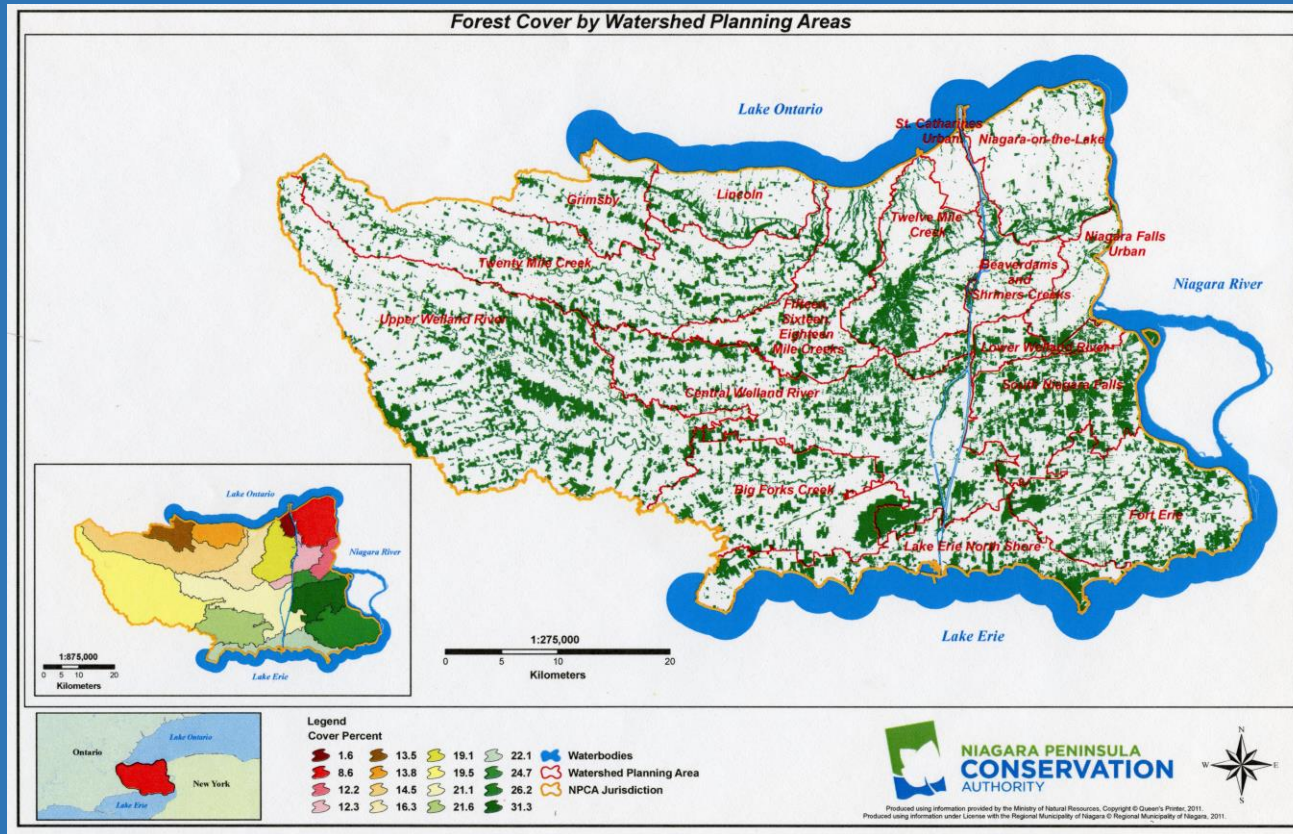
Urban Area

Development Pressure Will Only Increase In The Years Ahead



As we all know, Niagara is under significant development pressure. If we don't act now to preserve Niagara's natural environment there will be nothing left to save. Niagara has already experienced devastating losses to its natural heritage. 5

Niagara's Depleted Natural Heritage



Environment Canada says 30% forest cover is the minimum forest cover threshold.

40% will support half of potential species richness and marginally healthy aquatic systems.

50% forest cover is likely to support most of the potential species and healthy aquatic systems.

In Niagara we have 17.5% forest cover. Many large areas of Niagara including Grimsby, Lincoln,

St. Catharines, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Thorold, and Niagara Falls have less than 14%.

Some areas are as low as 1.6%. It's important to note this map is from 2011. More has been lost.

Niagara's Woodlands Are In Bad Shape

They are small, narrow, fragmented and don't have interior forest habitat.

The Natural Heritage System will protect the woodlands that exist and will enhance them with buffers, linkages and through restoration plantings.

FOREST CONDITIONS

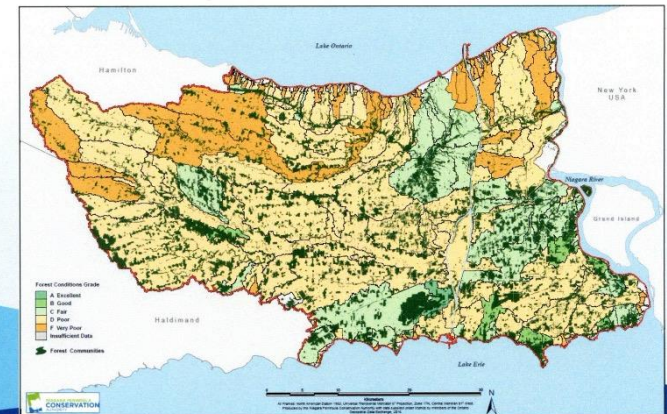
D

Forests are ecosystems that are composed of a diverse group of plants, animals and other organisms. Forests provide many social and ecological benefits such as habitat of flora and fauna, carbon sequestration, building materials, and opportunities for recreation.

The percentages of forest cover, forest interior, and stream side cover were used to evaluate the forest conditions of the watershed.

What Did we Find?

- The majority of NPCA's watershed scored a D grade as most of the woodlands are small, narrow, fragmented, and do not contain interior forest habitat.
- The highest forest condition grades were found in the southern portions of the watershed.
- The lowest forest condition grades were found in watersheds along the Lake Ontario shoreline, portions of Hamilton, and the urban centres such as St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.



Niagara's Surface Water Is In Bad Shape

Surface water is contaminated with fertilizer and pesticides from agriculture, faulty septic systems, sewer overflows and urban stormwater.

Its quality has been rated a “D” in Watershed Reports for many years.

Protecting natural areas and enhancing them, as envisioned in the NHS report, is key to improving ground water quality.

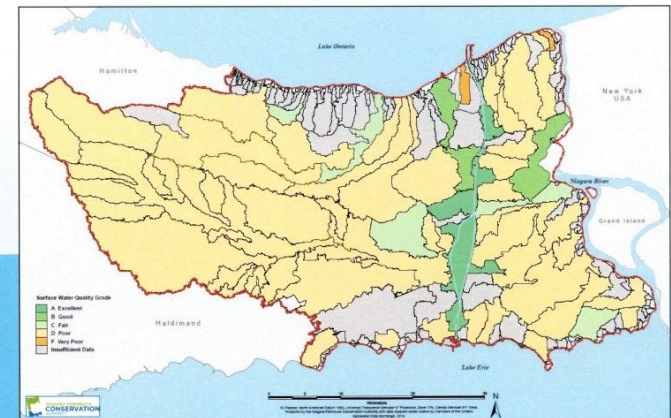
The NPCA monitors water quality at 80 sites throughout its watershed.

Surface water quality is graded using three indicators:

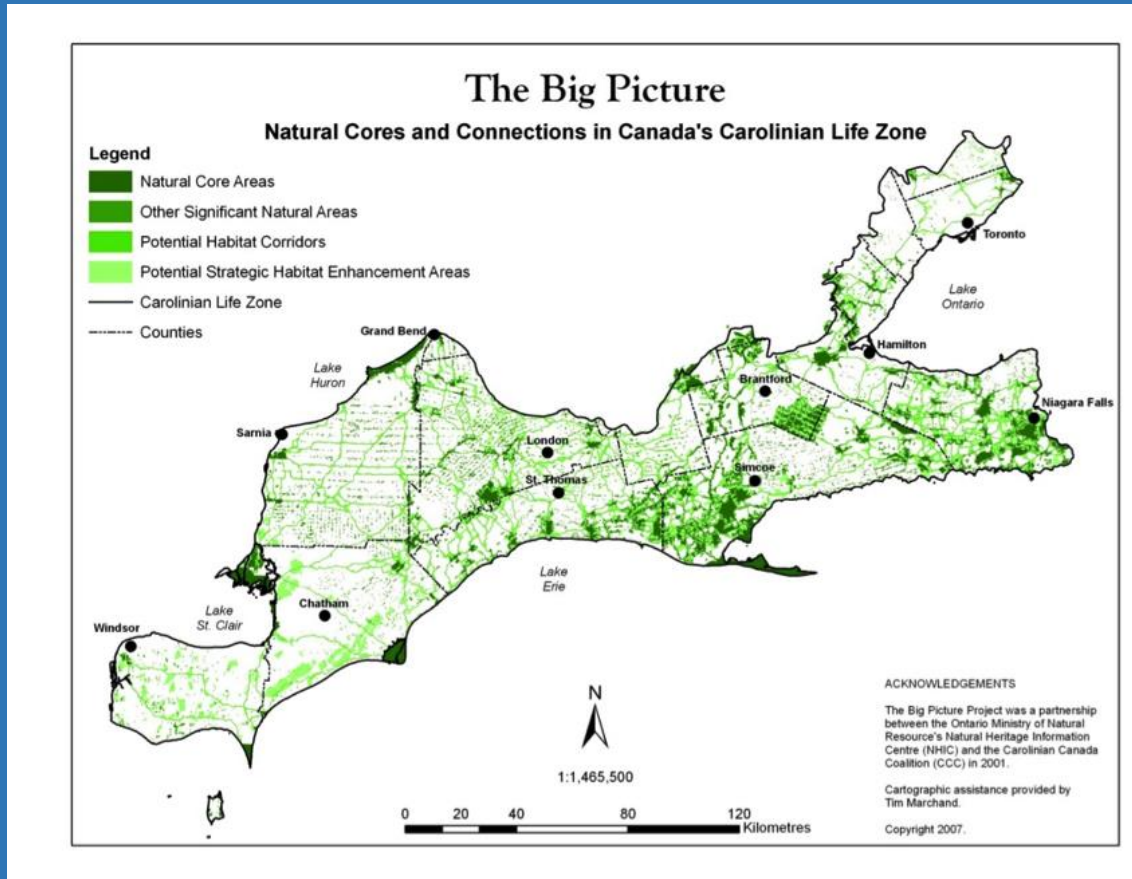
- Phosphorus (contributions from excessive fertilizer use and wastewater discharge)
- E. coli bacteria (found in the intestines of humans and other animals)
- Benthic macroinvertebrates community (small animals without a backbone that live at the bottom of streams). These animals have a range of tolerances to water pollution. Their quantity and variety can provide an indication of the level of water pollution.

What Did we Find?

- Most of the watersheds scored a D grade and have poor water quality.
- The highest surface water quality grades were found in watersheds where cleaner water is redirected from Lake Erie and the Niagara River to support hydroelectric generation and shipping in the Welland Canal.
- Nutrient and bacteria contamination from non-point sources (agricultural/livestock runoff and faulty septic systems) and point sources (combined sewer overflow and urban stormwater) continue to be the major causes of water quality impairment in the NPCA watershed.

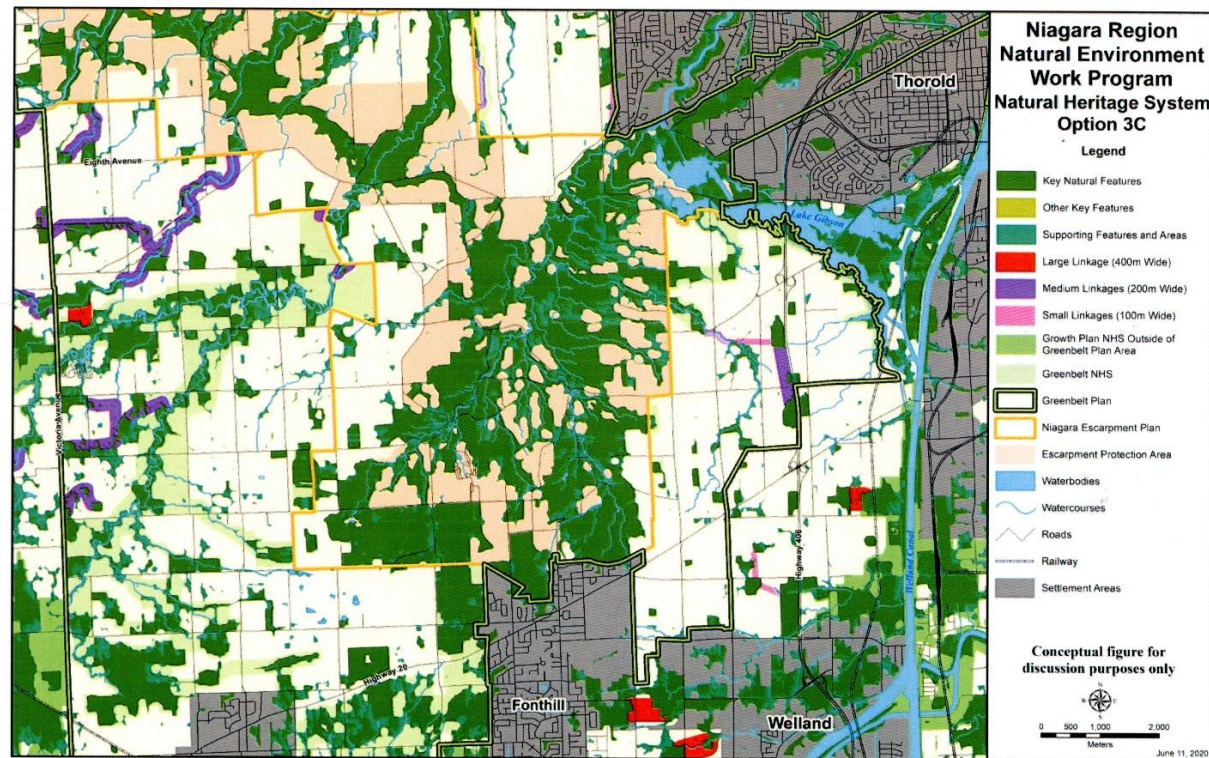


Niagara's NHS Is Key To Preserving Canada's Most Diverse Ecosystem



The Carolinian Zone is the most diverse bioregion in Canada but due to the loss of natural areas to urban development and agriculture less than 15% of its natural area remains. 125 species are considered vulnerable, species of special concern, threatened or endangered by either the federal or provincial government.

Please Support the Best NHS Plan: 3C not 3B



13

The major difference between Option 3C and # B is that option 3C includes supporting features and small linkages within settlement areas and suggests minimum buffers from key natural features within settlement areas.

Please Support the Best NHS Plan: 3C not 3B



Malcolmson Eco Park, St. Catharines

One of the things COVID-19 has taught us is that people value nature where they live.

Please Support the Best NHS Plan: 3C not 3B



Our people deserve all the green infrastructure benefits that natural spaces provide: shade/cooling; water purification; flood abatement; oxygen production; erosion control.



Fort Erie Friendship Trail

Thank you

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2020 3:39 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: FW: Online Form - Request to Speak at a Standing Committee

From: Niagara Region Website
Sent: Thursday, 09 July 2020 12:39:20 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Clerks
Subject: Online Form - Request to Speak at a Standing Committee

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

Name
Liz Benneian

Address
3150 Culp Road

City
Jordan Station

Postal
L0R 1S0

Phone
9055623819

Email
lizcdn@yahoo.com

Organization

standing committee
Planning and Economic Development Committee

Presentation Topic

Item 5.1 PDS 26-2020 Natural Environment Work Program

Presentation includes slides

Yes

Previously presented topic

No

Presentation Details

I would like to thank those in who have been working on this report for their excellent work so far. I would also like to draw the Councillors attention to the urgent need to develop the most robust Natural Heritage System possible and to support option 3C that is outlined in the report. The slide deck will be less than 6 slides. I realize I am a few hours late in this request but hope you will consider it. I look forward to hearing from you. All the best, Liz

Video Consent

Yes



Norman, Sean

From: Carla Rienzo <carlarienzo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2020 10:48 AM
To: Norman, Sean
Cc: Bradley, Jim
Subject: Final Agenda for the Niagara Region Planning and Economic Development Committee

Dear Sean Norman, where our natural heritage systems are concerned let it be known that **I fully support only option 3C** as it identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas; supporting features in and outside of settlement areas; includes large, medium, and small linkages outside of settlement areas; includes small linkages inside of settlement areas where the potential area is in a natural state; and, prescribes mandatory buffer minimums outside of settlement areas with suggested policy minimums inside of settlement areas.

Sincerely,
Carla Rienzo

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2020 3:23 PM
To: 'SORE'
Cc: Huson, Diana; Making Our Mark; Acs, Erik; Norio, Ann-Marie
Subject: RE: Niagara Region re Natural Heritage System Recommendation
Attachments: PDS 26-2020 Natural Environment Work Program - Phase 4.pdf

Hi SORE Association,

Thank you for your submission.

To clarify, as noted in the attached PDS 26-2020 the recommendations are preliminary and still require input through the 2nd Point of Engagement - which we are currently undertaking. All of the options that are being evaluated will be presented, and input towards finalizing the evaluation process will be requested.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: SORE <update@sorenottl.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, July 15, 2020 4:32 PM
To: Norio, Ann-Marie <Ann-Marie.Norio@niagararegion.ca>
Cc: Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>; Huson, Diana <Diana.Huson@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Niagara Region re Natural Heritage System Recommendation

Dear Mr. Norman and Members of Planning and Economic Development Committee:

We write concerning PDS 26-2020-Natural Environment Work Program-Presentation of Options, which was presented at today's Committee meeting. Our apologies for this late submission but we only just became aware of the report and today's meeting.

SORE is a federally incorporated not-for-profit community organization dedicated to the wise management, use and development of the historic Rand Estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We count many hundreds of NOTL and Region residents among our members and supporters. You can visit our website at sorenottl.ca for more information on our organization.

The Rand Estate contains several natural environmental components of interest and importance among its many attributes, including heritage trees, woodlands and One Mile Creek and its tributaries.

We read with interest the report and recommendation of your consultants, supported by staff, for Option 3B with respect to Natural Heritage System inputs to the Region's updated Official Plan. The report indicates that this option most closely reflects the input received during the consultation process to date.

With respect, we do not agree. The Consultation Summary Report which sets out the input supposedly leading to this conclusion does a good job of reflecting the advice provided by the various stakeholders to the consulting team. It lists nine "Key Themes" concerning that input. Among them are the following:

- Take a Systems Approach to Natural Environment Planning
- Recognize the Uniqueness of Niagara's Geography, Natural Environment and Agriculture
- Accurately Map the Natural Environment
- Protect the Natural Environment
- Forward Thinking Natural Environment Policies and Official Plan
- Build Trust Through Continued Engagement, Collaboration and Education.

We do not see anywhere in that consultation report a Key Theme that natural environment considerations and planning should be subservient to other considerations. Option 3C presented in the report in our view most accurately represents the input received from the stakeholders through the Region's consultation process. Yet the recommendation that Option 3B is preferred is explicitly made on the basis that other considerations should temper the Natural Heritage System inputs to the update Official Plan. If the Region's intention was and is that notwithstanding the input received during the consultation process, other considerations would be brought to bear on the recommendation on a preferred option, that should have been expressly stated and the stakeholders given an opportunity to comment. As it stands, the report's recommendation on a preferred option cannot be reconciled, in our view, with the input supposedly leading to that recommendation.

We ask that both Options 3B and 3C be carried forward into the next stage of consultation and that the stakeholders be explicitly asked for focused input on both options in light of the Key Themes identified in the consultation report, before the preferred option is endorsed by this Committee.

We congratulate the Region and staff on this initiative. It is long overdue and welcome. As the input received to date makes clear, Niagara Region has a biosphere unique to Canada. Our Regional Official Plan should embrace and build on that reality.

SORE Association
update@sorenottl.ca
sorenottl.ca

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 11:58 AM
To: 'writeon@sympatico.ca'
Cc: Acs, Erik; Making Our Mark
Subject: FW: Questions concerning Natural Heritage System Report
Attachments: PDS 26-2020 Natural Environment Work Program - Phase 4.pdf; PDS 18-2018 Natural Environment - Project Framework.pdf; NHS Qs to Sean Norman.pdf

Hi Linda,

Thanks for your submission. Please see below a response to your questions:

**Q1. Option 3C “best fulfills” what would seem to be the *logical highest priority criteria...
So why is Option 3B being recommended?
[The chart on page 82 and 83 indicates via green circles that Option 3C “best fulfills”:
*Consistent....Achieve the Vision, Goals, and Objectives if the new NOP, with
consideration of Regional Council’s strategic priorities
*Defensible...Policies follow a systems-based approach
*Effective...Ensures protection of the natural environment system.].**

A1. The identification of the preliminary preferred options through the technical evaluation process considered all of the evaluation criteria and did not assign a higher or lower priority to any of the criteria. As noted in the attached report - PDS 26-2020 - the recommendations are preliminary and still require input through the 2nd Point of Engagement, which we are currently undertaking.

**Q2 a. Who ARE the “stakeholders” referred to in this report?
b. Do “stakeholders” in this report include environment, climate and public health?
c. The public IS a “stakeholder” — our natural heritage and its benefits are at stake....
So why the differentiation?
page100 - Next Step ... “to consult with stakeholders and the public.”]**

A2. Yes, you are correct the public is an important stakeholder in the project. Stakeholders groups for the project were outlined in the attached PDS 18-2018 (which lists the public as a stakeholder). In PDS 26-2020 we use the terminology “*public, stakeholders, and Indigenous Groups*” in an attempt to be clear to Council and others that are reading the report that we will be having sessions and engagement that are designed for the general public as well as reaching out to specific groups and organizations that have an interest in the project. Differentiating between public and stakeholders is not intended to prioritize or diminish any of the input received.

**Q3. Will ALL “consult” meetings be “public” — in that everyone can attend?
— i.e. NO “private” meetings with “certain” stakeholders.**

A3. The 2nd Point of Engagement for the project will include a range of public sessions, stakeholder workshops, presentations, and 1:1 meetings with other public agencies, committees, and Indigenous Groups. This is typically for any planning or municipal project, a range of consultation and engagement tools are used, including 1:1 meetings.

Where 1:1 meetings are held, we are transparent and identify them as part of the project record. All of the engagement sessions, presentations, and meetings that we have, as well as the input received will be documented as part of the next consultation summary report. For example – please refer to Table 1 (Pg 2) of the Consultation Summary Report for the 1st Point of Engagement, <https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/rural-and-natural-systems/pdf/natural-environment-consultation-summary-report.pdf>. This table lists all of the sessions, presentations, and meetings that were undertaken for our previous point of engagement. The input received at each is documented throughout the report and within the appendices.

Q4. When do you expect to have these meetings?

A4. We are currently finalizing the plans for the 2nd Point of Engagement. We expect to have the majority of our sessions in late-August, September, and early-October.

Q5. How will the meetings be advertised?

A5. We are currently finalizing our plan for advertising the public sessions, but it will include the Region's social media channels as well as the website for the new Niagara Official Plan. <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>. If you have not already done so, I would encourage you to sign-up to receive newsletters for the Official Plan which is one of the best ways to stay up-to-date on the entire Official Plan work program. [link at <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>]

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Linda Manson <writeon@sympatico.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2020 1:21 PM
To: Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Questions concerning Natural Heritage System Report

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Norman,
Please see the attached email containing questions concerning the Niagara Region Natural Heritage System Report.
I look forward to your responses.
Thank you for this very worthwhile endeavor!
Sincerely,
Linda Manson

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2020 9:43 AM
To: 'dpierrynowski@gmail.com'
Cc: Acs, Erik; Making Our Mark; Norio, Ann-Marie
Subject: RE: Online Form - Enquiry from Region website

Hi Dawn,

Thank you, we have received your submission.

We are just starting the consultation and engagement on the preliminary referred options which will be undertaken over the next several months.

All of the input we receive will be considered and documented as part of the next Consultation Summary Report.

We anticipate that the natural heritage and water resource system options will return to Regional Council in late 2020/early 2021 for a final decision.

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Niagara Region Website
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2020 11:33:46 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Clerks
Cc: webincoming
Subject: Online Form - Enquiry from Region website

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

name

Dawn J Pierrynowski

phone

9053842476

email

dpierrynowski@gmail.com

municipality

Welland

other mun

subject

Region's Natural Heritage System and Water Resourc

comments

I have sent the letter below to Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Diodati. I felt that the other councillors should be included. Hello Councillors, Please address Regional council regarding my concerns about the proposed options that have been put forward about the Region's Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System. I did watch the presentations to council. It is my firm belief that option 3C for the Natural Heritage System and option 2B for the Water Resource System provide the best options for the overall physical and mental health of Niagara's citizens, the health of the environment and ultimately the economy of the Region. A much better effort needs to be made to council about economic value of these resources. Making it easier to develop within a Natural Heritage System should not be the focus. All the other options do not have a long term vision of how our community's environmental resources should be conserved, preserved and enhanced. How can our poor water quality and conservation efforts continue to be acceptable? I would like my letter to be formally submitted to all of the council at the next meeting that these issues will be discussed at. Thank you Dawn Pierrynowski

reply

yes

Page Referrer

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/council/writtenletter.aspx>



Norman, Sean

From: Liz B. <lizcdn@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, August 16, 2020 11:11 AM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: questions re NHS and WRS planning

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Sean:

I was wondering if you could tell me what percentage of Niagara's landbase is designated as settlement areas? Also is a "settlement area" the same as the current municipal boundary or are there lands identified as settlement areas that go beyond what would be identified on current maps as municipal boundaries?

I was also wondering if the mapping exercise for the NHS and WRS is mapping in the settlement areas despite the fact staff are currently not recommending including the settlement areas?

I was also wondering why staff decided to make recommendations on options for the NHS and WRS, and make local and regional politicians aware of your recommendations, before public consultation was concluded?

Last question, have you reached a recommendation on how the NHS and WRS will be delineated? Will the lands for the NHS and WRS be designated or will they be depicted as overlays and what are the potential consequences for the protection of the NHS and WRS depending on how they are depicted?

Thanks,
Liz Benneian
905-562-3819

Norman, Sean

From: Acs, Erik
Sent: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 8:19 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: FW: More about Waverly and Niagara Regional Council

FYI

From: gracia.janes@bellnet.ca <gracia.janes@bellnet.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2020 7:07 PM
To: Acs, Erik <Erik.Acs@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Re: More about Waverly and Niagara Regional Council

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Thanks for your very detailed reply Erik. I look forward to reading the report and appendices, as John, who I consider very knowledgeable has commented favourably. I'm particularly interested in your field work and hope that the results will ensure protection of our natural areas both inside and outside of urban boundaries. I noticed at a Council meeting last Fall, that Niagara-on-the-Lake took out some of the mapping of our creeks etc. They may be back in, by amendment. I'm looking into it for the NOTL Conservancy, as we have successfully opposed flag lots on Victoria Street, where 65% of the lot to be divided was on flood plain (with a proposed cut and fill replacement of land approved earlier by the NPCA). Luckily the new proposed OP negates this ability to sever and build on flag lots. However, we were unsuccessful in stopping a division of land for 2 lots on William Street in the middle of a lovely natural woodland area near the banks of the One Mile Creek, which is now now subject of a subdivision application for more lots. Another important area of course is the Wilderness on King, which had 4 mapped levels of protection in the old OP. Fortunately the Niagara Foundation was bequeathed half the area and are hopeful of winning a court case to acquire the other at an affordable price. As you can see, we are very cognizant of the bit by bit potential for natural area destruction and hope your regional efforts pay off.

Regards,
Gracia

From: Acs, Erik
Sent: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 3:34 PM
To: pals@becon.org ; Gracia Janes
Cc: Norman, Sean
Subject: RE: More about Waverly and Niagara Regional Council

Hi John and Gracia,

We're still working on a response to the previous email.

I've attached a link (the report and attachments are too large to email) to the agenda which contains the identification and options report that went to the July Planning and Economic Development

Committee. The report is agenda item 5.1 and has several appendices. <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=78797728-409f-4734-ad7c-9e2f4d539969&Agenda=Merged&lang=English&Item=15>

Unfortunately I think the email below, and other articles floating around contain misinformation and paint the team involved in the project negatively. I would encourage you to review the report and attachments, keeping in mind that the Province requires us to meet the criteria laid out in Option 1 for both NHS and WRS. In the past in Niagara (and present in other jurisdictions) consideration of anything beyond the Province's requirements never occurs/occurred. Based on feedback from our consultation to date, we've developed a range of options for the natural heritage system and water resource system that far exceed Provincial requirements for the identification of features and systems. We've even gone so far as to identify these as preliminary preferred options.

In addition, we're currently undertaking the field work component of our ELC project which will support the creation of better natural environment mapping. <https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=7780>

I'm happy to answer any other questions. We also have a workshop coming up this fall, if you haven't received an invite for it yet you will soon.

Erik

Erik Acs: M.Sc. MCIP, RPP
Manager of Community Planning
Planning and Development Services
Regional Municipality of Niagara
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7
Phone: 905-984-3610
Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215
Fax: 905-687-8056
www.niagararegion.ca

From: pals@becon.org <pals@becon.org>
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2020 2:54 PM
To: Acs, Erik <Erik.Acs@niagararegion.ca>; Gracia Janes <gracia.janes@bellnet.ca>
Subject: Re: More about Waverly and Niagara Regional Council

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Erico just got back from out of town and may not have not seen your reply to my email. On this matter could you please email me the report which refers to these Options 3C AND 2b

On 2020-09-01 12:59, Kevin McCabe wrote:

Hello Everybody:

Marcie is our favourite birder, and has put together the petition regarding Waverly Woods. Here is her update on the next stage of the issue. Kevin

Options 3C and 2B. Saving Waverly Woods

Marcie Jacklin

Fort Erie, Canada

Aug 25, 2020 —

Dear citizens of Niagara, would you like our community to look like Mississauga? If not, it is very important that you know there currently is an opportunity to join with people from around the Region to work together to ensure that Niagara Regional Council makes the best decision for us and for future generations.

In the coming months, Niagara's Regional Council will have a once in a lifetime chance to vote to preserve Niagara's natural heritage for the future or to continue to allow it to be destroyed and paved over.

As part of the Official Plan review, the Region must develop a Natural Heritage System (NHS) and a Water Resource System (WRS). The plans need be in place by July 1st, 2021.

To be effective in preserving what little is left of Niagara's natural ecosystems, the NHS and WRS will need to map and protect environmentally significant areas and water resources, sufficient buffers to protect them and linkages to connect them into resilient and sustainable systems that can foster and enhance local biodiversity into the future.

Unfortunately, Regional staff are recommending options that will not meet this objective, largely because it leaves all settlement areas (municipalities and their designated development lands) out of the equation. Natural systems do not recognize lines drawn on a map. They are either considered in their entirety or you don't have a "system". If this was in place now, Waverly Woods would have been protected from development.

Not only should the Regional Council select the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System that best protects the environment, they should also select the ones that provide the most benefits for the Region's citizens. For the Natural Heritage System that is Option 3C and for the Water Resource System that is Option 2B.

COVID has shown us the importance of having nature close to home. Beyond that our urban areas also need the green infrastructure benefits that natural spaces provide such as flood and erosion protection, pollution mitigation, pollination services, biodiversity protection and water quality improvements.

To learn more about this issue, please watch this clip of the presentation Town of Lincoln resident Liz Benneian recently made to the Planning and Economic Development

Committee: https://www.youtube.com/embed/R_Y1gIdVSN0?start=4974&end=6400&fbclid=IwAR2wliLkG2c_ZjPqUIRnREOKI0ZRFYk3wKs1kTDrL-uRgJaeVxAloXJKsQg

To connect with others who will be encouraging Council to choose the best NHS and WRS options for our future contact Liz at the Biodiversity and Climate Action Committee at bcacniagara@gmail.com.

Have a look at the Biodiversity and Climate Action Committee Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=294341598685232&id=114688909983836&_tn_=K-R

Please connect with your Regional Councillors and Mayors listed here to let them know you want 3C and 2B. <https://www.niagararegion.ca/government/council/profiles/default.aspx>

* Please donate to help us cover our legal and expert costs. Go to this link <https://www.forterievoices.org/donation> or send a donation to Community Voices of Fort Erie, P.O. Box 273, Fort Erie, Ontario L2A 2S0. All donations go towards our legal and expert costs. We require experts to testify at the Hearing in areas like Planning, Ornithology, Wetlands, Hydrology, Military History and Built Heritage.

* Share the petition with others [Sign the Petition](#) Can we get to 7500 signatures by September 1st? If you prefer not to sign the petition an alternative is to join our email list by sending your email and name to cvferie@gmail.com.



The Regional Municipality of Niagara Confidentiality Notice The information contained in this communication including any attachments may be confidential, is intended only for the use of the recipient(s) named above, and may be legally privileged. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, disclosure, or copying of this communication, or any of its contents, is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please re-send this communication to the sender and permanently delete the original and any copy of it from your computer system. Thank you.

Norman, Sean

From: Acs, Erik
Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 1:34 PM
To: pals@becon.org; Gracia Janes; Marcie Jacklin; Rick; Bruce and Laurie Mackenzie
Cc: Norman, Sean
Subject: RE: State of Regional Plan Review Natural Areas

Hi John,

Sorry for the delay in this reply. I had Sean provide the following input

John, you are correct – the Growth Plan NHS does not extend into urban boundaries. However, as you have noted the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) does require the protection of natural heritage features with urban boundaries. The Regional NHS will be implementing the Growth Plan NHS, Greenbelt Plan NHS, and PPS, as well as issues which are of regional importance. The Regional NHS that we are developing will be in both the urban and rural areas of the Region.

At this stage in the work program we have not developed draft policies or detailed mapping of the Region – there is therefore nothing to share at this point. We are still considering options for how the NHS (and water resource system) will be designed. Those reports can be found here:

Staff report – <https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/rural-and-natural-systems/pdf/report-identification-evaluation.pdf>

Consultant's report - <https://www.niagararegion.ca/projects/rural-and-natural-systems/pdf/technical-report-identification-evaluation.pdf>

As clearly noted in the staff report – the recommendations at this point are preliminary and still require the input of the public and stakeholders – which we will be undertaking over the next several weeks. You will however note that the NHS and WRS options that are being recommended by staff and our consultants go well beyond provincial requirements.

In regards to your question about the LPAT, we're not really at the point yet where we have investigated that in much detail. There have been changes to the Planning Act, and there are certainly components of an Official Plan that are no longer subject to appeal – we (legal team) still need to sort out the details on that. Suggesting the entire plan is not subject to appeal is premature at this point. Regardless, we still have lots of consultation ahead, and many opportunities for Council to hear public feedback. Regional Council is not the final approval authority for the plan, that authority lies with the Province.

Erik

From: pals@becon.org <pals@becon.org>
Sent: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 1:47 PM
To: Acs, Erik <Erik.Acs@niagararegion.ca>; Gracia Janes <gracia.janes@bellnet.ca>; Marcie Jacklin <mjacklin@brocku.ca>; Rick <guitarjones@gmail.com>; Bruce and Laurie Mackenzie <kintail52@gmail.com>
Subject: State of Regional Plan Review Natural Areas

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Thanks Eric I remember on the Public Meeting on the regional plan last fall you discussed with me the board which showed proposed mapping for natural areas, which I believed followed provincial amendments to the Growth Plan. It appears that the map did not show any proposed protected natural areas that are within urban boundaries. This is of concern to me since such an approach would remove from the current ECA protection, both the Waverly Beach and Thundering Waters areas. While the approach may reflect the current state of the Growth Plan, I believe it is contrary to the PPS Natural Areas policies, (which are refined in the Natural Heritage Reference Manual), which make no reference to urban boundaries. In fact the guidelines go into considerable length into how to link and buffer natural areas are part of subdivision approval. Also the Growth Plan provisions, like all provincial policies are minimal standards, which the region can and in this case, should exceed.

I have tried to navigate the Regional website to see the proposed Natural Area policies. Could you please send me the policy both by pdf and normal mail. Normal mail would be helpful since the colours of any map would show up. My address is 134 Church Street, St. Catharines, L2R-3E4.

As I indicated in the Woodland Review, the most practical change to the Natural Areas policy would be to require that any proposal to justify site alteration in an ECA area should be subject to a mandatory peer review. Such reviews should also be required in the more regulated EPA areas, in which infrastructure projects (ie. roads) are permitted.

Another concern I have is I heard at a Planning Committee meeting that the new regional plan would not be subject to review by LPAT. Is this correct?

Thanks, John Bacher

Norman, Sean

From: Brigitte Bonner <brigittebonner@hotmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 3:05 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: Niagara Official Plan Review

Saturday, September 12, 2020

Dear Mr. Norman,

I am writing in regards to the Natural Heritage System (NHS) and the Water Resource System (WRS) which are part of the review of the Official Plan.

I believe that it is extremely important that the options that provide the most protection for our environment and our water be selected.

This is a crucial time in history as we are battling more and more negative effects of climate change. The plan selected will affect generations to come. If strict protections are not put into place now, it may be too late.

It is vital that Niagara's remaining natural areas and water resources are protected now, as the pressure of development is ever increasing. We need a functioning ecosystem to survive.

That is why I believe that Option 3C for the NHS and Option 2B for the WRS are the best choices. These options provide the most protection for our natural systems both inside and outside settlement areas.

I am very concerned about this issue and hope that the options that are most beneficial for the environment and the residents of Niagara are put into place.

Thank you in advance for giving me the opportunity to provide my input.

Sincerely,

Brigitte Bonner

Ridgeway, Ontario

Sent from my iPad

Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Monday, September 21, 2020 11:20 AM
To: Norman, Sean; Heyworth, David
Cc: Acs, Erik
Subject: FW: Letter/questions regarding Niagara's Official Development plan

FYI.

From: Edie Thomson <musicaledie@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 20, 2020 10:30 AM
To: makingyourmark@niagararegion.ca
Subject: Letter/questions regarding Niagara's Official Development plan

Dear Mr. Heyworth,

I understand that development is inevitable and cannot be stopped since our population in this area is increasing, but I believe MORE can be done to align the population growth with healthier environmental standards in the new "Official Plan."

My question is such: when a developer culls the trees in a forested area in order to prepare it for housing, who is ultimately responsible for replacing all those trees that come down?

Is there a particular person or department that counts the number of trees that come down so that the equal amount are replaced? (Or does this even happen?)

The developers and real estate agents selling the properties are making MILLIONS of dollars in these developments, but what are they giving back once the land is stripped and habitat is lost? The development should be done responsibly so that trees in that area are left undisturbed as much as possible, then REPLACED with an equal ratio to what was cut.

My concern is that our forests and treed canopy of this region are coming down at an alarming rate, thus reducing the necessary "cooling effect." We are living in unprecedented times where global warming and climate change is a HUGE issue, therefore, more consideration and mandatory regulations should be in place BEFORE trees are taken down.

The natural solution to the urban sprawl and population growth is to focus attention on filling in the existing empty strip malls which are noticeable throughout the entire region. It only takes a car ride from one end of the city of Niagara Falls to the other to see at least 4 vacant strip malls collecting dust. That land should be developed FIRST and "in-filled" with new homes before another project is started.

Another suggestion I have is that once an area is slated to be a housing development, a full section behind those homes should be left unaltered (no tree cutting) so that natural habitat for native birds are permitted to thrive in that area.

I thank you for your attention to the above and look forward to attending the online information seminars. I also urge you and your team to set the standards high so our region is recognized for creating environmentally healthy developments.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Edie Thomson

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Tuesday, October 13, 2020 11:56 AM
To: 'Tristan Knight'
Cc: Costantini, Karen; Making Our Mark
Subject: RE: Follow-up to Presentation

Hi Tristan,

Thanks for the follow-up. You are right, at this phase we are really looking at concepts for the NHS and WRS. Policy development will be part of the next phases of our work program.

With the current provincial framework there is a difference of how features are to be protected (i.e. within Provincail NHS's protection is per the Growth Plan/Greenbelt Plan and outside of the NHS's they are per the PPS). This is something we are thinking actively about, and once there is a preferred option, we will be designing the system and making a recommendation on this.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Tristan Knight <tristan@terrastoryenviro.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 20, 2020 7:36 PM
To: Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>; Costantini, Karen <Karen.Costantini@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Follow-up to Presentation

Hi Sean, Karen,

First, just wanted to express my appreciation for the workshop held last week. Overall the presentations were informative and thought-provoking. North-South (Sal in particular) are eminently qualified to be delivering advice/options on environmental policy development, and I'm glad they are on your team. I do intend on submitting responses to your questionnaire.

In considering the presentation further, I wanted to clarify something that I'm not sure was covered. Does the Region intend to implement a different set of policies for significant natural features occurring beyond the boundary of the future RNHS as part of the updated ROP? I recognize that the presentation was focused primarily on options for mapping the NHS, and so this question may be a bit beyond scope (perhaps it falls in line with Project Phase 7?). If a "two-tiered" approach to Regional policies for significant/key natural feature protection within vs. beyond the future NHS is under consideration (or likely), the configuration of the NHS (i.e., the focus of Project Phase 4) becomes a more important question. As a consultant I see this regularly – applications dealing with (say) a Significant Woodland within the Growth Plan NHS are afforded a 30 m setback, while a (roughly)

equivalent Significant Woodland is afforded a smaller setback (sometimes considerably) if it's beyond the Growth Plan NHS (where only the PPS "no negative impact" test would apply, without "mandatory minimum" setbacks).

If you wanted to respond to the above through the matrix you are providing on the Q&A that's okay of course.

Thanks again.

T.

Tristan Knight M.E.S., M.Sc.
Senior Ecologist | President
Terrastory Environmental Consulting Inc.
(c) 905-745-5398
www.terrastoryenv.com

Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 9:15 AM
To: lorrainenadeau8@gmail.com
Subject: RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Hi Lorraine,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the new Niagara Official Plan. We have forwarded your email to the staff involved in the growth management, housing, and environmental policy aspects of our new official plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

From: Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 9:35 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

Name

Lorraine Nadeau

Email

lorrainenadeau8@gmail.com

Phone

9056884625

Organization or Affiliation

Address

76 Village rd.

City

St. Catharines

Specify City

St. Catharines

Postal Code

L2T 3B7

Province

Ontario

Topics of Interest

Housing Strategy,Natural Environment,Agriculture,Climate Change

Other Topics of Interest

Comments

The explosive suburban development that is overtaking the region is troubling at best. The large expensive homes and surrounding barren neighborhoods are not geared to young families, mature or single people or low/moderate incomes. Green and natural spaces are endangered and can not be offset nor replicated in sterile homogeneous landscapes. Diversity is critical for all existence. We humans are no exception. Development based on greed and filling tax coffers is short-sighted and will leave a devastating legacy.



Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 9:21 AM
To: Mary-Anne Ratte
Subject: RE: Niagara region

Good Morning Mary-Anne,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the new Niagara Official Plan. The policies of the new plan will support the development of existing urban areas, while also protecting agricultural lands and natural heritage.

We have forwarded your email to the staff involved in the growth management, agriculture, and environmental policy aspects of our new official plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

From: Mary-Anne Ratte <mylexie1958@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 2:25 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Niagara region

To whom it may concern

My concerns regarding the region are as follows- rapid over development of all green space, poor transportation, increase in traffic and accidents, constant increase of property taxes even though there is more houses being built. Wild life are in our streets during early morning hours as we have invaded their space with over development. I hear coyotes howling most nights as I live near farm land. Four way stops need to end on busy roads, like Quaker. There is too much traffic and stop lights need to be installed. The Niagara region wants and are getting people to move to this area, but congratulations, so comes the crime. Regardless of what the police might claim, there is an increase of all crime rates. Much of this goes unreported. There is also an increase in homelessness as the price of housing and rent increase. Yes this is all negative, but I am very concerned that this once beautiful area with lots of farm land, trails and forest has lost and will continue to lose land so in a few years we will be as overcrowded and have more crime than the Toronto area. Good luck with your plan. I will watch closely who I vote for.

Mary-Anne

Norman, Sean

From: Mostacci, Rino
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2020 8:56 AM
To: Tamara Maiuri; Huson, Diana
Cc: Norman, Sean; Heyworth, David
Subject: RE: Please keep Niagara's ecosystems safe

Hi Tamara, thank you for your interest.
I have copied your correspondence to Sean Norman, who is managing this project.

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner, Planning & Development - Niagara Region - CA
E. rino.mostacci@niagararegion.ca T. 905. 685.1571 M. 289.241.0821

From: Tamara Maiuri <tam.maiuri@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2020 6:22 AM
To: Huson, Diana <Diana.Huson@niagararegion.ca>
Cc: Mostacci, Rino <Rino.Mostacci@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Re: Please keep Niagara's ecosystems safe

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Diana, thanks for getting back to me and for clarifying the information. I unfortunately had other commitments last night and missed the session but I'll be sure to follow along on this.

Thanks again

Tam

On Wed, Sep 23, 2020 at 3:58 PM Huson, Diana <Diana.Huson@niagararegion.ca> wrote:

Hi Tamara,

Thank you for reaching out. I'm afraid you may have received some inaccurate information.

While we were presented with a report on this, it was the consultation, not staff who made this recommendation. The message we received, and were in favour of as a Committee, was adopting measures beyond the minimum standards regulated by the province.

This work forms part of the official plan work and we are a long way from making a decision on this. Staff are in the middle of gathering public input on this at this time.

As someone who has an interest in this process as it unfolds and develops into a policy, I would encourage you to provide your feedback. One of our information centre are happening tonight and I would encourage you to contribute.

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/public-information-centres.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1WMt8myEfCLH0lvTKQc-Nc2w8zW06n2cdUYowBeXIFiY2gVCFnEgePCI0>

Thank you taking an interest in this important work! Have a wonderful day ;)

Diana Huson

Sent from [Workspace ONE Boxer](#)

On September 23, 2020 at 9:24:55 AM EDT, Tamara Maiuri <tam.maiuri@gmail.com> wrote:

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayors and Regional Councillors:

My name is Tamara Maiuri and I live in St. Davids.

I am writing to ask that you vote for the best possible Natural Heritage and Water Resource System (NHS and WRS) options to be part of the Official Plan. Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS ensure the necessary protection of Niagara's environment, protections that were outlined as essential in the Region's own report on climate change (which can be found here on page 30: www.niagararegion.ca/projects/rural-and-natural-systems/pdf/climate-change-discussion-paper.pdf).

This issue is important to me because the vote will determine Niagara's future. The NHS 3C & WRS 2B will:

- help mitigate climate change by preserving and enhancing natural systems
- protect all the green infrastructure benefits that natural areas provide including pollution reduction, oxygen generation, flood control, erosion prevention, urban cooling, pollination services
- provide greenspaces where people live, for recreation and better health
- help to address biodiversity loss in Niagara

We must protect Niagara's remaining natural areas and water resources right now because development pressure is increasing. If you don't adopt the best measures this term, there will be little left to save. Whether the people of Niagara can depend on a functioning ecosystem depends on your vote.

Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS provide the best protection and enhancement opportunities for these natural systems both outside and inside of settlement areas.

Concerns have been raised suggesting that by identifying aspects of the NHS and WRS in settlement areas, developers will feel so constrained that they will lobby to open even more greenfield lands for development. However, they are already lobbying for this and will regardless of how comprehensive the Region's NHS and WRS plans are. As such, the argument that certain aspects of the NHS and WRS in settlement areas might push them to lobby more is null and void.

Please, base your decision on the needs of Niagara's current and future residents, rather than the desires of a special interest group.

I will be following this issue closely. Your vote matters and will be remembered. I urge you to choose 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS.

Sincerely,
Tamara Maiuri
45 Melrose Dr, NOTL
289-687-5840

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Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 9:19 AM
To: cpaskey@gmail.com
Subject: RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Good Morning Cindy,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the new Niagara Official Plan. The policies of the new plan will support the development of existing urban areas, while also protecting agricultural lands and natural heritage.

We have forwarded your email to the staff involved in the growth management, agriculture, and environmental policy aspects of our new official plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

From: Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 1:37 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

Name
Cindy Paskey

Email
cpaskey@gmail.com

Phone
9056873175

Organization or Affiliation

Address

19 St. Lawrence Drive

City

St. Catharines

Specify City

Postal Code

L2M 2T7

Province

Ontario

Topics of Interest

Urban Structure,Housing Strategy,Natural Environment,Agriculture,Climate Change

Other Topics of Interest

Comments

I am concerned about the continuing loss of green space, tree canopy, residential neighbourhoods and the infilling of land with town housing (such as along Beaverdams Road, and has become common throughout Fonthill, St. Catharines, NOTL) and commercial buildings. Single residences, along with their trees and gardens are being destroyed and the land is being used for multi-unit buildings featuring concrete. What used to be a scenic "country-ish" drive is now becoming littered with commercial buildings - driving out to St. Davids along York Road for example. At the same time, commercial buildings go vacant and fall into disrepair – happening in St. Catharines at Fairview Mall, GM on Ontario Street, the Henley Plaza on Ontario Street for example. Niagara is losing its character and charm. Traffic congestion is increasing everywhere and public transit provides little relief. We have an aging population. With COVID even our minimum wage tourist-related jobs are at risk. We are attracting retirees who seek more affordable living and spend less, drive up housing prices and probably increasing pressure on our health care system. Our homeless population has increased. Many of our children are moving elsewhere for employment. Who will maintain all of the existing and new development / infrastructure over the long term? Niagara is becoming dominated by concrete and fast- food outlets. How is this affecting agriculture and healthy food choices? Is it possible to create more mixed-use developments that feature green space and amenities for residents? On Niagara's current land use trajectory, I believe our quality of life is diminishing.



Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2020 9:23 AM
To: Edie Thomson
Subject: RE: Written Opinion regarding Natural Heritage Plan

Good Morning Edie,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the new Niagara Official Plan. The policies of the new plan will support the development of existing urban areas, while also protecting agricultural lands and natural heritage.

We have forwarded your email to the staff involved in the growth management & housing, and environmental policy aspects of our new official plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

From: Edie Thomson <musicaledie@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 24, 2020 10:33 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Written Opinion regarding Natural Heritage Plan

After reading the material presented regarding Niagara's Official Plan: Natural Environment, it is imperative that we take every action to ensure that planning **Option #3 be the ONLY consideration moving forward.** We are at a critical point with global warming and climate change, and therefore, consideration to the environment must be a priority.

Option 3 offers a responsible compromise so that housing development can be done so in a balanced manner, while also accommodating wildlife and natural habitat in a proposed development.

My additional suggestion after viewing the information, is that more attention be considered when identifying a development's "buffer zone." The buffer zone should include a **larger square footage area** so that animal and wildlife habitat can remain relatively intact while also preserving tree canopy.

(I also noticed that missing in the development plans/ housing development was green space for children such as a city park/family area. This should be a compulsory part of every new housing development since many families require some kind of green space (grass and trees) for their children.)

I would also like to add that since builders and developers are the ones who acquire the most financial gain from a new growth plan/development project, then **THEY** should also be responsible for replacing the same number of trees they clear cut in the surrounding area. Tree replacement should NOT be at the expense of the city or municipality.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Edie Thomson

Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 8:52 AM
To: ibrucato@outlook.com
Subject: RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Good morning,

Thank you for the comments regarding Niagara's tree canopy coverage, and tree planting.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

From: Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, September 29, 2020 11:30 AM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

Name

JOHN BRUCATO

Email

ibrucato@outlook.com

Phone

9052958555

Organization or Affiliation

Address

3086 Chipman Crescent, Niagara Falls, On L2G 6M5

City
Niagara Falls

Specify City
Niagara Falls, Ontario

Postal Code
L2G 6M5

Province
Ontario

Topics of Interest
Natural Environment, Climate Change

Other Topics of Interest

Comments

In terms of our over-all environment as well as thwarting the effects of climate change, it is very important to maintain, if not INCREASE the tree canopy throughout the Niagara Region. Too many mature trees are being lost due to development, private discretionary removals, disease and insufficient public tree plantings. An aggressive and ongoing program of tree planting throughout the region should be implemented without delay. Programs engaging and encouraging community members and promoting the benefits of trees should be part of this initiative. Developers should be required to fund replacement of any portion of tree canopy that is reduced by projects, whether on the immediate site or by way of plantings in other locations. Tree stock for plantings should be of a suitable size that ensures successful growth of specimens to maturity.



Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2020 3:16 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: FW: Online Form - Enquiry from Region website-Comments on Natural Heritage

From: Niagara Region Website
Sent: Tuesday, 29 September 2020 11:18:15 (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Clerks
Cc: webincoming
Subject: Online Form - Enquiry from Region website

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

name

Maria Featherston

phone

905-871-4681

email

maria_featherston@hotmail.com

address

municipality

Fort Erie

other mun

subject

Regional Council/Clerk

comments

September 29, 2020 Dear Mayors and Regional Councillors: My name is Maria Featherston

and I am a resident of Fort Erie. Soon you will be asked to make the most important decision of this term—you will be asked to approve a Natural Heritage System (NHS) and Water Resource System (WRS) as part of the Official Plan. I am asking you to please vote for the Options that, according to your own technical experts, are most protective of our environment and water resources. They are options 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS. In these COVID times it has become more and more apparent how important our natural spaces are to our mental well-being. Upon moving to Fort Erie in 1977, we lived in an apartment and spent every weekend walking, hiking or even just driving along the river. It was a chance to de-stress, get away from confined spaces and enjoy nature. As an avid birdwatcher, camper and hiker I love to find wildlife in its natural settings. We are losing more and more habitat to development. This loss of Niagara's natural beauty will impact tourist dollars and make us less attractive to employers and new residents. It is critical that Niagara's remaining natural areas and water resources are protected now because development pressure is increasing and if you do not adopt the best measures this term, there will be little left to save. Whether future generations in Niagara can depend on a functioning ecosystem depends on your vote in this matter. Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS provide the best protection and opportunities for enhancement for these natural systems both outside of, and inside of, settlement areas. The health of our communities; physical, mental and natural depend on you. Climate change needs to be addressed and you have an opportunity here to do our part on behalf of Niagara residents. If you do not act now according to what the science of natural systems dictates, your actions cannot be undone. I took part in the ZOOM information meeting and I am convinced more than ever that there is only one possible option for each of these systems. I urge you to choose 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS. Maria Featherston 996 Parkdale Avenue Fort Erie, L2A 5B6 905-871-4681

reply
yes

Page Referrer
<https://www.niagararegion.ca/>



Norman, Sean

From: Mary Lou Tanner <mtanner@niagaraplanninggroup.ca>
Sent: Saturday, October 3, 2020 4:01 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Cc: Heyworth, David; Acs, Erik
Subject: Re: Tonight's Webinar

Hi Sean

Appreciate you reaching out. When doing the watercourse mapping project for the Region, we spent a great deal of time with the farmers in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We also heard a lot about this issue as we undertook the 2013 review of the Greenbelt Plan in Niagara. The Region's report on the Greenbelt Plan identifies the competing objectives related to natural heritage and farming. You can find a general description of the issue on page 35 of the Region's 2013 report prepared by Urban Strategies.

In essence the issue boils down to the need to ensure that there is no damage to crops by introducing habitat for bugs, pests, and disease through either the vegetative protection zone planting or the stewardship initiatives for habitat restoration. During the above projects, we heard very clearly from farmers that this was a major concern. The ladybug issue is this: for those farmers that sell their grapes to wine producers, the tolerance for ladybugs per tonne of grapes is 1 ladybug. Any more than 1 ladybug and the tonne of grapes is rejected. Farmers can't realistically check every cluster of grapes, what they do need is to ensure that plantings adjacent to NHS features do not create the circumstance where bugs have a foothold into the grape crop.

Thanks again. Wishing you all well.

Mary Lou

Mary Lou Tanner, FCIP, RPP

Principal Planner

M 289 776 8904 **E** mtanner@niagaraplanninggroup.ca



To our valued clients and industry partners:

Thank you for your work with NPG. We are grateful.

NPG staff continue to work remotely in full capacity through Stage 3 of Niagara's and Ontario's re-opening. We are available by email and phone. Our meetings will be conducted virtually using a variety of technology options that we

have as part of our day to day business. We have instituted enhanced health and safety and cleaning protocols for our office and our staff so we can all continue to be healthy and safe.

We continue to be ready and available to assist you. In the event you are having difficulty reaching us, please email Dianne Rintjema, drintjema@niagaraplanninggroup.ca. We hope you and those you care for are safe and well.

From: "Norman, Sean" <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>
Date: Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 1:38 PM
To: Mary Lou Tanner <mtanner@niagaraplanninggroup.ca>
Cc: "Heyworth, David" <david.heyworth@niagararegion.ca>, "Acs, Erik" <Erik.Acs@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: RE: Tonight's Webinar

Hi Mary Lou,

Thanks for the submission and bringing this to our attention. We will look into these issues in a bit more detail.

Yes, please send along the information regarding ladybugs if you could.

Regards,
Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP
Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

From: Mary Lou Tanner <mtanner@niagaraplanninggroup.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 7:58 PM
To: Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>; dave.heyworth@niagararegion.ca
Subject: Tonight's Webinar

Hi Sean and Dave

Thanks very much for the webinar tonight. It was a very good presentation and discussion. I do want to follow up with you on the question I raised about agriculture and buffers. For example, a natural sustaining vegetation protection zone, the following is from the Greenbelt Plan:

“In addition, these uses are exempt from the requirement of establishing a condition of *natural self-sustaining vegetation* if the land is and will continue to be used for agricultural purposes. “ (3.2.5.7). Land has been interpreted that everything up to a feature, a building, a parking area has to be planted with agricultural crops (even if the farmer cannot reasonably harvest them). It seems to be a very narrow interpretation of this policy. The consequence is that natural self-sustaining vegetation introduces new pests and bugs that could undermine the saleability of the crops. I can share the ladybug quantum if needed. The point is that farmers need to plant and need flexibility to ensure the maximum sale price; natural self-sustaining vegetation can bring pests that undermine that.

Second issue: The PPS policy of existing agricultural uses. There have been agencies who have interpreted “existing” as “existing” on the date the PPS came into effect. So if a farmer chooses to change an orchard to a vineyard, the agency has interpreted this as no longer an “existing” agricultural use. We’ve also had experience where land in fallow that is then planted has been interpreted as not “existing”. The consequence is that new policies impact what can and can’t be done with the farm and the farm buildings.

I really think that duplicating the provincial policies needs to be balanced with the needs of farmers in Niagara – there are competing interests around agriculture, value added/on farm diversification etc.

Mary Lou Tanner, FCIP, RPP

Principal Planner

M 289 776 8904 E mtanner@niagaraplanninggroup.ca



To our valued clients and industry partners:

Thank you for your work with NPG. We are grateful.

NPG staff continue to work remotely in full capacity through Stage 3 of Niagara’s and Ontario’s re-opening. We are available by email and phone. Our meetings will be conducted virtually using a variety of technology options that we have as part of our day to day business. We have instituted enhanced health and safety and cleaning protocols for our office and our staff so we can all continue to be healthy and safe.

We continue to be ready and available to assist you. In the event you are having difficulty reaching us, please email Dianne Rintjema, drintjema@niagaraplanninggroup.ca. We hope you and those you care for are safe and well.

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Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 9:56 AM
To: mbuckin1@becon.org
Subject: RE: Natural Heritage System

Good Morning Marya,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding natural heritage system options for the new Niagara Official Plan. The policies of the new plan will support the development of existing urban areas, while also protecting agricultural lands and natural heritage.

We have forwarded your email to the staff involved in the environmental work program for the new official plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

From: mbuckin1@becon.org <mbuckin1@becon.org>
Sent: Sunday, October 4, 2020 2:33 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Natural Heritage System

Greetings

Having read the options and as a 40 yr. Resident of Niagara there is only option that can truly be called Natural Heritage which is Option 3 C.

When I moved here that many years ago I was greatly impressed with the 'Greenness' of the Region and felt that Niagara should take pride in the extent of woodlots, forests, marshes, wetland, meadows, and farmlands extant in an area as Urban as it was then and with an ever expanding urbanization such as S. Ontario. It was Iconic! along with beautiful. The drive from the Border to Toronto was an impressive 'Gateway' with the lovely views of Orchards and a site line across Lake Ontario often as far as Toronto.

From an Environmental point of view to the perspective of Tourism and Healthy, Livable Communities , Green is what Niagara needs to Preserve, Promote and Celebrate.

So much of what was here those years ago is now Devastated. The stretching of urban sprawl is constantly increasing along with ever higher building elevations. To me this contrary to what can make Niagara outstandingly unique and attractive and that is being Iconically Green . By Building up without excessive heights and using in-filling over outward expansion addresses the need for improved tax bases, increasing population, employment possibilities, tourism, and attractive, healthy communities.

The best course toward this is by ending the fragmentation of woodlots, bush, and forests; recognizing and respecting the vital role of nature in all its forms including wetlands, savannahs, meadows, lakes, ponds and streams and highlighting their role in making Niagara unique in its shoreline local in spite of being adjacent the

intense density of the GTA. The Pandemic has highlighted the significance of nature's role in holistic and inclusive health and greatly enhanced people's appreciation and desire to be in around natural environments. That means that communities need to pay even greater attention to all of the Components of Nature that contribute to the highest quality of air, water, and lifestyles while at the same time, greatly contributing to the reduction of environmental and weather related threats. These are the kind of factors that stand in contrast to other Options and make Option 3C the most desirable choice. I am aware of the concerns about impeding the flexibility of Developers but it seems to be, overall, Developers are far more adaptable than the Components of Nature. The recent acceleration of floods, fires, drought, storms, temperature fluctuations, and more underscores this. We ignore these elements at our peril. Our Natural Heritage and overall well being depends

Of greatest Urgency is the recognition that without healthy people, a healthy environment and ecosystem it is impossible to Have let alone Sustain a Healthy Economy.

Sincerely,

Marya F. Buckingham, BA, M.Div

#309 81 Scott St. St. Catharines, L2n 7L5

Norman, Sean

From: Making Our Mark
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 9:43 AM
To: David Reimer
Subject: RE: Virtual Public Information Centre: Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System

Good Morning David,

Thank you for submitting comments regarding the webinar we held on natural heritage for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We appreciate your feedback and have forwarded your email to the staff involved in the environmental work program for the new official plan, for their consideration and inclusion in the consultation summary.

Best Regards,
Official Plan Team

-----Original Message-----

From: David Reimer <niagaramd@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 7:27 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Virtual Public Information Centre: Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System

Thank you for your presentations - they were very informative and well-presented. My comments would be;

It is clear that we have mandated residential growth goals from the Province, a desire for industrial/commercial growth to provide local jobs, and a desire to protect our valuable agricultural land. But, I am grateful to see that you are considering an emphasis on our Natural Environment as well. I would encourage you to recommend the most progressive of your possible recommendations (Option 3C) for a number of reasons;

- our natural areas are the most easily lost, but the hardest to reclaim, of land uses
- we are seeing significant losses in insect and bird populations warning us of increasing

environmental stresses and greater changes to come. Loss of habitat is a major factor in this, and Niagara is relatively low in natural habitat

- Climate change is a reality, and the benefits of 'green' areas in temperature modification, carbon capture, and moisture retention are well-known
- this present pandemic has emphasized the value of green spaces to the mental health and well-being of our population. And given the crowds at many of our green areas, it suggests we need more.
- ecological diversity is hard to put a dollar, social/cultural, or ethical value to. However, I believe it is very important, and natural habitat protection is key to it's protection.

Sincerely yours,
David Reimer

Norman, Sean

From: Norman, Sean
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2020 3:11 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: FW: Feedback re. the Niagara Official Plan (NOP) Virtual Info/Consultation Sessions

From: Desmond Sequeira <sequeira_cdjd@sympatico.ca>
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2020 1:22 PM
To: Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>
Cc: Barnhart, Daryl <Daryl.Barnhart@niagararegion.ca>; Bellows, Sandie <Sandie.Bellows@niagararegion.ca>; Bradley, Jim <Jim.Bradley@niagararegion.ca>; Butters, Barbara <Barbara.Butters@niagararegion.ca>; Bylsma, Dave <Dave.Bylsma@niagararegion.ca>; Campion, Frank <Frank.Campion@niagararegion.ca>; Chiocchio, Pat <Pat.Chiocchio@niagararegion.ca>; Darte, George <George.Darte@niagararegion.ca>; Diodati, Jim <Jim.Diodati@niagararegion.ca>; Disero, Betty <Betty.Disero@niagararegion.ca>; Easton, Sandra <Sandra.Easton@niagararegion.ca>; Edgar, Kelly <Kelly.Edgar@niagararegion.ca>; Fertich, Wayne <Wayne.Fertich@niagararegion.ca>; Foster, Robert <Robert.Foster@niagararegion.ca>; Gale, Bob <Bob.Gale@niagararegion.ca>; Gibson, Kevin <Kevin.Gibson@niagararegion.ca>; Greenwood, Barbara <Barbara.Greenwood@niagararegion.ca>; Heit, Brian <brian.heit@niagararegion.ca>; Huson, Diana <Diana.Huson@niagararegion.ca>; Insinna, Tom <Tom.Insinna@niagararegion.ca>; Ip, Laura <Laura.Ip@niagararegion.ca>; Jordan, Jeff <Jeff.Jordan@niagararegion.ca>; Junkin, Marvin <Marvin.Junkin@niagararegion.ca>; Nicholson, Peter <Peter.Nicholson@niagararegion.ca>; Norio, Ann-Marie <Ann-Marie.Norio@niagararegion.ca>; Redekop, Wayne <Wayne.Redekop@niagararegion.ca>; Rigby, Tim <tim.rigby@niagararegion.ca>; Sendzik, Walter <Walter.Sendzik@niagararegion.ca>; Steele, Bill <Bill.Steele@niagararegion.ca>; Tripp, Ron <Ron.Tripp@niagararegion.ca>; Ugulini, Terry <Terry.Ugulini@niagararegion.ca>; Villella, Leanna <Leanna.Villella@niagararegion.ca>; Whalen, Tim <Tim.Whalen@niagararegion.ca>; Witteveen, Albert <Albert.Witteveen@niagararegion.ca>; Zalepa, Gary <Gary.Zalepa@niagararegion.ca>
Subject: Feedback re. the Niagara Official Plan (NOP) Virtual Info/Consultation Sessions

I attended the sessions on 22, 23, & 24 September 2020. You have said, " We hope you enjoyed our event".

Permit me to be as "Canadian" as I can manage to be at this time by responding as follows: After spending six valuable hours away from other important matters to give you my attention, the answer is "definitely NOT"..

As a very lay person seeking enlightenment from experts, a number of questions arose for me. For example,

- Why were sessions aimed at simple persons like me (as distinguished from the exceptionally knowledgeable people you are) so replete with jargon unintelligible to me?
- My even less "Canadian" streak prompts me to ask: Was this some form of predictable political narcissistic ploy, consisting mostly of self-talk and self-congratulations, which could then give you license to say that you fully involved the public in the process, thereby also giving yourselves a pass on whatever you proceed to do?
- Why did you even present to an ordinary person like me at this stage when, as it appeared to me, you had so little to say by way of concrete, specific proposals vs vague generalities full of uncertainties and "motherhood" statements? Your numerous and complicated maps contributed to teaching me nothing.

In case you choose to dismiss the above as a rant by some lone crackpot with an axe to grind, here are quotes from a couple of others who also attended, regarding what you had to offer:

From Ryan Forster, an advanced doctoral candidate in Political Ecology:

" It is chalk full of the bromidic language of technocrats..... It's painstaking bureaucratic crap that appears as a systematic process aimed at thorough and responsible decision making but is, I suspect, a functional barrier to proper democratic participation. I mean, these are experts and they are well-informed, but how can the public truly weigh in without some simplified, shortened version of all this? (And Ryan says more)

From Kostyn Petrunick, an English Graduate student:

".... I was at the one last night. They are brutal..... I think they are being purposefully obscure or accidentally so. Either way, It's an anti-democratic barrier"

I cannot believe that the Niagara Regional Council (NRC), especially with Jim Bradley at the helm and including the mayor of my city and others whom I also voted for, will allow this travesty to pass for public info/consultation. As far as I am concerned, I sat through six hours without being informed. My effort to say so at the third meeting was predictably "paraphrased" out of my comments by your Q&A moderator

I do hope that you will manage to recognize the above as a sincere effort to provide you with some constructive criticism to assist with any future attempt to inform and consult. How many others felt the same as me but are way too "Canadian" to say so? What you need most of all is communication specialists who might, first of all, help you know your audience.

Please Note: I do have some thoughts re. what I, as a resident of Niagara (given the Climate and Biodiversity Collapse that is already upon us) expect from an NRC that I helped to elect and several of whose members I personally voted for. I will share this shortly in a separate email though I am joining thousands of others in Niagara by becoming cynical about the politicians of the region, even more so after Thundering Waters. Yes, I have good reason to believe that it is many of these politicians with their vested interests who are the impediments to taking the Climate and Biodiversity Collapse crisis seriously and NOT the educated, knowledgeable council staff.

Thank you,

Desmond Sequeira

St. Catharines ON

905 937 1554

Norman, Sean

From: egailb <egailb@sympatico.ca>
Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 9:16 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: Niagara's wonderful natural heritage

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am a continuing member of the St. C Heritage Advisory Committee, (formerly simply Heritage Committee), and a member of a number of community organizations that are concerned about climate change, esthetics (billboards blighting the city) and historical societies. All I can add to the mess that has been made of Thundering Waters [the corporation with a memorandum of agreement by our former Ontario gov't] by the former NPCA and more is to *please please* have the region firmly uphold out local Niagara biodiversity, our natural wonders here.

Gail Benjafield, St. Catharines

Norman, Sean

From: Allan Teichman <allan.teichman@me.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 1:07 PM
To: Norman, Sean
Subject: Input to Niagara Regional Council on preserving our natural heritage

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr. Norman,

Please convey the following to Regional Council as my input on the Region's planning for natural heritage preservation planning.

As a long-time resident of the Niagara area, one of the things I value most about it are the pockets of natural heritage that exist throughout this region. There is literally no week, year-round, when I am not out hiking or exploring one of them.

As the region continues to welcome new residents, that natural heritage is getting gobbled up and fragmented at a steady rate. Thriving ecosystems like the Thundering Waters Forest are at risk of diminution to "memories of" status.

Recommendations and suggestions for preservation aren't binding, which means they are not a priority for any developer. Let's make both of those change!

I support the greatest degree of protection we can bring to our natural heritage areas, and specifically reject any decision to continue on our path of non-binding suggestions. I strongly encourage the Region to have the foresight and strength to choose **Natural Heritage System 3C** and **Water Resource System 2B** as best able to protect both settled and unsettled areas for a healthy and green future.

Through the Niagara Parks system, we have successfully protected the natural heritage that drives our tourism industry. It's now time to bring that same rigour to the natural areas that make this part of the province a great place to actually live.

Thanks,

-- Allan --

~~~~~  
Allan Teichman  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario



**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** erika loffelmann <loffelmannrika@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 1:32 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Natural Heritage sites

To those whom this may concern,

I am a lifetime resident of St.Catharines. I've had the privilege to grow up, in my opinion, one of the most beautiful areas of Canada. We have such an amazing opportunity to give this legacy to our future generations. But only if we act now to protect, preserve and form a truly unique program of conservation. Please, I ask you to seriously consider making sure we can continue to offer our children and the world at large the biodiversity and conservation of our ecosystem here. Thank-you for your time and serious consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Erika Loffelmann

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Lorna Anstruther <lanstruther@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 8:09 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Preserve Our Natural Heritage

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr. Norman:

After participating in the debacle in Niagara Falls regarding the Riverfront Development, I am compelled to add my two cents about preserving our natural heritage.

We have one and only one chance to get this right and sadly too much of our natural heritage has been lost and continues to be lost because the Region and communities have failed miserably to set and follow the regulations.

NHS Option 3C

WRS Option 2B

The tighter the regulations the better.. Also needed is strict monitoring of sites, with swift action when violations are reported / occur. I would like to see that violations are punished with huge fines and mandated remedial measures.

Thank you,  
Lorna Anstruther  
Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6H7

**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 1:59 PM  
**To:** Melissa McGlashan  
**Subject:** RE: Natural Heritage System - Plan Better, Live Better

Good afternoon Melissa,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

**From:** Melissa McGlashan <melissamcglashan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 11:01 AM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Natural Heritage System - Plan Better, Live Better

Please respond indicating that this letter has been received.

**Natural Heritage System  
Plan Better, Live Better**

To The Region,

There has recently been a presentation to the Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee regarding a Natural Heritage System. It seems obvious that, of the options presented, Option 3c is the most protective of our environment and human health, and provides for the most green infrastructure benefits. It also provides the most information to council and staff when making future planning decisions.

It was very disappointing that staff specified a preference for option 3b during the presentation to the Planning and Economic Development Committee without yet having done any public consultation or stakeholder meetings. In addition, it was disappointing that this option is preferred given that staff has not specified any goals they are trying to achieve with the Natural Heritage System nor how option 3b would achieve those goals. Option 3b does not map within urban areas. This leaves a great deal of information out of future decision making as the majority of our Niagara population is in urban areas. Option 3b severely limits the ability of council and staff to make informed decisions on behalf of Niagara Region residents. Option 3c provides staff and council with the most information by mapping throughout the region, including rural, suburban, and urban areas.

With Niagara Region revising its official plan as well as designating a natural heritage system, now is our last, best chance to protect our farmlands, wetlands, and green spaces. By mapping within urban areas, Option 3c gives cities all



of their mapping information. This allows for decisions to be made regarding buffer areas around natural heritage sites and linkages to other natural heritage sites. Linkages are significant because without linkages we merely have islands of green space, and species diversity dies in islands.

Having all mapping information helps give cities the flexibility to deal with development applications. Without this information, all planning intentions are undercut. I live in Welland and our urban boundary is about to be expanded to include all land to the Pelham and Thorold borders making mapping in my city extremely important and valuable. Several of Niagara's current regional councillors have previously served as city councillors which means that they have experience dealing with issues arising from development applications. Mapping throughout the region, rather than only doing half the job, can help avoid these issues by clearly establishing where development can be accommodated and under what conditions (for example maintaining buffer zones and/or linkages). This clarifies situations for potential developers and further enables city councillors to act in the best interests of their constituents.

It is incredibly important to note that once our natural areas are bulldozed it is not possible to restore them. Niagara Region has one opportunity to preserve what we have left of our natural habitats. The region needs smart development and option 3c far exceeds option 3b at achieving this. Rather than settle for doing part of the job, we should be employing the best option and obtaining the most information. Why would the region set out to do half a job and deny future councillors and planning staff the best information to make informed decisions? Why should Niagara residents have to settle for less than the best?

It is my hope that you will agree that more information leads to better planning which leads to healthier, more beautiful and functional cities for all. I am writing today to add my voice to others in the community who may reach out to you on this topic, and to ask that staff recommend option 3c for the designation of our Natural Heritage System. In closing I would like to impart two final thoughts: 1) Better planning does not mean no development, and 2) People do not come to Niagara for the concrete.

Please maintain the natural heritage of the Niagara Region for generations to come.

Kindest regards,

Melissa McGlashan, Hon BSc.  
490 Clare Ave  
Welland ON L3C 3B5

**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:16 PM  
**To:** berzerker9001@hotmail.com  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara Official Plan

Hi Nancy

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** berzerker9001@hotmail.com <berzerker9001@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 10:23 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Niagara Official Plan

Hello,

It is important for the future of the Niagara Region that the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource system be extended into the settlement areas, that is options 3C NHS and 2B WRS. The patchwork approach to development will give disastrous results for environmental sustainability and ultimately make the region undesirable for growth of any kind. The region has many abandoned areas that are excellent candidates for redevelopment. We can't continue to simply abandon development failures from the past and destroy the few natural areas remaining. These natural areas are necessary for sustainable growth.

I urge you to opt for sustainable growth by implementing options 3C NHS and 2B WRS.

Thank you for your consideration.

Nancy Lease  
289 First Ave  
Welland

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:13 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** FW: Water Resource Systems - Sept 24/20

Hi Sean,

This also came to the inbox. Could you please file and respond as appropriate.

Thanks.

---

**From:** Marcie Jacklin <mjacklin@brocku.ca>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 4:25 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Water Resource Systems - Sept 24/20

Hello

Thanks for the all work which has been done on the new Official Plan so far.

Here are a few questions that I have from the meeting on Sept 24/20

1. It was mentioned that there wasn't much guidance from the province about WRS. Who will establish the criteria? Who will be the experts?
2. My notes are a bit unclear - will Vegetation Protection Zones be required within Settlement areas?
3. I think Sal mentioned NHIC however getting records into their database right now is difficult given the reduced staff. I would still suggest that the team consult with local nature clubs about Endangered Species.
4. What are the concerns about developing on top of a Highly Volatile Aquifer? How would development be managed?
5. Given what happened between 2009 and 2018 there are multiple trust issues with site specific studies - they are often inaccurate or incomplete etc. Are there plans to address these issues given that many of the experts were laid off during that period?

Regards

Marcie Jacklin [mjacklin@brocku.ca](mailto:mjacklin@brocku.ca)



## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:12 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** FW: Natural Environment - NHS Sept 23/20

Hi Sean,

This came to the inbox. Could you please file and respond as appropriate.

Thanks.

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**From:** Marcie Jacklin <mjacklin@brocku.ca>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 7, 2020 4:14 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Natural Environment - NHS Sept 23/20

Hi

I still have a few questions from the evening of Sept 23/20

1. You mentioned at the beginning that climate was an overlay but there doesn't seem to be much info about climate change mitigation for this key section.
2. You mentioned that Option 3C was restrictive. Could you explain what you meant by that?
3. How many developers would be willing to add enhancement areas to their plans?
4. How realistic are population growth estimates for 30 years in the future?
5. Why does planning always focus on compensation rather than protection? Surely developers know when they are buying wetlands/woodlands etc.

Regards

Marcie Jacklin [mjacklin@brocku.ca](mailto:mjacklin@brocku.ca)

SORE Association  
[update@sorenottl.ca](mailto:update@sorenottl.ca)  
[sorenottl.ca](http://sorenottl.ca)

On 8-Oct-2020, at 5:51 PM, SORE <[update@sorenottl.ca](mailto:update@sorenottl.ca)> wrote:

We are submitting these comments for the consideration of Regional staff and Councillors on behalf of SORE.

SORE is a federally incorporated not for profit organization dedicated to the protection and wise management of the historic Rand Estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SORE represents several hundred residents in NOTL concerned about inappropriate development and the protection of natural and built heritage.

The Rand Estate is a nationally significant heritage asset currently under threat from an entirely inappropriate development proposal involving a hotel, convention centre and high density subdivision. Randwood contains (or contained before a large portion of it was outrageously clear cut two years ago) one of the few surviving examples of an extensive designed landscape by Dunington-Grubb, in addition to a variety of heritage trees, woodlots and One Mile Creek and one of its tributaries. The Rand Estate is a clear and compelling example of natural environment and water resource features in a settlement area that the Region's Official Plan should be focused on protecting and enhancing rather than abandoning.

As indicated in our correspondence of July 15 (copy enclosed), it was and remains our view that Option 3C best accords with the input that the Region has received during all of the consultation on this issue. The initial recommendation of staff that Option 3B is preferred is, with respect, neither traceable or replicable given the input the Region has received. That recommendation can only be justified if the Region acknowledges that other considerations have been brought to bear outside the input received during the consultation process. Those considerations should be made explicit if the Committee elects not to adopt Option 3C.

Substantively, it is our submission that the Region should and indeed must clearly map natural heritage system and water resource system features holistically using an ecosystem approach as required by both the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act and the MMAF Statement of Environmental Values under the Environmental Bill of Rights. This should include buffers and linkages in accordance with a proper ecosystem approach, both outside and very importantly inside settlement areas. Such features should not and we submit cannot be ignored simply because they are inside

settlement areas. They are a critical component of not only ecosystem health; they enhance the quality of life for all within settlement areas.

Such an approach is not only required under relevant legislation, we submit it makes for good business. Developers will clearly know where the constraints are and municipalities within the Region can then deal with development proposals transparently and from a position of strength.

In closing, we urge staff and the Committee to consider carefully:

1. the input received during the consultation process;
2. the Region's obligations under the Planning Act and The Environmental Bill of Rights; and
3. the benefit of clear guidance to developers and lower tier municipalities with respect to ecosystem protection of natural heritage features and water resource systems, both inside and outside of settlement areas.

We thank you for your consideration and extend our appreciation for the efforts of staff and Council in this important endeavour.

SORE Association

[update@sorenottl.ca](mailto:update@sorenottl.ca)  
[sorenottl.ca](http://sorenottl.ca)

**Norman, Sean**

---

**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:32 PM  
**To:** Ian Darling  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara's New Official Plan

Hi Ian,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

**From:** Ian Darling <ian.darling@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 4:43 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Niagara's New Official Plan

Hello ,

I would like to voice my pro-conservation opinion that the Natural Heritage systems and Water resource system 3C NHS and 2B WRS be extended into the settlement areas to promote the preservation of these systems throughout all of the region.

Thank you,

Ian Darling

--

Ian Darling



**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** judy doerr <judydoerr505@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 1:00 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Cc:** Bradley, Jim  
**Subject:** NOP/CLIMATE CHANGE/"CRITICAL CHOICES FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM IN OUR CHANGING WORLD".

NOP /PLANNING DEPT FOR THE BEST 2020 CHOICES

The Official Plan must reflect "the best environmental science"

To protect what is left of Niagara Natural Heritage and Natural Water Systems. Must take into consideration the up to date environmental science critical to sustaining our ecosystems in a climate change era. We will be missing an opportunity to assure Niagara residents AND future generations the most optimal protection is in place rather than basic choices that allow for loopholes and arbitrary discretion that create future unnecessary waste of time political process & tax dollars over and over. (like what went on for years with RIVERFRONT Dev. Protesting)..we need CLEAR regulation....that We can be proud and CONFIDENT in that our NHS/WRS will not be lost for children to enjoy healthy communities.....that is everyone's RESPONSIBILITY. It is what we expect from elected officials in 2020 and beyond.

Please use this vital opportunity to choose opt 3c for NHS and

2B for WRS.....it only makes sense given these critical times where biodiversity is critical to our survival and sustaining healthy communities for future generations....the science based evidence is there as proof we must use it and incorporate it into future planning.

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Huson, Diana  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 11:42 AM  
**To:** Kerry Kennedy  
**Cc:** Norman, Sean; Mostacci, Rino  
**Subject:** Re: Official plan feedback

Hi Kerry,

Thank you for reaching out with your feedback. We appreciate your input as this important policy takes form.

The 3C and 2B models were part of consultants report helping to conceptualize how we can proceed in thinking about what these plans (as part of the overall new official plan) and subsequent mapping could look like. It also helped to inform a robust model of public consultation that occurred incorporating 28 sessions over 15 days with a diverse group of stakeholders.

While there's still much work to do, I don't believe that what comes back to Council will be a 3X or 2Y model. It will most likely incorporate aspects of some or all of these models in proceeding to a mapping stage, which still requires more time. And probably more important will be the secondary plans developed by all of our municipalities, such as Pelham, that outline and implement these policies at the local level. They all form part of a very important puzzle!

Thank you for providing input on this. It's a very important project and we need as many people participating in the process as possible to ensure our policy accurately reflects the best interests of our communities.

I can tell you that our Committee has shown interest in upholding and championing environmental policy where possible so I believe we have a good mindset in examining and voting on this issue.

I hope that provides some clarification. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. Have a wonderful day!

Diana Huson  
Regional Councillor  
Town of Pelham

On Oct 8, 2020, at 3:11 PM, Kerry Kennedy <forkennedys@hotmail.com> wrote:

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I am submitting my response to the options presented for the Niagara Region Official Plan's natural heritage system and water resource system plans.

In order to be a resilient and sustainable community, the only informed options are 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS.

There was a time when decision makers and land owners didn't know better and made choices negatively impacting the ecological function of our land. In 2020 we have the science to know better. We understand that the ecosystem services provided by the biodiversity and health of connected wetlands, water courses and natural spaces are essential to human health and survival. Our choices now will impact us at a local level and contribute to the resilience of our globe.

Support for industry and population growth need to occur without further fragmenting the very fragile and already extensively damaged natural heritage systems in Niagara. This is critical. The removal of forest cover in Niagara has already damaged the ecological integrity and function of our systems. Without protecting the remaining connectors, including in settlement areas, we will be at higher risk, unable to support our diversity of species potential and suffer with poor water quality.

NHS 3C and WRS 2B are, without question, the prudent choices for our community.

Kerry Kennedy  
1088 Deborah Street  
Fonthill ON  
L0S 1E4

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:29 PM  
**To:** Kostyn  
**Subject:** RE: Feedback on NHS Stakeholder Groups / Public Meeting

Hi Kostyn,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

**From:** Kostyn <kostyn.petrunic@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 2:29 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Feedback on NHS Stakeholder Groups / Public Meeting

Hello,

My name is Kostyn Petrunick, and I am a resident of the Town of Lincoln (Jordan Station). I attended the "Virtual Public Information Centre: Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System" on September 23, 2020, and am providing feedback here because I don't believe I received the feedback form. Please confirm you received it.

I affirm the concerns which have already been raised by community members about the vague and jargon-filled language and format of the presentations, and I am expressing some additional concerns.

The first of these is that the NHS plan lacks an explicit goal. How can you plan something without having goals? Despite climate change supposedly being integrated across the Official Plan, the NHS options fail to mention it. The connection between climate change, biodiversity loss, and conservation are clear and well documented in The New Niagara Official Plan's Climate Change Discussion Paper from November 2019. We need to be specific in addressing this.

While some suggest that the choice is effective, comprehensive conservation or development, this is a false dichotomy. I am very much for thoughtful, urban planning and sustainable development. Currently, municipalities have nothing they can use to stand up to bad development applications, but a comprehensive NHS (and WRS) could serve this function. These plans can help councils get the kinds of development they actually want. We want good development, in the right places, to foster long-term, livable communities.

Additionally, we must protect natural heritage in settlement areas with strong linkages because so



much of Niagara is already designated as settlement area and to keep natural heritage protection outside of that would defeat the whole point of maintaining and enhancing ecosystems in the region.

Finally, I want to again voice my disappointment with the proposed options. Why would we accept two non-options (1 & 2), two bare minimum options (3A & 3B) and only one comprehensive option (3C)? Are we a bare minimum region? Do we want the bare minimum for our friends and neighbours?

NHS 3C and WRS 2B are the only truly sustainable options. Anything less is unacceptable.

Thank you for your time.

All the best,

Kostyn Petrunick (he/him)

**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:33 PM  
**To:** LinaRich Lianga  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara official plan

Good evening Lina,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** LinaRich Lianga <linarichlianga@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 7:15 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Niagara official plan

To whom it may concern,

I would like to voice my pro-conservation opinion that the Natural Heritage systems and Water resource system 3C NHS and 2B WRS be extended into the settlement areas to promote the preservation of these systems throughout all of the region.

Thank you

Lina Lianga

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Rob and Arlene Carson <rcarson1@cogeco.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 11:26 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark  
**Cc:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Official Plan Review- Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems - Carson

I participated in the two Zoom meetings on Wednesday September 23 (Virtual Public Information Centre: Natural Environment – Natural Heritage Systems) and Thursday September 24 (Virtual Public Information Centre: Natural Environment – Water Resources Systems and Niagara Watershed Plan). Prior to those presentations, I was prepared to make a case for Options 3C and 2B.

I subsequently reviewed “Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, March 18, 2010, Natural Heritage Reference Manual for Natural Heritage Policies of the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005, Second Edition, Toronto”. This document outlines technical guidance for implementing natural heritage policies of the Provincial Policy Statement 2005 (PPS), the recommended technical criteria and approaches consistent with the PPS to protect natural heritage features and areas, and natural heritage systems in Ontario. No where are the various options in the Zoom presentations found. Proponents of specific developments must demonstrate that alternate approaches are consistent with the PPS.

In Section 2.1, Natural Heritage is defined. It states that natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term, ecological functions and biodiversity of natural heritage systems shall be maintained, restored or improved. It recognizes linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and groundwater features. Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in endangered/threatened species significant habitat, significant wetlands (in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E i.e. below Canadian Shield – and significant Canadian Shield wetlands north), significant coastal wetlands, significant woodlots/valleylands south and east of Canadian Shield, significant wildlife habitat, significant areas of natural and scientific interest, unless demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on natural features or ecological functions, and on lands adjacent to natural heritage features and areas unless ecological function has been evaluated and no negative impacts on natural features and ecological functions has been demonstrated.

Planning authorities shall protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by identifying surface water features, groundwater features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas necessary for ecological and hydrologic integrity of watershed, and will maintain linkages and related functions among surface water features, groundwater features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas on a watershed basis. Protection for prime agriculture areas and mineral aggregate resources are recognized.

No development or alteration is permitted in a significant feature. No development or site alteration is permitted in adjacent lands unless ecological function is evaluated, concluding no negative impacts (EIS). The width of adjacent lands to significant wetlands is 120m.

Considerable emphasis in the Reference Manual is placed on linkages or corridors. The limitations and value/quality are discussed, and functions and scale of linkages are defined. Waterbodies/wetlands are disproportionately valuable, so water features, wetlands, hydrologically important areas must be protected. Water resources (surface/ground water, hydrologic functions) may require separate analysis to be factored into natural heritage system design.

The options considered by Niagara Region do not conform to the Reference Manual, especially the “rules” for buffers and linkages, and the relationship to settlement areas, in different options. I suggest that the Region abandon the options and develop a NHS and WRS that are fully compliant with the Reference Manual guidelines.

Robert Carson, M.Sc., P.Eng.  
1 McFarland Gate  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON  
LOS 1J0



**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Sarah Lynch <splynch@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:34 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Niagara Region official plan

An inventory of Niagara's remaining natural areas, conducted between 2006 and 2009 by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA), concluded that Niagara only had 56.4% of the natural areas remaining that would be needed to ensure a science-based, functioning ecosystem into the future. The Region's own environmental consultants have stated that Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS have the best chance of preserving a functioning ecological system into the future. I support option 3C and option 2B.

Sarah Lynch  
L2R1Z1

Sent from my iPad

**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:33 PM  
**To:** Tara Darling  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara Official Plan

Hi Tara,

Thank you for your comments.

We have forwarded your email regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan, to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

**From:** Tara Darling <tara.darling@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 4:45 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Niagara Official Plan

Hello ,

I would like to voice my pro-conservation opinion that the Natural Heritage systems and Water resource system 3C NHS and 2B WRS be extended into the settlement areas to promote the preservation of these systems throughout all of the region.

Thank you,

Tara Darling

**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:33 PM  
**To:** winkal winkal  
**Subject:** RE: Natural Heritage Systems

Good Evening Win,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** winkal winkal <winkal@sympatico.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 7:46 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>; Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Natural Heritage Systems

Greetings,

I wish to record my preference for option 3c in Niagara's Official Plan review under Natural Heritage Systems, and option 2B under Water Resource systems. These options will help to protect natural areas and natural features with linkages and buffers within settlement areas. This will make it clear where development can take place with the least amount of damage to our natural heritage.

The presence of natural areas close to residential neighbourhoods has proven invaluable in these current unprecedented times of anxiety and restricted activity. Being out in nature, having forests and fields and wildlife close to us has been essential to our mental and physical health.

I cannot be more emphatic that these two options are the only options worth considering.

Sincerely,

Win Laar

8 Sheppard Cres., RR1, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0 905-262-5057 [winkal@sympatico.ca](mailto:winkal@sympatico.ca)

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:36 PM  
**To:** janetashleypollock@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Hi Ashley,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted via this email and for your continued participation at our virtual webinars.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in all of your identified topic areas of interest for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 3:54 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

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Name  
Ashley Pollock

---

Email  
[janetashleypollock@gmail.com](mailto:janetashleypollock@gmail.com)

---

Phone  
905-687-6503

---

Organization or Affiliation

---

Address  
24 Gale Crescent, Apt 2



---

City

St. Catharines

---

Specify City

St Catharines

---

Postal Code

L2R 3K9

---

Province

Ontario

---

Topics of Interest

Urban Structure,Housing Strategy,Employment Lands Strategy,Land Budget,Natural Environment,Agriculture,Climate Change,Aggregates,Other

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Other Topics of Interest

pollution

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Comments

October 9th deadline: First thing I would like to say is that a recent notice on social media has said that comments regarding the “New Official Plan” for Niagara needs to be submitted by the public by Friday, October 9th. This feels uncomfortable ... 1) because the recent webinars (Sept 23, 24, Oct 7, 8, 20, 21) have not been completed; therefore, it can be construed that no matter any comments made by the public for the last 2 webinars could very well be ignored since they take place after Oct 9th. 2) because this, seemingly, cuts off the public before the planning process is completed (target date, I believe, is 2022). During that “over a year” time, things may change such as, new population moving into the region. 3) As well, the pandemic has changed things - we’re not as mobile as we were, we’re expected to stay at home much more, we’re expected to reduce close interactivity (family/friend bubbles), and so on. The more diverse, as in “live-work-play” a community is, the easier it is to fulfill pandemic restrictions. Focus of the plan: Climate change should be looked at as the most important. The greater the green canopy - as in more trees, less water-hungry, low-diversity lawns, more community gardens, more green roofs, more vertical gardens, more balcony gardens, many, many more trees/shade in heat-sink-large parking lots (or similar), etc, etc, etc - the lower air pollution will be. It’s also likely that soil/ground pollution would be lowered, or, at least, mitigated. And if a water feature (lake, pond, river, creek, etc) is available in an area, greenery along shorelines helps towards shoreline stabilization and flood mitigation (possible wildlife regeneration as well like more birds, more fish, etc). Our planet is becoming hotter, drier, along with more extreme weather events (and now it seems, more pandemics). This threatens our lives - it's even possible that people will die droves - hence, planning needs to take not just the causes of but also the results of climate change into account. Diversification in a community, too, is important - communities should be “live-work-play”. Housing that fulfills all needs (whether high or low density housing, though high density gives any resident more chances to interact with

others). Diverse housing also provides “affordability” and “affordable”. Work has always made up some part of any urban community - but retail, food services, offices, industry, even farming should be part of a community setting as well - such as, easier & faster to get to work, more employment opportunities (particularly) for younger people, etc. The trend to separate “live-work-play” components has led to “dead” areas. One example is an industrial park that’s only vibrant during the day (but scary, isolated, lonely at night). Play should be at our fingertips or within easy reach, wherever, whatever, whenever any of us are doing things such as, eating lunch under shade tree, walking/running/bicycling in a park, looking out an office/home window at other people playing, etc, etc, etc. Because the Niagara region also is a food basket (not just a fruit basket), agriculture is also terribly important. We need to partner up better between our urban and farming peoples and communities. We all should know how, what, why, where our food comes from - or, at the very least, be more familiar. All too often it seems, urban and farming communities are adversarial. They shouldn’t be. Ditto for all work environments - industries, offices, retail, etc. Pollution - we just simply need to clean it up - whether old stuff or new stuff. The public needs to be involved - all the way throughout this process. Nevermind, planning department & various partners expertise, the public lives here. The living “it” is also a type of expertise. The public needs to be involved in some kind of ongoing committee-type-partnership with Niagara Regional Planning - not just reading the latest news or email or announcement, watching a webinar, or some such . We need to be engaged.



## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 8:30 PM  
**To:** jmpotter068@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Hi Mary,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 3:27 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

---

Name

Mary Potter

---

Email

[jmpotter068@gmail.com](mailto:jmpotter068@gmail.com)

---

Phone

905-892-2566

---

Organization or Affiliation

---

Address

461 Kilman Road

---

City  
**Pelham**

---

Specify City  
**Ridgeville**

---

Postal Code  
**L0S 1M0**

---

Province  
**Ontario**

---

Topics of Interest  
**Natural Environment**

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Other Topics of Interest

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Comments  
I hope you will select the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System that provides the most benefits for the Region's citizens.





**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:18 PM  
**To:** splynch@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Hi Sarah,

Thank you for the comments you have submitted regarding the development of the natural heritage system and water resource system for the new Niagara Official Plan.

We have forwarded your email to staff involved in the natural environmental work program for the new Niagara Official Plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:16 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

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Name  
Sarah Lynch

---

Email  
[splynch@gmail.com](mailto:splynch@gmail.com)

---

Phone  
9059846615

---

Organization or Affiliation

---

Address  
29 Ottawa St

---

City  
St. Catharines

---

Specify City  
St Catharines

---

Postal Code  
L2R 1Z1

---

Province  
Ontario

---

Topics of Interest  
Housing Strategy,Natural Environment,Agriculture,Climate Change

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Other Topics of Interest

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Comments  
The Region's own environmental consultants on the project have stated that Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS have the best chance of preserving a functioning ecological system into the future. I support Option 3C and 2B.



Annette Gibbons  
9 Lawrence Avenue  
Grimsby, ON, L3M 2M1  
agibbons4@cogeco.ca

October 9, 2020

Re: Niagara Region Official Plan  
Natural Heritage System (NHS) and Water Resource System (WRS)

### Comments

1. Natural systems don't stop at municipal boundaries. We need to include buffers, linkages and potential enhancement areas in settlement areas.
2. Goals have not been set in terms of what the region is trying to achieve regarding environmental sustainability, biodiversity protection, ecosystem function and our climate crisis.
3. A well-defined NHS and WRS can help eliminate the contentious battles Niagara's municipalities keep having over development applications because if we know where we can't build, then we also know where we can.
4. Mapped NHS and WRS features and buffers/linkages and enhancement areas, including in settlement areas, can be tools municipalities use to negotiate with developers to get the kind of development they want. It's another tool in their tool chest.
5. Properly mapping the NHS and WRS can help achieve the higher-density, compact, transit friendly, live/work/play communities, with greenspace that we say we want but rarely get.
6. Settlement areas currently cover 20% of Niagara's landscape and will soon be more with boundary expansions from Welland and Niagara Falls.
7. Features in settlement areas cannot be protected over the long term unless they have buffers and linkages. Features that are not properly protected become future development sites.
8. A robust NHS WRS option is needed because that is just the first step and we know that protections will get watered down in every step going forth, from decisions made on what is mapped and what isn't to what happens when development applications come forward and the developers consultants argue that buffers can be reduced and significant woodlands are no longer significant etc.

9. None of the options actually lives up to the goals of the policy framework for the Natural Environment as outlined in the Region's current Official plan that states: The Healthy Landscape policies apply an ecosystem approach based upon the following principles a) Ecosystem Health and Sustainability – to ensure healthy, resilient and self-sustaining ecosystems over the long term while also meeting human needs. We know from the work done by the NPCA during the Nature For Niagara natural heritage inventory work (2006-2009) that Niagara only had 56.4% of the natural systems left that are needed for a science-based, functioning ecosystem that could sustain itself into the future. Their modelling showed that even if they did their best to protect what was left, they could only save 90% of the 56.4%. We have lost much since and none of the options protects all of what's left. We don't have what we need now to protect a functioning ecosystem, so it is absolutely essential that the NHS and WRS protect as much as possible.
10. Staff said Climate change was not a separate item in the Official Plan because climate change would be "woven into" all parts of the plan. How is it woven into the NHS/WRS options? Climate change is barely mentioned in the report.
11. The Region should be a leader in biodiversity protection. In the Region's current Official Plan under Objectives for a Healthy Landscape it says:
- 7.1 To maintain a healthy natural environment for present and future generations.
  - 7.2 To conserve Niagara's distinctive natural character.
  - 7.3 To apply an ecosystem-based approach to planning and decision-making.
  - 7.4 To foster and promote cooperation among public agencies, private landowners and community groups.
  - 7.5 To support and encourage environmental stewardship and restoration.

How does this plan fulfill these objectives?

Please choose Option 3C for the Natural Heritage System(NHS) and Option 2B for the Water Resource System (WRS).

Sincerely,

Annette Gibbons



# Niagara Region Natural Heritage System and Water Resources System Concept Plans

## Introduction

I would like to thank Niagara Region's staff for their public consultation presentations and for providing the opportunity to comment on their concept plan for the development of the regional Natural Heritage System and Water Resources System. Developing these plans, given the number of competing interests for land use in the Region, is not a simple task but it is extraordinarily important.

**It is vital that we ensure that this is a science driven process which then can be separately considered on its own merits prior to being considered under the many lens of political, economic, and planning influences. Fortunately, much of the science is available.**

Though the planning is in the concept stage, the details of the science must be the guiding factors. What is not clear from the presentations is the extent to which the detailed work which was completed by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) in studies such as the *Natural Heritage Areas Inventory* (NHAi) and *Nature for Niagara's Future* is being utilized. **This work indicates that almost a decade ago Niagara was in the position of having a significant 'natural deficit' meeting only 56% of targets identified as being required for having a healthy ecosystem.**

These plans must include target setting to ensure that there is adequate representation of the natural communities and their components. The plans must clearly state what the Region's goals are for our Natural and Water Systems and demonstrate that measures will be included which will both retain and protect existing assets and identify and support opportunities for remediation where needed. This would ensure that there is a clear understanding of whether the proposed actions will accomplish what we as a community expect.

As stated in the NPCA Natural Heritage Areas Inventory (2010);

*The Niagara Peninsula is located within the northern most range of the deciduous forest region in North America (also referred to as the Carolinian Canada zone). It has the warmest average annual temperatures, the longest frost-free growing season and the mildest winters in Canada. **This zone represents 1% of Canada's land area and it has more species of plants and animals than any other ecosystem in Canada.** (Carolinian Canada website).*

We must always remember that the Niagara Region is a unique natural area of Canada and we have an opportunity and an obligation to acknowledge it as such through this exercise. It is likely our last chance.

# Niagara Region Natural Heritage System

## Proposed Concept Plan

### Comments

#### Social/Economic Factors

**Option 3C is the best choice from the available options and would best serve the needs of our residents, as well as somewhat support the further development of potential ecotourism opportunities.**

When considering the options presented, it is important to understand the multiple functions of natural systems. As well as being important for biodiversity and natural functions, easy community access and usage is important for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. Providing adequate access to natural areas within settlement areas, which are within walking distance of a high percentage of the local community, contributes to the quality of life of its residents.

The demand for access to natural features has been clearly demonstrated since the beginning of COVID-19, where many natural areas were overwhelmed with usage by both residents and visitors. As we seek to increase settlement densities the demand for access to natural areas is likely to increase even more as property sizes decrease and populations increase and we must ensure that there are adequate greenspaces, especially robust natural systems, to address resident needs. There is no indication that consideration of community needs has been included in of the options offered and if not then this does not serve the needs of our residents.

Many natural areas within urban boundaries show signs of degradation which can be attributed to high use and incursion of adjacent land uses. This clearly demonstrates the need for adequate buffers to protect the values of the core areas. Urban linkages are also important within neighbourhoods to promote movement of both human and natural elements between urban natural features.

There are potential economic benefits to ensuring we have robust natural systems, both urban and rural, from a tourism perspective. The proposed Niagara Peninsula Geopark discusses the potential to expand ecotourism and the associated economic benefits. The efforts of local groups recognizes the economic value of promoting activities such as bird watching which generates millions of dollars annually in the Point Pelee area and similarly has the potential of contributing to our local economy . There is no indication that this planning exercise takes into account a need to consider the potential economic benefits which can be realized through ecotourism by maximizing the diversity and potential of our natural communities.

#### Natural Systems Functions

**Option 3C is the best choice from the available options as it would provide the crucial buffers and linkages needed in both urban and rural areas to help retain the health and natural values of these communities.**

As noted in the introductory remarks, the public presentations did not indicate the extent to which the available science has been used to develop the options presented. No targets are identified and we have

no indication as to the effectiveness, from a conservation and protection perspective, of what would be retained under these options. There is no indication that climate change will have impacts on these natural communities, or any real indication of potential impacts from other sources as the Region's Climate Change Discussion Paper does not discuss natural systems impacts in detail. This paper does however state;

*Land use planning has been identified as one of the most effective processes for local adaptation to climate change, as existing tools available, such as official plans, zoning by-laws, and development permits can help to minimize climate change risk to the community.*

And further;

*Climate change adaptation can occur through design and orientation that promotes green infrastructure, such as street trees, urban forests, permeable surfaces, bioswales, and green roofs.*

What we do know is;

- The Niagara watershed meets only has, at most, 56% of the targets identified for a healthy ecosystem as a natural heritage system. These targets were set during stakeholder engagement sessions over a year and a half during the process of developing the Nature for Niagara's Future study and are mostly focused on ecological, hydrological and habitat functions. **This indicates that almost a decade ago Niagara was in the position of having a significant 'natural deficit'.** Given the increasing development activity in the watershed one can state with a large degree of certainty that this deficit has increased since the study.
- Remediation needs must be recognized with opportunities identified and planned for now if we are going to decrease our 'natural deficit'
- Urban natural areas require linkages and adequate buffers if they are not going to be at risk of losing their ecological value, further increasing our 'natural deficit'
- Climate change will likely add a host of stressors which then have the potential to increase this deficit or which can be better mitigated through adequate planning, ensuring the natural communities and systems are as robust as possible.

And there is no indication that the available science has been adequately utilized on its own to determine how best to develop this strategy, separate from planning and political considerations.

**The science must come first, followed by other considerations, if we are to have a Natural Heritage System which will adequately address protection and mitigates natural deficits. And the process must be transparent.**

**Therefore, though these comments identify 3C as the best of the proposed options, it must be noted that the approach, the process itself, does not appear to be suitable to determine how to best move forward to develop a science based Natural Heritage System which will stand the test of time.** Yes this is a planning exercise but it must have solid foundations in science.

It is recommended that further options be developed which build on the existing Option 3C and include science based information as to where identified natural deficits in the Region may be addressed, as well as clearly indicating the associated relative conservation and protection benefits. Further options can then be developed which layer on and clearly identify political and planning considerations which may influence final outcomes.

## **Niagara Region Water Resources Systems Comments**

**Based on the options provided, option 2B is the best choice.**

NPCA has provided a watershed report card for many years which 'grades' a number of components of our natural systems, including our ground water and surface water, in the Watershed.

Surface water quality is an ongoing concern and according to the NPCA's 2018 Report, 'Most of the watersheds scored a D grade and have poor water quality'.

While groundwater quality was graded a 'B', it was noted that some groundwater quality is impacted by adjacent land use.

It is unfathomable that water resource protection in the Niagara Region should not be as stringent as possible given the poor water quality which exists in the Region and the importance of the resource. Given that the NPCA report identifies urban Combined Sewer Outlets (CSOs) as a contributing factor, it is imperative that urban protection is included in this plan.

### Final Comments

NPCA Board meeting minutes, dated July 15, 2020, state under Preliminary Preferred Options (pg. 15);

Following the evaluation of the options, preliminary preferred options were identified for the NHS and WRS. The preliminary preferred options are the recommendations of the Consultant team and are supported by the professional opinion of Regional Planning Staff.

Option 3B was identified as the preliminary preferred NHS option.

Option 2A was identified as the preliminary preferred WRS option.

Reasons for these choices were provided and can be found in these minutes.

These statements raise a number of questions.

1. Why did the Region's presenter at the September 22<sup>nd</sup> public consultation presentation state that there was not a staff preferred option?
2. Are these preferences science based?



3. Are these preferences in the best interests of our residents, our communities, and our natural systems, and future generations?
4. How do we know if these stated preferences are best, or will adequately protect our natural systems if they are not based on the best available science?

We deserve clear answers prior to further resources being committed to this exercise.

#### Recommendations

1. Develop further science based options which build on 3C (NHS) and 2B (WRS) and include targets which will act as measurables to determine effectiveness of the strategies over time.
2. Provide separate information on political and planning issues which might influence these options.
3. Incorporate climate change impacts into these options to determine how this stressor might impact the value of the ecological features and what can be done to reduce those impacts.
4. Withdraw the Preliminary Preferred Options until such time as sufficient information is available and analyzed.

**Submitted by**

**Liz Benneian**

**Although the pdf form that was sent to us does not state it has word count limits, it seems to so I have submitted my comments in this format.**

**1. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system, which option(s) best satisfy the following statements:**

**a. Represents a forward-thinking approach to natural environment planning. Why do you feel that way?**

None of the options represents a really forward-thinking approach to NHS or WRS planning because that would have to start with a goal of trying to protect and enhance enough features, buffers, linkages and enhancement areas to create a minimum science-based system threshold that was likely to result in a functioning and resilient ecosystem that would be robust enough to last into the future.

I believe the planning for the NHS and WRS puts the cart before the horse in terms of you are already roughing out what features to include and exclude, inside and outside of settlement areas, without a clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve and what you need to achieve it.

Under the Region's current Official Plan, in the policy section on the natural environment it notes:

"The Healthy Landscape policies apply an ecosystem approach based upon the following principles:

- a) Ecosystem Health and Sustainability – to ensure healthy, resilient and self –sustaining ecosystems over the long term while also meeting human needs.
- b) An Ounce of Prevention – to emphasize better up-front planning to avoid problems.
- c) Environmental Protection Plus Enhancement – to protect the existing environment while supporting environmental restoration.
- d) Stewardship Plus Regulation – to combine support for the stewardship activities of landowners, community groups and public agencies with regulations to maintain ecosystem health.
- e) Thinking Globally, But Acting Locally – to address the cumulative effects of individual actions."

None of the Options will achieve a). Without a goal you cannot achieve b). We know from the Natural Heritage Inventory work that the NPCA did between 2006 and 2009, that Niagara only

had, at that time, (and so much has been lost since!) 56.4% of natural areas to meet that minimum science-based threshold for sustainability. Even in their best case “no constraints” modelling only 90% of that amount would have been preserved. What you are proposing will save so much less. I think citizens deserve to know how much less. So, none of the options fulfills c). Stewardship and regulation have not been mentioned in discussions on the NHS/WRS so d) is not addressed and there is virtually no discussion in the documents or at stakeholder meetings of addressing cumulative impacts so that eliminates e).

You have started from the wrong base.

You are looking at restrictions instead of possibilities, to give as was stated more “flexibility” to developers. For instance, Under the 3C option which is the “best” Option you’ve presented, you include small linkages inside of settlement areas “where the potential area is in a natural state”. Why not include all potential linkages in settlement areas and leave it to the municipalities to negotiate as site plan applications come forward? Linkages are linkages. If they are not in a natural state, they could be enhanced. Even linkages that are no more than a sidewalk with minimal greenery on each side can serve as a valuable linkage, not only for small creatures, but for larger animals especially at night after most human activity has ceased.

The same with including mandatory minimum buffers for significant features within settlement areas. We have all seen the applications from developers that claim backyards are sufficient buffers. If the options were really forward-thinking, then they would be stating whatever was needed to protect the features, in and outside of settlement areas over the long term. **Unless there are appropriate buffers from features in settlement areas, you know they will not survive, and when they degrade, they become open to development so that ultimately, no natural areas will exist in our cities.**

Municipalities continually complain that they feel their hands are tied in negotiations with developers. Mapping natural heritage features, their buffers, linkages and potential enhancement areas and protecting/designating them, wherever possible, outside of settlement areas, and identifying them inside of settlement areas, would provide some leverage to municipalities to negotiate with developers when development applications come forward so that our Region’s cities have a hope of creating livable communities that are attractive, that harness the green infrastructure benefits that natural areas provide and that give citizens the access to nature that they need.

For me, the fight to get an ecosystem approach to planning began in 2000 when citizens fought for, and eventually got, a science-based natural heritage system in North Oakville, the first of its kind in Ontario, upheld by the OMB in a precedent-setting decision. I can’t believe that 20 years later, I am still fighting for the same thing. Protecting the natural systems on which we depend is not forward-thinking, it is necessary.

Of course, of the options presented, 3C and 2B are preferable but they are not sufficient.

**b. Helps ensure that growth takes place in the most appropriate places in the Region. Why do you feel that way?**

All of the Options make Growth in settlement areas less restrictive to developers and therefore guide growth to urban areas.

3C and 2B shouldn't be looked at as an impediment to growth in settlement areas. Rather identifying buffers, linkages and potential enhancement areas inside of settlement areas should be viewed as tools municipalities can use to guide the growth that will occur to be as beneficial to the community and least costly to existing taxpayers as possible in terms of providing a more compact, denser urban form that supports public transportation and leaves room for parks and natural areas, and all the benefits they provide, that make a city a desirable place to live.

**c. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agriculture in the Region. Why do you feel that way?**

As you know, and as is outlined in the Technical Report, all of your options protect agriculture.

Neither the NHS nor the WRS as proposed, places any restrictions on agriculture. Though they likely should in terms of requiring sufficient mandatory buffers to protect watercourses.

I understand that agriculture is extremely important to Niagara. And I support local agriculture. However, like any business, I think agriculture should do its best to limit the harm it causes to commonly held resources including our water.

We know that Niagara only has one cold water stream left and it is in trouble. We know our ground water is highly contaminated with agricultural runoff. We know the Great Lakes, our drinking water supply, is being overloaded with phosphorous that runs off farm fields.

Much of this could be mitigated with vegetative buffers along watercourses, or in farmers terms, "ditches".

**d. Achieves an appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting growth and economic development in the Region. Why do you feel that way?**

What is "an appropriate balance"? If we are leaving less trees/wetlands/meadows/natural areas than needed to mitigate pollution, prevent flooding, protect our drinking water, produce oxygen, feed wildlife, prevent erosion, promote pollination, for people to recreate, to create livable, attractive cities, to protect the area's natural beauty and our health and our vital tourism and viticulture industry, is that an appropriate balance?

The issue shouldn't be sacrificing one to protect the other. Growth and economic development can be achieved at the same time natural systems are protected and even enhanced.

Every city has acres of land along major transportation routes that are filled with single-story commercial buildings with large parking lots out front. Many of these commercial spaces are



now empty as COVID has accelerated the decline in storefront retail. In the era of online shopping, many of these retail spaces will never be needed again. As well, we are now experiencing a large number of empty commercial/office spaces with COVID accelerating a work-from-home trend. These already serviced lands, adjacent to public transportation, should be redeveloped into human scale (4- to 6-storey) buildings at street front (more storeys behind), with commercial on the bottom, and more affordable housing above, that would meet the needs of both younger and older members of our community and with parking directed below ground and with lots of space for plazas and parks and other communal assets that make a city livable.

This kind of compact urban growth is what we keep saying we want but that is rarely what we get as even in our urban areas sprawling development of single-family homes and townhouses continues to be favoured over a more compact urban form, and as development of greenfields is favoured over redevelopment.

You have not provided an option that provides sufficient protection to the natural environment while supporting growth and economic development. But of the options that you have provided 3C and 2B comes closest.

## **2. In thinking about all of the options reviewed for the natural heritage system and water resource system...**

### **a. What do you like about the options — what are the ‘positives’ and ‘advantages’?**

The positives in all the 3s and 2B is that this Region is finally moving away from the features-only based system that it has clung to long after most municipalities have created more science-led, eco-system-based planning.

3C and 2B allow for the most supporting features, specially the critical linkages between features.

### **b. What don't you like about the options?**

NHS and WRS plans are being created without goals in mind. How can you know if the plan you are creating is capable of achieving the results you want in terms of protection of Regional natural areas and water resources if you haven't defined them? Where is the science? Where is the data?

How can could you have presented a preferred option to the P&EDC before you had the basic information these decisions should be made on? NHS and WRS options should be driven by goals and defined by science.

Also, as already made clear in my comments above, the options identified are not robust enough to actually protect the features that have been/will be identified, especially in settlement areas.

I should point out that Natural Heritage System planning in Oakville started with the Mapping of Natural heritage features, buffers and linkages in a joint effort by the MNRF, Conservation

Halton and the Town of Oakville. Once the mapping was done, then policies and planning were created.

2A is totally inadequate to protect our water resource system. Only 2B should be considered.

The Region needs the strongest possible NHS and WRS options because as you well know there will be unlimited opportunities to water down protection for NHS features and at every step of the process going forward, from the mapping stage, to the submission of site plans.

One big issue with mapping is that you have acknowledged that you will not be able to map everything so will have to rely on environmental assessments submitted by developers' consultants and as we all know, while they identify features, they then usually make the case why they can still be destroyed. Not good enough.

The Region should be responsible for knowing what ecological and water resource systems it has. whether you build on the good work of the NPCA of a dozen years ago, whether you have to hire the NPCA or other consultants again, whatever, get the mapping done.

**3. In consideration of all of the options and variations for identifying a natural heritage system and water resource system, what would you recommend be put forward as a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?**

If I had the ability to support an alternative Option it would be one that:

1. Set a goal that was the most protective of existing features and would designate them with mandated buffers and linkages and identified enhancement areas that were sufficient to at least protect what we have (which is about half of what is actually needed as per the NPCA Nature for Niagara study).
2. In my NHS Option 3D would:
  - Identify additional features in and out of settlement areas
  - Identify supporting features inside and outside of settlement areas including potential enhancement areas
  - Include large medium and small linkages outside of settlement areas
  - Include suggested large medium linkages inside settlement areas.
  - Include mandatory small linkages wherever possible inside settlement areas.
  - Prescribe mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas
  - Prescribe mandatory minimum buffers for features inside of settlement areas
  - Prescribe minimum buffers for supporting features inside of settlement areas.

Furthermore, with the understanding that the Region's residual Natural areas are not sufficient to provide the residents of this Region with a functioning ecosystem now or over the long-term, and as the lead for environmental planning in the Region, the Region should work with municipalities to promote the renaturalizing of our urban areas so they, too become a part of the natural ecosystems through measures that include but are not limited to:

1. Plans to naturalize 25% of municipal parks
2. Require the planting of only native trees, shrubs and wildflowers on all new developments and on Municipal and regional lands
3. Begin a public education campaign to highlight the benefits of planting native.

4. Support, through partnerships with the NPCA, municipalities and community groups, naturalization on public and private lands in urban areas.

Of the options identified, I can only support 3C and 2B.

5. **What, if any, additional information beyond that considered to date, would you share to inform the identification of a preferred option for the natural heritage system and water resource system?**

If you want to make your NHS/WRS more defensible, I suggest wording in the Official Plan that the protection of Niagara's natural heritage and water resources is a first priority for the Region. The fact such a line was included in Oakville's Official plan was of significant importance in the precedent-setting decision upholding the NHS when more than two dozen developers took the Town to the OMB.

## **6. Additional comments/feedback.**

I do not appreciate being told that what I have heard and what I have read is untrue.

Staff presented their preferred options to the P&EDC, which were 3B and 2A. In their report it was also suggested that the committee could relieve the staff from carrying out anymore public consultation. The fact that the committee did not do that doesn't negate the fact that staff suggested it. Therefore, it is right to conclude that staff meant what they said when they told the P&EDC they had a preferred option and, in fact, were so supportive of it, they thought further public consultation unnecessary.

As a citizen, I do not appreciate elected officials, acting as surrogates for planning staff, telling me to stop saying what I know to be true.

Intimidation does not engender public trust. Pretending there was no preferred option, as was stated during the public consultation meeting, when there was, also does not engender public trust.

Second, I registered for the stakeholder consultation, but I listened in to all of the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of public consultations. I came away thinking that if I hadn't already been through a multi-year fight for the Province's first NHS, if I had not read the Technical report and other available information about the NHS/WRS planning process and if I wasn't already familiar with Provincial and municipal planning policy, I would have found much of what was presented as unintelligible.

Too much time was spent on explaining Provincial planning policy. It could have been greatly simplified. Too much time was spent on options you were barely considering, and not enough time was spent on really drilling down on the key options.

The presenters went well over-time, limiting time for people to ask questions.

Some answers didn't address the questions asked or did but then became so long-winded, adding in so much extraneous information, that the answer was lost.

There wasn't any clarity on what the NHS and WRS was meant to achieve, likely because no clear goals have been set. There was no clear idea of "here's where we are now" and "here's where we want to be."

I found the maps that were used misleading as they suggested that everything in the Greenbelt and the Niagara Escarpment Plan was already "protected" natural area when that is hardly the case.

I would hope in the future, the region can find a better way to conduct public engagement on such an important project that has the possibility of protecting, or not protecting, Niagara's natural heritage and water resources for future generations. The Region and its citizens should be partners in this exercise and a more consultative public engagement process would help.



**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** Bernadette Secco <bernadette.secco@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 10:54 AM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Cc:** Making Our Mark  
**Subject:** Natural Heritage & Water Resource Options  
**Attachments:** image.jpg; ATT00001.txt

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

To Whom It May Concern:

My comments are, my preferences. That is, for the Natural Heritage System, I support option 3C. For Water Resource System, I support Option 2B.

The chart below explains my reasons.

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Cheryl Schonewille <csbaybeach@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 10:34 AM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Saving our Environment

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Sean,

Please incorporate all future decisions involving the Niagara Region with the first priority to protect our remaining natural resources. Please don't pave over paradise!

We must protect what we can't manufacture.

Sincere regards,  
Cheryl Schonewille  
Fort Erie.

**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** D Labute <ddlabute@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 9:07 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Official Plan Review

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Mr No

The so called protected Core Natural Heritage areas in Niagara are being eaten up by development to the point that they will no longer survive.

The OP states that an EIS must be conducted on the land within 120 metres adjacent to a PSW greater than 2 ha in size. (Table 6-1 Core Natural Heritage Components and adjacent lands)

A property owner can have the NPCA forester mark off the 30 metre buffer around the PSW. The owner can then start to clear cut and grade the area outside the subject land (which I will call Area 1). If there is another polygon of the PSW complex located 200 metres from Area 1 the 30 metre buffer will be marked and cut. The sad part is that the NPCA and Region allow this to happen, disregarding the 120 metre rule (Ref Polygon 3 & 4 Drapers Creek along Sumbler Rd in Welland)

- Heritage corridor is lost between Polygon 3&4 and Polygon 13 on Clare Ave and Webber Rd, Welland
- Wildlife habitat is smaller area, less nesting areas and feeding grounds.
- Not a violation because no work was done within the PSW buffer.

As long as the property owner or developer has not applied for a permit to develop the area, the 120 metre buffer requirement for the EIS in the OP does not apply. When the EIS is performed, the property between the two polygons is just barren land. All vegetation is gone (wetland plants and soil), no furry animals or amphibians. The EIS can now recommend a reduced buffer around the PSW from 30 to 15 metres and the NPCA and Region will approve it.

For over 5 years I have tried to have the NPCA and the City of Welland remove an illegal drain pipe that is connected into the city sewer. It is still in place today. (Polygon 15 Drapers Creek in Welland.)

The Draper Creek PSW complex is being destroyed and examples are all along South Pelham Rd.

ROPA 11 the removal of Polygon 15 Drapers Creek from the Official Plan was denied by the Region. In June 2016. November 2016 the OMB ruled against the removal of Polygon 15 from the Drapers Creek complex based on the incorrect information in the EIS.

Niagara has lost too much of our Core Natural Heritage areas by so called 'removal of dead and dying ash' trees and again reducing the NPCA regulated 30 metre wetland buffer to 15 metres.

It is time to save Thundering Waters and the Waverly forest from reckless development.

Respectfully  
Don LaBute  
Welland

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Ed Smith <edsmith121@yahoo.ca>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 3:29 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Comments on the NHS

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good afternoon Sean,

I have been following the process for the development of a NHS at the region and would like to take this opportunity to express my dissatisfaction with the options presented.

I struggle to identify any real efforts at environmental stewardship and visionary growth plans for the environmental deficits that Niagara currently faces. From an outside perspective it is difficult to see this as anything except an effort to do a minimal amount for Niagara environment. I believe our environment needs more than a minimal response plan. I believe the Niagara Region should be setting examples for the green future of this Region.

I would be remiss to fail to mention the lack of measurable goals for Niagara. Water quality, tree canopy, climate change, eco-system health indicators, so many opportunities for the Region to demonstrate a true commitment. I just don't see it happening in these options.

I believe more can be accomplished, the Region can do better than these options suggest. I ask the Region to assume a role of visionary leadership on these issues in order to guarantee that so much of what we value about the Niagara Region is maintained for generations.

Thank you,

Ed Smith  
St Catharines



**Norman, Sean**

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**From:** June Chipp <juneechipp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 10:52 AM  
**To:** Norman, Sean

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good Morning,

Niagara Region is responsible for protecting our natural environment and water resources, so that they may be enjoyed by all and not irretrievably lost. Please make this a priority in all future planning and decisions.

Thank you.

June Chipp  
Fort Erie

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Josh Michener <jmichener@live.ca>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 8:23 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Cc:** Dahlia Steinberg  
**Subject:** Choosing options 3c and 2b for the NHS and WRS is a must. Please think of the future of future people.

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Sean, please watch David Attenborough's new documentary, "A Life On Our Planet", with your family sometime. We need to, not only stop reducing the amount and types of natural areas we have, we need to increase them, we need to expand and protect areas of biodiversity or our great-grandchildren will suffer. Please encourage the most robust options in this decision and know you've done the right thing. You have the power to stand up and keep this region beautiful!

Sincerely,

Josh Michener

( A concerned father and longtime Niagara resident who's in love with the natural biodiversity we still have and who doesn't want to see it negatively impacted.)

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** leo thrash <huizdashthrash@yahoo.ca>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 7:24 AM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** preservation of green space

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Norman,  
I would like to encourage you to please do what you can to preserve green space and to stop the sprawl of development. What happened to preserving the escarpment? Where did the greenbelt go?  
The results of the greed of developers and governments brings tears to my eyes. What was once such a pretty place to live is fast being bulldozed and we are becoming Toronto-like. Towns have lost there definition and distinction. Wildlife has no place to go. Bring back regulation! Feedback on this issue should not be necessary. Ridiculousness!  
Thanks for your time,  
Leona Thrasher  
87 Mildred Avenue,  
St Catharines, ON

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Marcia Carlyn <marcia.carlyn@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 11:00 AM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Please Help Save the Environment!

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Sean,

As a senior planner, I hope you put the highest priority on saving our environment and natural resources. We're counting on you!

Thanks for your help,

Marcia Carlyn  
Crystal  
Beach



## Norman, Sean

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**From:** not disclosed <abraxof@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 9, 2020 1:12 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** Biodiversity

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the Niagara Region email system. Use caution when clicking links or opening attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Sean,

I think we should protect all the natural sites that are possible. There are already enough developments. Do we need to look any further than our ever disappearing winter and global warming?

Of course our kids but so do the adults who take care of the kids \*all humans\*. It's a huge boost for mental health not to mention physical health which are both directly linked.

Probably someone smart could also make an economic link between preservation that is more enduring and meaningful than profit of developers, construction companies and city taxes.

Pitter patter. get at er'.

thanks

mark.

## **Feedback on the Natural Heritage System (NHS):**

At the outset of the NHS Public Information Consultation (PIC) via zoom, we were told the goal was to set a DIRECTION. The technical report states: “*Option 3C best represents a FORWARD thinking SYSTEMS APPROACH ...*” So why would regional staff or councillors choose anything BUT the BEST, forward-directed option for the environment and people of Niagara in the Regional Official Plan?

If COVID -19 has taught us anything, it's the importance of having as much nature as possible where we live — for the simple pleasures, restorative and immune system benefits it provides.

The disastrous, outdated features-based approach still in use here (aided and abetted for half a decade by the thankfully-ousted NPCA rogue regime) ... has resulted in tremendous loss of natural heritage — what remains needs the strongest ‘catch-up’ protection possible. Given the compounding negative impact of climate change on top of development pressures? Even Option 3C doesn't go far enough ... but it's the best option shown — to date.

With Option 3C as a solid foundation in settlement areas, Niagara's towns and cities could follow up with their own forward-thinking enhancement/restoration efforts and eco policies (such as naturalizing and boosting shade-giving tree canopy) — to add protection of our natural environment and enjoyment of it (so important to mental and physical well-being).

ONLY Option 3C prescribes mandatory buffers for Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs), but not in settlement areas (where development happens). Mandatory buffers are the ONLY way to protect these precious natural flood controllers and air purifiers from falling prey to Environmental Impact Studies (bought and paid for by developers and usually not peer reviewed) ‘justifying’ reduced buffers. [I tried explaining this to an aunt in California and she thought I was joking.]

Planning staff state concern that Option 3C “*may pose unintentional consequence of developers pushing for expansion of urban boundaries due to resulting reduction of available land within settlement areas*” — but include no evidence-based risk assessment to measure benefits against unintended negative consequence. [News flash: It's already happening — as brownfields abound — so that concern is invalid.]

Will Option 3C tighten limits on what can be developed? Yes — to protect our natural heritage. But just as Option 3C will map what CAN'T be developed, it will make it clear what CAN be. And maybe will get developers doing some forward thinking of their own — building up not out!

The technical report clearly shows Option 3C as providing the best protection of our natural heritage system — features, buffers and linkages — which should be the first priority objective vs. providing flexibility for developers! That priority should be evident in the name alone.

— Linda Manson, Niagara Falls

**Feedback on the Water Resource System (WRS) on NEXT page ...**

### **Feedback on the Water Resource System (WRS):**

The BEST choice of WRS options is as CLEAR as the QUALITY of our WATER should be: 2B.

How do I know? By reading what's in the technical report ... and by hearing the answer given to my question at the WRS Public Information Consultation (PIC).

I asked: "*What do you see as the key long-term differences between 2A and 2B — impact wise?*"

North-South Environmental's expert replied:

*"Impact wise? Benefits first? **More features, more area covered ... better quality water.**"*

BETTER QUALITY WATER with 2B: What more do regional councillors need to know?  
Why would anyone ever settle for anything less — for the people of Niagara?

— Linda Manson, Niagara Falls

[Feedback on the Natural Heritage System \(NHS\) on PREVIOUS page.](#)

## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Norman, Sean  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 22, 2020 2:14 PM  
**To:** Norman, Sean  
**Subject:** FW: Long Term Plan

**From:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 22, 2020 10:58 AM  
**To:** Banach, Isaiah <Isaiah.Banach@niagararegion.ca>; Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Long Term Plan

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**From:** Ken Lilley <[badhare@cogeco.ca](mailto:badhare@cogeco.ca)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 21, 2020 9:20 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <[makingourmark@niagararegion.ca](mailto:makingourmark@niagararegion.ca)>  
**Subject:** Long Term Plan

I believe a responsible long term plan must mandate a reduction in our regional population.

We must reduce our pollution and our impact on global warming. We must also stop our biodiversity destruction.

It is obvious continuous growth has not and will not work.

Thank you for your consideration.



## Norman, Sean

---

**From:** Making Our Mark  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 29, 2020 4:46 PM  
**To:** jkotsch@gmail.com  
**Subject:** RE: Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

Hi John,

Thank you for submitting your comments on various topic areas of the new Niagara Official Plan.

While some of your comments may be more relevant to local municipal planning responsibilities, we will certainly be forwarding your email to staff involved in the natural environment, housing, and transportation work programs for the development of our new plan, for their consideration.

Best Regards,  
Official Plan Team

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**From:** Niagara Region Website <webmaster@niagararegion.ca>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 29, 2020 4:11 PM  
**To:** Making Our Mark <makingourmark@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Online Form - Official Plan 2019 Updates Request

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

---

Name

John Kotsch

---

Email

jkotsch@gmail

---

Phone

905-354-3109

---

Organization or Affiliation

---

Address

6597 Erwin Cr.

---

City  
Niagara Falls

---

Specify City

---

Postal Code  
L2G 4Z9

---

Province  
Ontario

---

Topics of Interest  
Urban Structure,Housing Strategy,Natural Environment,Agriculture,Climate Change

---

Other Topics of Interest  
recreational use of regional lands

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Comments

• The regional level of government needs to develop a plan/strategy which protects and promotes the urban forest/canopy - too many residents, businesses, developers and government agencies remove mature trees without a thought to the long term effects of these actions. Too few trees are planted either on private or public lands to make up for the ongoing lost to our urban forest. • Enhancing and expanding our urban forest is an efficient and cost effective way to help our region to endure the negative effects of global warming, and increase the capture and storage of carbon from the atmosphere. • Hire regional arborists to aid and educate municipals, businesses, and citizens on the proper maintenance of our trees. • Pass a law that specifically requires municipalities to mandate developers of new homes, to immediately plant trees on boulevards once a unit is ready for occupancy. Too often developers do not plant trees until an entire subdivision is completed, which may take years. • The Region needs to partner with Hydro One in order to develop a plan which focuses on using hydro corridors as places of recreation and urban food gardens. Walking/cycling trails with inter and intra city connections need to be developed on these corridors. These trails would add to the quality of life for Niagara's citizens and add another tourist draw to our area. • Increase and improve the number of bike lanes on our streets/roads. A white line is not good enough on some of our busier streets. • Mandate that more affordable housing units should be built, especially in new housing / condo developments. Many municipalities around the world specify the percent of affordable units needed to be included in new housing developments.



## Norman, Sean

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**From:** Norman, Sean  
**Sent:** Monday, November 2, 2020 1:07 PM  
**To:** 'writeon@sympatico.ca'  
**Cc:** Making Our Mark; Acs, Erik  
**Subject:** FW: NHS Options July 15 vs Sept 23 NHS buffers - major differences!  
**Attachments:** July 15 vs Sept 23 NHS buffers!.pdf

Hi Linda,

Following the presentation of the options as outlined in Technical Report #2 to the Planning and Economic Development Committee on July 15th, the consultant team prepared presentations for Stakeholder Workshops and the two Public Information Sessions. While these presentations were being prepared it became evident that the Technical Report #2 had some minor inconsistencies in the options and the text related to buffers (in particular how the table presented the options) that required clarification and revision to the table for the presentations to stakeholders and the public. The options presented to the stakeholders and public attempted to provide greater clarity and consistency on what was included in each option as described in Technical Report #2.

Regards,  
**Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP**  
Senior Planner  
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region  
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

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**From:** Linda Manson <writeon@sympatico.ca>  
**Sent:** Saturday, October 31, 2020 11:36 AM  
**To:** Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** NHS Options July 15 vs Sept 23 NHS buffers - major differences!

Sean,  
MAJOR differences between these 2 presentations  
wrt 'Buffers/Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas) ...  
Intentional?  
By mistake?  
Please advise --- thanks!  
-Linda

Natural Environment Work  
Program –Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options  
Planning and Economic Development Committee  
PDS 26-2020

July 15, 2020

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP –Senior Planner

<https://pub-niagararegion.escribemeetings.com/FileStream.ashx?DocumentId=9805>

See page 17 (attached)

Virtual Public Information Centre Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/pdf/sept-23-presentation.pdf>

See page 17 (attached)

Your message is ready to be sent with the following file or link attachments:

July 15 vs Sept 23 NHS buffers!.pdf



**From:** Niagara Chapter Trout Unlimited Canada; SORE; Peninsula Field Naturalists, Niagara Falls Nature Club; Niagara Beekeepers' Association of Niagara; Ontariogreen Conservation Association; Bert Miller Nature Club; Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative; Hamilton Naturalists; Friends of One Mile Creek; Extinction Rebellion Niagara; Miriam Richards, Professor Biological Sciences, Brock University; and members of the Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

**To:** Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee

Nov. 3 2020

Re: Woodland Tree Bylaw and Its Impact on Natural Heritage and Water Resource System Planning

Dear Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee:

The information that came forward to the Planning and Economic Development Committee about the Woodland Bylaw makes the issue of adopting the most robust Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems more important than ever.

As was made clear in answer to Councillor Butters' specific question about what the bylaw would do to preserve or enhance the existing 17% forest cover in Niagara, staff replied that there was nothing in this bylaw that would add to the existing tree cover in the Region. In fact, there is little in this bylaw that will actually protect our *existing* tree cover. Staff explained they were limited in making improvements to the Region's Forestry Bylaw by the Municipal Act and Forestry Act.

For instance, forests that have suffered tree loss due to emerald ash borer, and no longer meet the density requirements under the Forestry Act, including woodlands currently mapped as Significant Woodland or Environmental Conservation Area under the Official Plan, can be reclassified as not significant and can lose their protection. Nothing in the new bylaw changes this.

The new bylaw will not prevent the practice of some woodland owners from clearing the understory, which ensures that the woodland will lose its significance over time as no new trees will grow to replace the old.

The new bylaw only applies to specific lands and therefore does not cover much of the remaining wooded areas in Niagara. For the same reason, the bylaw cannot set tree replacement rules/ratios. Replacement orders are only put into effect, at the discretion of the Region's enforcement officer, if he determines a violation has occurred on woodlands covered by the bylaw. Tree removals that occur through applications under the Planning Act cannot be covered by the Region's bylaw. To protect any other wooded area, group of trees or specific trees, or removal of trees due to applications covered by the Planning Act, each municipality would have to enact their own Private Tree Bylaws.

There is no ongoing monitoring of woodlands covered by the bylaw. Offences are pursued on a complaint basis and the time limit is tight. The Region hoped to increase the time limit for pursuing charges from 6 months to two years but found out they couldn't because of the Provincial Offences Act.

Any fines levied due to an offense against the new Woodland Bylaw will not go to restoration efforts, tree planting grants or to land acquisition. Fines under this bylaw “are divided up on a pro rata share with the lower tier municipalities based on legislated requirements” — as contained in an answer by staff to public comments on the bylaw.

The old bylaw contained numerous exemptions to the bylaw, including many added in 2008 for agricultural use, and the new bylaw includes one more plus it no longer protects hedgerows less than 20 m wide. These will inevitably lead to further woodland losses.

Finally, there is nothing in the new bylaw that addresses two of the greatest threats we face — climate change and biodiversity loss.

While questions were asked about possible tree planting/restoration programs, it's important to note that these are significantly limited by three factors:

1. a severe lack of funding for those efforts,
2. lack of readily available land for naturalization, and
3. the reliance on volunteers and community groups to carry out work that should be paid employment by professionals.

Furthermore, unless restoration plantings outstrip the continuous losses due to development and other land uses — and there is zero evidence that they do — then Niagara's irreplaceable natural ecosystem will continue to diminish over time.

In summary, the Region's new Woodland Bylaw does not address the concerns articulated so well by Chair Bradley and Councillors Butters, Fertich, Easton and Greenwood about improving the Region's limited tree cover. Staff suggested that Council look to the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System planning to address concerns about protection of our unique, but diminished and fragmented, local ecology.

**That makes it more important than ever that you approve only the most robust Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems.**

Natural Heritage System (NHS) and Water Resource System (WRS) plans map significant environment and water resource features, delineate sufficient buffers to protect them and link them together to form an ecological system that is sufficient to provide:

1. the green infrastructure benefits we require,
2. enough nature to support local flora and fauna and
3. a resilient ecosystem that will continue to exist over time.

**Given the development pressure Niagara Region is under, this is the last chance we have to save Niagara's unique natural environment for future generations.**

Taking all types of ecosystems into account including forests, wetlands, meadowlands etc. a 2011 study by the NPCA estimated that the watershed's remaining natural areas contribute only 56 per cent towards what the system needs to remain viable, and therefore persists as a highly environmentally degraded and fragmented landscape. <https://npca.ca/our-voice/post/restoring-and-improving-niagara-peninsula-watershed>

What Planning staff identified to you as their preliminary preferred options at the July 15 PEDC meeting, 3B for the NHS and 2A for the WRS, come nowhere close to protecting our remaining natural areas. Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS is the best of the options presented, however, we think they could be improved upon and we will present some ideas to you in future correspondence/presentations. Please see the chart that shows the differences between the current options.

| <b>Natural Heritage System</b>                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Staff's preliminary recommendation</b>                                                                        | <b>Best option to protect environment and meet Region's stated goals</b>                                                                   |
| <b>NHS Option 3B</b>                                                                                             | <b>NHS Option 3C</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - Identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas                                                 | - Identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas                                                                           |
| - Identifies supporting features outside of settlement areas such as potential enhancement areas                 | - Identifies supporting features <b>inside and outside of settlement areas</b> including potential enhancement areas                       |
| - Includes large and medium linkages outside of settlement areas                                                 | - Includes large, medium, and <b>small linkages</b> outside of settlement areas                                                            |
|                                                                                                                  | - <b>Includes small linkages inside of settlement areas where the potential area is in a natural state</b>                                 |
| - Suggests policy minimum for buffers outside of provincial NHSs and both inside and outside of settlement areas | - Prescribes <b>mandatory</b> buffer minimums outside of settlement areas with <b>suggested policy minimums inside of settlement areas</b> |
| <b>Water Resource System</b>                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Staff's preliminary recommendation</b>                                                                        | <b>Best option to protect water resources and meet Region's stated goals</b>                                                               |
| <b>WRS Option 2A</b>                                                                                             | <b>WRS Option 2B</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - Would identify additional features only outside of settlement areas                                            | - Would identify additional features and areas <b>Region-wide, including within settlement areas</b>                                       |

Please be aware that developing these options is just the first step to the creation of a Regional NHS and WRS. This phase only develops a concept of what features, buffers and linkages should be considered inside and outside of settlement areas. The next layer will be the mapping, then the consultation with municipal planning staff

and likely with other stakeholders including developers. There will be many opportunities to include or exclude areas from the final plan.

As well, there are municipal boundary expansions coming forward from Niagara Falls and Welland, and significant development applications in Fort Erie and elsewhere, that will affect what is left to protect.

**The decision on the NHS/WRS may be the most important decision you make during this term of Council, that will have the greatest impact on future generations.**

During the recent public consultations on both the Woodland Bylaw Review and the NHS/WRS, the public made it clear that they want the strongest possible protection for our remaining natural areas. We trust that you will give the public's concerns serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Dennis Edell, Niagara Chapter Trout Unlimited Canada

Lyle Hall, SORE, Niagara-on-the Lake

Bob Highcock, President, Peninsula Field Naturalists

Joyce Sankey, Conservation Director, Niagara Falls Nature Club

Lucy Sardella, Niagara Beekeepers' Association of Niagara

Liz Benneian, Executive Director, Ontariogreen Conservation Association

Lynda Goodridge, Bert Miller Nature Club

Marcie Jacklin, Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative

Miriam Richards, Professor Biological Sciences, Brock University

Chris Motherwell, Hamilton Naturalists

Klara Young-Chin, Friends of One Mile Creek, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Ryan Forster and Team, Extinction Rebellion Niagara

Annette Gibbons, Grimsby, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Dr. Carol Tuck-Riggs, Grimsby, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Jackie Oblak, Town of Pelham, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Christine Knighton, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Melissa McGlashan, Welland, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara





October 13, 2020

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP  
Senior Planner  
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region  
Delivered via email: [Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca](mailto:Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca)

Dear Mr. Norman:

**Re: Niagara Official Plan – Natural Heritage and Water Resource Mapping**

The Grape Growers of Ontario (GGO) is the official organization operating under the Farm Products Marketing Act, that represents all of Ontario's 500 processing grape growers on 17,000 acres of vineyards, including 180 wineries. The GGO welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Natural Environment Work Program of the Niagara Official Plan. Consultation with individuals, organizations and those who are dependent on agriculture is important to achieve the appropriate balance between protecting the natural environment and supporting agricultural activities in Niagara.

We commend Niagara Region, its staff and planners for understanding the importance of agriculture to the community. The recognition that agriculture is a contributor to the sustainability of the Greenbelt and requires support to maintain the land base is essential when considering mapping any changes. The Agriculture System approach addresses both the protection of farmland and the viability of the agri-food sector.

The Region's Plan needs to recognize the importance of infrastructure and services required for the viability of the agri-food sector including all agricultural water resource infrastructure such as agricultural swales, constructed drains, ditches, privately owned irrigation ponds and all current and future municipally or privately owned irrigation systems or channels. Due to the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, water for irrigation is becoming more critically important to the viability of the Niagara Specialty Crop Area designated in the Greenbelt Plan. The Region must ensure that this man-made infrastructure is recognized as part of the Agricultural System and Agri-Food Network rather than as key natural heritage, hydrological features, or fish habitat.



The Grape Growers of Ontario supports the proposed Option #1 “Minimum Standards Overlay” outlined in the Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4 Agricultural Community Workshop presentation dated September 21, 2020.

The Natural Heritage mapping needs to be developed with input from growers and others to achieve the balance of protected countryside and productive countryside as identified in the *Planning for Health, Prosperity and Growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: 2015-2041* document. We recommend that the Agricultural Policy and Action Committee with its representation from grower organizations, municipal leaders and Niagara regional representatives be utilized in establishing the Natural Heritage and Agricultural systems including identification of agricultural infrastructure and all aspects of the Region of Niagara’s long-term planning. It is important to understand that agriculture must not only be protected, but valued as a partner in protecting the Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond, and we would be pleased to provide additional input throughout the Natural Heritage and Water Resource Mapping process.

Regards,



Debbie Zimmerman, CEO  
Grape Growers of Ontario  
[d.zimmerman@grapegrowersofontario.com](mailto:d.zimmerman@grapegrowersofontario.com)

c: Matthias Oppenlaender, Chair, Grape Growers of Ontario  
Bill Schenck, Chair, Agricultural Policy and Action Committee





Delivered via email: Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca

Re: Niagara Official Plan – Natural Heritage and Water Resource Mapping

The Niagara Federation of Agriculture (NFA) is your agricultural organization representing over 1,400 farm family members. Niagara offers the most diversified area of food production in all of Canada and agriculture has proven to be the economic mainstay within the Region. Agricultural producers have \$838.1 million in gross farm receipts with an employment impact of 19,892 jobs within the Region. The Niagara Federation of Agriculture (NFA) is the local extension of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) which represents over 38,000 farm family members across our province.

The directors of the Niagara Federation of Agriculture would like to take this opportunity to thank the Region of Niagara for including the agriculture community in the discussion concerning the new Official Plan. This is an overwhelming process and it comes during a difficult time for all. The directors have reviewed the information provided and would like to make the following comments with respect to the Natural Heritage System.

1. Based on the information provided at this time, the federation would prefer Option 1, implementing Natural Heritage System as an overlay.
2. There is concern over the mapping: who does the mapping, at what time of year will the mapping be completed, will the landowner be notified when mapping is being completed, will the landowner be able to meet with those developing the map to explain what the features are on their farm, will the mapping be ground-truthed and what is the process to change/appeal if the landowner disagrees with the mapping? NFA would like to work with Niagara Region to address these concerns.
3. The federation strongly suggests that land owners be notified of any designation changes to the land prior to the change being finalized.
4. The federation would like to be involved in the next steps, including mapping and development of the policies associated with agriculture in the Official Plan including natural heritage system, corridors and linkages, water resources, transportation and infrastructure.

Thank you once again for this opportunity to work with the Region of Niagara in the development of their Official Plan. The federation has a committee focused on this issue and would appreciate working with the Region in developing a progressive, agriculture friendly Official Plan. The struggles of COVID-19 over the past few months highlights the importance and the need for a supply of safe and healthy food. Niagara can fill this need if given the right tools to work with. Please contact me at 289-303-8883 if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Chris Hamilton  
President  
Niagara Federation of Agriculture



## Ontario Tender Fruit Growers

October 6, 2020

**Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP**

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

Delivered via email: [Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca](mailto:Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca)

Re: Niagara Official Plan – Natural Heritage and Water Resource Mapping

The Ontario Tender Fruit Growers represents over 200 family farms on approx. 9,000 acres of tender fruit, primarily located in the Niagara Region.

The 2020 season has brought again to the forefront, the importance of water to our economic sustainability. Our initial crop estimates have been drastically affected by the lack of rain this season and as at September 28<sup>th</sup> we are facing a moisture deficit of 554mm, which is 17% greater than the historical average.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the Resource Mapping project for the Niagara Official Plan and are pleased that the Niagara Region recognizes the importance of agriculture in its policy direction.

The Greenbelt Plan (2017) also recognizes the importance of agriculture and has designated the Niagara Peninsula Tender Fruit and Grape lands as a specialty crop area with supportive plan policies which are essential to our sustainability as a sector. The following excerpts are key components in that policy;

*“The agricultural land base is comprised of prime agricultural areas, including specialty crop areas, and rural lands. The agri-food network includes infrastructure, services and assets important to the viability of the agri-food sector.”*

*Integrated planning for growth management, including goods movement and transportation planning, shall consider opportunities to support and enhance the Agricultural System.*

*Municipalities are encouraged to implement regional agri-food strategies and other approaches to sustain and enhance the Agricultural System and the long-term economic prosperity and viability of the agri-food sector, including the maintenance and improvement of the agri-food network.*

*The agri-food network does not require land use designations in official plans. Municipalities are expected to provide policies to maintain and enhance the agri-food network and to identify the physical location of components of the agri-food network in collaboration with the Province. This work will assist with the long-term viability of the agri-food sector by planning for agriculture and the rural economy.*

An Agri-Food network for the Niagara Specialty Crop Area should be established by the region and all infrastructure for that Agri-Food network should be identified. This would include all agricultural water resource infrastructure components.

These include;

- agricultural swales,
- constructed drains,
- ditches,
- privately owned irrigation ponds,
- and all current and future municipally or privately owned irrigation systems or channels

The above systems should not be mapped as key natural heritage, hydrological features or fish habitat. These systems are crucial infrastructure that supports agricultural viability. They are not natural and do not consistently contain enough water to maintain aquatic life or natural self-sustaining vegetation.



All other key natural heritage /hydrological features should be mapped under Option 1 as presented to stakeholders in September to implement the minimum standards of the Provincial Policy Statement and Plans.

Additionally, as there has only been conceptual maps presented, ongoing public and stakeholder consultations on the mapping process and plan should occur prior to finalizing.

We would be pleased to participate in a separate committee to establish the Agri-Food network for the Specialty Crop Area and suggest that the Agricultural Policy Action committee which already has representation from grower organizations, municipal leaders and Niagara regional reps would be the ideal platform for that work. This work would include the identification of infrastructure and all aspects of long-term planning for the success of the agricultural sector in Niagara.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PT' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Phil Tregunno  
Chair, Ontario Tender Fruit Growers  
[ptregun@gmail.com](mailto:ptregun@gmail.com)

C. Agricultural Policy Action Committee



NIAGARA  
HOME  
BUILDERS'  
ASSOCIATION

*Build With Us!*

Mr. Doug Giles – Acting Commissioner of Planning  
Niagara Region

**December 1, 2020**

Dear Mr. Giles,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Region of Niagara New Official Plan Project ("NOP"). This letter is submitted on behalf of the Niagara Home Builders Association ("NHBA"), providing our comments, thoughts and concerns. We want to state clearly that the intent of this submission is to assist Regional staff with their ongoing work on the NOP. It is our belief that this detailed submission will be helpful to staff, providing a basis for future discussions and coloration between the Region and the NHBA, the result of which will be a strong and exceptional Official Plan.

As you are aware, the NHBA consists of over 140 members, including builders, developers, and suppliers, and for over 60 years has been the voice of the home building industry in Niagara. Together, our members provide all aspects of the home building industry and are responsible for 90% of all new residential dwellings constructed in the Niagara Region. Through our Government Relations Committee ("GRC"), we have assembled a team of planning experts and professionals with decades of experience in policy and development planning in Ontario and the Niagara Region. From our extensive experience and practical insights, we provide these detailed comments to you.

Attached to this letter is a chart outlining concerns and impacts of the draft Environmental Policies that have been provided for public comment. This chart provides the collective feedback from our GRC, and has been compiled under two (2) categories:

1. Natural Heritage and Environmental Policies
2. Agricultural and Rural

Overall, the NHBA has significant concerns with the processing steps, messaging, technical accuracy and implementation impacts of the ROP material. As the chart shows, our concerns are expressed from the perspective of landowners, the agricultural community, and the development community. In our view, the focus of the ROP should be first and foremost about growth management, and how the Region will proactively plan to accommodate significant growth in the coming years. There is no doubt that the Region is forecast to grow, and issues such as housing supply and affordability will be negatively impacted by an overly restrictive planning framework which unnecessarily frustrates needed development. Accommodating growth should be the main position from which all other ROP work emanates.

We close by re-iterating our willingness to continue constructive and collaborate dialogue with staff. Through the continued efforts of our GRC and as a stakeholder representing the homebuilding industry, our aim is to continually provide the Region with professional, structured and thorough communication providing our collective perspective. Over time, we see these efforts as critical in establishing a professional and positive working relationship with staff. Please accept our comments in the spirit of this objective.

Please review the detailed comments in our attachment at your earliest. We will be in touch to set up future consultation meetings between staff and the GRC, and we look forward to working with staff on the NOP.

Thank you,

Chuck McShane

NHBA Executive Officer

| Issues and Concerns                         |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                       |                   |                    |                        |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Category and Theme                          | Comment / Concern                                                                                  | Impact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Affected Bodies       |                   |                    |                        |
|                                             |                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Development Community | Private Landowner | Municipal Planning | Agricultural Community |
| Natural Heritage and Environmental Policies | Unsubstantiated Increase in Buffer Widths for Natural Heritage Features (i.e. Wetlands, Woodlands) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arbitrarily applied buffer widths without science-based ground truthing and feature verification across the Region is concerning</li> <li>Eliminates ability for individual private analysis by a QP, which is not consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, Section 2.1.8, which allows development and site alteration on adjacent lands to Natural Heritage features, if the ecological function of the adjacent lands has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or on their ecological functions.</li> <li>Assumes all features across the Region are the same (quantity, quality, functions)</li> </ul> | x                     | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                                             | Prescriptive Natural Heritage Corridors Outside of Urban Areas                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inflated significance of otherwise non-significant features (i.e. NH corridors)</li> <li>Fragmentation of Agricultural lands and limitations on arable lands</li> <li>NHS outside urban areas already limits Urban Boundary Expansion opportunities. The proposed approach will cause further fragmentation and limit growth opportunities in otherwise appropriate locations within urban areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                       | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                                             | Provision of Regulatory Policies for Features Regulated by Other Agencies                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duplication of services and responsibilities already delegated to the NPCA by the Province (i.e. wetland buffer requirements and requested requirements for supporting documentation)</li> <li>Could create contradictory comments or review processes making the process inconsistent, confusing, risky and unreliable</li> <li>Confusion, frustration, and delayed review timelines of development applications and permit processes for development community and public at large</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          | x                     | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                                             | Mapping Basis Unclear                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No inventory mapping of features provided to inform proposed policy direction</li> <li>Preliminary mapping schedule not based on scientific analysis</li> <li>Existing mapping is outdated and erroneous</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | x                     | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                                             | No Demonstrated Need for Enhanced Policy Beyond Provincial Requirements                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of analysis on the impacts that enhanced environmental Policies will have in relation to meeting the other objectives of the Official Plan</li> <li>Enhanced environmental Policies will lead to further limiting the current amount of urban lands available for development, driving up land and housing costs.</li> <li>Existing NH Information has not been released that demonstrates the status of NH</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | x                     | x                 | x                  | x                      |

| Issues and Concerns    |                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                       |                   |                    |                        |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Category and Theme     | Comment / Concern                                                                                                             | Impact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Affected Bodies       |                   |                    |                        |
|                        |                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Development Community | Private Landowner | Municipal Planning | Agricultural Community |
|                        |                                                                                                                               | Areas quantified through data and mapping                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                   |                    |                        |
|                        | No Evidence of Inventory or Ground Truthing Provided to Inform Policy Directions                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Policies should inform the process and encourage ground truthing on a site by site basis and allow the science to inform buffers etc., similar to how things are right now.</li> <li>Data and information has been quoted without providing the necessary background information to substantiate data (i.e. tree canopy coverage is quoted at 16% of the Niagara Region, no mapping or data has been released with information)</li> </ul> | x                     | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                        | Lack of Criteria or Information for Growth Options for The Region                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of growth information makes it difficult to comment or properly analyze other policy areas of the Plan</li> <li>Watershed Planning Paper identifies future preparation of High, Medium and Low Constraints</li> <li>No other documents reference criteria</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                   | x                     | x                 | x                  | x                      |
| Agricultural and Rural | The Proposed Natural Heritage Policies Affecting Agricultural/Rural Lands Are Proposed to Be More Restrictive                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher restrictions on lands outside the urban boundaries will limit the viability of Agricultural operations in the Region</li> <li>Fuller understanding and analysis of impact of policy options on Agricultural land, on crops, and of viability of crops</li> <li>How are NH Features that straddle the Urban Boundary being addressed if there are a different set of Policies for Urban or Rural Areas?</li> </ul>                       |                       | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                        | No Clear Indication of How Features Crossing Urban Area Boundaries Will Be Managed or Evaluated                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No difference between the features on the ground so how does a QP provide discernable evidence to support different development constraints based on policy parameters?</li> <li>Buffers and setbacks should be determined based on impacts</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                         |                       | x                 | x                  | x                      |
|                        | There Is No Clear Understanding About Normal Farm Practices and The Impacts of Rigorous or Restrictive Environmental Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strict environmental Policies in the Agricultural areas places undue financial burden on a struggling industry, degrading the viability of Agricultural operations</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                       | x                 |                    | x                      |



| Issues and Concerns |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                       |                   |                    |                        |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Category and Theme  | Comment / Concern                                                                                                        | Impact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Affected Bodies       |                   |                    |                        |
|                     |                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Development Community | Private Landowner | Municipal Planning | Agricultural Community |
|                     | Water Resources Considered as Regulated Natural Heritage Features Rather than a Resource Required to Support Agriculture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could lead to having to provide setbacks and buffers to areas, restricting the amount of land that can be used for Agricultural uses, which is not consistent with the Provincial Policy Plan to protect and support the viability of Agricultural areas</li> </ul> |                       | x                 | x                  | x                      |

## Norman, Sean

---

**From:** Norman, Sean  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 3:23 PM  
**To:** 'SORE'  
**Cc:** Huson, Diana; Making Our Mark; Acs, Erik; Norio, Ann-Marie  
**Subject:** RE: Niagara Region re Natural Heritage System Recommendation  
**Attachments:** PDS 26-2020 Natural Environment Work Program - Phase 4.pdf

Hi SORE Association,

Thank you for your submission.

To clarify, as noted in the attached PDS 26-2020 the recommendations are preliminary and still require input through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement - which we are currently undertaking. All of the options that are being evaluated will be presented, and input towards finalizing the evaluation process will be requested.

Regards,  
**Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP**  
Senior Planner  
Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region  
Phone: 905-980-6000 ext. 3179 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215

---

**From:** SORE <update@sorenottl.ca>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 15, 2020 4:32 PM  
**To:** Norio, Ann-Marie <Ann-Marie.Norio@niagararegion.ca>  
**Cc:** Norman, Sean <Sean.Norman@niagararegion.ca>; Huson, Diana <Diana.Huson@niagararegion.ca>  
**Subject:** Niagara Region re Natural Heritage System Recommendation

Dear Mr. Norman and Members of Planning and Economic Development Committee:

We write concerning PDS 26-2020-Natural Environment Work Program-Presentation of Options, which was presented at today's Committee meeting. Our apologies for this late submission but we only just became aware of the report and today's meeting.

SORE is a federally incorporated not-for-profit community organization dedicated to the wise management, use and development of the historic Rand Estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We count many hundreds of NOTL and Region residents among our members and supporters. You can visit our website at [sorenottl.ca](http://sorenottl.ca) for more information on our organization.

The Rand Estate contains several natural environmental components of interest and importance among its many attributes, including heritage trees, woodlands and One Mile Creek and its tributaries.

We read with interest the report and recommendation of your consultants, supported by staff, for Option 3B with respect to Natural Heritage System inputs to the Region's updated Official Plan. The report indicates that this option most closely reflects the input received during the consultation process to date.

With respect, we do not agree. The Consultation Summary Report which sets out the input supposedly leading to this conclusion does a good job of reflecting the advice provided by the various stakeholders to the consulting team. It lists nine "Key Themes" concerning that input. Among them are the following:

- Take a Systems Approach to Natural Environment Planning
- Recognize the Uniqueness of Niagara's Geography, Natural Environment and Agriculture
- Accurately Map the Natural Environment
- Protect the Natural Environment
- Forward Thinking Natural Environment Policies and Official Plan
- Build Trust Through Continued Engagement, Collaboration and Education.

We do not see anywhere in that consultation report a Key Theme that natural environment considerations and planning should be subservient to other considerations. Option 3C presented in the report in our view most accurately represents the input received from the stakeholders through the Region's consultation process. Yet the recommendation that Option 3B is preferred is explicitly made on the basis that other considerations should temper the Natural Heritage System inputs to the update Official Plan. If the Region's intention was and is that notwithstanding the input received during the consultation process, other considerations would be brought to bear on the recommendation on a preferred option, that should have been expressly stated and the stakeholders given an opportunity to comment. As it stands, the report's recommendation on a preferred option cannot be reconciled, in our view, with the input supposedly leading to that recommendation.

We ask that both Options 3B and 3C be carried forward into the next stage of consultation and that the stakeholders be explicitly asked for focused input on both options in light of the Key Themes identified in the consultation report, before the preferred option is endorsed by this Committee.

We congratulate the Region and staff on this initiative. It is long overdue and welcome. As the input received to date makes clear, Niagara Region has a biosphere unique to Canada. Our Regional Official Plan should embrace and build on that reality.

SORE Association  
[update@sorenotl.ca](mailto:update@sorenotl.ca)  
[sorenotl.ca](http://sorenotl.ca)

SORE Association  
[update@sorenottl.ca](mailto:update@sorenottl.ca)  
[sorenottl.ca](http://sorenottl.ca)

On 8-Oct-2020, at 5:51 PM, SORE <[update@sorenottl.ca](mailto:update@sorenottl.ca)> wrote:

We are submitting these comments for the consideration of Regional staff and Councillors on behalf of SORE.

SORE is a federally incorporated not for profit organization dedicated to the protection and wise management of the historic Rand Estate in Niagara-on-the-Lake. SORE represents several hundred residents in NOTL concerned about inappropriate development and the protection of natural and built heritage.

The Rand Estate is a nationally significant heritage asset currently under threat from an entirely inappropriate development proposal involving a hotel, convention centre and high density subdivision. Randwood contains (or contained before a large portion of it was outrageously clear cut two years ago) one of the few surviving examples of an extensive designed landscape by Dunington-Grubb, in addition to a variety of heritage trees, woodlots and One Mile Creek and one of its tributaries. The Rand Estate is a clear and compelling example of natural environment and water resource features in a settlement area that the Region's Official Plan should be focused on protecting and enhancing rather than abandoning.

As indicated in our correspondence of July 15 (copy enclosed), it was and remains our view that Option 3C best accords with the input that the Region has received during all of the consultation on this issue. The initial recommendation of staff that Option 3B is preferred is, with respect, neither traceable or replicable given the input the Region has received. That recommendation can only be justified if the Region acknowledges that other considerations have been brought to bear outside the input received during the consultation process. Those considerations should be made explicit if the Committee elects not to adopt Option 3C.

Substantively, it is our submission that the Region should and indeed must clearly map natural heritage system and water resource system features holistically using an ecosystem approach as required by both the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act and the MMAF Statement of Environmental Values under the Environmental Bill of Rights. This should include buffers and linkages in accordance with a proper ecosystem approach, both outside and very importantly inside settlement areas. Such features should not and we submit cannot be ignored simply because they are inside



settlement areas. They are a critical component of not only ecosystem health; they enhance the quality of life for all within settlement areas.

Such an approach is not only required under relevant legislation, we submit it makes for good business. Developers will clearly know where the constraints are and municipalities within the Region can then deal with development proposals transparently and from a position of strength.

In closing, we urge staff and the Committee to consider carefully:

1. the input received during the consultation process;
2. the Region's obligations under the Planning Act and The Environmental Bill of Rights; and
3. the benefit of clear guidance to developers and lower tier municipalities with respect to ecosystem protection of natural heritage features and water resource systems, both inside and outside of settlement areas.

We thank you for your consideration and extend our appreciation for the efforts of staff and Council in this important endeavour.

SORE Association

[update@sorenottl.ca](mailto:update@sorenottl.ca)  
[sorenottl.ca](http://sorenottl.ca)

**From:** Niagara Chapter Trout Unlimited Canada; SORE; Peninsula Field Naturalists, Niagara Falls Nature Club; Niagara Beekeepers' Association of Niagara; Ontariogreen Conservation Association; Bert Miller Nature Club; Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative; Hamilton Naturalists; Friends of One Mile Creek; Extinction Rebellion Niagara; Miriam Richards, Professor Biological Sciences, Brock University; and members of the Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

**To:** Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee

Nov. 3 2020

Re: Woodland Tree Bylaw and Its Impact on Natural Heritage and Water Resource System Planning

Dear Members of the Planning and Economic Development Committee:

The information that came forward to the Planning and Economic Development Committee about the Woodland Bylaw makes the issue of adopting the most robust Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems more important than ever.

As was made clear in answer to Councillor Butters' specific question about what the bylaw would do to preserve or enhance the existing 17% forest cover in Niagara, staff replied that there was nothing in this bylaw that would add to the existing tree cover in the Region. In fact, there is little in this bylaw that will actually protect our *existing* tree cover. Staff explained they were limited in making improvements to the Region's Forestry Bylaw by the Municipal Act and Forestry Act.

For instance, forests that have suffered tree loss due to emerald ash borer, and no longer meet the density requirements under the Forestry Act, including woodlands currently mapped as Significant Woodland or Environmental Conservation Area under the Official Plan, can be reclassified as not significant and can lose their protection. Nothing in the new bylaw changes this.

The new bylaw will not prevent the practice of some woodland owners from clearing the understory, which ensures that the woodland will lose its significance over time as no new trees will grow to replace the old.

The new bylaw only applies to specific lands and therefore does not cover much of the remaining wooded areas in Niagara. For the same reason, the bylaw cannot set tree replacement rules/ratios. Replacement orders are only put into effect, at the discretion of the Region's enforcement officer, if he determines a violation has occurred on woodlands covered by the bylaw. Tree removals that occur through applications under the Planning Act cannot be covered by the Region's bylaw. To protect any other wooded area, group of trees or specific trees, or removal of trees due to applications covered by the Planning Act, each municipality would have to enact their own Private Tree Bylaws.

There is no ongoing monitoring of woodlands covered by the bylaw. Offences are pursued on a complaint basis and the time limit is tight. The Region hoped to increase the time limit for pursuing charges from 6 months to two years but found out they couldn't because of the Provincial Offences Act.

Any fines levied due to an offense against the new Woodland Bylaw will not go to restoration efforts, tree planting grants or to land acquisition. Fines under this bylaw “are divided up on a pro rata share with the lower tier municipalities based on legislated requirements” — as contained in an answer by staff to public comments on the bylaw.

The old bylaw contained numerous exemptions to the bylaw, including many added in 2008 for agricultural use, and the new bylaw includes one more plus it no longer protects hedgerows less than 20 m wide. These will inevitably lead to further woodland losses.

Finally, there is nothing in the new bylaw that addresses two of the greatest threats we face — climate change and biodiversity loss.

While questions were asked about possible tree planting/restoration programs, it's important to note that these are significantly limited by three factors:

1. a severe lack of funding for those efforts,
2. lack of readily available land for naturalization, and
3. the reliance on volunteers and community groups to carry out work that should be paid employment by professionals.

Furthermore, unless restoration plantings outstrip the continuous losses due to development and other land uses — and there is zero evidence that they do — then Niagara's irreplaceable natural ecosystem will continue to diminish over time.

In summary, the Region's new Woodland Bylaw does not address the concerns articulated so well by Chair Bradley and Councillors Butters, Fertich, Easton and Greenwood about improving the Region's limited tree cover. Staff suggested that Council look to the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System planning to address concerns about protection of our unique, but diminished and fragmented, local ecology.

**That makes it more important than ever that you approve only the most robust Natural Heritage and Water Resource Systems.**

Natural Heritage System (NHS) and Water Resource System (WRS) plans map significant environment and water resource features, delineate sufficient buffers to protect them and link them together to form an ecological system that is sufficient to provide:

1. the green infrastructure benefits we require,
2. enough nature to support local flora and fauna and
3. a resilient ecosystem that will continue to exist over time.

**Given the development pressure Niagara Region is under, this is the last chance we have to save Niagara's unique natural environment for future generations.**

Taking all types of ecosystems into account including forests, wetlands, meadowlands etc. a 2011 study by the NPCA estimated that the watershed's remaining natural areas contribute only 56 per cent towards what the system needs to remain viable, and therefore persists as a highly environmentally degraded and fragmented landscape. <https://npca.ca/our-voice/post/restoring-and-improving-niagara-peninsula-watershed>

What Planning staff identified to you as their preliminary preferred options at the July 15 PEDC meeting, 3B for the NHS and 2A for the WRS, come nowhere close to protecting our remaining natural areas. Option 3C for the NHS and 2B for the WRS is the best of the options presented, however, we think they could be improved upon and we will present some ideas to you in future correspondence/presentations. Please see the chart that shows the differences between the current options.

| <b>Natural Heritage System</b>                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Staff's preliminary recommendation</b>                                                                        | <b>Best option to protect environment and meet Region's stated goals</b>                                                                   |
| <b>NHS Option 3B</b>                                                                                             | <b>NHS Option 3C</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - Identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas                                                 | - Identifies additional features in and outside settlement areas                                                                           |
| - Identifies supporting features outside of settlement areas such as potential enhancement areas                 | - Identifies supporting features <b>inside and outside of settlement areas</b> including potential enhancement areas                       |
| - Includes large and medium linkages outside of settlement areas                                                 | - Includes large, medium, and <b>small linkages</b> outside of settlement areas                                                            |
|                                                                                                                  | - <b>Includes small linkages inside of settlement areas where the potential area is in a natural state</b>                                 |
| - Suggests policy minimum for buffers outside of provincial NHSs and both inside and outside of settlement areas | - Prescribes <b>mandatory</b> buffer minimums outside of settlement areas with <b>suggested policy minimums inside of settlement areas</b> |
| <b>Water Resource System</b>                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Staff's preliminary recommendation</b>                                                                        | <b>Best option to protect water resources and meet Region's stated goals</b>                                                               |
| <b>WRS Option 2A</b>                                                                                             | <b>WRS Option 2B</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - Would identify additional features only outside of settlement areas                                            | - Would identify additional features and areas <b>Region-wide, including within settlement areas</b>                                       |

Please be aware that developing these options is just the first step to the creation of a Regional NHS and WRS. This phase only develops a concept of what features, buffers and linkages should be considered inside and outside of settlement areas. The next layer will be the mapping, then the consultation with municipal planning staff



and likely with other stakeholders including developers. There will be many opportunities to include or exclude areas from the final plan.

As well, there are municipal boundary expansions coming forward from Niagara Falls and Welland, and significant development applications in Fort Erie and elsewhere, that will affect what is left to protect.

**The decision on the NHS/WRS may be the most important decision you make during this term of Council, that will have the greatest impact on future generations.**

During the recent public consultations on both the Woodland Bylaw Review and the NHS/WRS, the public made it clear that they want the strongest possible protection for our remaining natural areas. We trust that you will give the public's concerns serious consideration.

Sincerely,

Dennis Edell, Niagara Chapter Trout Unlimited Canada

Lyle Hall, SORE, Niagara-on-the Lake

Bob Highcock, President, Peninsula Field Naturalists

Joyce Sankey, Conservation Director, Niagara Falls Nature Club

Lucy Sardella, Niagara Beekeepers' Association of Niagara

Liz Benneian, Executive Director, Ontariogreen Conservation Association

Lynda Goodridge, Bert Miller Nature Club

Marcie Jacklin, Niagara Birding Conservation and Tourism Collaborative

Miriam Richards, Professor Biological Sciences, Brock University

Chris Motherwell, Hamilton Naturalists

Klara Young-Chin, Friends of One Mile Creek, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Ryan Forster and Team, Extinction Rebellion Niagara

Annette Gibbons, Grimsby, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Dr. Carol Tuck-Riggs, Grimsby, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Jackie Oblak, Town of Pelham, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Christine Knighton, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

Melissa McGlashan, Welland, Biodiversity and Climate Action Niagara

## **Appendix F: Planning Advisory Committee Presentation**

- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options - Presentation to Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) (September 16, 2020)



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# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN

# **Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options**

**Presentation to Planning Advisory Committee (PAC)**

**September 16, 2020**





# Project Overview – Natural Environment

| Project Phase | Activities                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | Project Initiation and Procurement                                                       |
| 2             | Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas |
| 3             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study                          |
| 4             | Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)                                       |
| 5             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)   |
| 6             | Develop Regional Natural System(s)                                                       |
| 7             | Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping                                                   |
| 8             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules                     |
| 9             | Other Implementation Tools                                                               |



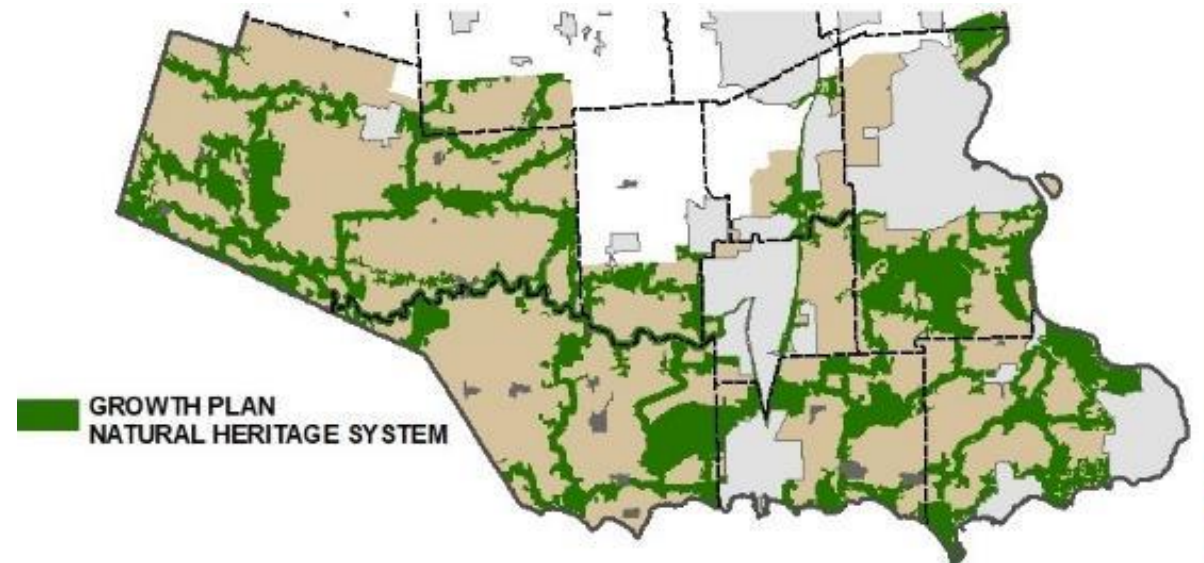
# Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



# Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also requires that a water resource system be identified and protected.
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture





# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes



# Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a WRS – however, the Growth Plan requires that a WRS be identified
- While some components of a WRS can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



# Development of Options

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
  - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
  - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
  - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
  - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
  - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
  - Conform with provincial requirements
  - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara

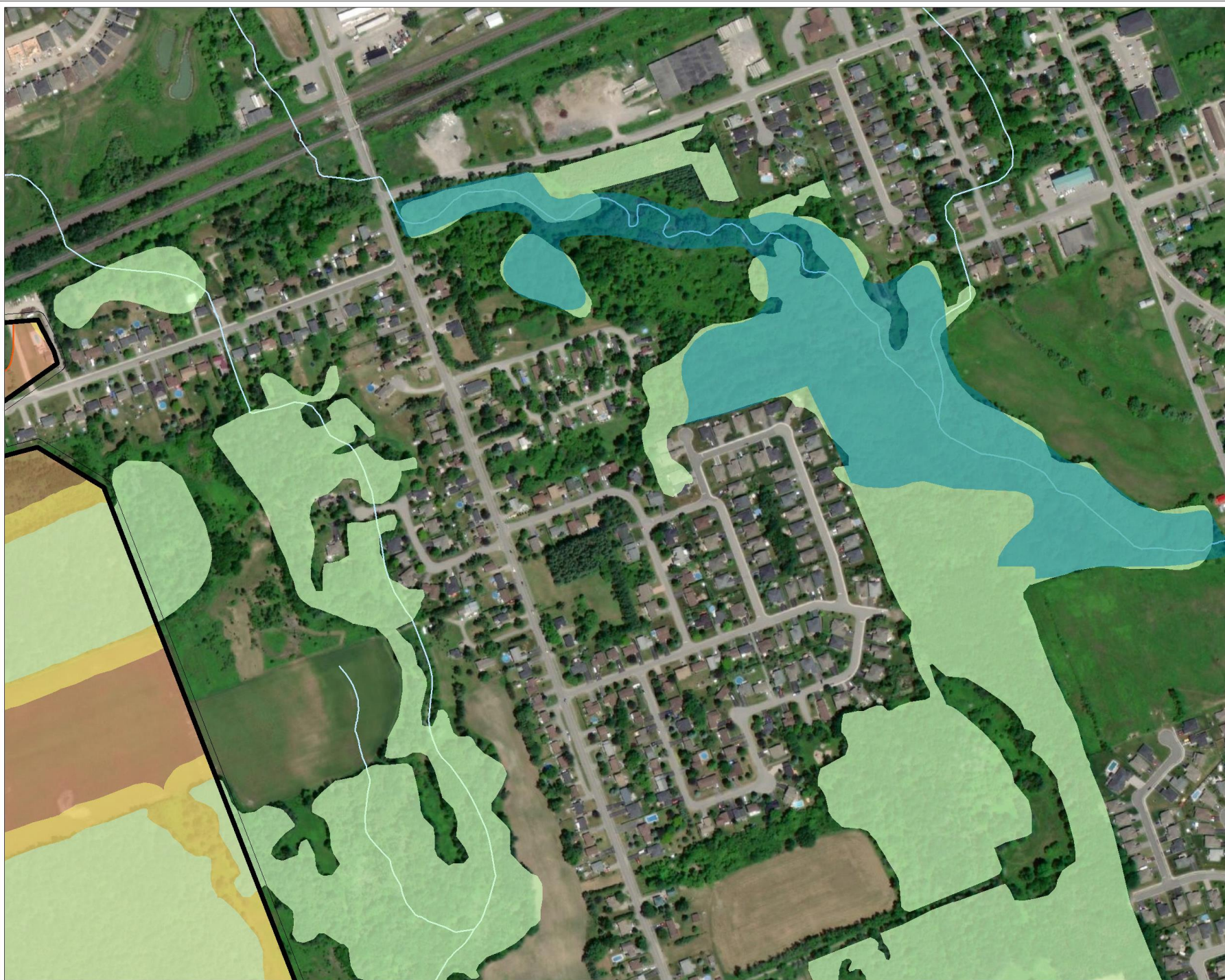


# Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
  - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
  - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS. outside of the Provincial NHSs
  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.







# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

## Legend

Settlement Area

## Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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## Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

### Legend

#### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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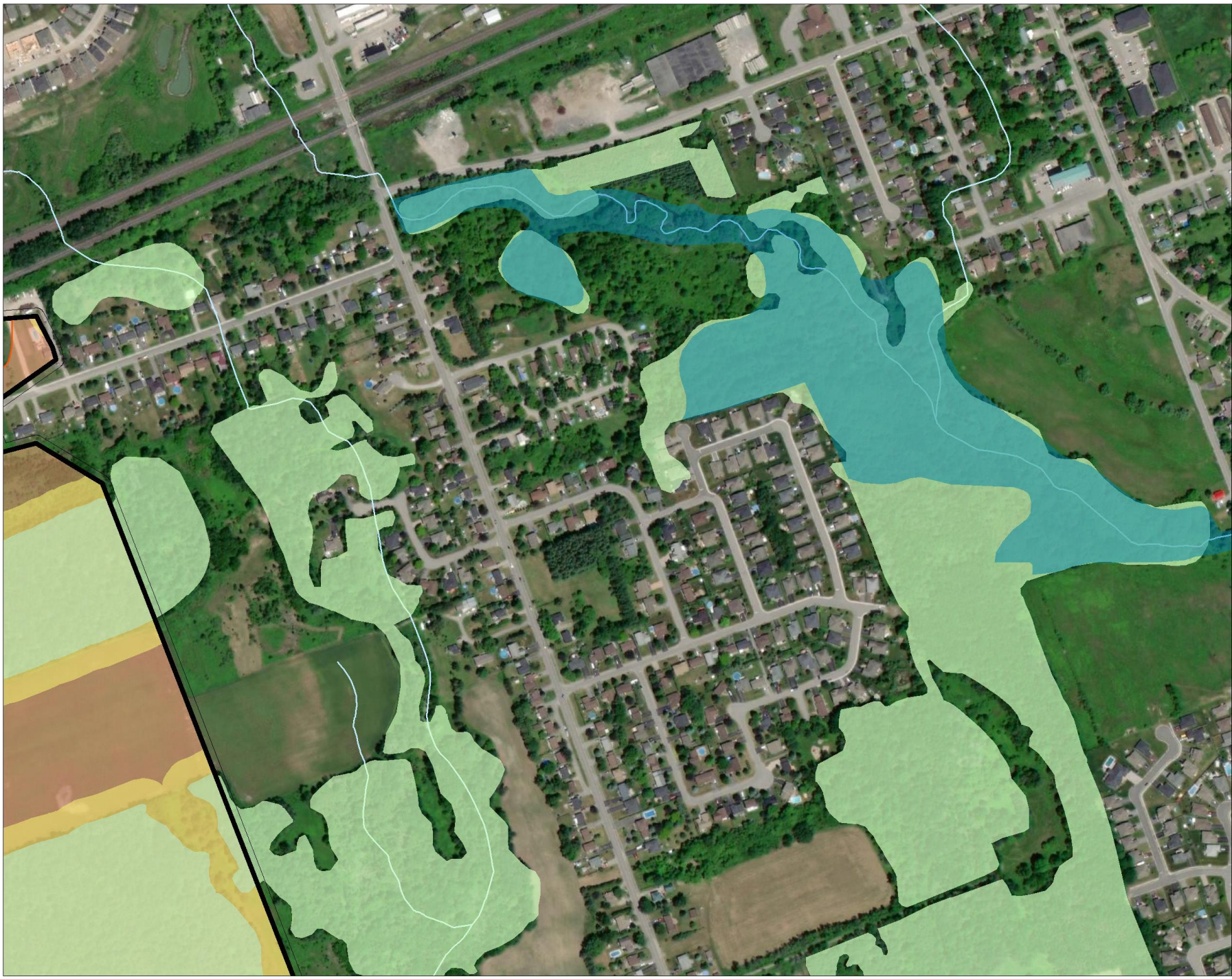
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# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

|                                                                                 | N.H.S. 3A                                                                                                                                                                                                           | N.H.S. 3B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | N.H.S. 3C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component Features and Areas</b>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P.</li> <li>Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A</li> <li>Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas</li> <li>Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B</li> <li>Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B</li> <li>Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connecting the System (linkages)</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> <li>Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state</li> </ul>                                                                              |
| <b>Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                   |





Conceptual Natural  
Heritage System  
Settlement Area  
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



|                           |                     |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Project Number<br>20-1149 | Date:<br>2020-09-09 |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

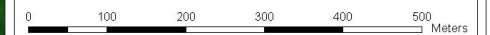
#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number  
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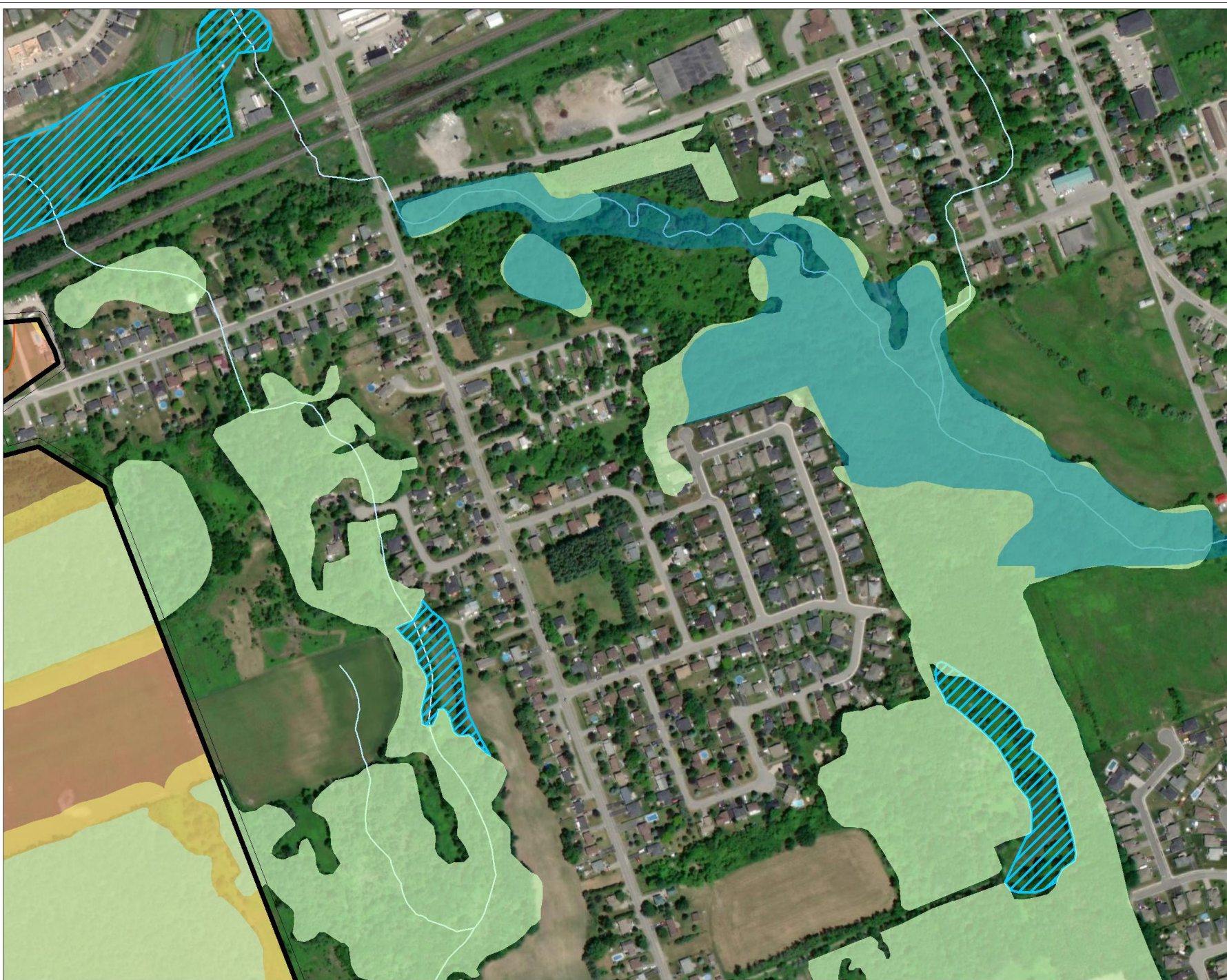
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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend


 Settlement Area

### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number  
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Date:  
2020-09-09



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Conceptual Natural  
Heritage System  
Outside Settlement Area  
**Option 3B**

**Legend**

**Required Components**

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

**Optional Components**

- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
  - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
  - Medium Linkage (200m)
  - Mandatory Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



Project Number  
20-1149

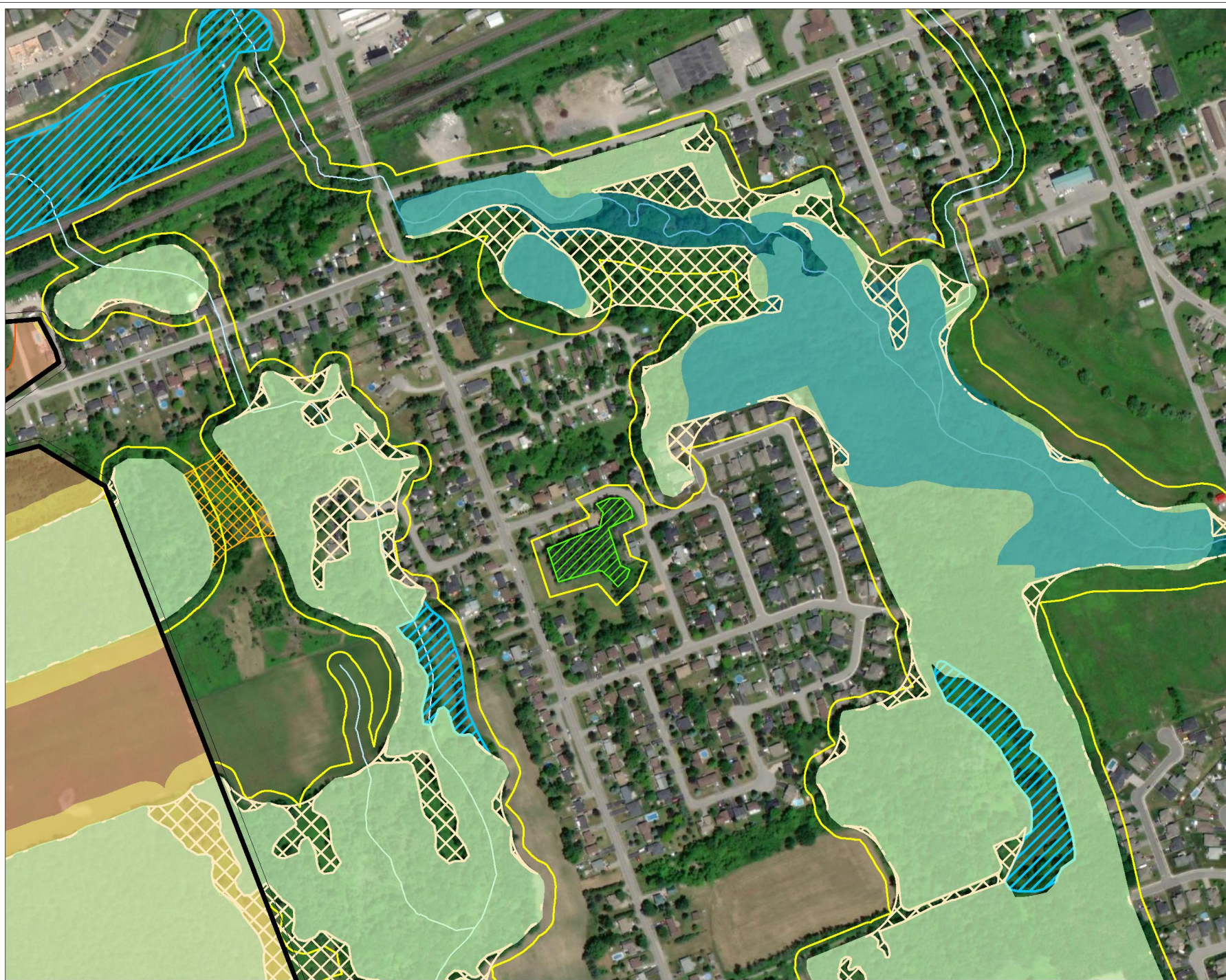
Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

Settlement Area

## Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

## Optional Components

### Other Key Features

Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

### Supporting Features and Areas

Other Woodlands

Enhancement Areas

### Linkages

Small Linkage (100m)

Minimum Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components




#### Other Key Features


-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Small Linkage (100m)

-  Minimum Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
  - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas













# Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

## Legend

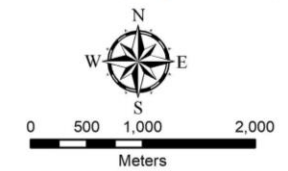
### Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

-  Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
-  Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for  
discussion purposes only



north-south  
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020





# Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan (although it would be fully protected by policies in the Official Plan as required by provincial policy and federal legislation).
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.





# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020.
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
  - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction for an 'watershed planning equivalency document'. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives.



# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



# Your Feedback is Requested



# Discussion Questions

- Do you require any additional information or clarification on the options presented?
- What do you like and/or dislike about the range of options developed?
- What is your feedback on the options – given the range of competing land uses and other planning considerations?





## **Appendix G: Agricultural Policy and Action Committee Presentation**

- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification Options - Agricultural Policy and Action Committee (September 25, 2020)



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# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN

# Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification Options

Agricultural Policy and Action Committee  
September 25, 2020



[makingourmark@niagararegion.ca](mailto:makingourmark@niagararegion.ca)



# Project Overview – Natural Environment

| Project Phase | Activities                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | Project Initiation and Procurement                                                       |
|               | Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas |
|               | 1 <sup>st</sup> Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study                          |
| 4             | Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)                                       |
|               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)   |
| 6             | Develop Regional Natural System(s)                                                       |
| 7             | Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping                                                   |
| 8             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules                     |
| 9             | Other Implementation Tools                                                               |



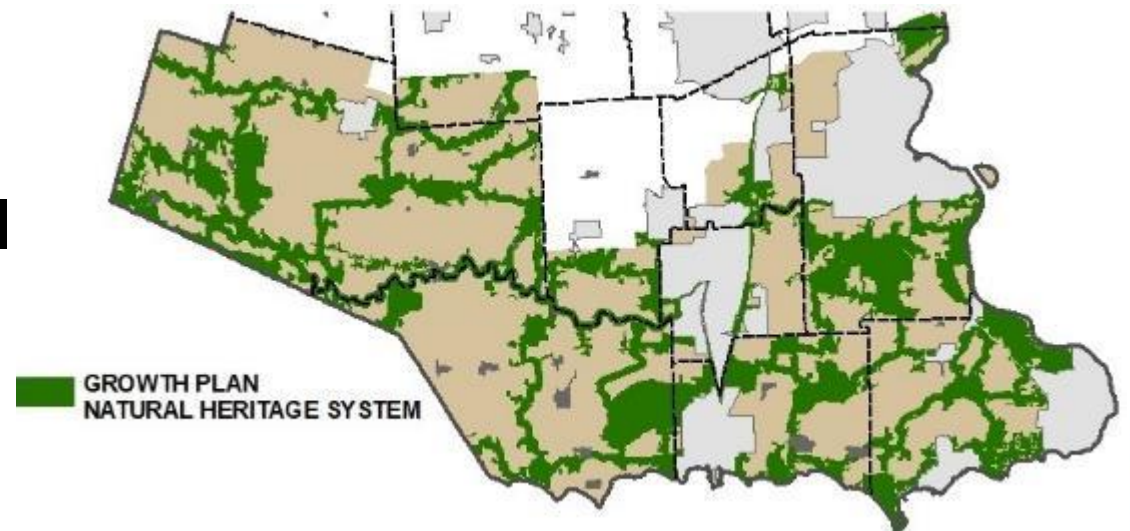
# Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



# Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also require that a water resource system be identified and protected
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture





# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes





# Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a W.R.S. – however, the Growth Plan requires that a W.R.S. be identified
- While some components of a W.R.S. can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



# Developing Options for the Natural Environment System

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
  - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
  - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
  - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
  - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
  - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
  - Conform with provincial requirements
  - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara

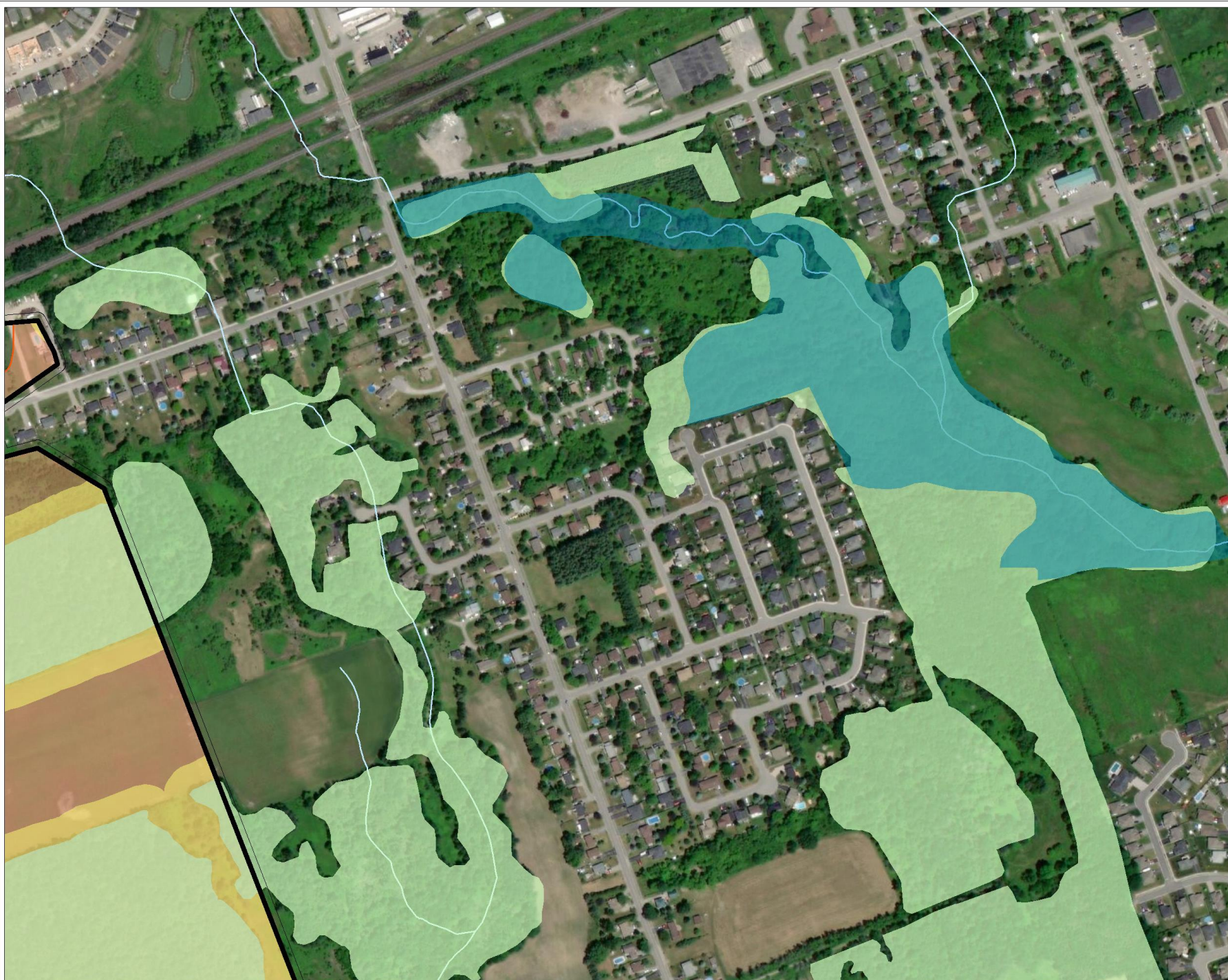


# Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
  - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
  - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS. outside of the Provincial NHSs
  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.







# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

## Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



|                           |                     |       |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------|
| Project Number<br>20-1149 | Date:<br>2020-09-09 | N<br> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------|

Map Produced by North South Environmental (NSE) Inc.  
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Imagery: ESRI







## Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

### Legend

#### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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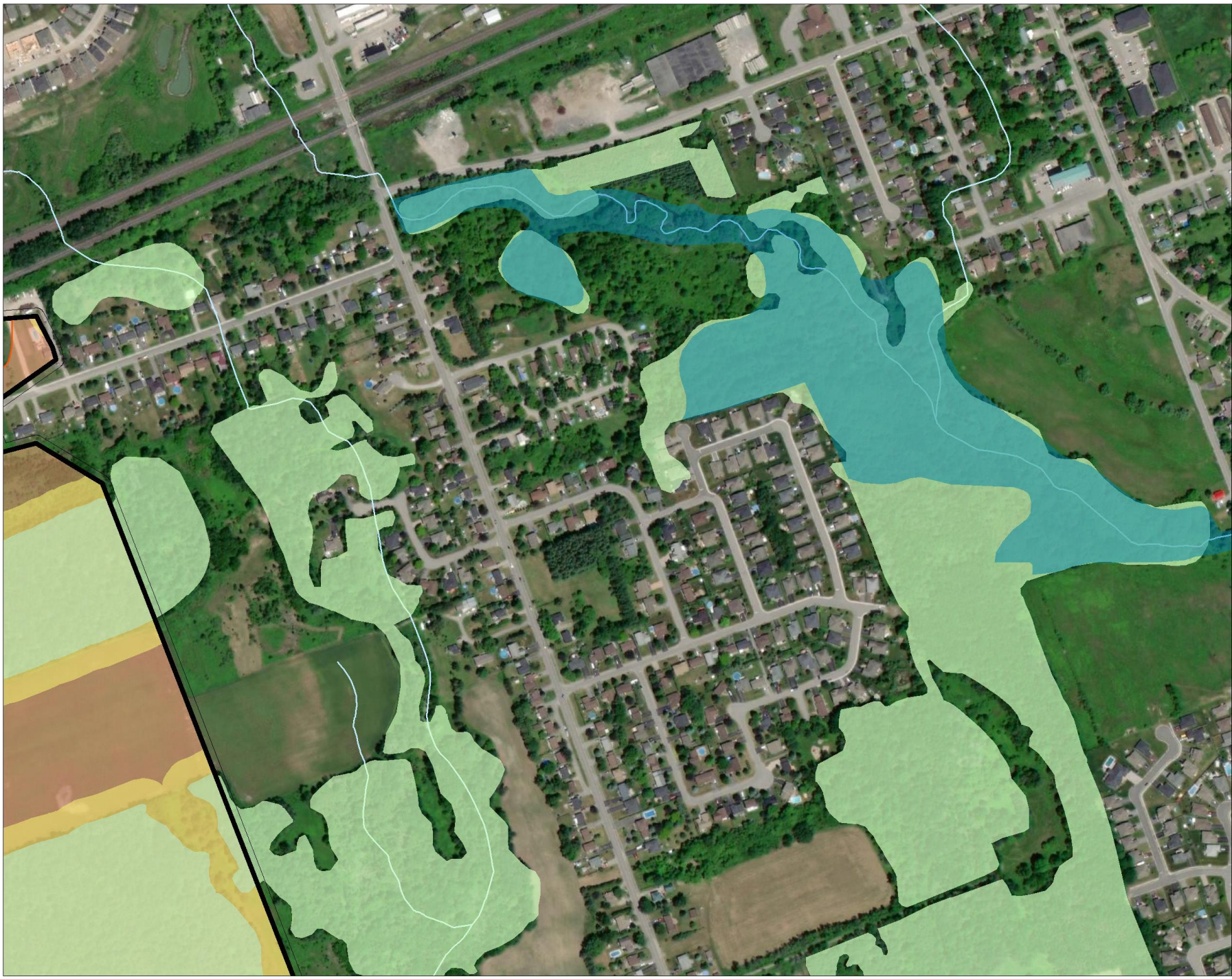
**north-south**  
ENVIRONMENTAL



# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

|                                                                                 | N.H.S. 3A                                                                                                                                                                                                               | N.H.S. 3B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | N.H.S. 3C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component Features and Areas</b>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P.</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connecting the System (linkages)</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> <li>• Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |





Conceptual Natural  
Heritage System  
Settlement Area  
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



|                           |                     |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Project Number<br>20-1149 | Date:<br>2020-09-09 |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09

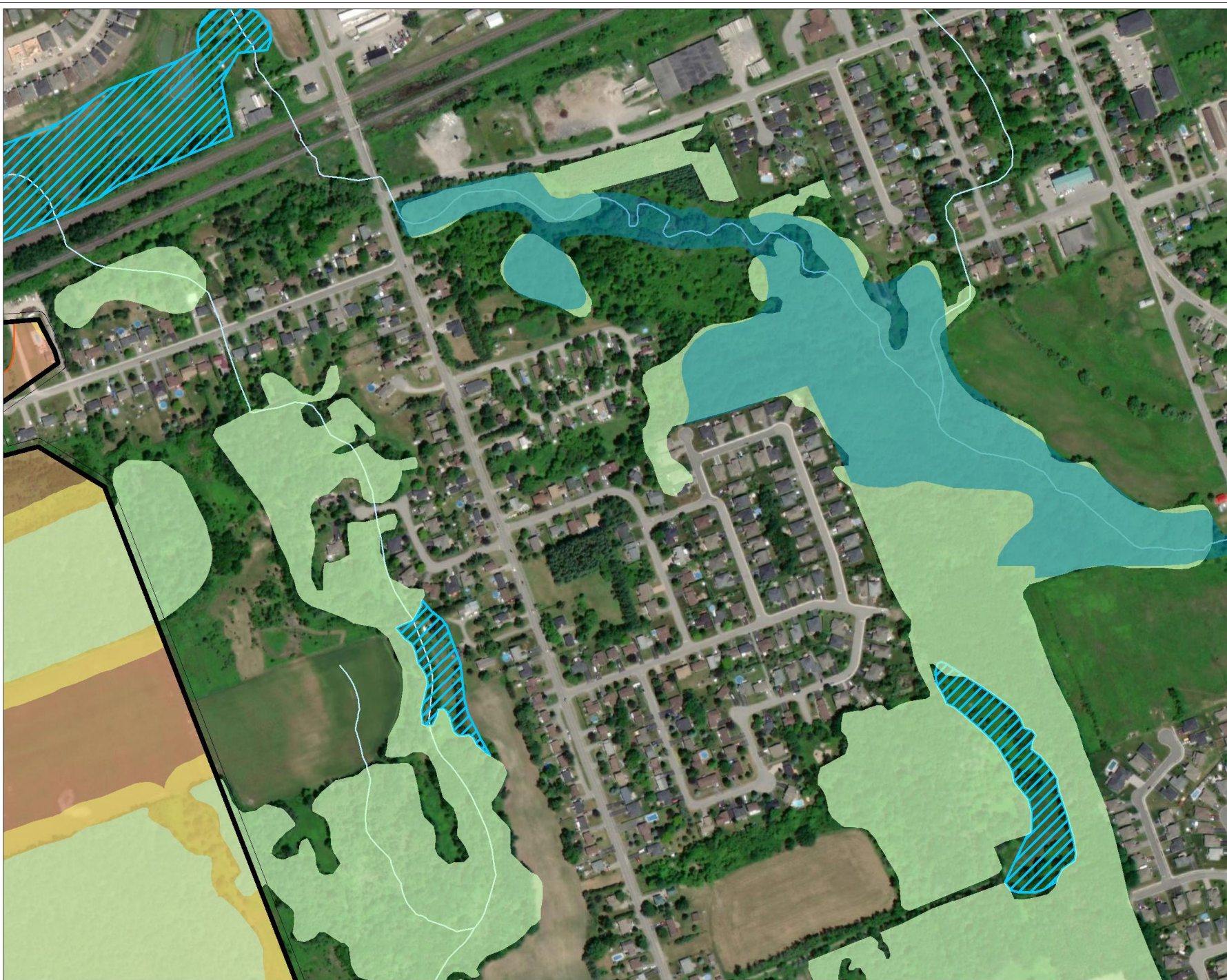


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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

Settlement Area

### Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number  
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Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

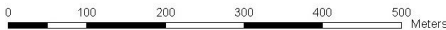
### Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

### Optional Components

- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
  - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
  - Medium Linkage (200m)
  - Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

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Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

- Legend**
- Settlement Area
  - Required Components**
    - Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
    - Vegetation Protection Zones
    - Significant Woodlands
    - Provincially Significant Wetland
    - Watercourses
  - Optional Components**
    - Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
  - Other Key Features**
    - Other Woodlands
    - Enhancement Areas
  - Supporting Features and Areas**
    - Small Linkage (100m)
  - Linkages**
    - Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



|                           |                     |        |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Project Number<br>20-1149 | Date:<br>2020-09-11 | N<br>▲ |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------|

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

### Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Medium Linkage (200m)
- Small Linkage (100m)

- Minimum (prescribed) Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number  
20-1149

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2020-09-09



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# Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
  - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas













# Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

## Legend

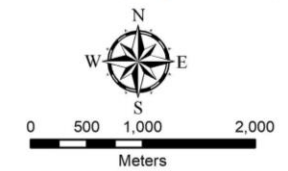
### Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

-  Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
-  Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Settlement Areas

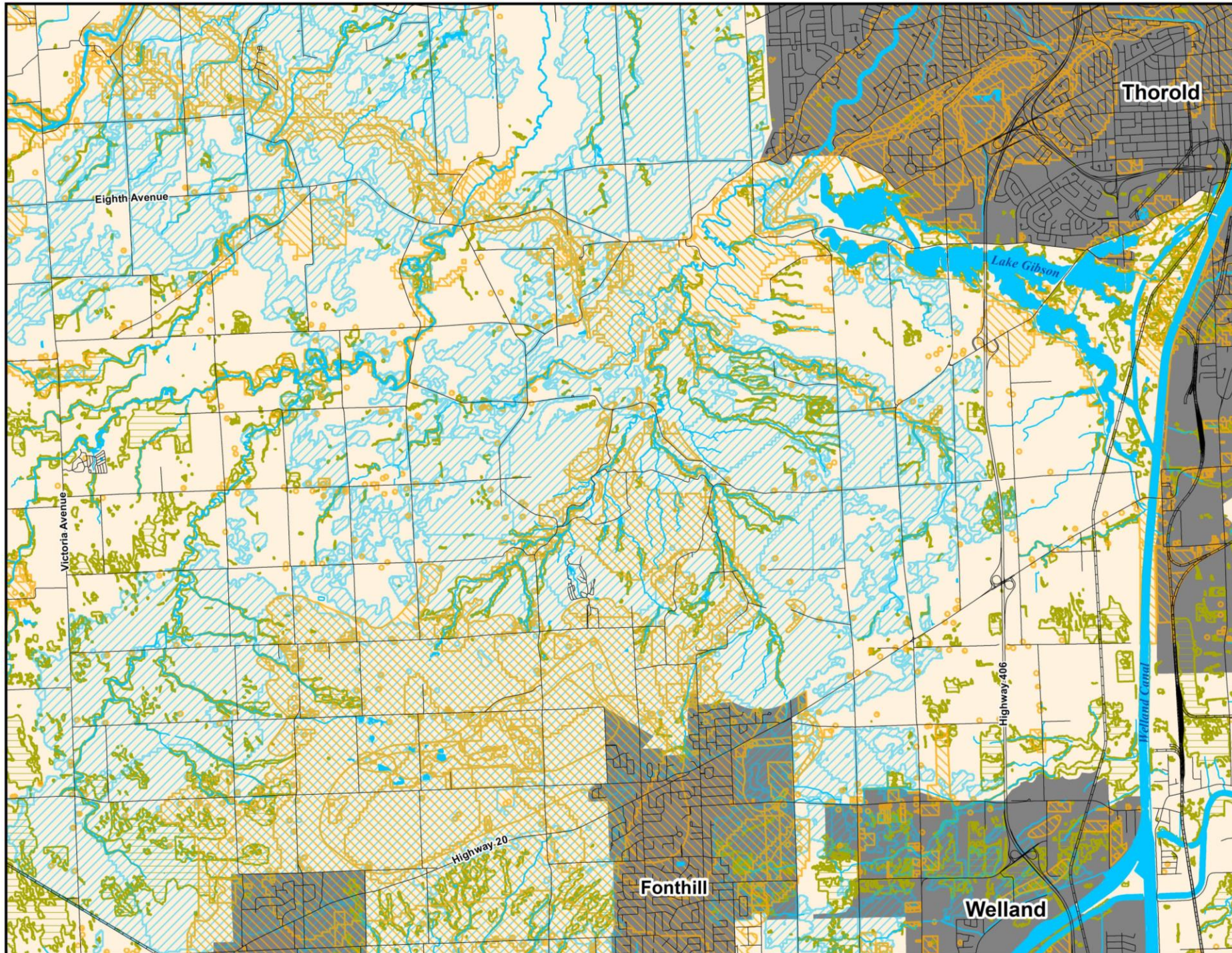
Conceptual figure for  
discussion purposes only



north-south  
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020





# Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines, and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies





## **Appendix H: Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority Consultation**

- Update on Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program - Presentation to NPCA Board (Thursday, September 17, 2020)
- The Niagara Official Plan and Natural Environment Work Program Update - Presentation to NPCA Public Advisory Committee (Thursday, September 24, 2020)
- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options - Presentation to NPCA Staff (September 29, 2020)



making our mark

**NIAGARA**  
OFFICIAL PLAN

# **Update on Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program**

**Presentation to NPCA Board**

**Thursday, September 17, 2020**



# Planning Hierarchy in Ontario

## PLANNING MANDATE FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN NIAGARA

### ONTARIO HOUSING SUPPLY ACTION PLAN



PROVINCE-WIDE POLICIES




AREA SPECIFIC POLICY PLANS

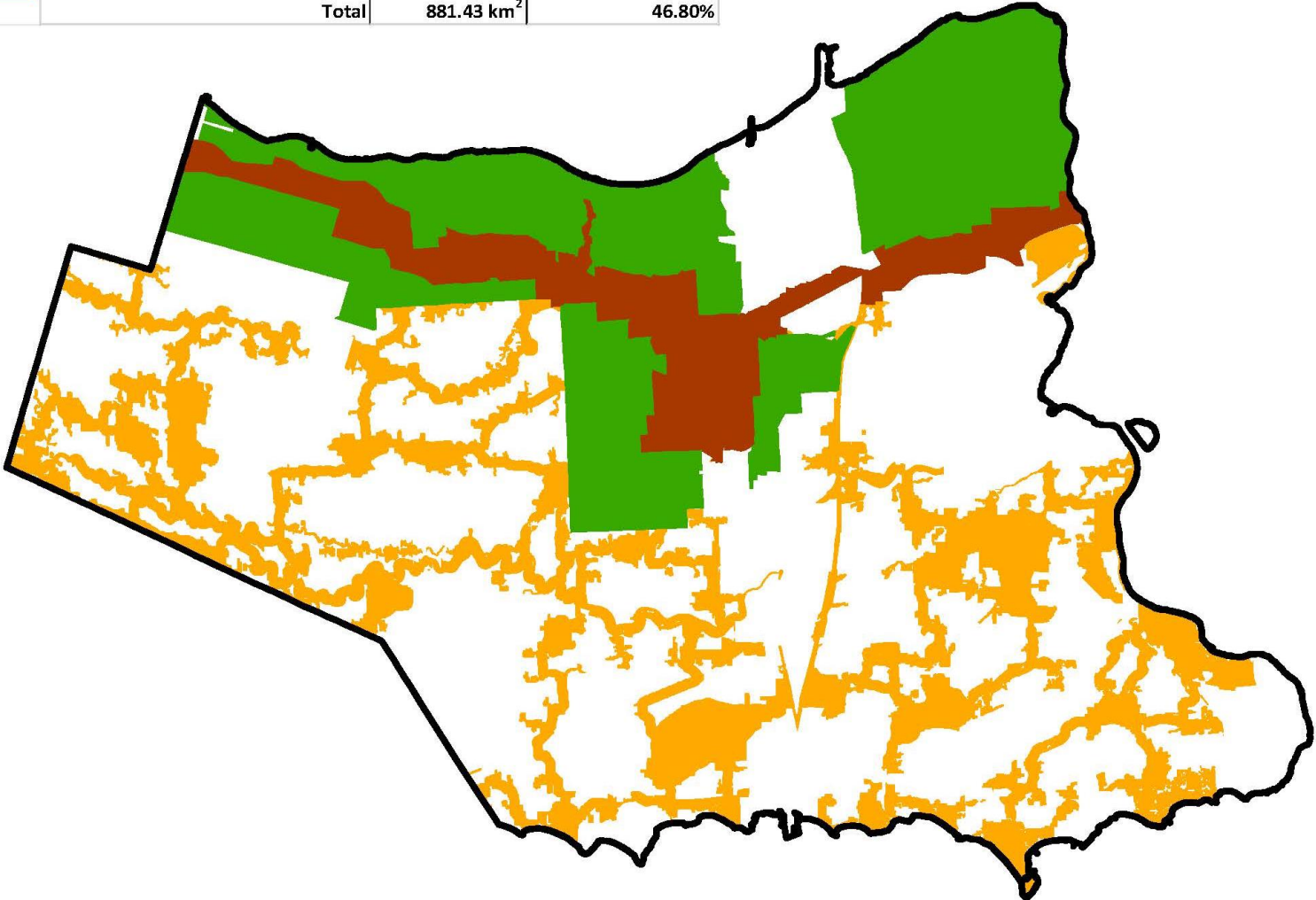
NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN





# Provincial Planning Coverage

| NIAGARA REGION                                                                    |                                     | Total Land Area        | % of Total Land Area<br>in Niagara Region |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
|  | Niagara Escarpment Plan             | 137.75km <sup>2</sup>  | 7.30%                                     |
|  | Greenbelt Plan                      | 356.49 km <sup>2</sup> | 18.90%                                    |
|  | Growth Plan Natural Heritage System | 387.19 km <sup>2</sup> | 20.60%                                    |
| Total                                                                             |                                     | 881.43 km <sup>2</sup> | 46.80%                                    |



# Niagara Official Plan

NATURAL HERITAGE & WATER RE  
WATERSHED PI  
CLIMATE CHA

URBAN DESIGN  
CULTURE & ARCHAEOLOGY  
DISTRICT & SECONDARY PLANS



REGIONAL STRUCTURE  
REA BOUNDARY EXPANSIONS  
WITH ALLOCATIONS  
AND NEEDS  
HOUSING

TRANSPORTATION  
WATER & WASTEWATER  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
STORMWATER

RURAL & AGRICULTURE    EMPLOYMENT LANDS  
MINERAL AGGREGATE RESOURCES

# Alignment of Draft Vision with Public Consultation Results and Council Strategic Plan

| Draft Vision                                      | Public Consultation Results<br>Public Information Centres Nov. 2019                                                                                                                                                 | Council Strategic Plan 2019 2022                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EXCEPTIONAL</b> development and communities    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in well-planned, high quality development in appropriate locations that improves our communities, while protecting what's valuable</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 2.1- enhance community wellbeing</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| <b>DIVERSE</b> housing types, jobs and population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant focus on achieving a greater mix of housing types, including affordable housing, for individuals and families living, studying and working in Niagara</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 2.3- addressing affordable housing needs</li> </ul>                                                           |
| <b>THRIVING</b> agriculture and tourism           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in leveraging the GO Train to boost tourism and advancing economic opportunities associated with agriculture and nature-based ecotourism</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 1.1- economic growth and development</li> <li>Objective 1.4- strategically target industry sectors</li> </ul> |
| <b>RESILIENT</b> urban and natural areas          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong emphasis on the importance of protecting the natural environment and enhancing resilience of urban areas to mitigate and adapt to climate change</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 3.2- environmental sustainability and stewardship</li> </ul>                                                  |



# Alignment of Draft Directives with Public Consultation Results and Council Strategic Plan

| Draft Directives                                                                                                         | Public Consultation Results<br>Public Information Centres Nov. 2019                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Council Strategic Plan 2019 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>GROWING REGION</b><br>Manage growth strategically and diversify the housing stock to accommodate all ages and incomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in directing growth to appropriate locations supported by infrastructure and servicing, and achieving a greater mix of housing types to support affordability, such as semi-detached dwellings, row housing and apartment buildings</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 2.3- addressing affordable housing needs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>VIBRANT REGION</b><br>Elevate the livability and engaging qualities of communities, facilities and attractions        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in proactive planning and design excellence that improves community livability, while celebrating Niagara's unique features and cultural assets</li> </ul>                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 2.1- enhance community wellbeing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>CONNECTED REGION</b><br>Provide connections within and between communities and outside of the region                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong emphasis on the importance of infrastructure to support growth, and enhancing public transit and active transportation opportunities</li> </ul>                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 3.1- advancing regional transit and GO rail service</li> <li>Objective 3.3- maintain existing infrastructure</li> <li>Objective 3.4- facilitating the movement of people and goods</li> </ul> |
| <b>COMPETITIVE REGION</b><br>Plan and manage growth to position Niagara for economic prosperity                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant interest in managing resource extraction and rehabilitation wisely, as well as protecting employment lands and supporting economic opportunities through investments in transit and tourism</li> </ul>                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 1.1- economic growth and development</li> <li>Objective 1.4- strategically target industry sectors</li> </ul>                                                                                 |
| <b>SUSTAINABLE REGION</b><br>Enhance the sustainability and resilience of Niagara's built and natural environment        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong emphasis on protection and enhancement of the natural environment and opportunities within urban areas to both mitigate and adapt to climate change to build resilience</li> </ul>                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objective 3.2- environmental sustainability and stewardship</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  |





## Virtual Public Information Centres (Zoom Webinars)

**Wednesday, Sept 23**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Natural Heritage System

**Thursday, Sept. 24**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Water Resource System

**Wednesday, Oct. 7**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Growth Management  
- Growth Allocations,  
Settlement Area Boundary  
Review, Regional Structure,  
Land Needs, Housing

**Thursday, Oct. 8**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: District & Secondary  
Plans, Urban Design, and  
Employment Lands

**Tuesday, Oct. 20**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Rural & Agriculture,  
Mineral Aggregate  
Resources, Archaeology &  
Culture

**Wednesday, Oct. 21**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Infrastructure, Water  
and Wastewater, Stormwater,  
Transportation

# Niagara Official Plan Consultation

## Also this Fall/Winter:

- Official Plan Online Surveys
- Range of Stakeholder Engagement Sessions (virtual)
- Local Council Workshops
- 1:1 Meetings with Local Planning Departments



# Natural Environment Work Program Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options



# Project Overview – Natural Environment

| Project Phase | Activities                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | Project Initiation and Procurement                                                       |
| 2             | Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas |
| 3             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study                          |
| 4             | Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)                                       |
| 5             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)   |
| 6             | Develop Regional Natural System(s)                                                       |
| 7             | Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping                                                   |
| 8             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules                     |
| 9             | Other Implementation Tools                                                               |



# Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports, mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program





# Development of Options

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
  - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
  - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
  - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
  - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
  - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
  - Conform with provincial requirements
  - Represents an increase in protection as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



# Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
  - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
  - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS, outside of the Provincial NHSs
  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components- such as, regional linkages and buffers



# Water Resource System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas
- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”



# Join us at our Virtual Public Information Centres (PIC) to learn more and provide your feedback on the options

**Wednesday, September 23 at 6:00pm – Natural Heritage System Options**

**Thursday, September 24 at 6:00pm – Water Resource System Options**

**Register at: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>**





# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
  - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
  - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives
  - Project will be introduced at the Public Information Centre on September 24
- Work of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is Ongoing
  - Group includes Planning staff from NPCA, Local Municipalities, and Province





making our mark

# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN

# **The Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program Update**

**Presentation to NPCA Public Advisory Committee**

**Thursday, September 24, 2020**



# Planning Hierarchy in Ontario





# What is an Official Plan?

- The Niagara Official Plan will be a long-range, policy planning document used to guide the physical, economic and social development of Niagara
- It will contain objectives, policies and mapping that form the Region's approach to managing growth and the economy, providing infrastructure and protecting the natural environment, cultural resources and agricultural land



# Framework for the Niagara Official Plan



## **GROWING REGION**

How we manage growth and development, with a range and mix of housing forms, including affordable housing

## **CONNECTED REGION**

How we improve connections with transit, recreation and trails, infrastructure and technology

## **COMPETITIVE REGION**

How we increase our competitiveness by supporting employment opportunities and protecting agricultural lands

## **VIBRANT REGION**

How we enhance the vibrancy of communities by supporting strong urban design and protecting cultural heritage

## **SUSTAINABLE REGION**

How we protect our natural environment and plan for climate change



# Timeline for the Niagara Official Plan



## Virtual Public Information Centres (Zoom Webinars)

**Wednesday, Sept 23**

**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Natural Heritage System

**Thursday, Sept. 24**

**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Water Resource System

**Wednesday, Oct. 7**

**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Growth Management  
- Growth Allocations,  
Settlement Area Boundary  
Review, Regional Structure,  
Land Needs, Housing

**Thursday, Oct. 8**

**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: District & Secondary  
Plans, Urban Design, and  
Employment Lands

**Tuesday, Oct. 20**

**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Rural & Agriculture,  
Mineral Aggregate  
Resources, Archaeology &  
Culture

**Wednesday, Oct. 21**

**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Infrastructure, Water  
and Wastewater, Stormwater,  
Transportation

# Niagara Official Plan Consultation

## Also this Fall/Winter:

- Official Plan Online Surveys
- Range of Stakeholder Engagement Sessions (virtual)
- Local Council Workshops
- 1:1 Meetings with Local Planning Departments





# Natural Environment Work Program Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options



# Project Overview – Natural Environment

| Project Phase | Activities                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | Project Initiation and Procurement                                                       |
| 2             | Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas |
| 3             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study                          |
| 4             | Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)                                       |
| 5             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)   |
| 6             | Develop Regional Natural System(s)                                                       |
| 7             | Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping                                                   |
| 8             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules                     |
| 9             | Other Implementation Tools                                                               |



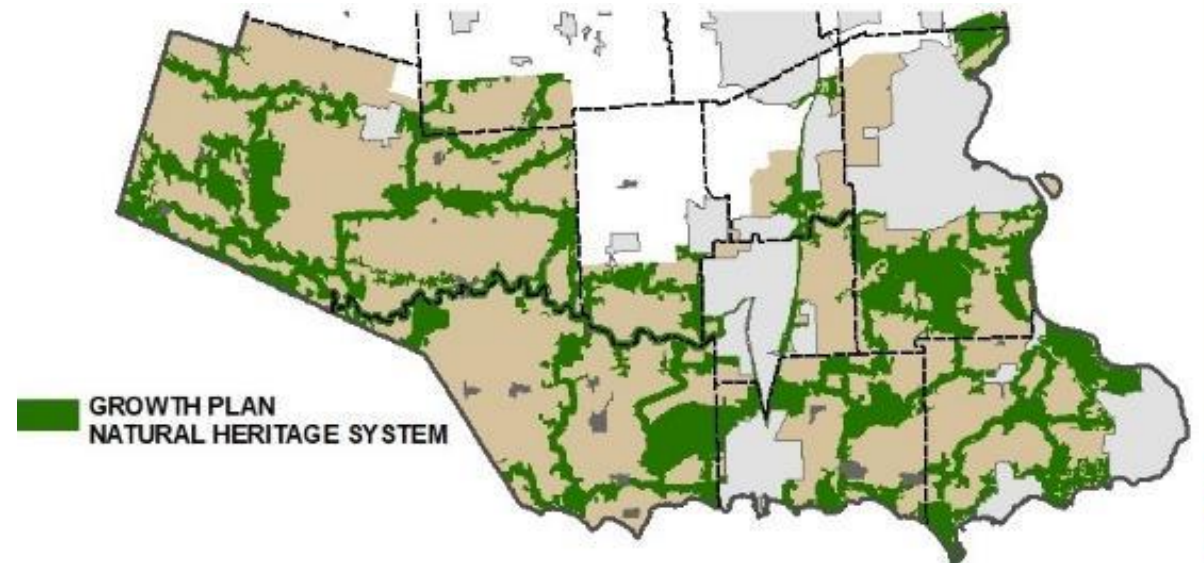
# Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports, mapping and policy development process
- **Goal is to establish the overall direction** for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



# Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also requires that a water resource system be identified and protected.
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies





# Development of Options

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
  - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
  - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
  - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
  - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
  - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
  - Conform with provincial requirements
  - Represents an increase in protection as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



# Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
  - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
  - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS, outside of the Provincial NHSs
  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components- such as, regional linkages and buffers



# Water Resource System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas
- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”



# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies





# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
  - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff
  - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives
  - Project will be introduced at the Public Information Centre on September 24
- Work of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is Ongoing
  - Group includes Planning staff from NPCA, Local Municipalities, and Province





making our mark

# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN

# Niagara Region

## Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options

**Presentation to NPCA Staff**

**September 29, 2020**



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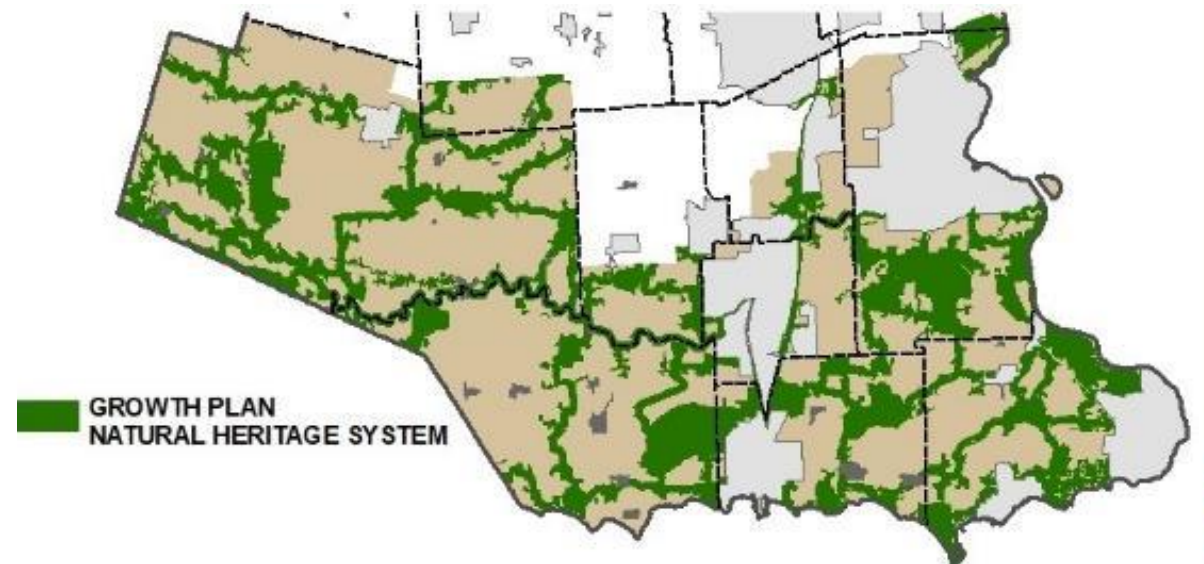
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# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture





# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes





# Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a WRS – however, the Growth Plan requires that a WRS be identified
- While some components of a WRS can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



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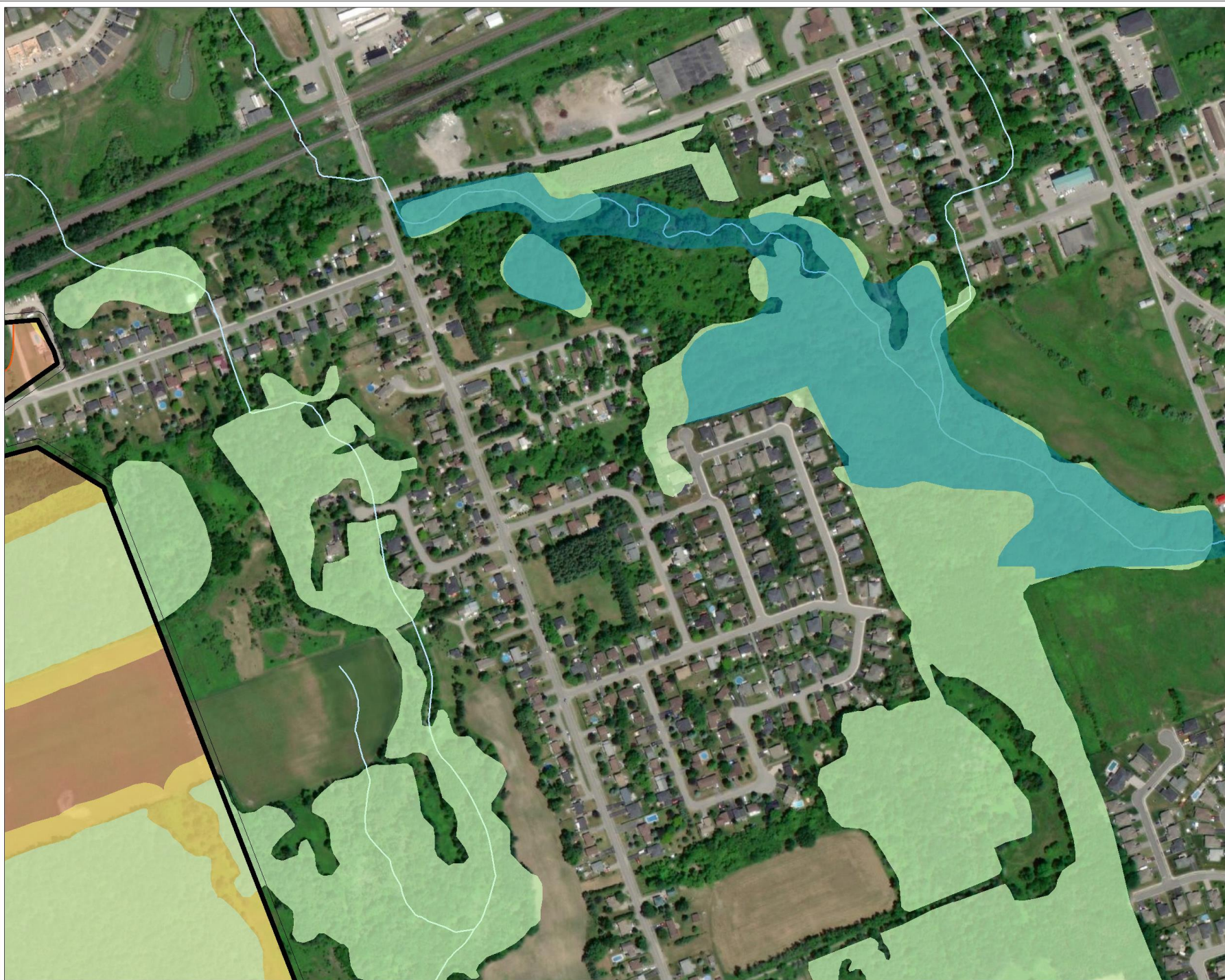


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- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2


## Legend

 Settlement Area


## Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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Imagery: ESRI

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## Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

### Legend

#### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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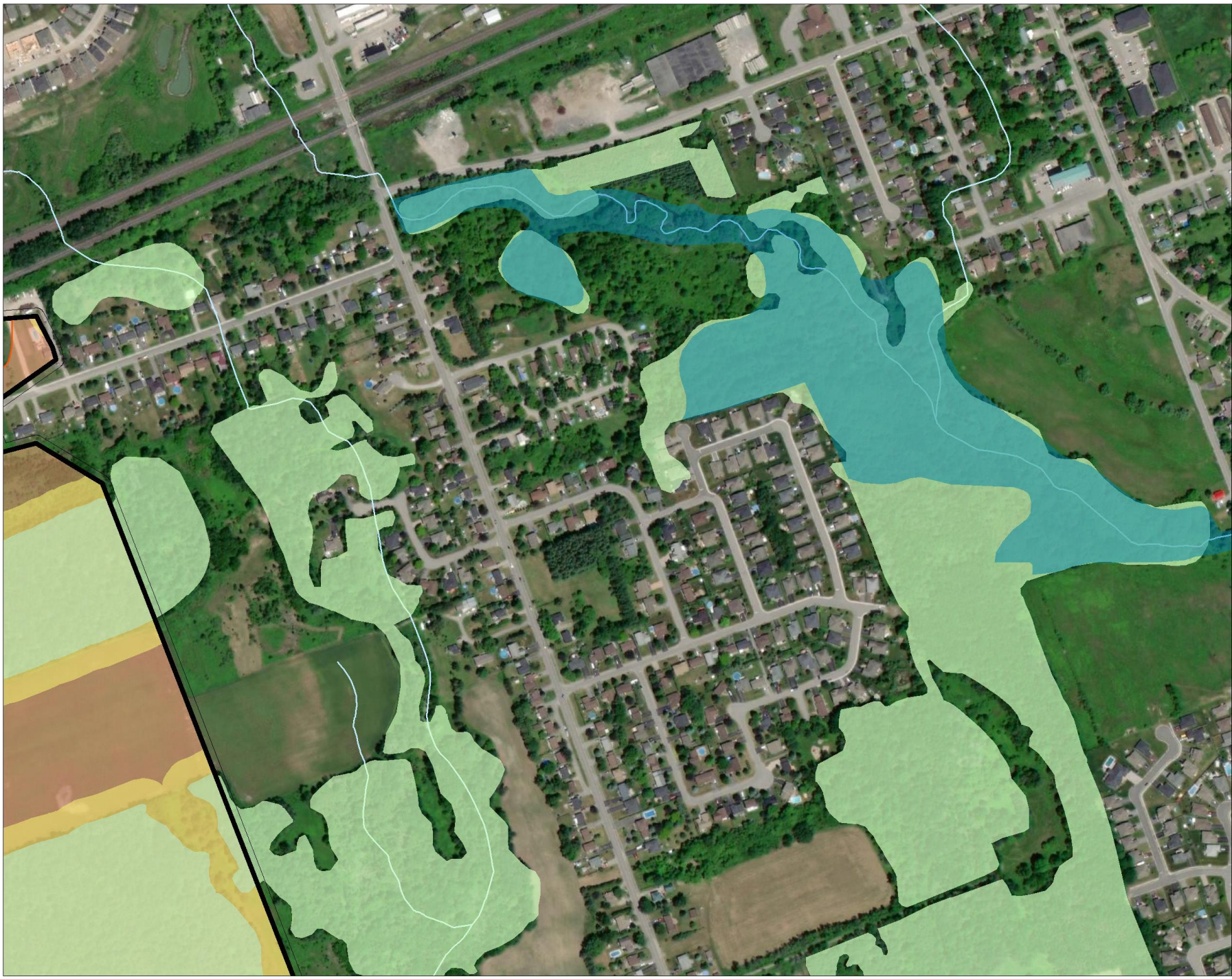
**north-south**  
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# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

|                                                                                 | N.H.S. 3A                                                                                                                                                                                                               | N.H.S. 3B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | N.H.S. 3C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component Features and Areas</b>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P.</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connecting the System (linkages)</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> <li>• Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |





Conceptual Natural  
Heritage System  
Settlement Area  
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

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|                           |                     |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Project Number<br>20-1149 | Date:<br>2020-09-09 |  |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

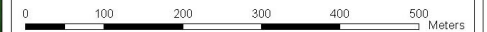
#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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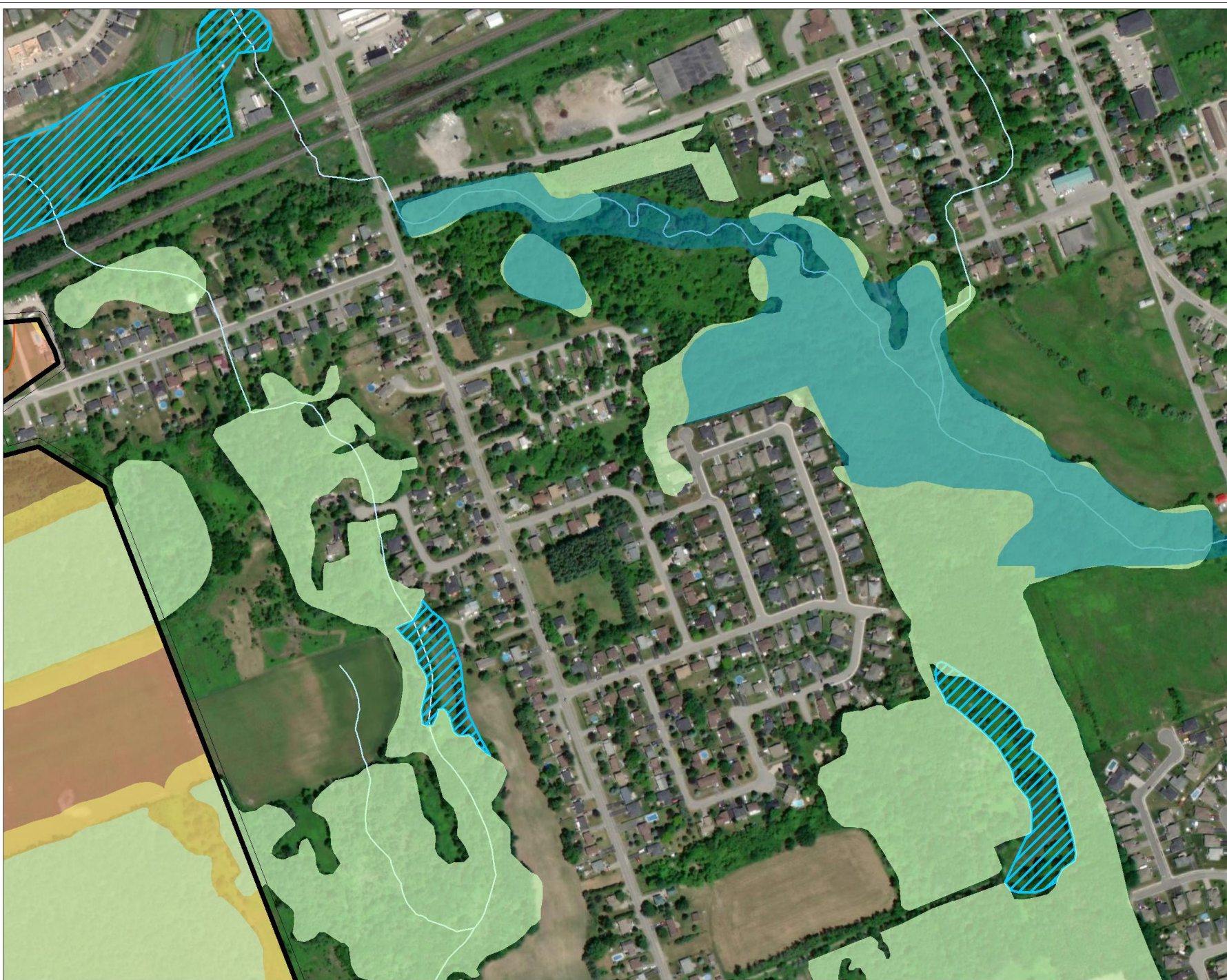


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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

Settlement Area

### Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

- Legend**
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
  - Vegetation Protection Zones
  - Significant Woodlands
  - Provincially Significant Wetlands
  - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
  - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
  - Medium Linkage (200m)
  - Mandatory Buffers

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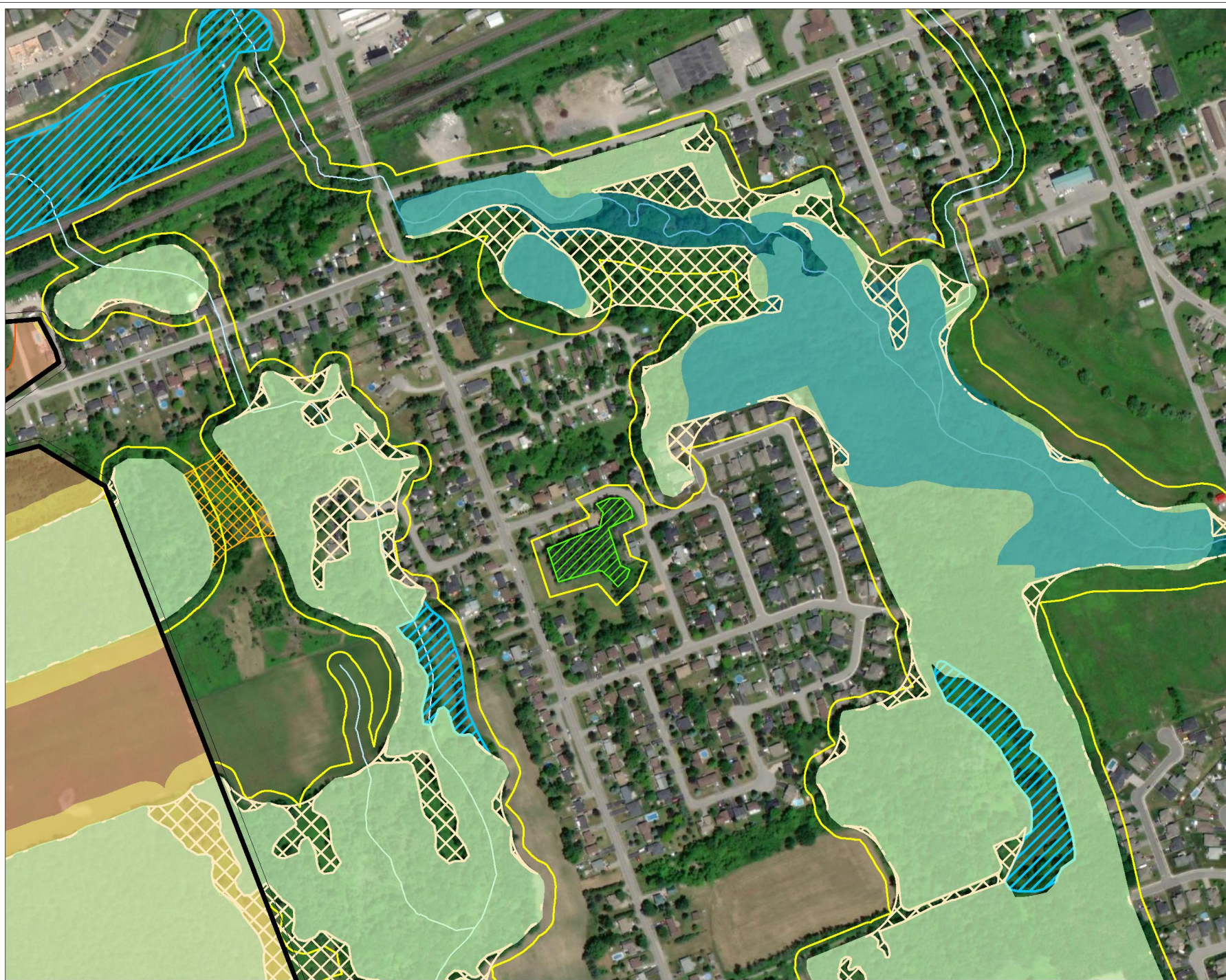
Project Number 20-1149 Date: 2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

Settlement Area

## Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

## Optional Components

### Other Key Features

Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

### Supporting Features and Areas

Other Woodlands

Enhancement Areas

### Linkages

Small Linkage (100m)

Minimum Buffers

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0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components




#### Other Key Features


-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

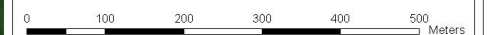
-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Small Linkage (100m)

-  Minimum Buffers

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Imagery: ESRI





# What is a Water Resource System?

- “A system consisting of ground water features and areas and surface water features (including shoreline areas), and hydrologic functions, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption. The water resource system **will** comprise **key hydrologic features** and **key hydrologic areas**”. (Growth Plan 2019)



# Components of a Water Resource System

- Key Hydrologic Features (required)
  - Provincially Significant Wetlands and other wetlands
  - Permanent and intermittent streams
  - Inland lakes and their littoral zones
  - Seepage areas and springs
- Key Hydrologic Areas (required)
  - Significant ground water recharge areas
  - Highly vulnerable aquifers
  - Significant surface water contribution areas
- Hydrologic Functions
- Groundwater features
  - Recharge/discharge areas
  - Ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
  - Water tables
  - Aquifers and unsaturated zones
- Surface Water Features
  - Headwaters
  - Recharge/discharge areas
  - Associated riparian lands
- Shoreline Areas
- Vegetation Protection Zone



# Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
  - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas













# Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

## Legend

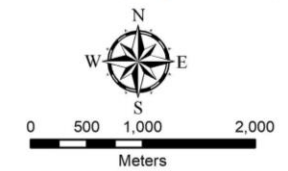
### Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

-  Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
-  Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Settlement Areas

Conceptual figure for  
discussion purposes only



north-south  
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020





# Additional Considerations for the Natural Environment System

- Offsetting will not be considered as part of the policy framework for the new Niagara Official Plan
- Fish habitat is not recommended to be mapped as part of the new Niagara Official Plan
- There will be a need to update existing guidelines, and to prepare new guidelines to support the implementation of the NHS and WRS



Central Mudminnow (bottom) can be found in slow moving streams, marshes, weedy ponds and ditches.



# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020.
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# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
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## **Appendix I: Provincial Planning Staff**

- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options – Presentation to Provincial Staff (September 16, 2020)



making our mark

# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN



# Niagara Region

## Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options

**Presentation to Provincial Staff**

**September 16, 2020**



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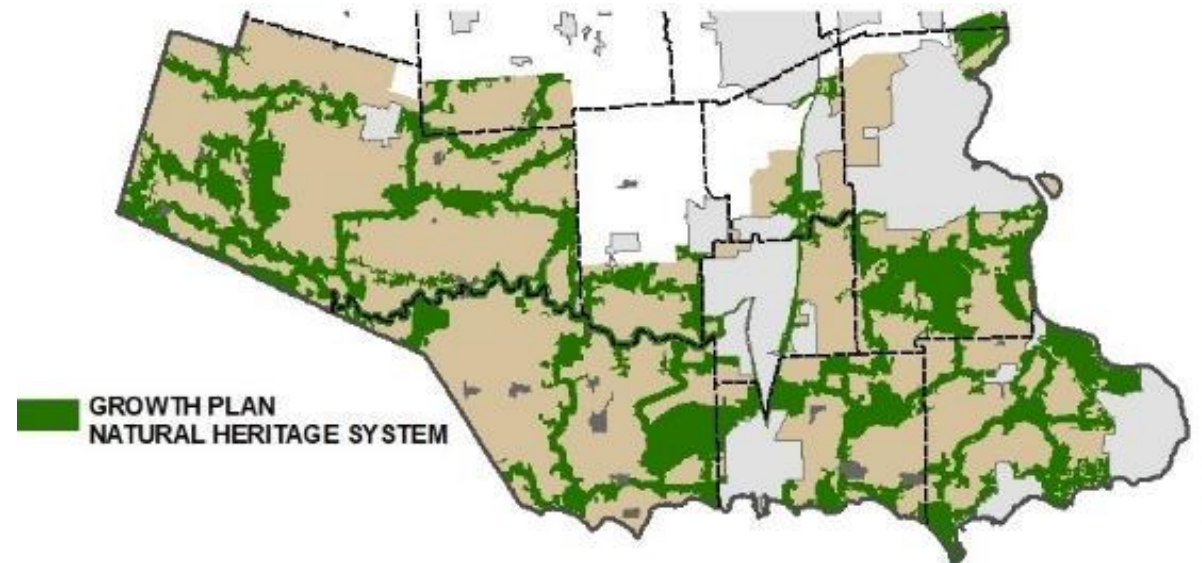
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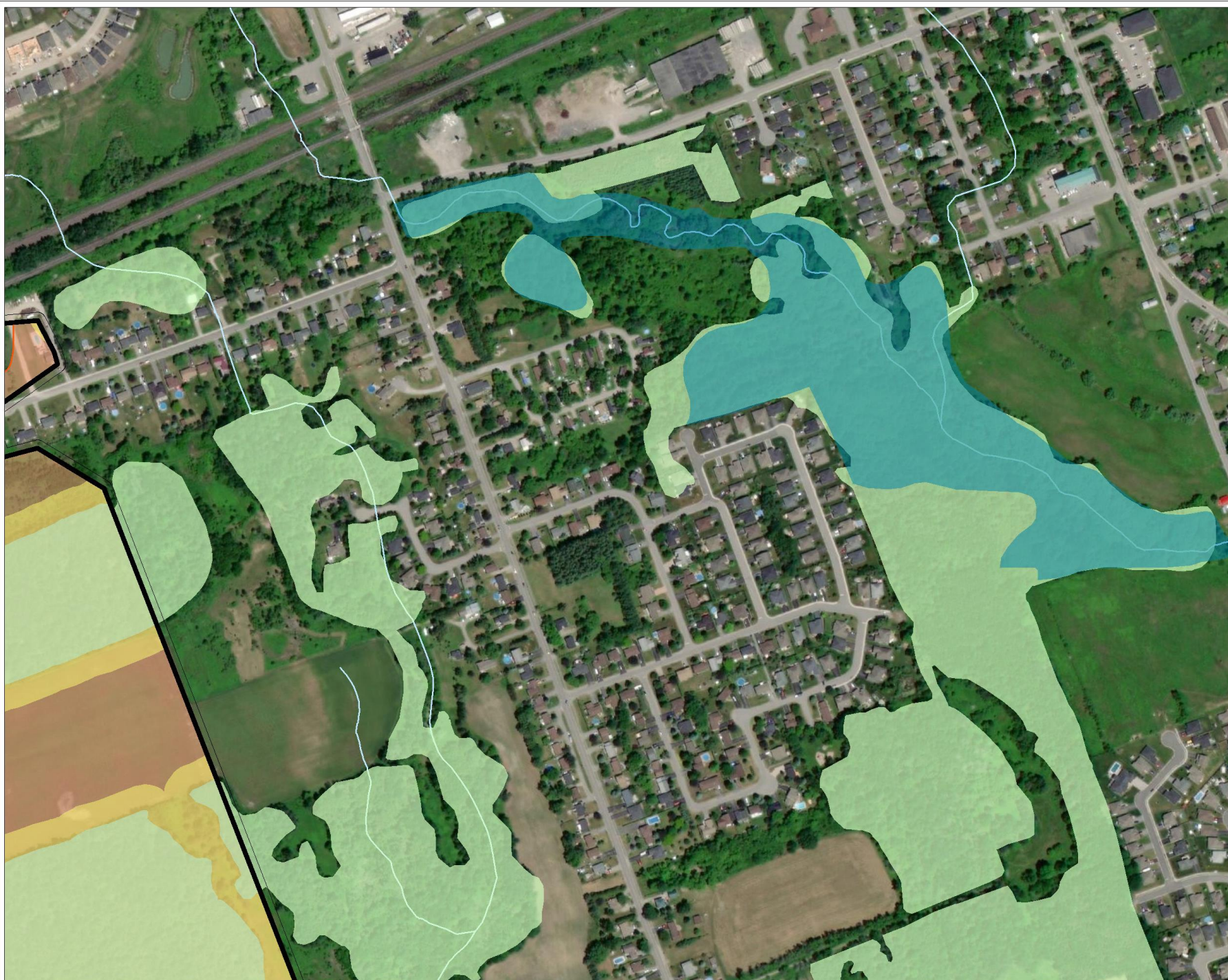


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  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.







# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

## Legend


 Settlement Area

## Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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2020-09-09



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## Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

### Legend

#### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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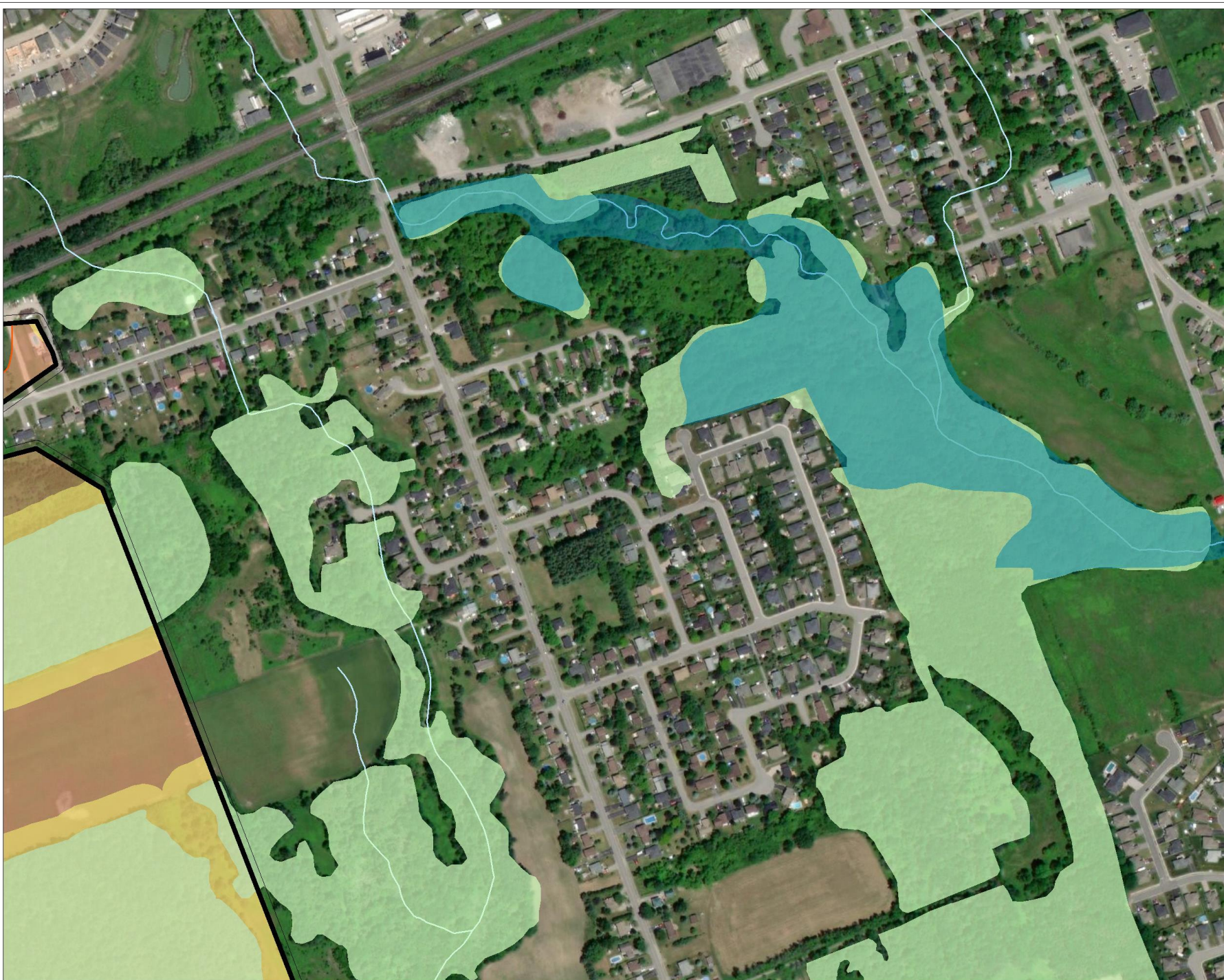
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# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

|                                                                                 | N.H.S. 3A                                                                                                                                                                                                               | N.H.S. 3B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | N.H.S. 3C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component Features and Areas</b>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P.</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connecting the System (linkages)</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> <li>• Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |






# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend

 Settlement Area

## Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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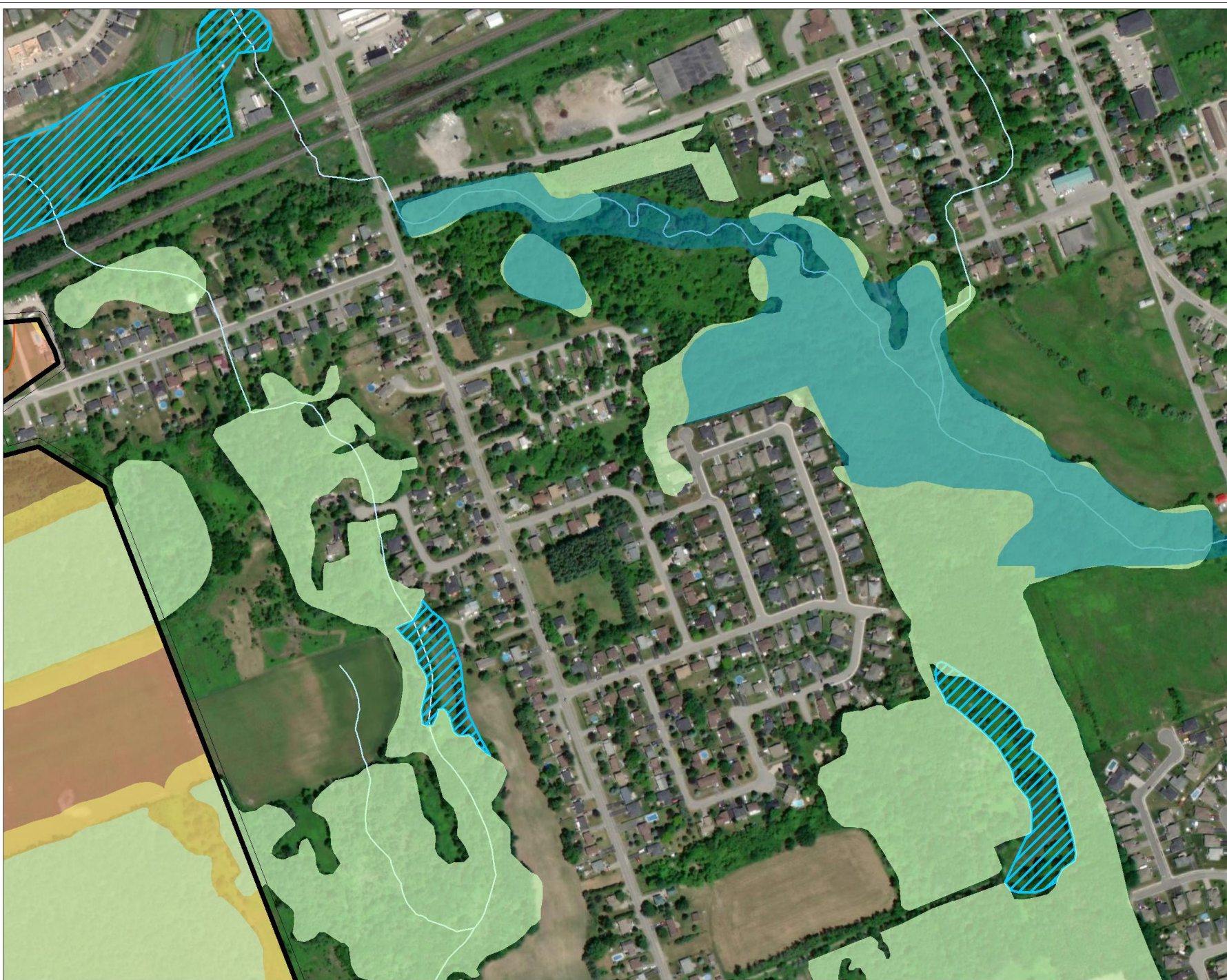
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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

 Settlement Area

### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

- Legend**
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
  - Vegetation Protection Zones
  - Significant Woodlands
  - Provincially Significant Wetlands
  - Watercourses
- Optional Components**
- Other Key Features
- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)
- Supporting Features and Areas
- Enhancement Areas
  - Other Woodlands
- Linkages
- Large Linkage (400m)
  - Medium Linkage (200m)
  - Mandatory Buffers

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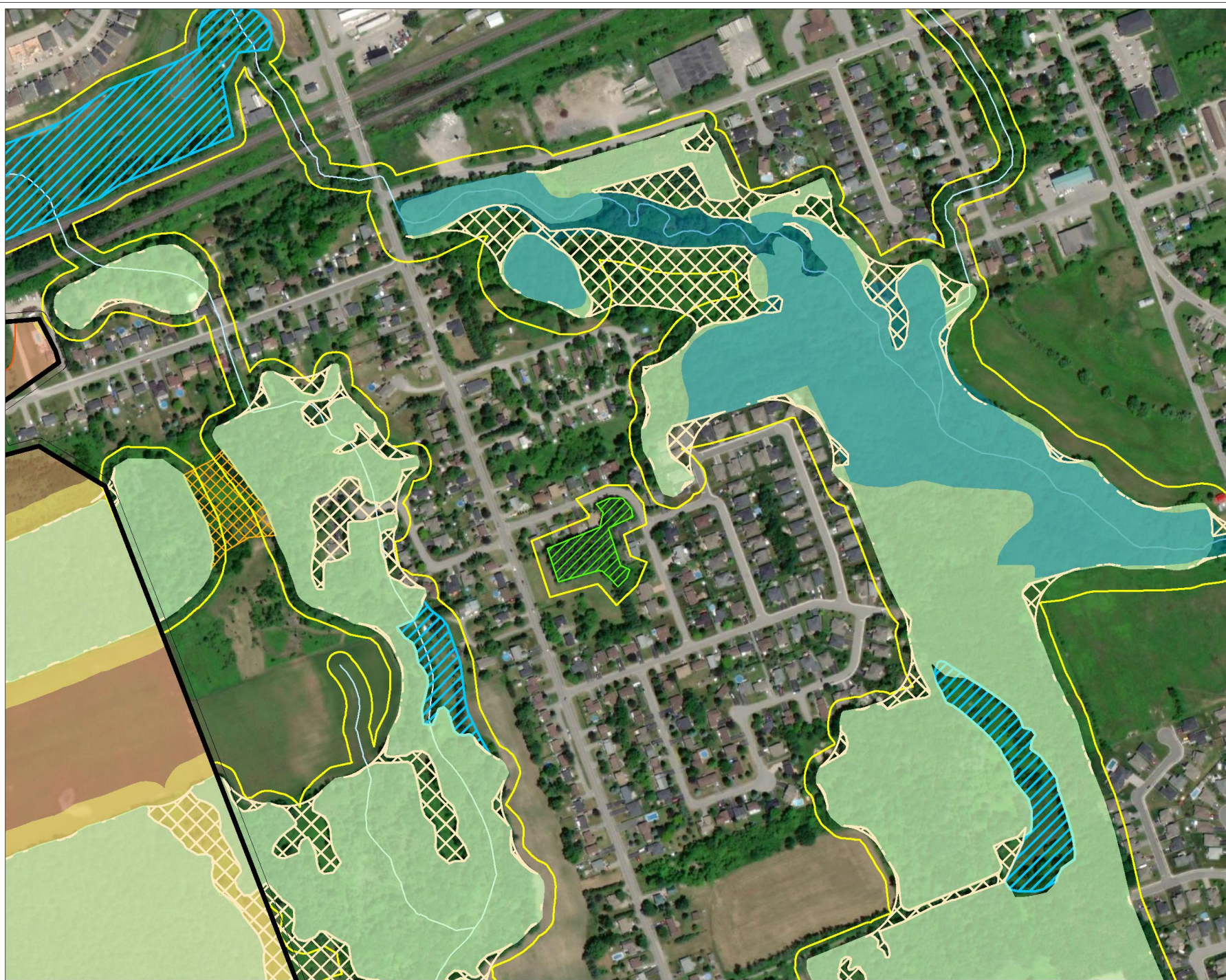
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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

Settlement Area

### Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

Other Woodlands

Enhancement Areas

#### Linkages

Small Linkage (100m)

Minimum Buffers

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

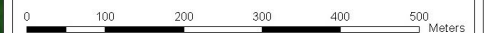
#### Supporting Features and Areas

-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Small Linkage (100m)
-  Minimum Buffers

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# Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
  - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas













# Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

## Legend

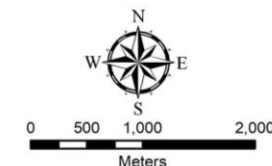
### Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

-  Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
-  Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Settlement Areas

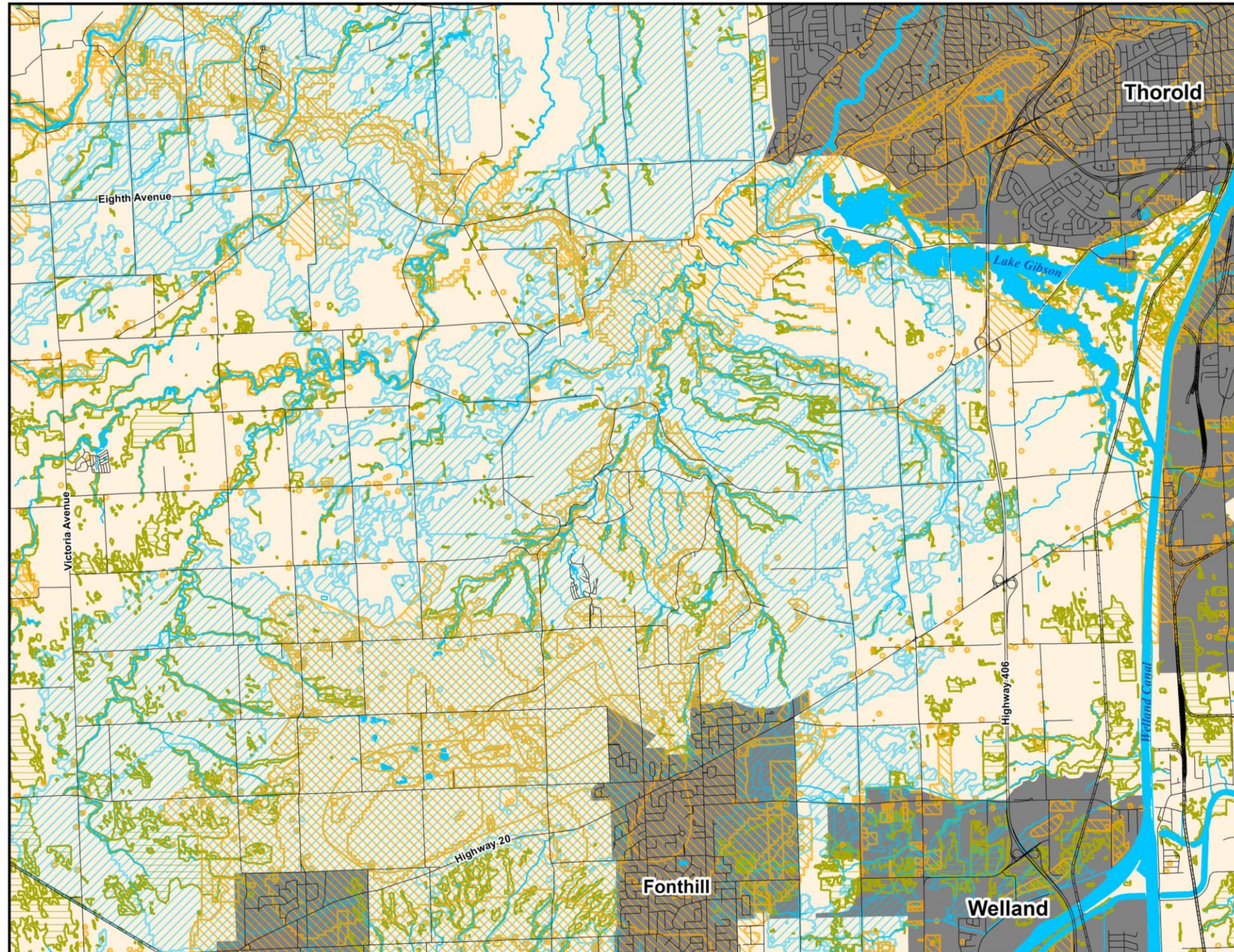
Conceptual figure for  
discussion purposes only



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June 11, 2020





# Your Feedback is Requested





# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020.
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
  - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction for an 'watershed planning equivalency document'. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives.



# Discussion Questions

- Do you require any additional information or clarification on the options presented?
- Do you agree with our interpretation of Provincial policies? Do you agree that all of the identified options would conform with Provincial requirements?
- Are there any Provincial policies or other Provincial direction that we may be overlooking?
- Are there any best practices or lesson-learnt from other Regional municipalities that you could share with us?
- Should we be anticipating any changes or new material or guidelines from the Province?





## **Appendix J: Niagara Escarpment Commission Staff Consultation**

- Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options – Presentation to Niagara Escarpment Commission Staff (September 16, 2020)
- Information Report - Final Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, prepared by Niagara Escarpment Commission (March 22, 2018)



making our mark

**NIAGARA**  
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# Niagara Region

## Natural Environment Work Program – Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options

**Presentation to Niagara Escarpment Commission Staff**

**September 16, 2020**





# Project Overview – Natural Environment

| Project Phase | Activities                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | Project Initiation and Procurement                                                       |
| 2             | Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas |
| 3             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study                          |
| 4             | Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)                                       |
| 5             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)   |
| 6             | Develop Regional Natural System(s)                                                       |
| 7             | Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping                                                   |
| 8             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules                     |
| 9             | Other Implementation Tools                                                               |



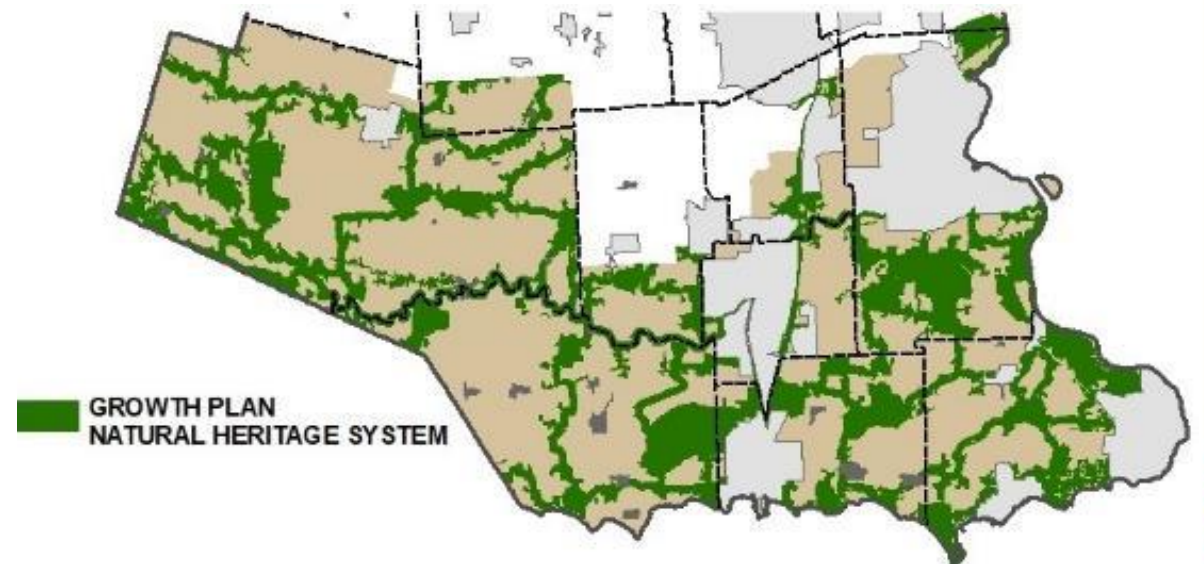
# Overview of Phase 4

- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program



# Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also requires that a water resource system be identified and protected.
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies





# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



- In addition to preparing a map of the NHS, the Province has also mapped the agricultural system
- Within the agricultural system, the PPS and Growth Plan both require that Prime Agricultural Areas be designated in Official Plans
- In contrast, the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan requires NHS to be shown as overlay – to recognize the primacy of agriculture



# Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

- Policies will not limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue (PPS 2.1.9)
- Greenbelt and Growth Plan NHS policies both provide a wide range of exemptions for new agricultural and agricultural-related buildings and structures
- The requirement for a natural buffer is exempt where lands will continue to be used for agricultural purposes



# Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a WRS – however, the Growth Plan requires that a WRS be identified
- While some components of a WRS can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)





# Development of Options

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
  - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
  - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
  - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
  - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
  - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
  - Conform with provincial requirements
  - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara

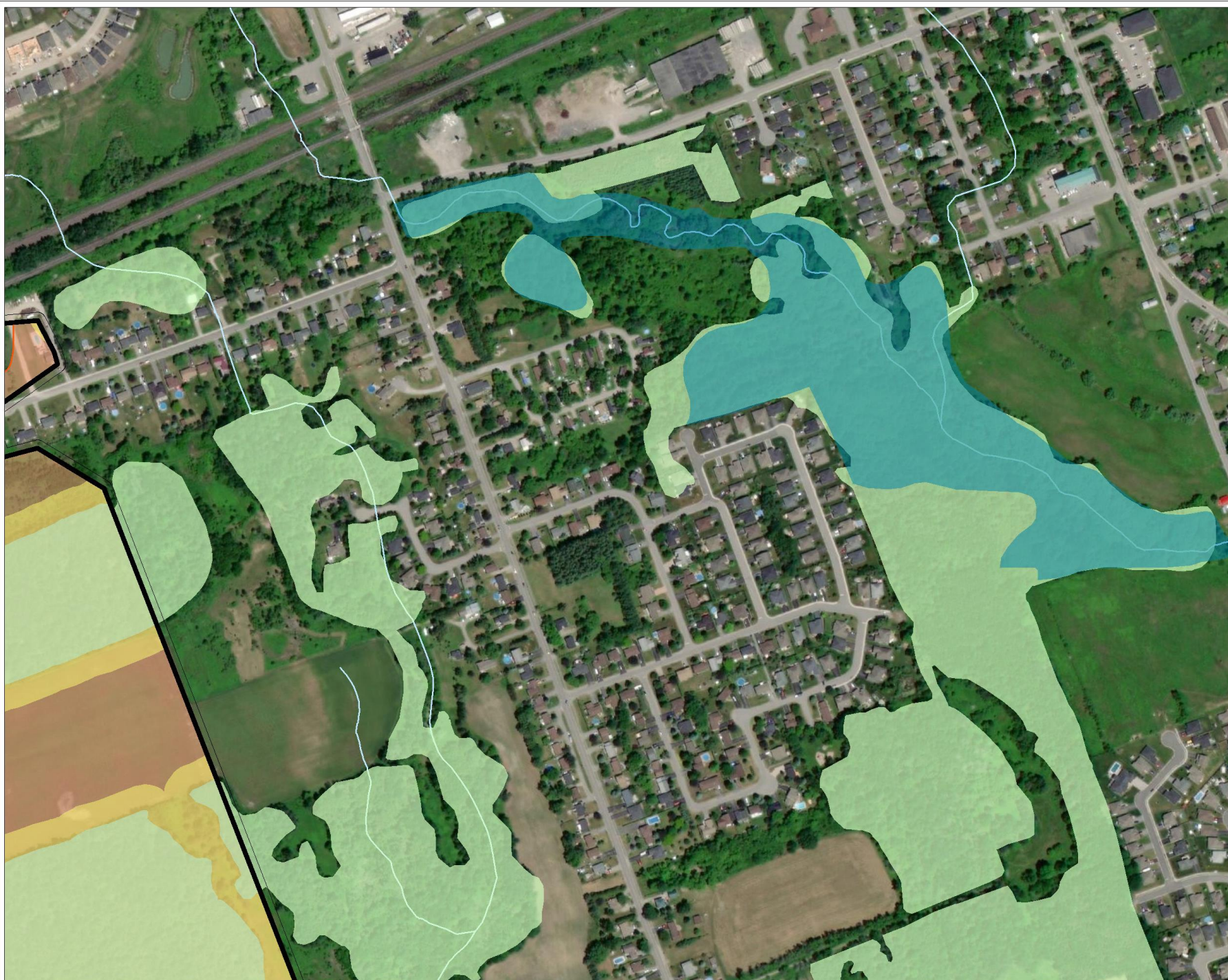


# Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
  - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
  - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS. outside of the Provincial NHSs
  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.







# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

## Legend

Settlement Area

## Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

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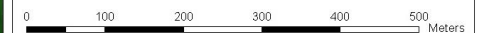
## Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

### Legend

#### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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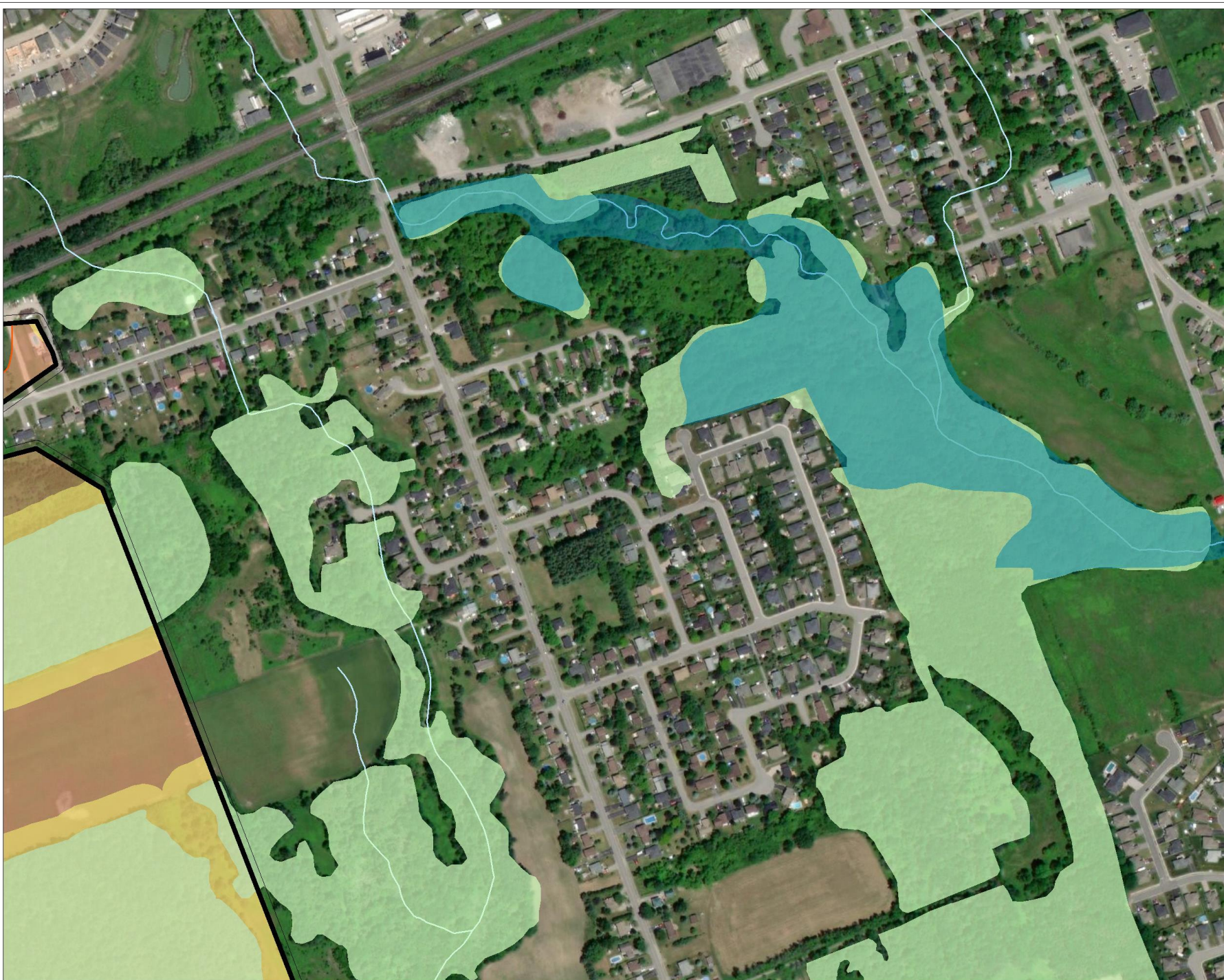
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# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

|                                                                                 | N.H.S. 3A                                                                                                                                                                                                               | N.H.S. 3B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | N.H.S. 3C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component Features and Areas</b>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P.</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connecting the System (linkages)</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> <li>• Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |






# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend

 Settlement Area

## Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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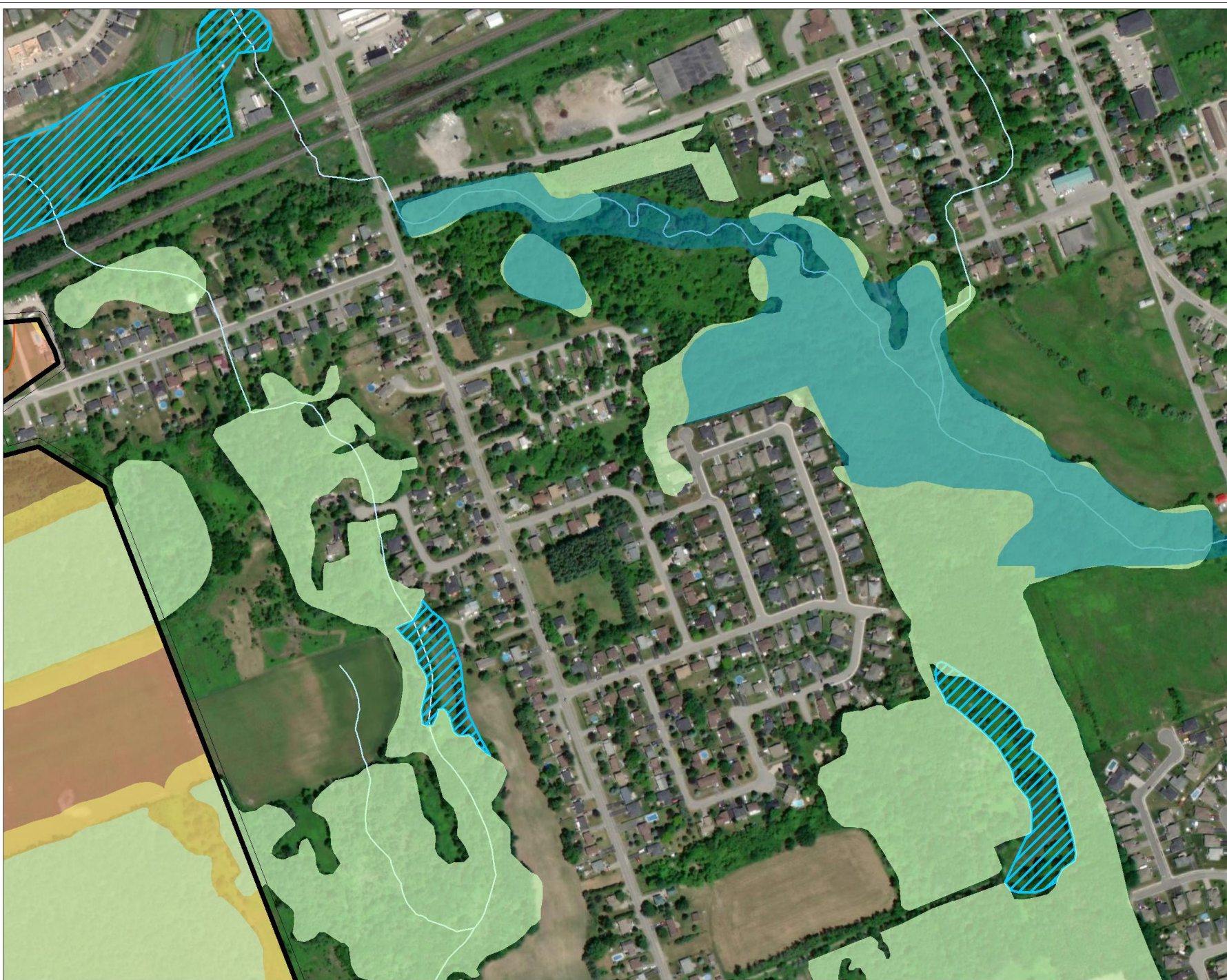


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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

 Settlement Area

### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components




#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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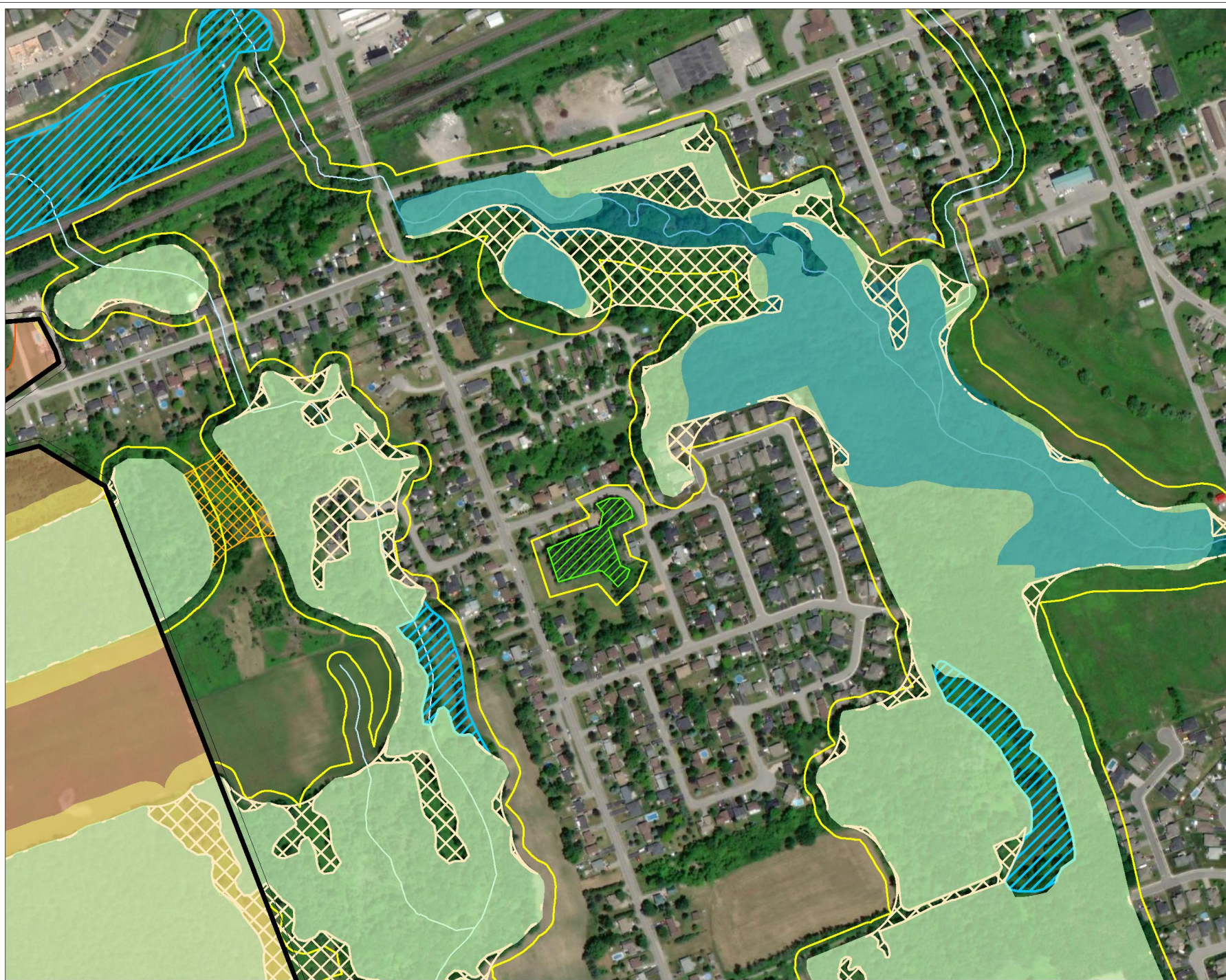


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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

Settlement Area

## Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

## Optional Components

### Other Key Features

Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

### Supporting Features and Areas

Other Woodlands

Enhancement Areas

### Linkages

Small Linkage (100m)

Minimum Buffers

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

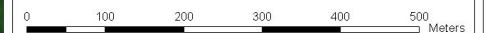
-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Small Linkage (100m)

-  Minimum Buffers

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# NHS Options Summary – NEP Area

- Options 1 & 2 - Minimum Standards Options
  - Have interpreted that the minimum provincial standard does not require the Region Official Plan to identify a NHS within the NEP area
- Option 3 (A, B, & C) - Going Beyond Minimum Standards
  - With these options key natural heritage features would be identified by in the NEP area by the Regional Official Plan





# Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
  - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
  - Option 2B – additional/optional features Region-wide, including within settlement areas





# Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

## Legend

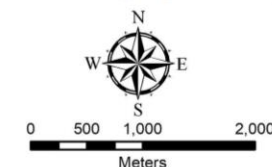
### Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

- Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
- Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
- Roads
- Railway
- Settlement Areas

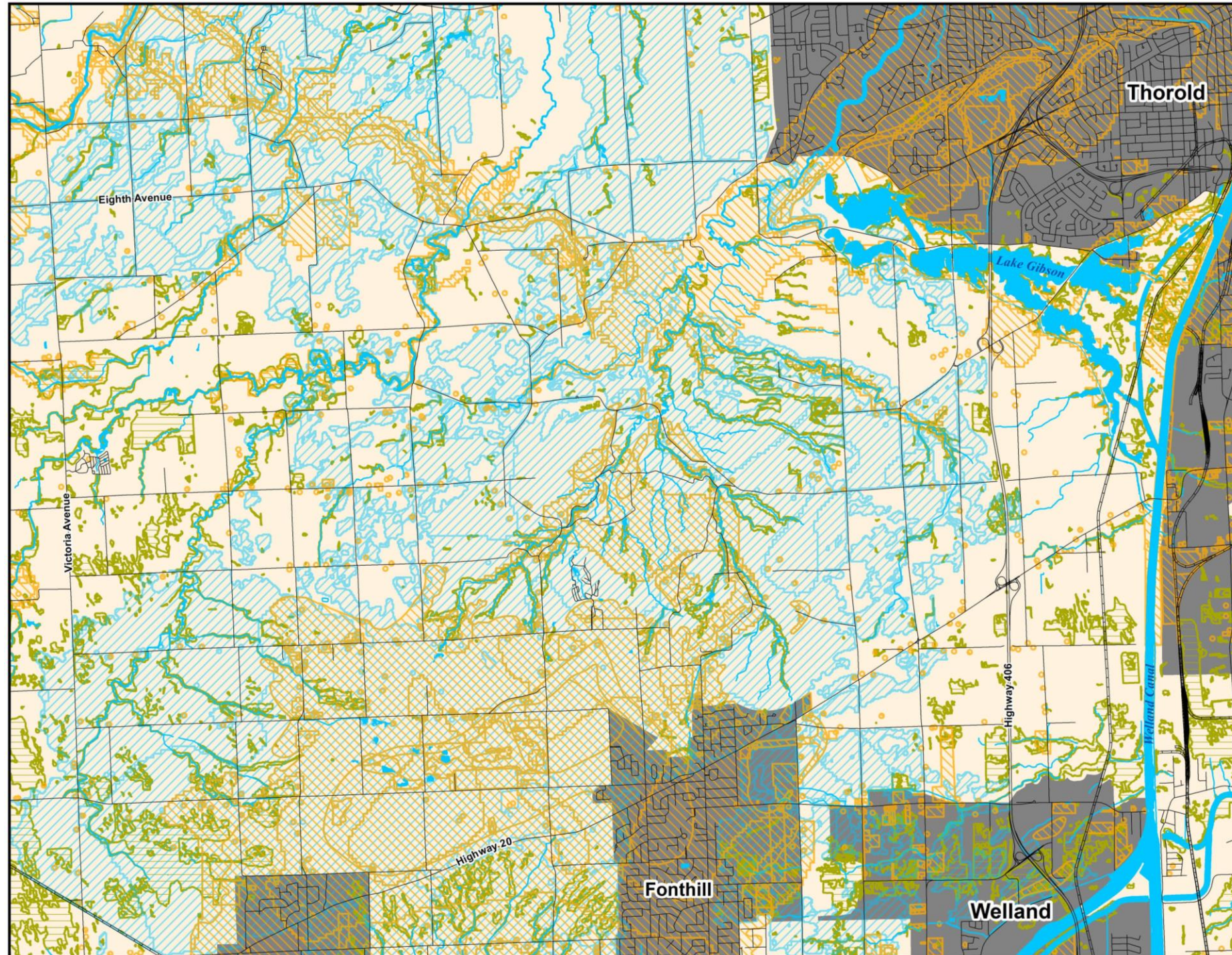
Conceptual figure for  
discussion purposes only



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ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020





# Your Feedback is Requested





# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies



# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020.
- Niagara Watershed Plan Project
  - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction for an 'watershed planning equivalency document'. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives.



# Discussion Questions

- Do you require any additional information or clarification on the options presented?
- Option 1 and 2 have interpreted the provincial minimum standard would not require the Region to identify an NHS within the NEP – do you agree with interpretation?
- What is your vision for how the NEP should be reflected in a Regional Official Plan?
- Is there any requirements or direction of the NEP that we may be overlooking?
- Are there any best practices or lesson-learnt from other Regional municipalities that you could share with us?





## Niagara Escarpment Commission

232 Guelph St.  
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1  
Tel: 905-877-5191  
Fax: 905-873-7452  
www.escarpment.org

## Commission de l'escarpement du Niagara

232, rue Guelph  
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No de tel. 905-877-5191  
Télécopieur 905-873-7452  
www.escarpment.org



Niagara Escarpment Commission  
An agency of the Government of Ontario

March 22, 2018

## INFORMATION REPORT

### Final Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

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#### BACKGROUND

The policies of the Growth Plan (2017) identify that the Province will map a Natural Heritage System (NHS) for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), in order to support a comprehensive, integrated, and long-term approach to planning for the protection of the Region's natural heritage and biodiversity. In 2017, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) led the development of the criteria, methodology and mapping for the NHS. A public consultation on the draft NHS took place from July to October 2017, including a 92 day Environmental Registry posting, technical workshops and open houses. Staff presented an Information Report to the Commission on the draft proposed NHS in October 2017. The Report provided some high level comments on the draft NHS from a technical perspective, given that the NHS has not been identified in the Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) Area.

The Province has released the final NHS mapping (see Map 1 attached), together with an Agricultural System plan. Together, the two plans will bring greater protections to natural areas and farmland in the GGH. The NHS for the Growth Plan is made up of natural heritage features (e.g. wetlands and woodlands), and areas connected by corridors (linkages), and includes natural areas and public lands and lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, as well as agricultural lands that enable ecological functions to continue.

The total area covered by the NHS is approximately 1.18 million hectares or forty-five percent of the Growth Plan for the GGS (excluding settlement areas). Seventy-two percent of the NHS consists of natural cover (terrestrial or aquatic). New policies of the Growth Plan (2017) require municipalities to incorporate the provincially identified NHS outside of settlement areas, as an overlay into official plans and to apply the appropriate policies to maintain, restore and/or improve its diversity and connectivity. Municipalities will be able to refine the mapping of the NHS (to include more detail), through a municipal comprehensive review (MCR), which will be subject to approval by the Province.

## **DISCUSSION**

The final NHS for the Growth Plan has not been applied or mapped in the Greenbelt Plan Area (including the NEP Area). Consultation on the draft proposed NHS resulted in the following actions and/or revisions to the mapping:

- Detailed review of the proposed NHS to correct identified mapping errors
- Review and consideration of additional fine-scale natural heritage data provided by five conservation authorities
- Review of requests for regional and site specific removals from the NHS, and revision of mapping where such requests were consistent with the principles and criteria of the NHS

The principles applied in mapping the system included the use of well documented criteria and rationale, and the application of a defensible and repeatable methodology. The scale of the system was focussed on the regional landscape context and the connectivity of the NHS to the existing NHS of adjacent areas (i.e. the Greenbelt NHS), was also considered, to the extent possible.

The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP) and the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan define and base their respective land use designations on a network of natural systems which are defined to include natural heritage and water resource systems. The NEP Land Use Designation Criteria of the Escarpment Natural Area and Escarpment Protection Area, although identified and defined differently because of the age of the NEP, encompass the same types of features that form the NHS of the Greenbelt.

As described in the NEP (2017) Part 1, Landscape Approach, the natural system of the NEP Area is managed as a connected and integrated landscape, given the functional inter-relationships between them. The NEP system of land use designations is viewed as the natural heritage system of the NEP Area, with the Escarpment Natural Area as the “core” area of the system, containing the most significant features in a relatively natural state, including wildlife habitat and geological features. The Escarpment Protection Area relates to the “linkage” areas of the system, and these lands are recognized as being important because of their visual and environmental significant and buffer function to the more sensitive Escarpment Natural Areas. The landscape approach of the NEP complements the Natural Heritage System of the rest of the Greenbelt Area. Together with the surrounding landscape, these systems work towards functioning as a connected natural heritage system.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Municipalities will be required to incorporate the Growth Plan NHS policies and mapping into their official plans as an overlay over the next few years, to ensure that land use planning decisions are protecting natural heritage and biodiversity in the GGH, consistent with the Growth Plan. Municipalities may, through a MCR, refine the

provincial mapping of the NHS with greater precision. The full range of agricultural uses and normal farm practices are permitted within the NHS.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Province has finalized the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The NHS for the Growth Plan does not include lands within the Greenbelt Area (including the NEP Area). The existing NHS within the Greenbelt remains in place.

The land use designations and applicable policies of the NEP (2017) will continue to apply to the assessment of development proposals in the NEP Area, there are no changes as a result of the implementation of the Growth Plan NHS. As provided in the Places to Grow Act (2005), where there is a conflict between the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan or Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Growth Plan regarding the natural environment or human health, the direction that provides more protection to the natural environment or human health prevails. There may be some limited situations when the NEC as a commenting agency on development proposals adjacent to the NEP Area.

The GGH contains many of Ontario's most significant ecological and hydrologic natural environments and scenic landscapes, including the Niagara Escarpment and the other natural areas in the Greenbelt Area and beyond. Overall, the identification of a regional scale NHS, together with the accompanying Growth Plan (2017) policies is positive, and will work to support a holistic landscape approach and greater connectivity with the existing NHS of the Greenbelt Plans, allowing opportunities for enhanced protection of species habitat, biodiversity, ecological health and ecosystem resiliency at the regional level.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission accept the Report for informational purposes.

**Prepared by:**

*Original signed by:*

---

**Lisa Grbinicek**  
**Senior Strategic Advisor**

**Approved by:**

*Original signed by:*

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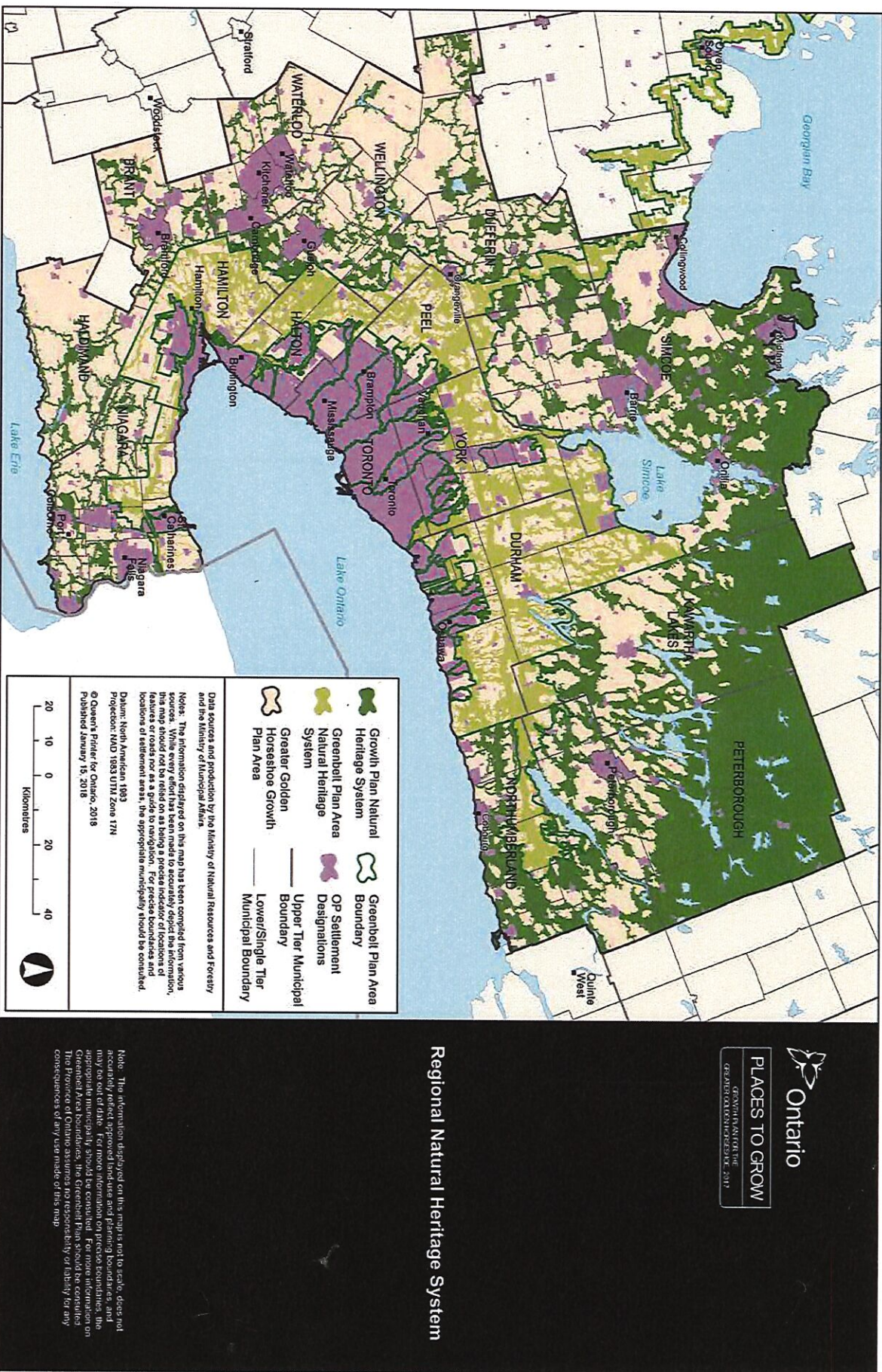
**David Ayotte**  
**Director**

**Attachments:** Map of Final Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan



Figure 4.

Regional Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.



PLACES TO GROW

GROWTH PLAN FOR THE  
GREATER GOLDEN HORSESHOE, 2017

## Regional Natural Heritage System

**Note:** The information displayed on this map is not to scale, does not accurately reflect approved land use and planning boundaries, and may be out of date. For more information on precise boundaries, the appropriate municipality should be consulted. For more information on Greenbelt Area boundaries, the Greenbelt Plan should be consulted. The Province of Ontario assumes no responsibility or liability for any consequences of any use made of this map.

## **Appendix K: Niagara Parks Commission Staff Consultation**

- The Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program Update - Presentation to Niagara Parks Commission Staff (Thursday, September 24, 2020)
- Niagara Parks – Environmental and Cultural Stewardship [Presentation to Niagara Region Staff] (October 1, 2020)





making our mark

# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN



# **The Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program Update**

**Presentation to Niagara Parks Commission Staff**

**Thursday, September 24, 2020**



# Planning Hierarchy in Ontario



# What is an Official Plan?

- The Niagara Official Plan will be a long-range, policy planning document used to guide the physical, economic and social development of Niagara
- It will contain objectives, policies and mapping that form the Region's approach to managing growth and the economy, providing infrastructure and protecting the natural environment, cultural resources and agricultural land





# Framework for the Niagara Official



## **GROWING REGION**

How we manage growth and development, with a range and mix of housing forms, including affordable housing

## **CONNECTED REGION**

How we improve connections with transit, recreation and trails, infrastructure and technology

## **COMPETITIVE REGION**

How we increase our competitiveness by supporting employment opportunities and protecting agricultural lands

## **VIBRANT REGION**

How we enhance the vibrancy of communities by supporting strong urban design and protecting cultural heritage

## **SUSTAINABLE REGION**

How we protect our natural environment and plan for climate change



# Timeline for the Niagara Official Plan



## Virtual Public Information Centres (Zoom Webinars)

**Wednesday, Sept 23**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Natural Heritage System

**Thursday, Sept. 24**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Water Resource System

**Wednesday, Oct. 7**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Growth Management  
- Growth Allocations,  
Settlement Area Boundary  
Review, Regional Structure,  
Land Needs, Housing

**Thursday, Oct. 8**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: District & Secondary  
Plans, Urban Design, and  
Employment Lands

**Tuesday, Oct. 20**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Rural & Agriculture,  
Mineral Aggregate  
Resources, Archaeology &  
Culture

**Wednesday, Oct. 21**  
**6:00 p.m.**

Topic: Infrastructure, Water  
and Wastewater, Stormwater,  
Transportation

# Niagara Official Plan Consultation

## Also this Fall/Winter:

- Official Plan Online Surveys
- Range of Stakeholder Engagement Sessions (virtual)
- Local Council Workshops
- 1:1 Meetings with Local Planning Departments





# Natural Environment Work Program Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options



# Project Overview – Natural Environment

| Project Phase | Activities                                                                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1             | Project Initiation and Procurement                                                       |
| 2             | Background Study and Discussion Papers for Mapping and Watershed Planning Priority Areas |
| 3             | 1 <sup>st</sup> Point of Engagement: Inform on Background Study                          |
| 4             | Develop and Evaluate Options for Natural System(s)                                       |
| 5             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Point of Engagement: Consultation on Options for the Natural System(s)   |
| 6             | Develop Regional Natural System(s)                                                       |
| 7             | Develop OP Policies & Finalize Mapping                                                   |
| 8             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Point of Engagement: Draft OP Policies and Schedules                     |
| 9             | Other Implementation Tools                                                               |



# Overview of Phase 4

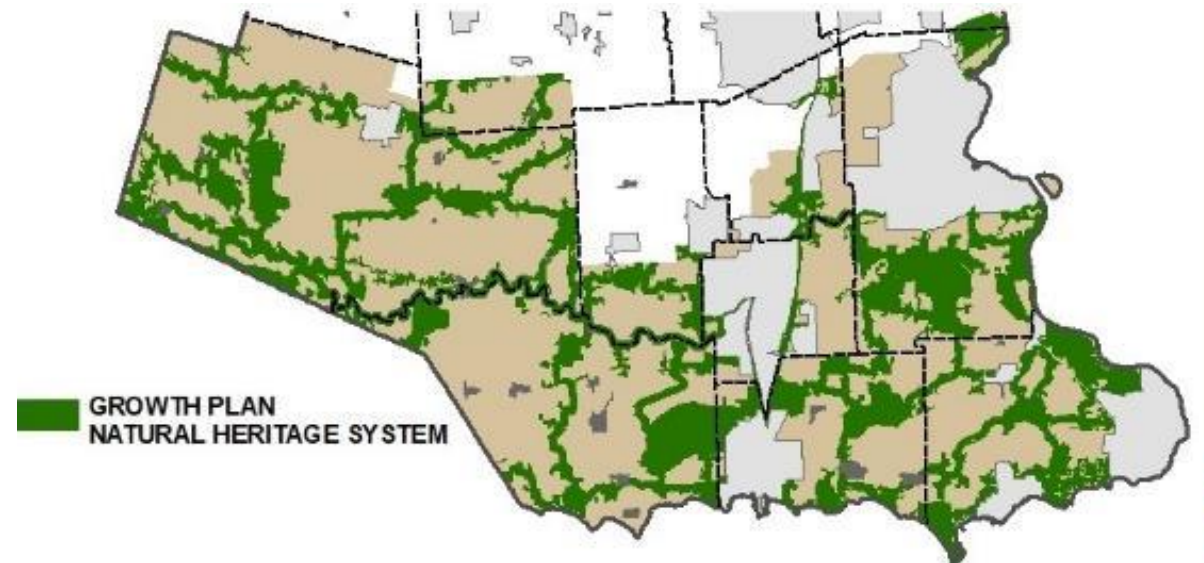
- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed to a level-of-detail that was required to support the evaluation and engagement process only
- Detailed and region-wide mapping to be completed in subsequent phases of the work program





# Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

- The **Greenbelt Plan** and **Growth Plan NHSs** have been identified by the Province and are to be implemented by municipalities
- The Growth Plan and PPS also requires that a water resource system be identified and protected.
- The PPS identifies the types of natural features, areas, functions, that must be protected through Official Plan policies



# Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

- The Province has not prepared a map showing a WRS – however, the Growth Plan requires that a WRS be identified
- While some components of a WRS can be identified (such as wetlands and stream corridors), other components can only be identified through future study



“Watershed planning or equivalent will inform ...the identification of water resource systems.” (Growth Plan, 4.2.1.3a)



# Development of Options

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
  - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
  - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
  - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change & invasive species
  - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
  - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
  - Conform with provincial requirements
  - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



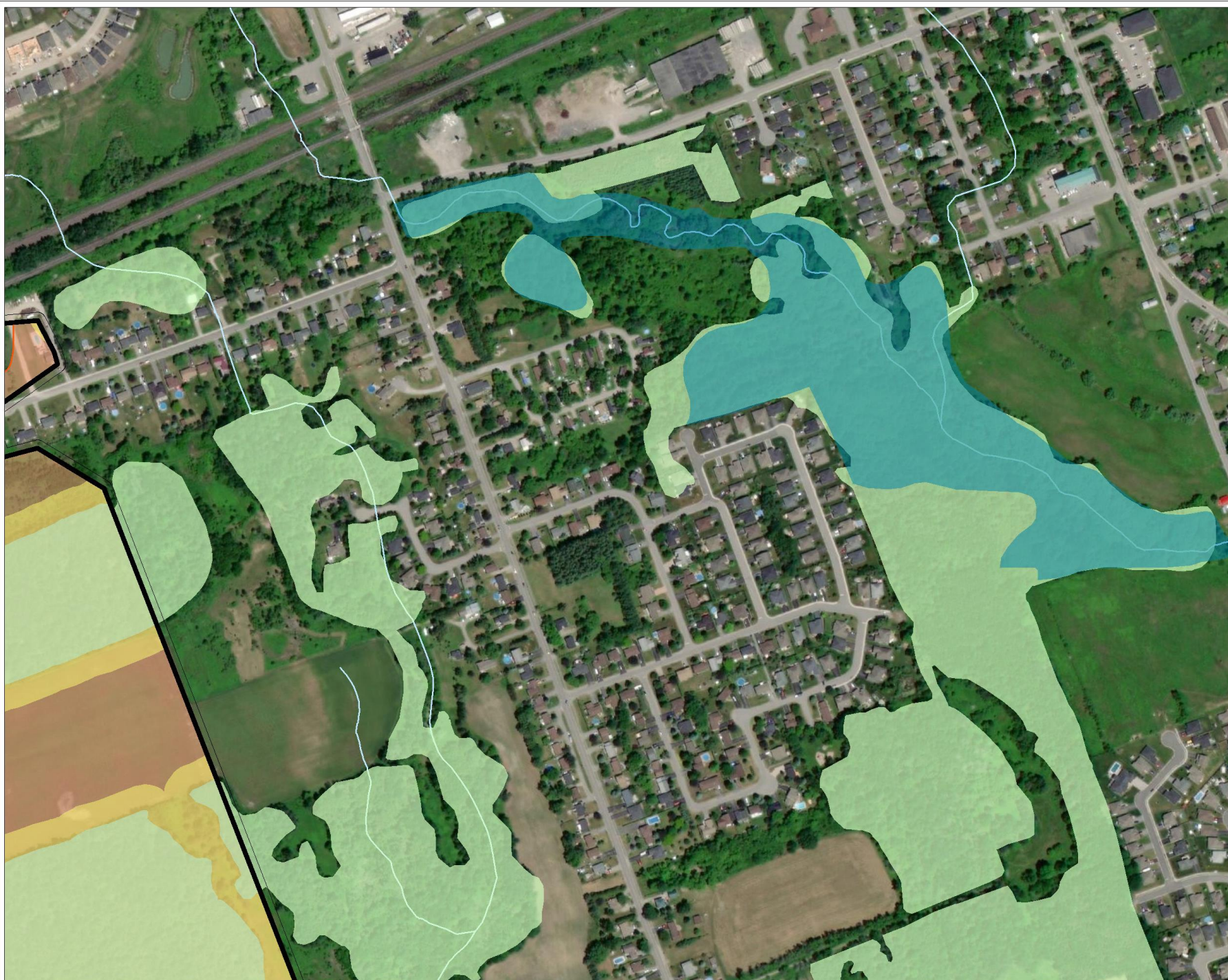


# Natural Heritage System Options

- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS and provincial plans
  - Relies on the provincial NHSs to fulfil the requirements for a ‘system-based’ approach
  - Key features required by provincial plans would be mapped, including significant features identified by the PPS. outside of the Provincial NHSs
  - The NHS including individual features would be shown as an overlay in the Official Plan schedules
- Option 2 - “Minimum Standards – Designation”
  - Same as Option 1 but the key/significant features would be designated as a mutually exclusive land use on the Official Plan schedules
- Option 3 – “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Builds upon Option 1 and 2 by providing three scenarios that exceed minimum provincial standards, and includes an increasing range of additional components, regional linkages, and buffers.







# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

## Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.



|                           |                     |       |
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## Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

### Legend

#### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

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Project Number  
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Imagery: ESRI

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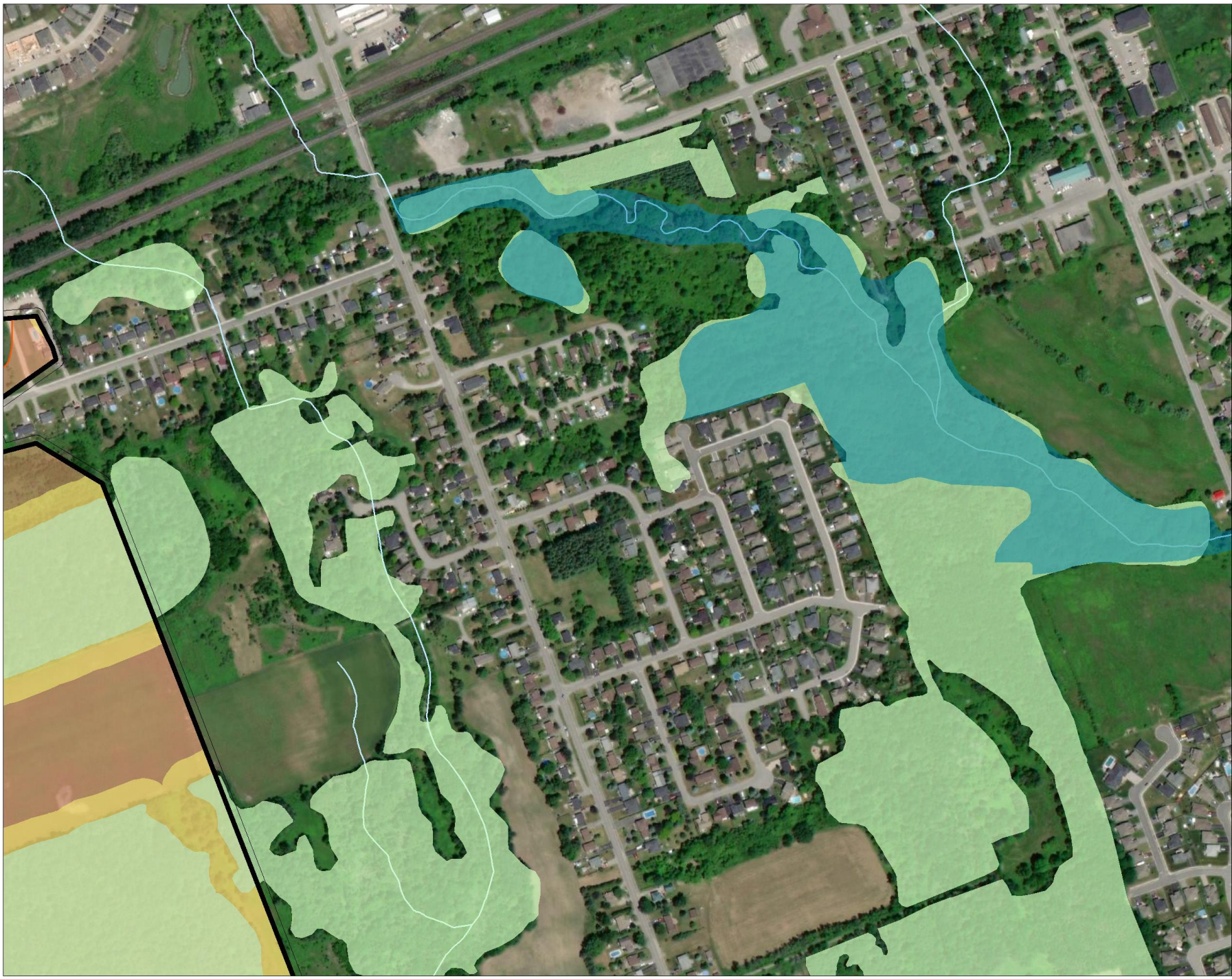




# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

|                                                                                 | N.H.S. 3A                                                                                                                                                                                                               | N.H.S. 3B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | N.H.S. 3C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Component Features and Areas</b>                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P.</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s, but only outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Option 3A</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Natural Heritage Features within the N.E.P. as per Options 3A and 3B</li> <li>• Other Key Natural Features and Areas outside of provincial N.H.S.s both outside and in settlement areas as per Option 3B</li> <li>• Supporting Features and Areas in all of the Region, including both outside and within settlement areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Connecting the System (linkages)</b>                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Linkages only between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large and Medium Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large, Medium and Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas outside of settlement areas</li> <li>• Small Linkages between Key Natural Features and Areas in settlement areas where the potential linkage area is in a natural state</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>Buffers/ Vegetation Protection Zones (to Key Natural Features and Areas)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggested policy minimums outside of provincial N.H.S.s, both inside and outside of settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandatory buffers outside of settlement areas (that can be reduced through study) with suggested policy minimums inside settlement areas</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |





Conceptual Natural  
Heritage System  
Settlement Area  
Option 3A

Legend

- Settlement Area
- Required Components**
- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Watercourses

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|                           |                     |  |
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|---------------------------|---------------------|--|

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A


## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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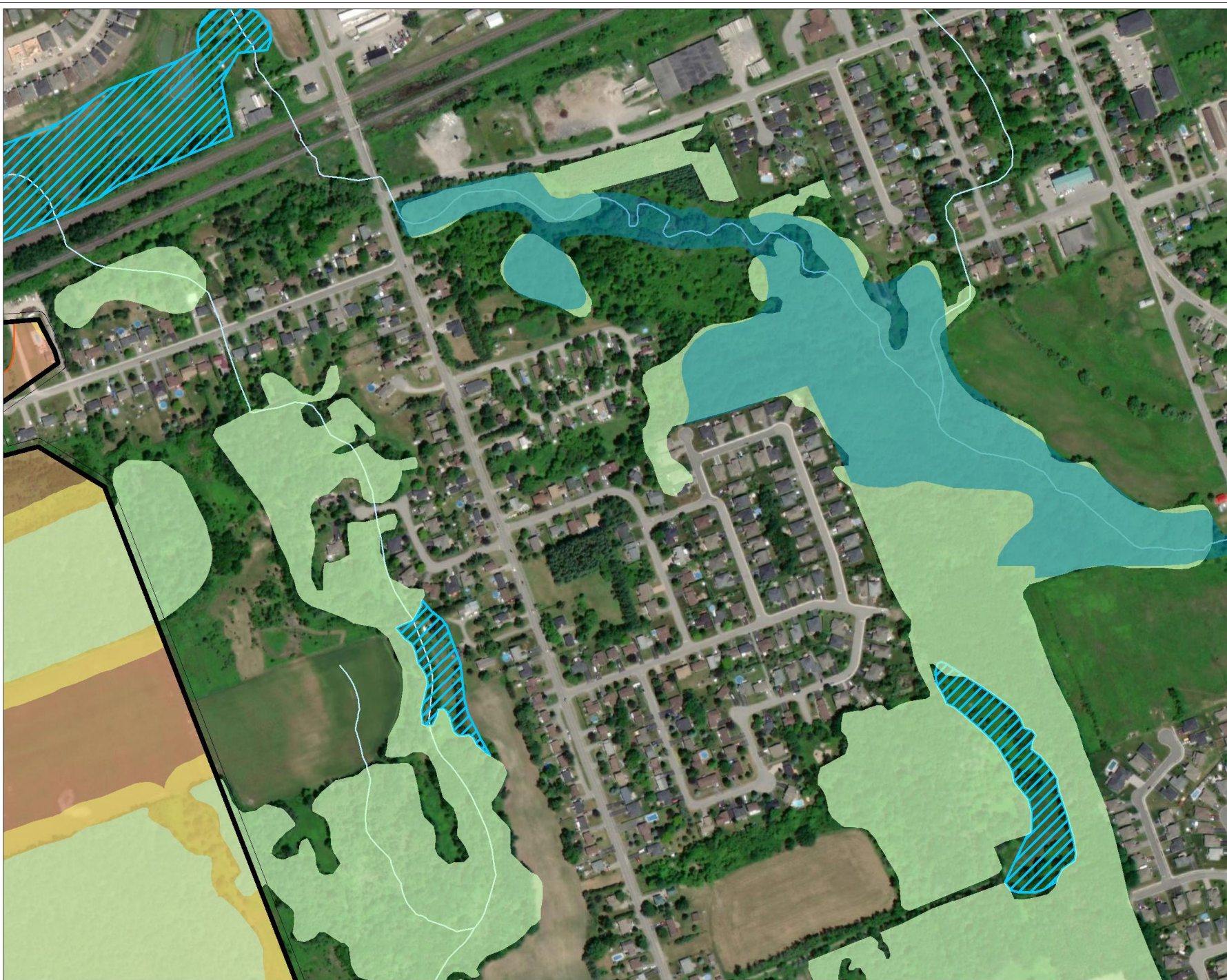


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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

 Settlement Area

### Required Components

-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetland
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

### Required Components



-  Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
-  Vegetation Protection Zones
-  Significant Woodlands
-  Provincially Significant Wetlands
-  Watercourses

### Optional Components




#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Medium Linkage (200m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09

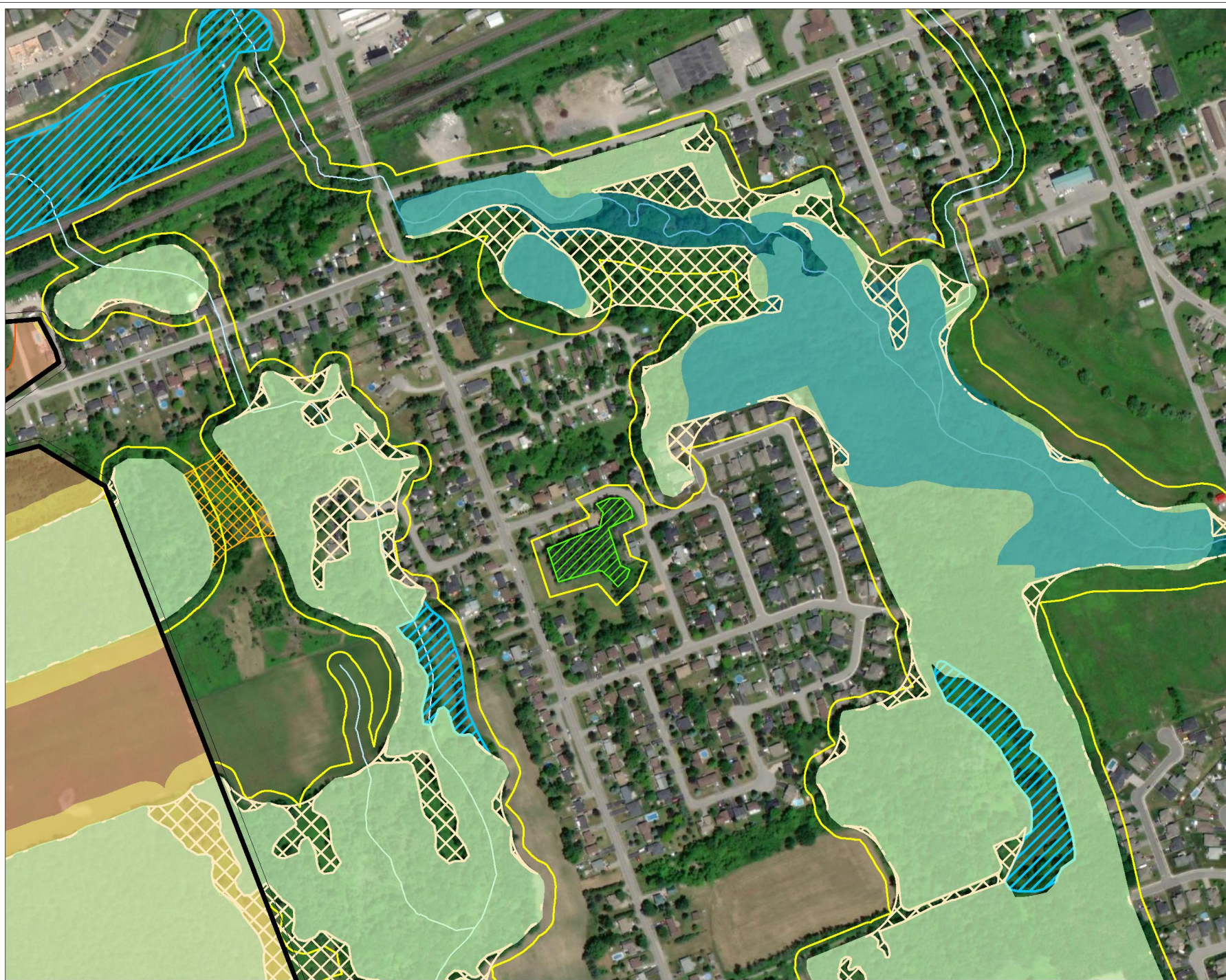


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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

Settlement Area

## Required Components

Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

Vegetation Protection Zones

Significant Woodlands

Provincially Significant Wetland

Watercourses

## Optional Components

### Other Key Features

Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

### Supporting Features and Areas

Other Woodlands

Enhancement Areas

### Linkages

Small Linkage (100m)

Minimum Buffers

These maps are conceptual and for illustration purposes. These maps were prepared to demonstrate the differences between the various NHS options and are not intended to depict specific areas in Niagara Region.

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Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
2020-09-09



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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C

## Legend

### Required Components

- Growth Plan Natural Heritage System
- Vegetation Protection Zones
- Significant Woodlands
- Provincially Significant Wetlands
- Watercourses

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

- Large Linkage (400m)
- Medium Linkage (200m)
- Small Linkage (100m)
- Minimum Buffers

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number  
20-1149

Date:  
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# What is a Water Resource System?

- “A system consisting of ground water features and areas and surface water features (including shoreline areas), and hydrologic functions, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption. The water resource system **will** comprise **key hydrologic features** and **key hydrologic areas**”. (Growth Plan 2019)



# Water Resource System Options

- “Informed by watershed planning or equivalent”
  - ‘Niagara Watershed Plan’ project has been initiated by the Region
- Option 1 - “Minimum Standards – Overlay”
  - Implements minimum standards of PPS, Growth Plan, and Greenbelt Plan
- Option 2 - “Going Beyond Minimum Standards”
  - Same as Option 1 but identified additional/optional components:
  - Option 2A – additional/optional features outside of settlement areas only
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# Niagara Region Natural Environment Work Program Water Resource System - Option 1 and 2

## Legend

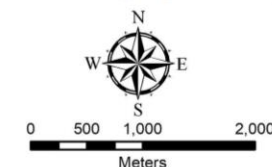
### Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

-  Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
-  Highly Vulnerable Aquifers
-  Roads
-  Railway
-  Settlement Areas

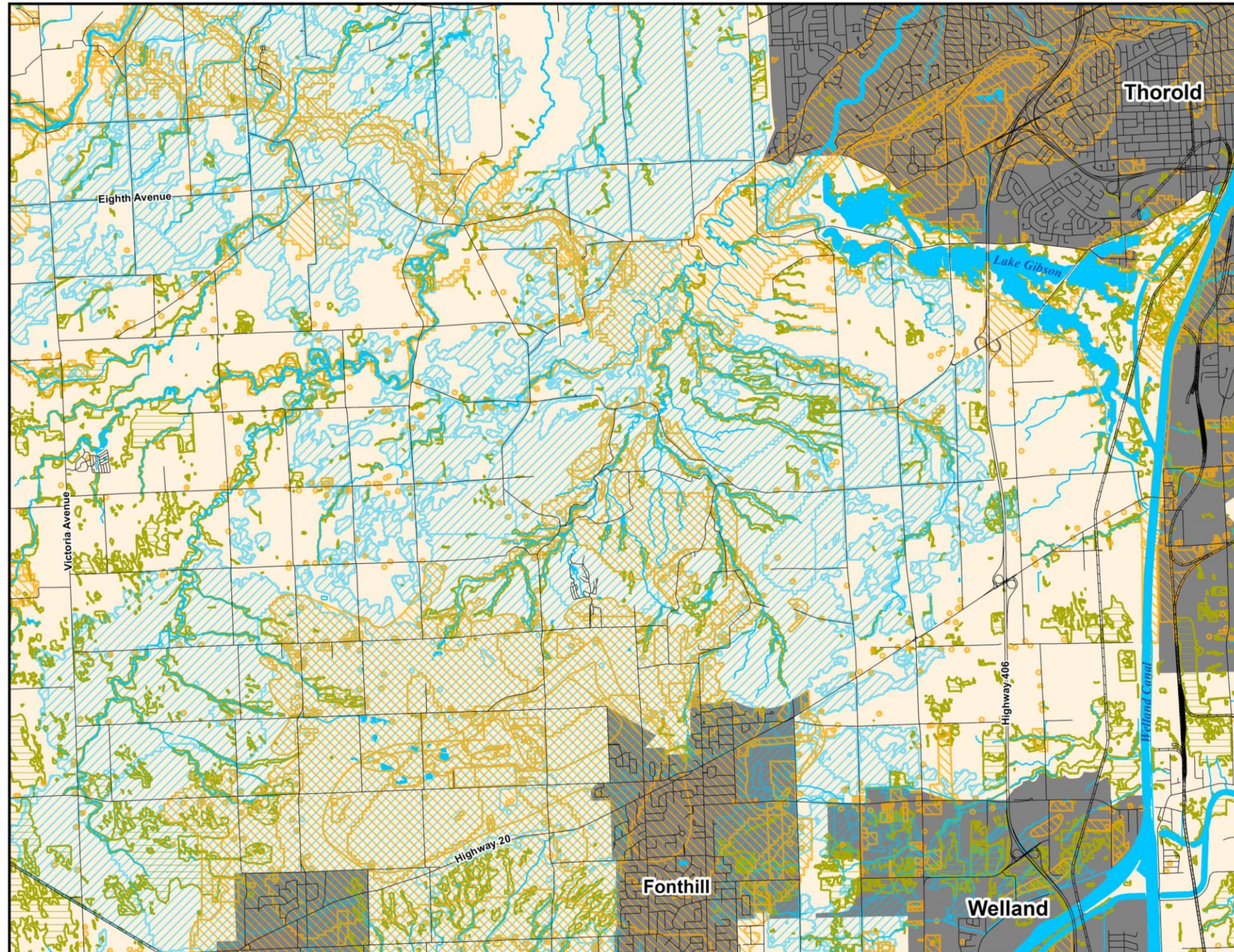
Conceptual figure for  
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June 11, 2020





# Updates on Supporting Projects

- Ecological Land Classification (ELC) Mapping Project
  - Update to the existing Natural Areas Inventory (NAI) dataset using 2018 aerial imagery. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Field verification process is currently wrapping-up. Final dataset is expected by the end of 2020.
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  - Tertiary-level watershed planning project being completed in accordance with provincial direction for an 'watershed planning equivalency document'. Project is being completed in collaboration with NPCA staff.
  - Early-stages, reviewing background information and preparing draft goals and objectives.



# Next Steps



1. Receive feedback through 2<sup>nd</sup> point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Prepare detailed design of the preferred options and recommendations for OP policies







**NIAGARA  
PARKS**

# Environmental and Cultural Stewardship

October 1, 2020





# Introduction and Overview



**NIAGARA  
PARKS**

About Niagara Parks









# Guiding Principles

Prior to the opening of the original Park, the Commissioners were guided by two general principles which were regarded by the Government of the day as indispensable conditions:

- there should be no permanent financial burden on the Province, but that the Parks should become self-supporting
- the Park should, as far as possible, be free to the public

These indispensable conditions continue to guide our operations.



A close-up photograph of purple lavender flowers. In the lower-left foreground, a bee is perched on a flower, facing right. The background is a soft-focus field of more lavender flowers under bright, natural light.

# PRESERVING AND PROMOTING the natural & cultural ..... HERITAGE ALONG THE ..... NIAGARA RIVER CORRIDOR



## Mandate and Vision

- An innovative example of sustainability as the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River corridor
- A welcoming, accessible and inspiring place offering world-class natural, historical, and authentic experiences
- A source of national pride and identity
- One of the most spectacular Parks in the world





# NPC stewards 1,325 hectares of land along the entire Niagara River corridor.

|   |                   |                                                                                                                   |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Experiences       | Attractions, Events, Educations, Eco-tourism, Active Living, Adventure, Natural Wonders                           |
| 2 | Infrastructure    | 56 Km Niagara Parkway, 53 Km Recreation Trail, Attractions, Facilities, Parking Lots, Service Roads, Golf Courses |
| 3 | Gardens and Parks | Queen Victoria Park, Botanical Gardens School of Horticulture, Queenston Heights Park, Kings Bridge Park          |
| 4 | Natural Areas     | Niagara Falls, Niagara Gorge, Niagara Glen, Niagara Escarpment, Niagara River Shoreline, Species at Risk          |
| 5 | Heritage          | Old Fort Erie, Chippawa Battlefield, Laura Secord Homestead, McFarland House, Queenston Heights                   |





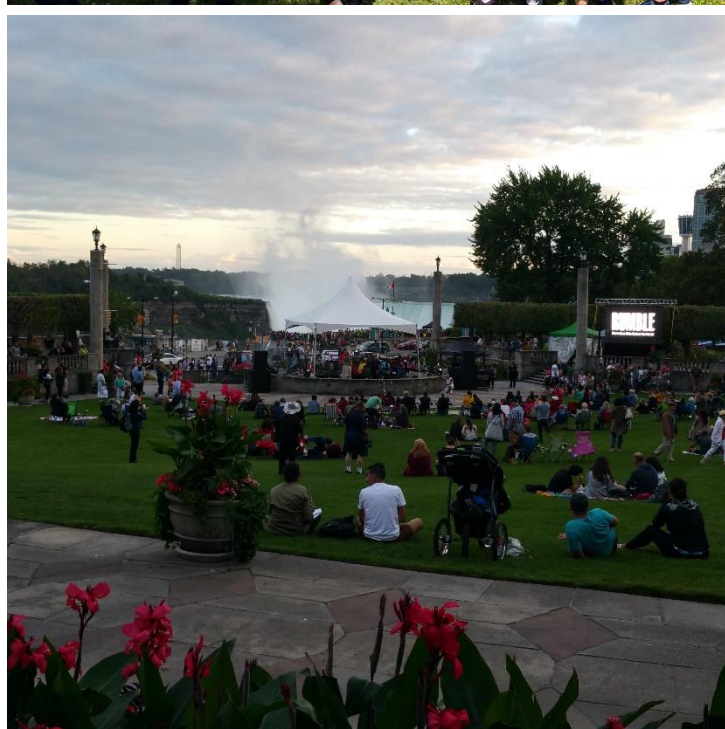
**NIAGARA  
PARKS**

# Cultural Connections and Stewardship





# Cultural Connections









# Landscape of Nations

- Memorial dedicated to the warriors who fought and died during the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812 and all warriors who participated in the War of 1812
- Unveiled in October 2016 at Queenston Heights Park
- Landscape of Nations 360 connection





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# Environmental Stewardship





## Fostering Collaboration

- Over 65 stewardship partners, including government agencies, non-government organizations, and grass-root organizations.
- Bi-national collaboration
- MOU's with Forests Ontario, Canadian Wildlife Federation,
- Work with Educational Institutions - Brock University and Niagara College







## Niagara Parks Golf & the Audubon Society

2014 Legends on the Niagara Golf Complex became Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary

- protecting significant wetlands,
- naturalizing turf grass,
- reforestation,
- reducing chemical and fertilizer use,
- conserving water,
- enhancing water quality,
- educating golf course staff, players and community members





# Brock University and the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Initiative







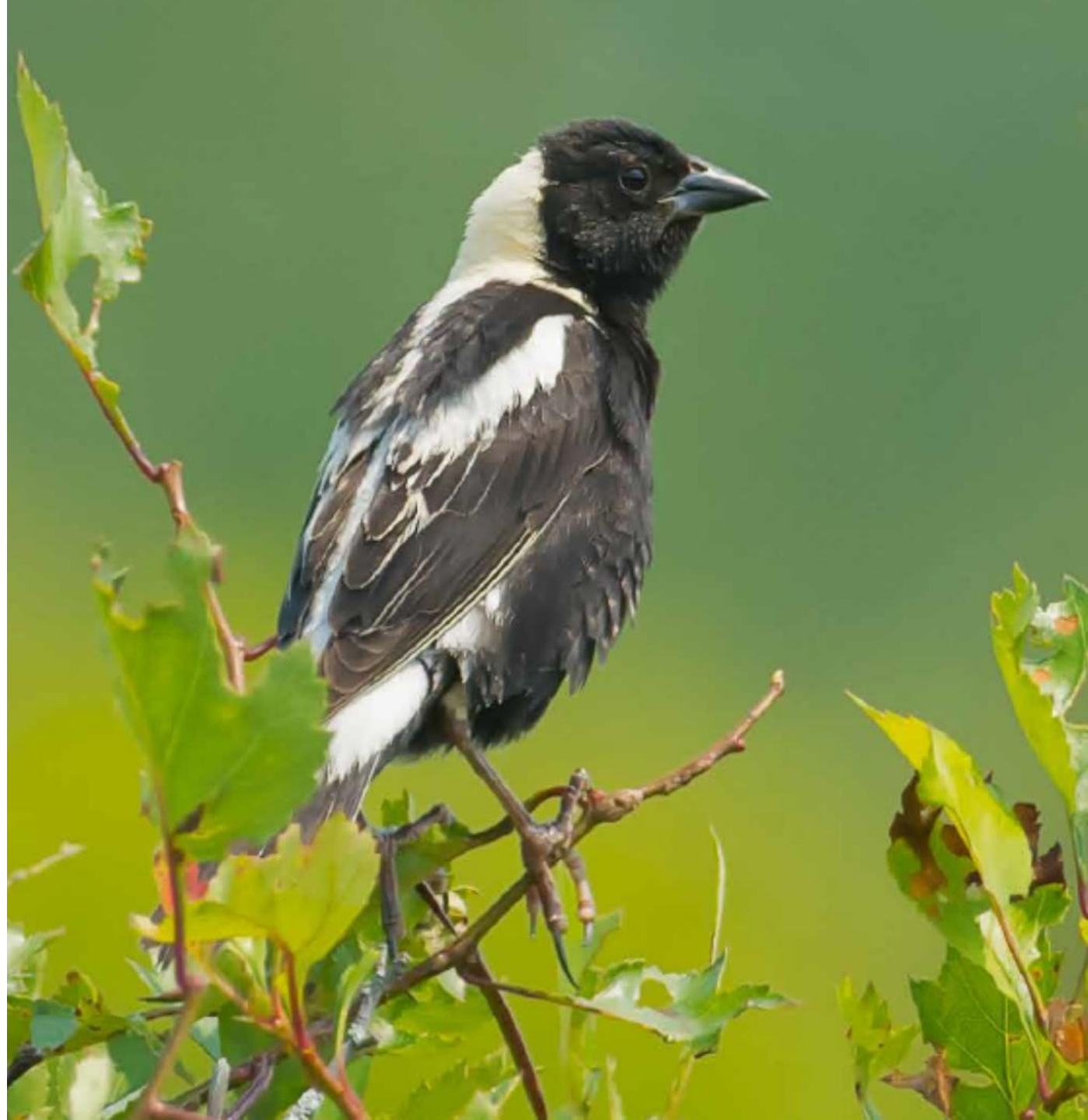
## Experiencing the Natural Niagara River Corridor

- Providing Hands-On Educational Opportunities
- Workshops and Seminars
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Student Projects and Field Trips
- Guided Hikes
- Tree Planting Events
- Niagara Glen Nature Centre





## Caring for Species at Risk







## Invasive Species Management

- Emerald Ash Borer
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
- Tree of Heaven
- Buckthorn
- Garlic Mustard
- Dog-Strangling Vine
- Phragmites – Common Reed





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# Pollinators, Shoreline Habitats and Urban Forestry

# Urban Forestry Management Strategy Goals

## Maintain and Increase Canopy Cover



- 35% canopy cover
- 75% shoreline vegetation

## Increase Species & Habitat Diversity



- Utilize 5-10-20 rule when developing planting plans

## Mitigate Impacts



- Invasive species monitoring
- Climate change
- Recreational use

## Increase Awareness & Promote Stewardship



- Engage partners
- Develop seed sources
- Build relationships with nurseries

## Improve Data Collection & Monitoring

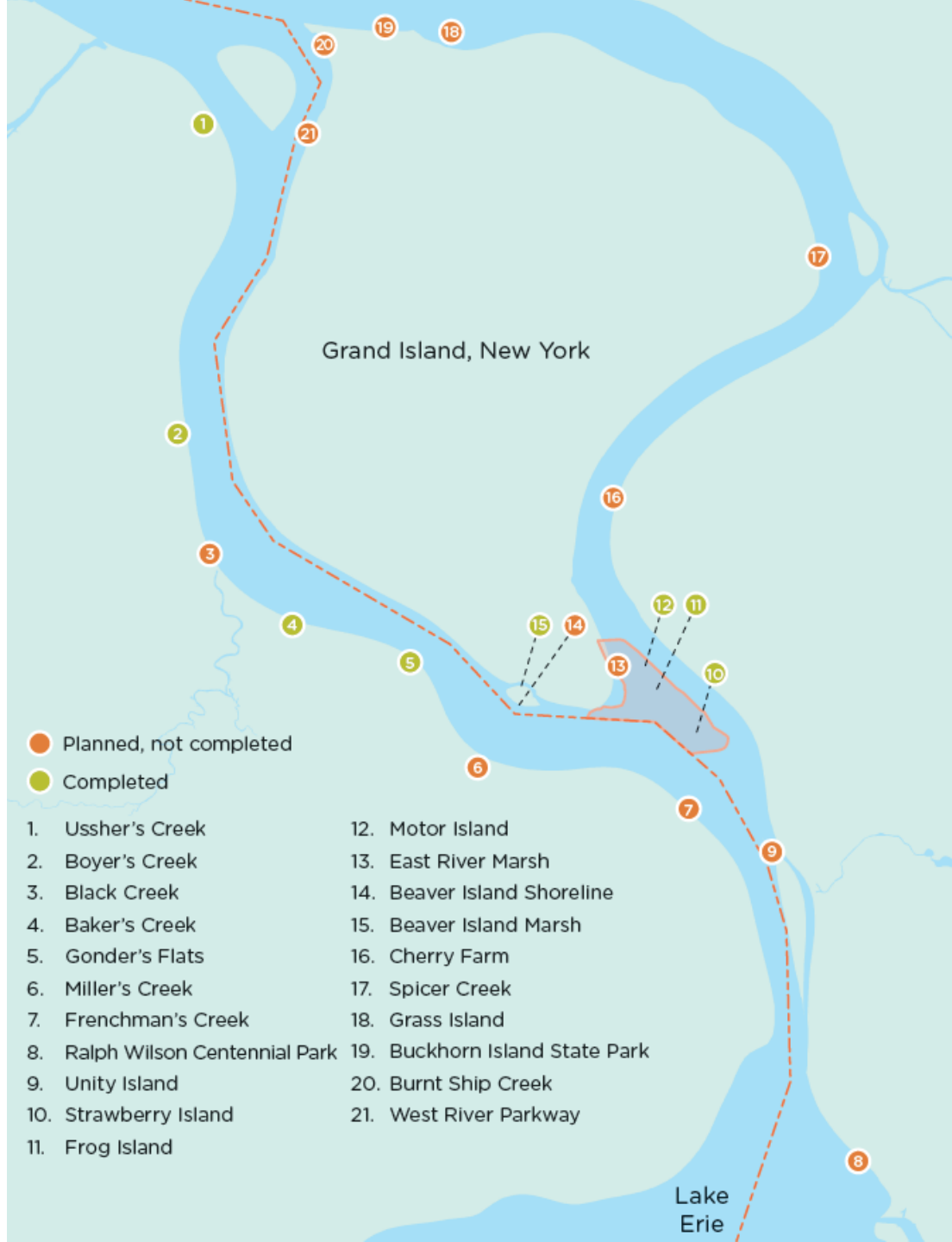


- Tree mapping
- Plant inventories
- Tree health assessments



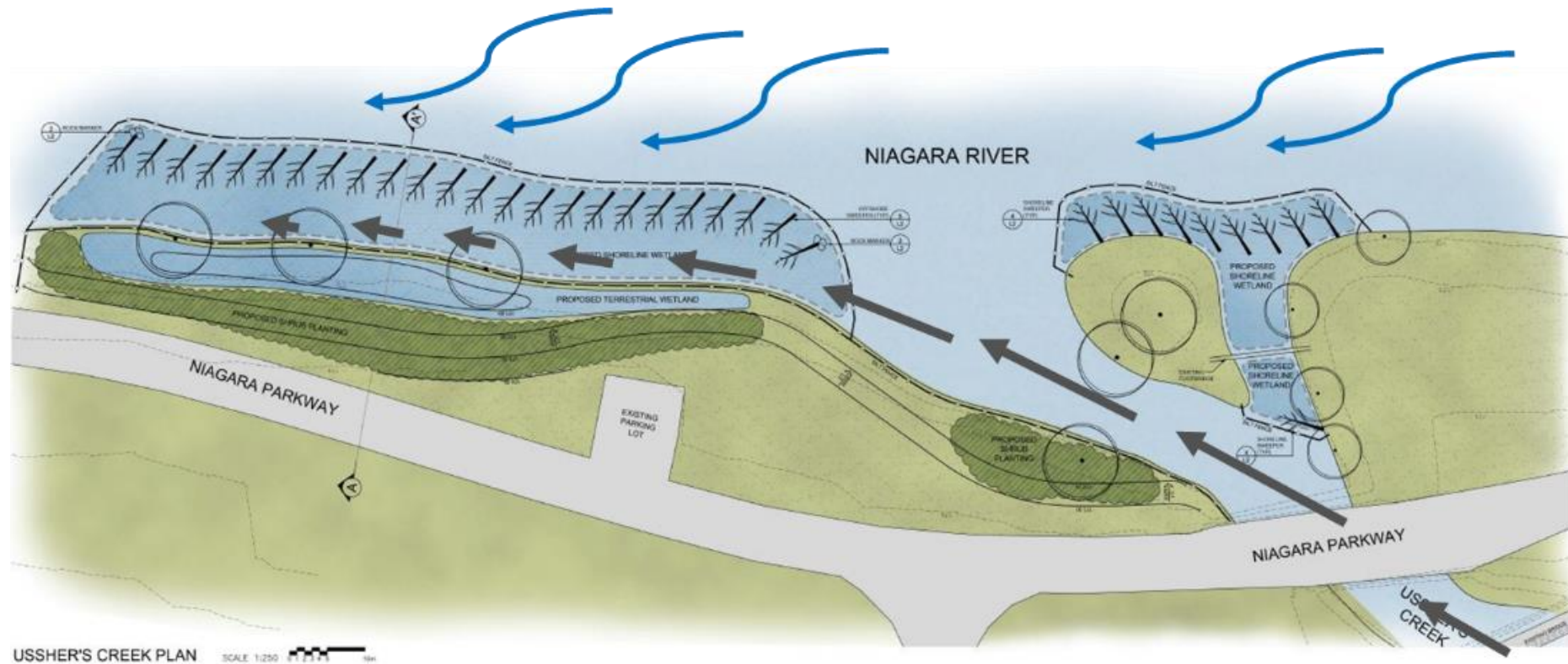
## Niagara River Coastal Wetland Restoration Project

- Seven sites selected at creek mouths in the upper Niagara River
- Work is completed during the winter
- Partners:
  - MNRF (COA)
  - Environment Canada
  - Niagara River RAP
  - New York Department Environmental Conservation





## Concept Designs





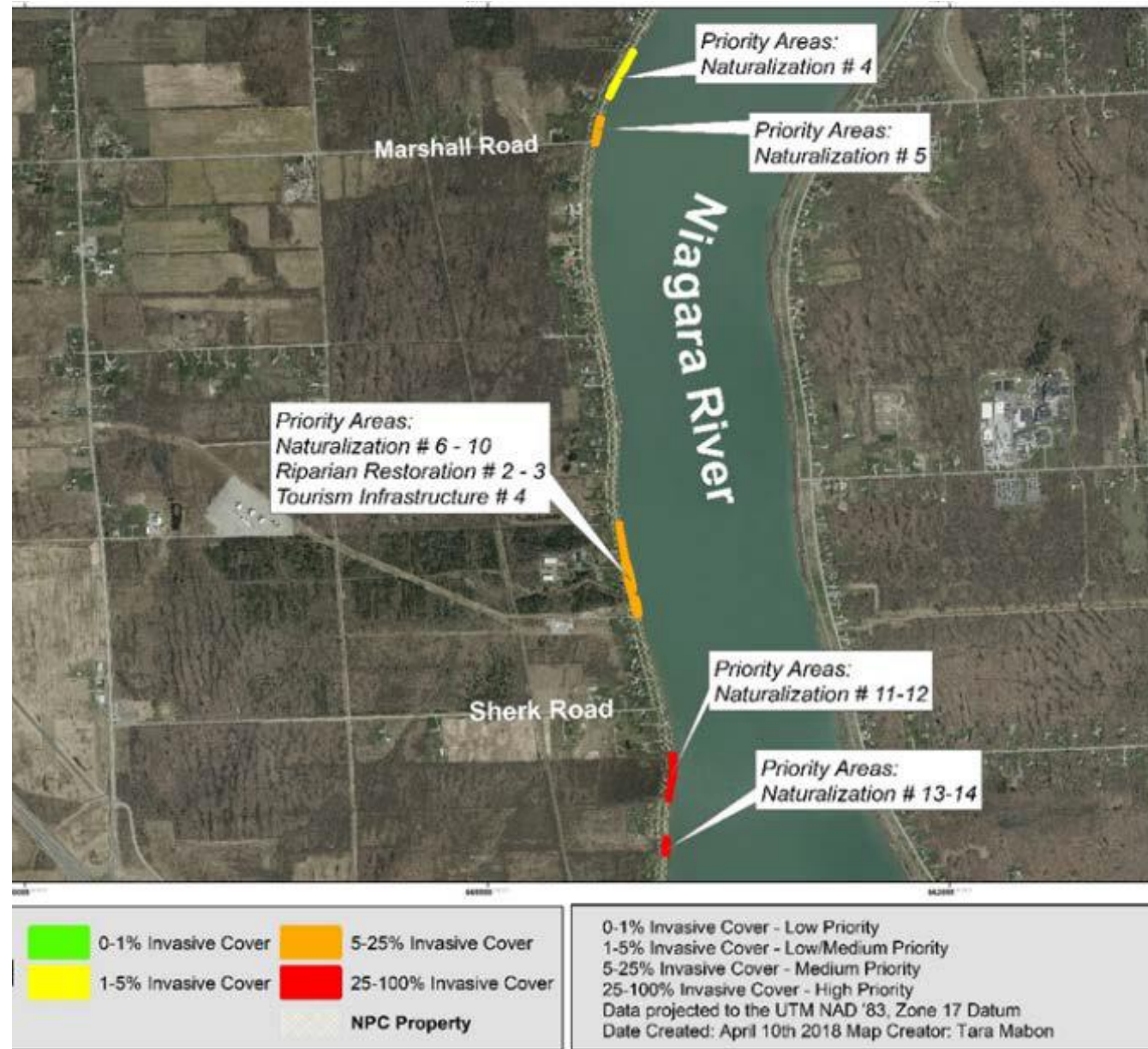




# Restoring Riparian Zones of the Niagara River

- Restore and expand 2km of riparian buffers by planting over 15,000 native plants annually
- Goal to restore 75% of the shoreline with native vegetation cover
- Benefits:
  - provide wildlife habitat
  - improve water quality,
  - prevent erosion
  - mitigate flooding

## Niagara Parks Restoration Inventory Zone 2 Invasive Species Presence



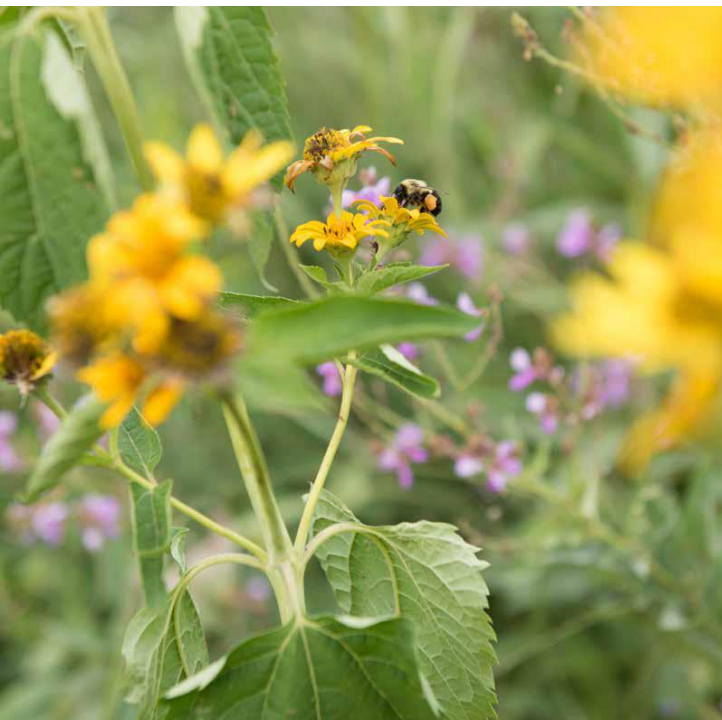












## Pollinator Garden Route

- Established and enhanced 12 pollinator garden habitats
- Planted 15,000 wildflowers and shrubs
- Interpretive signs include content inspired by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Anishinaabe
- Continuing to expand the route with the addition of new pollinator garden habitats





# Chippawa Grassland Bird Habitat Project

- Restoration of 120 acres of fallow agricultural fields into tallgrass prairie
- Provides essential habitat for grassland nesting bird species and pollinators
- Funded by Environment Canada, MNRF and corporate sponsors
- Managed by the Prescribed Burn program, seven sites total





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Looking Ahead



## The Future

- Programs for target audiences
- Communication strategies for reporting progress
- Future projects – Parks Canada, additional fish habitat restoration grants
- New Memorandum of Understanding with Brock University
- Working with partners to leverage a larger communication network





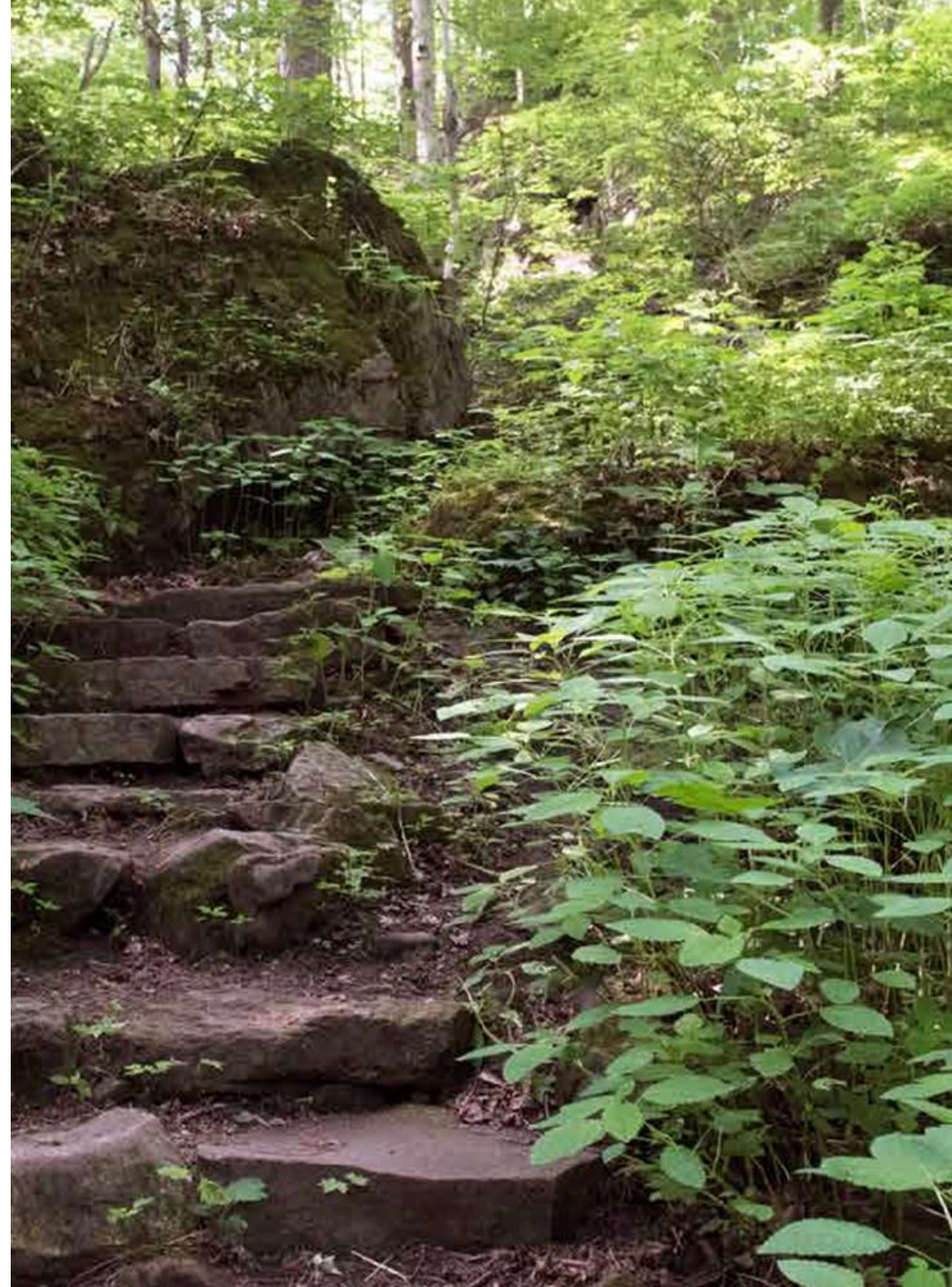
# Environmental Stewardship Action Plan

## Vision

To be an innovative example of sustainability as the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River corridor

## Goals include:

- Stewardship planning strategy
- Experience
- International leadership
- Monitoring and evaluation








## Growing Collaboration





The Niagara River corridor:  
An environment that will continue to inspire,  
engage, educate and amaze for the next 13  
decades and beyond.