

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:

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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:

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Wednesday, September 23, 2020 - 6:00 PM

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



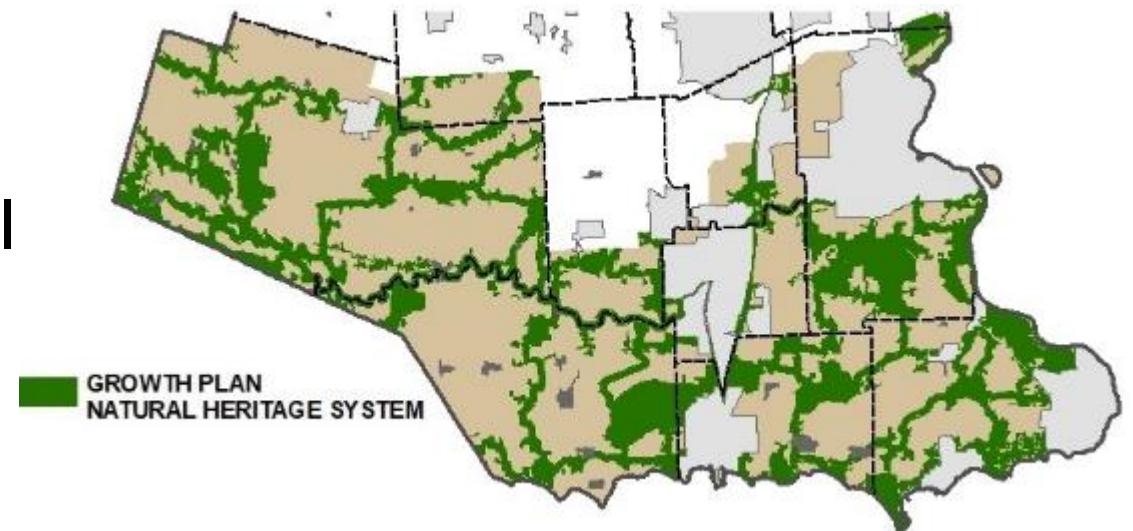
Overview of Phase 4

- 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

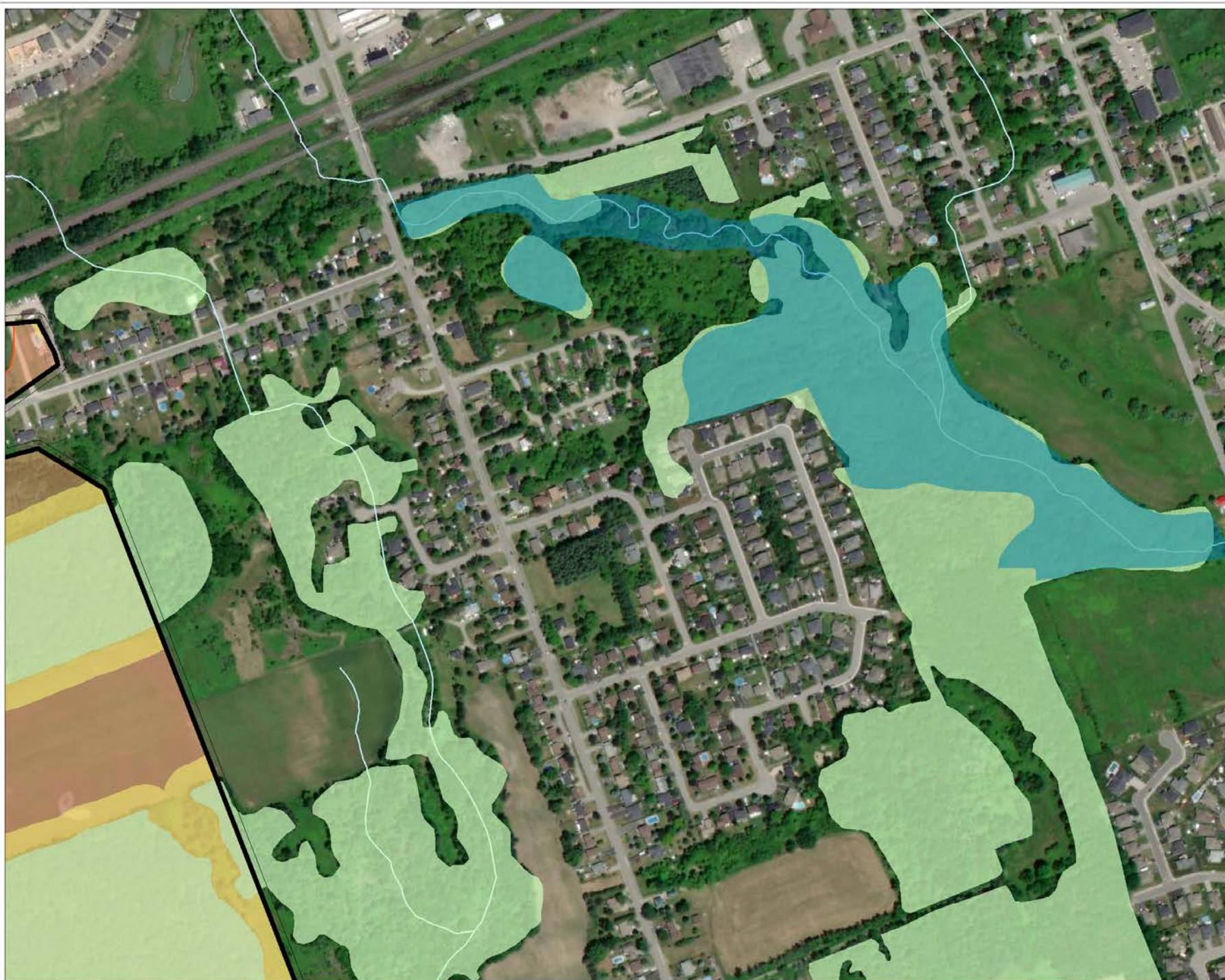
- Definitions of NHS in PPS and Provincial Plans provide direction for required and optional components
- Linkages
 - Included within Provincial NHSs
 - Optional to identify additional linkages beyond Provincial N.H.S.s
- Buffers / Vegetation Protection Zones
 - Requirement to provide to key features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

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Map Produced by North South Environmental (NSE) Inc.
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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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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

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.

0 100 200 300 Meters

Project Number
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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

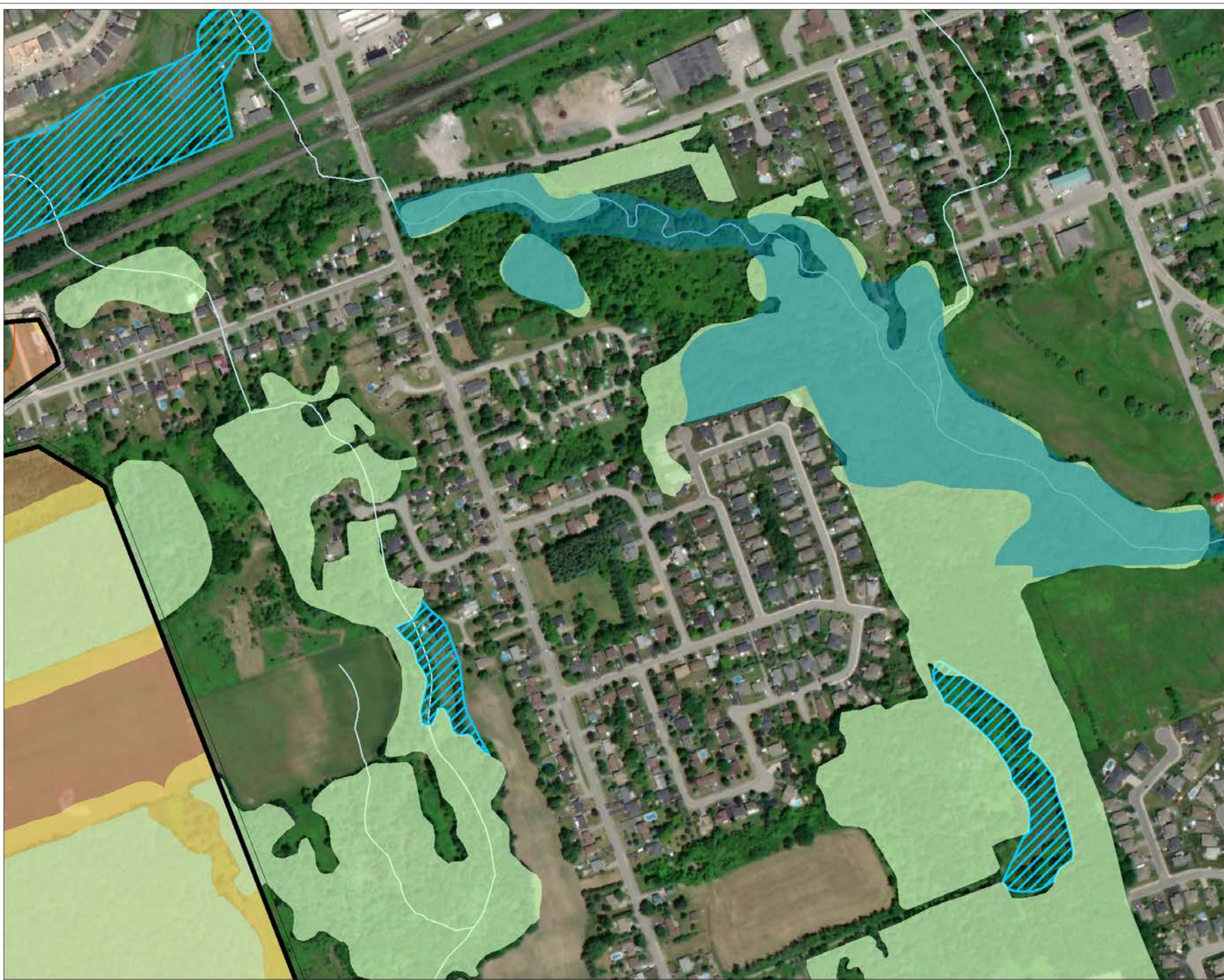
Date:
2020-09-09



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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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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 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

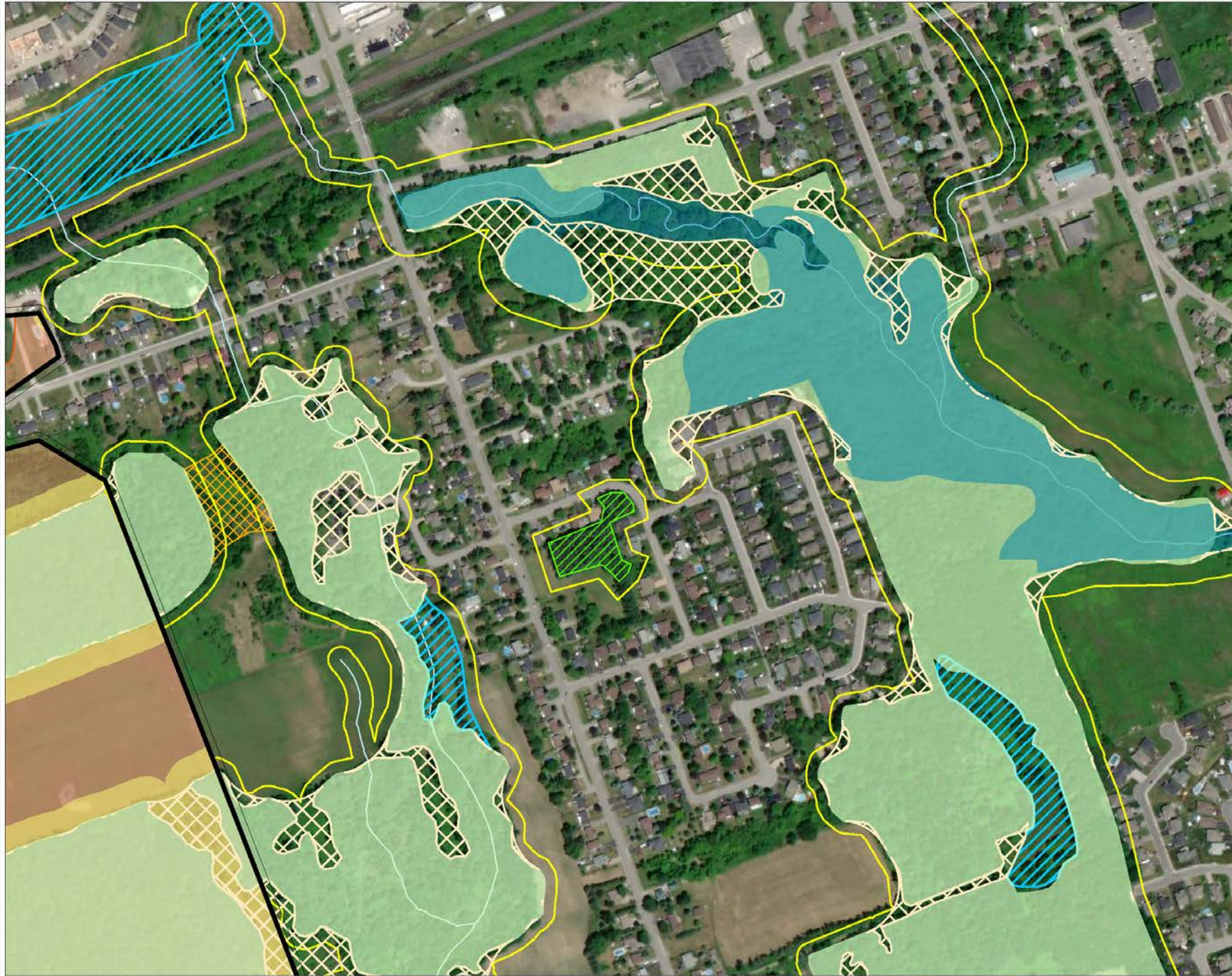
Date:
2020-09-09



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Imagery: ESRI

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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

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	N
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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.

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Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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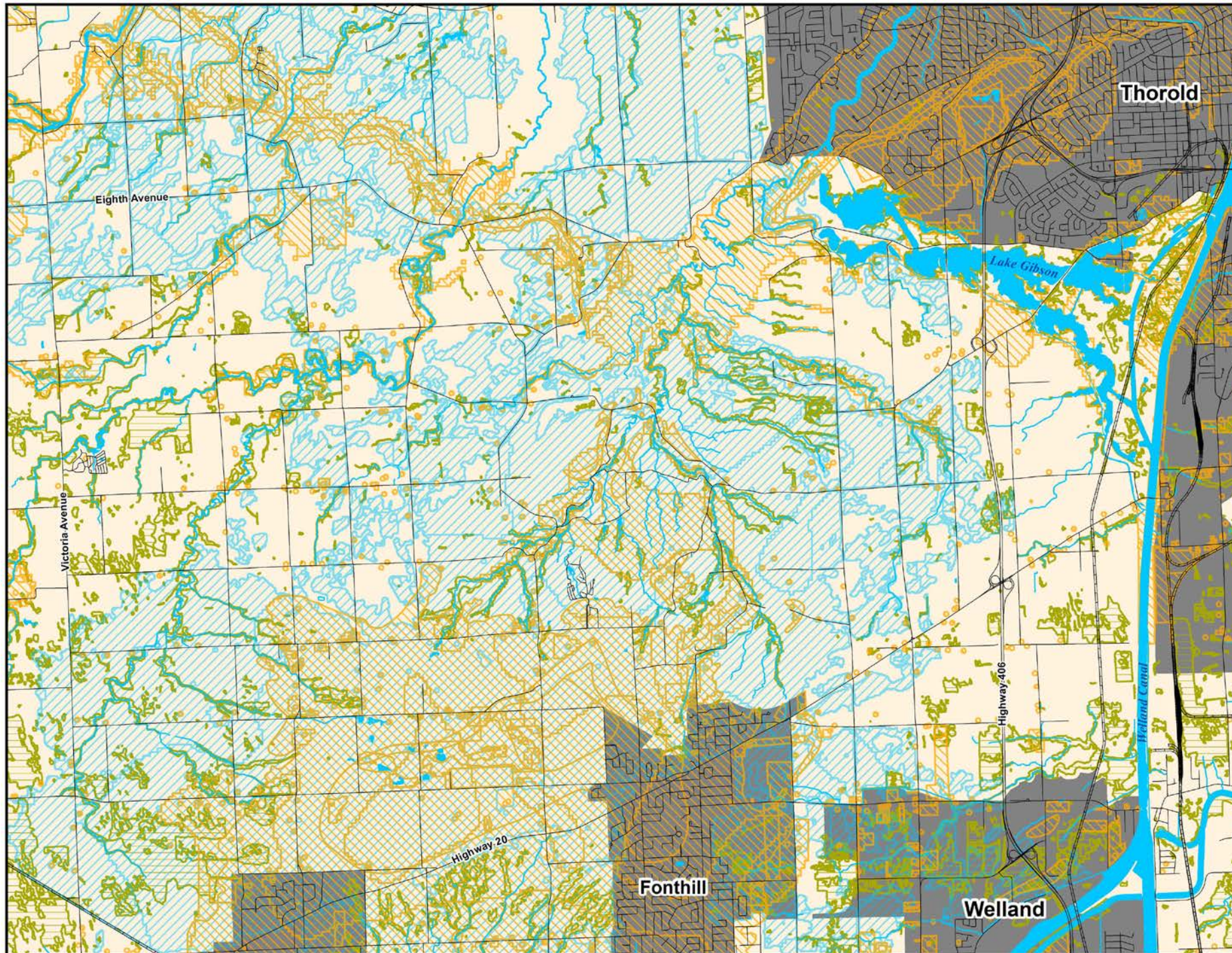
north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



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

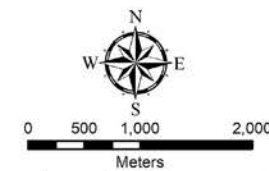
Key Hydrologic Features

- 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



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

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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



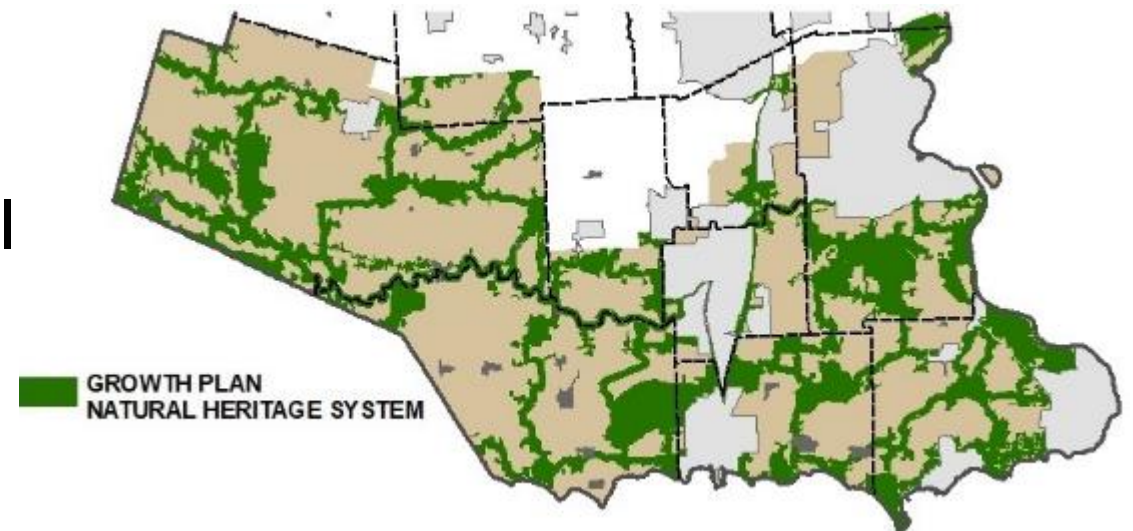
Overview of Phase 4

- 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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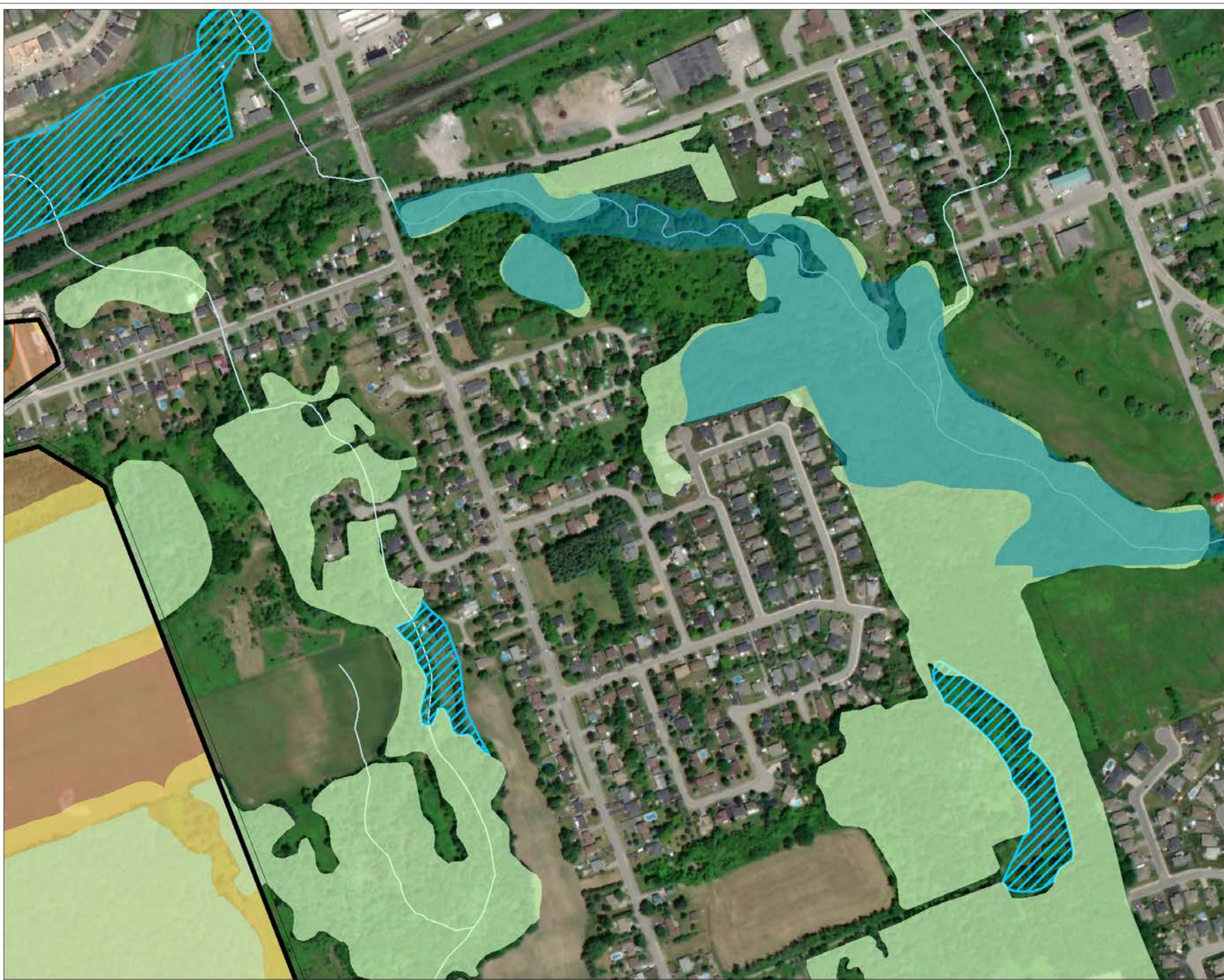
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

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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Project Number
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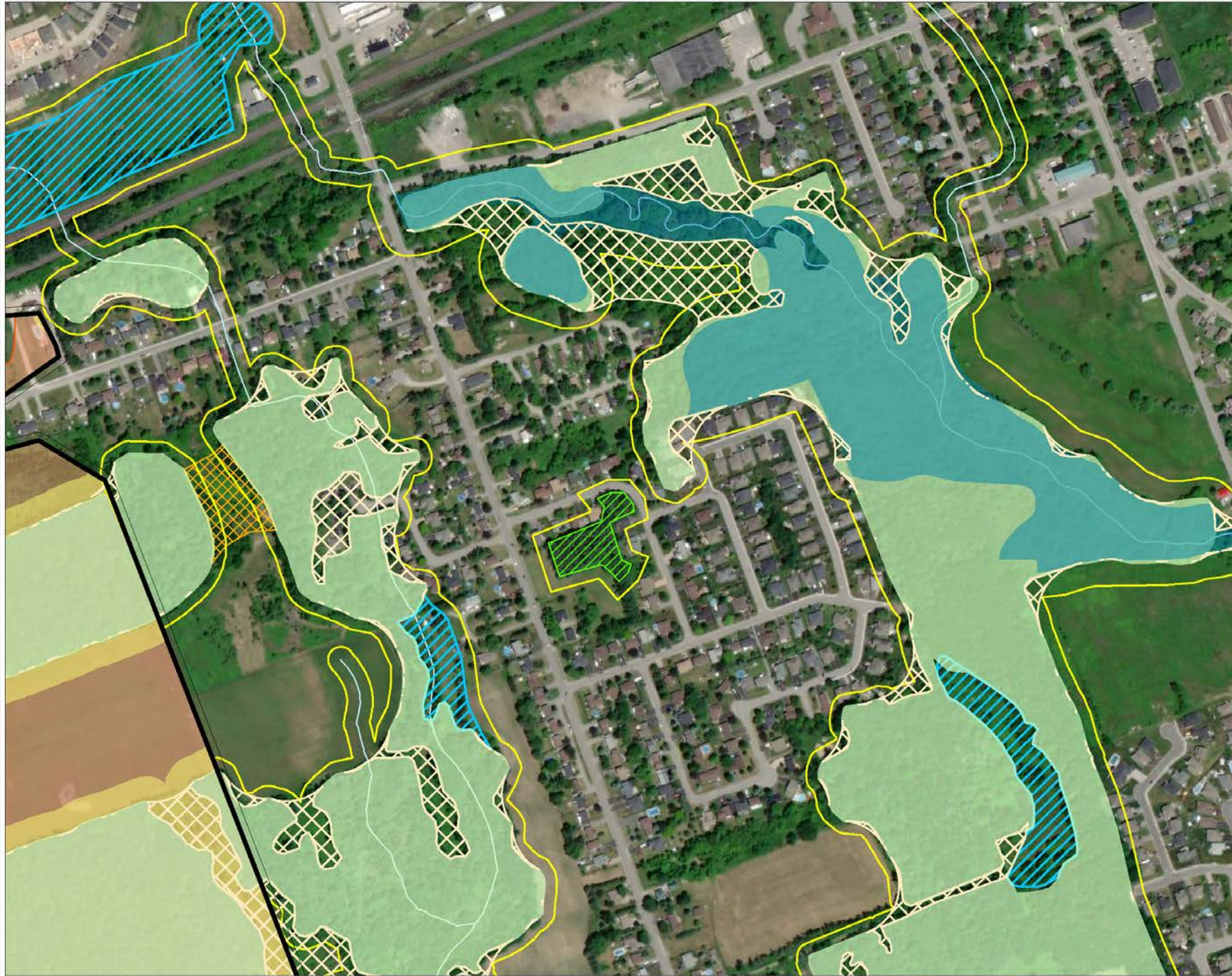
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

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

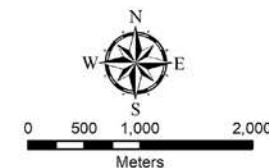
Key Hydrologic Features

- 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



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

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

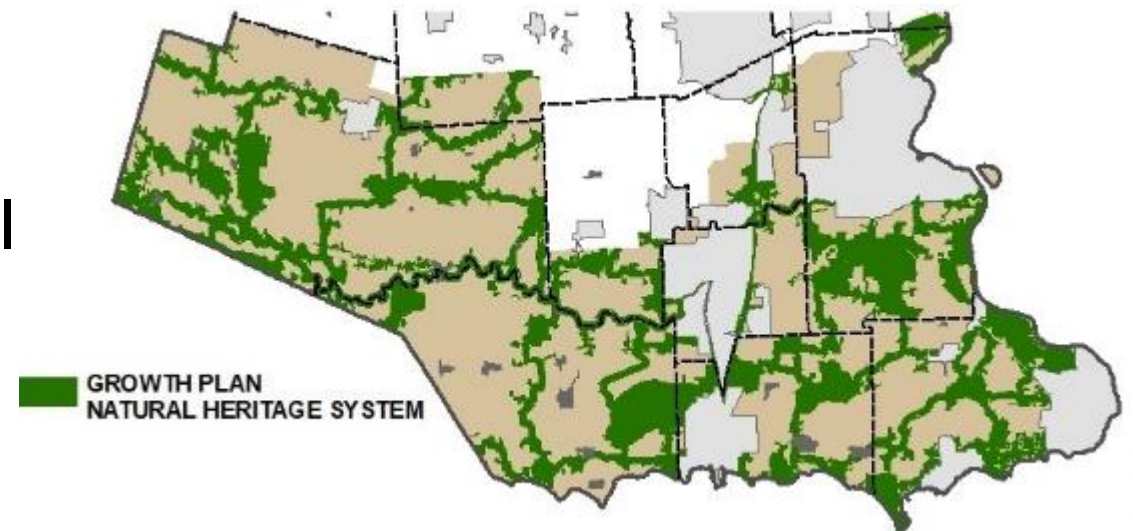
Overview of Phase 4

- 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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 - Represent an increase as compared to the existing system and policies in Niagara



Natural Heritage System Options

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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.



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

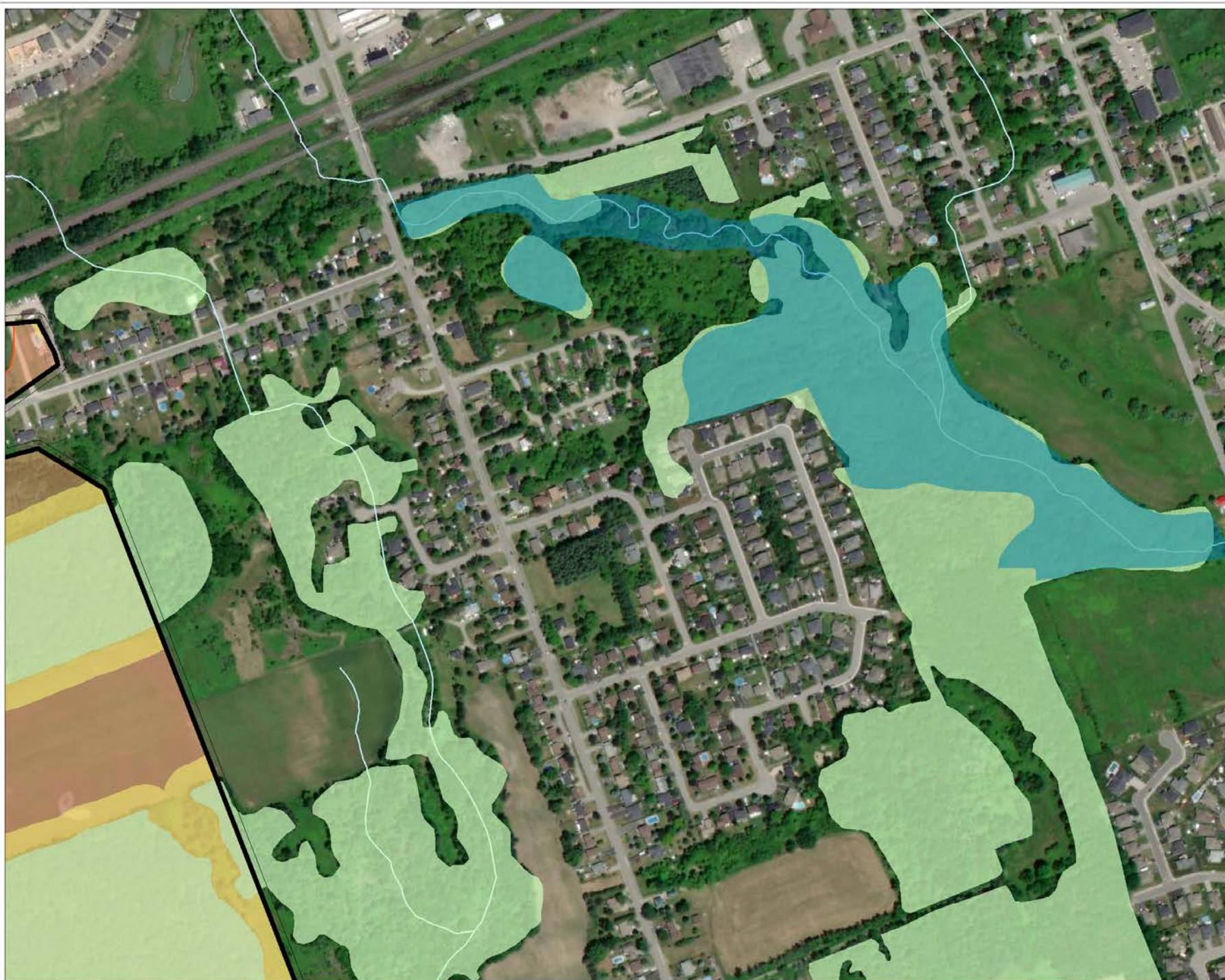
- **Supporting Features and Areas**

- 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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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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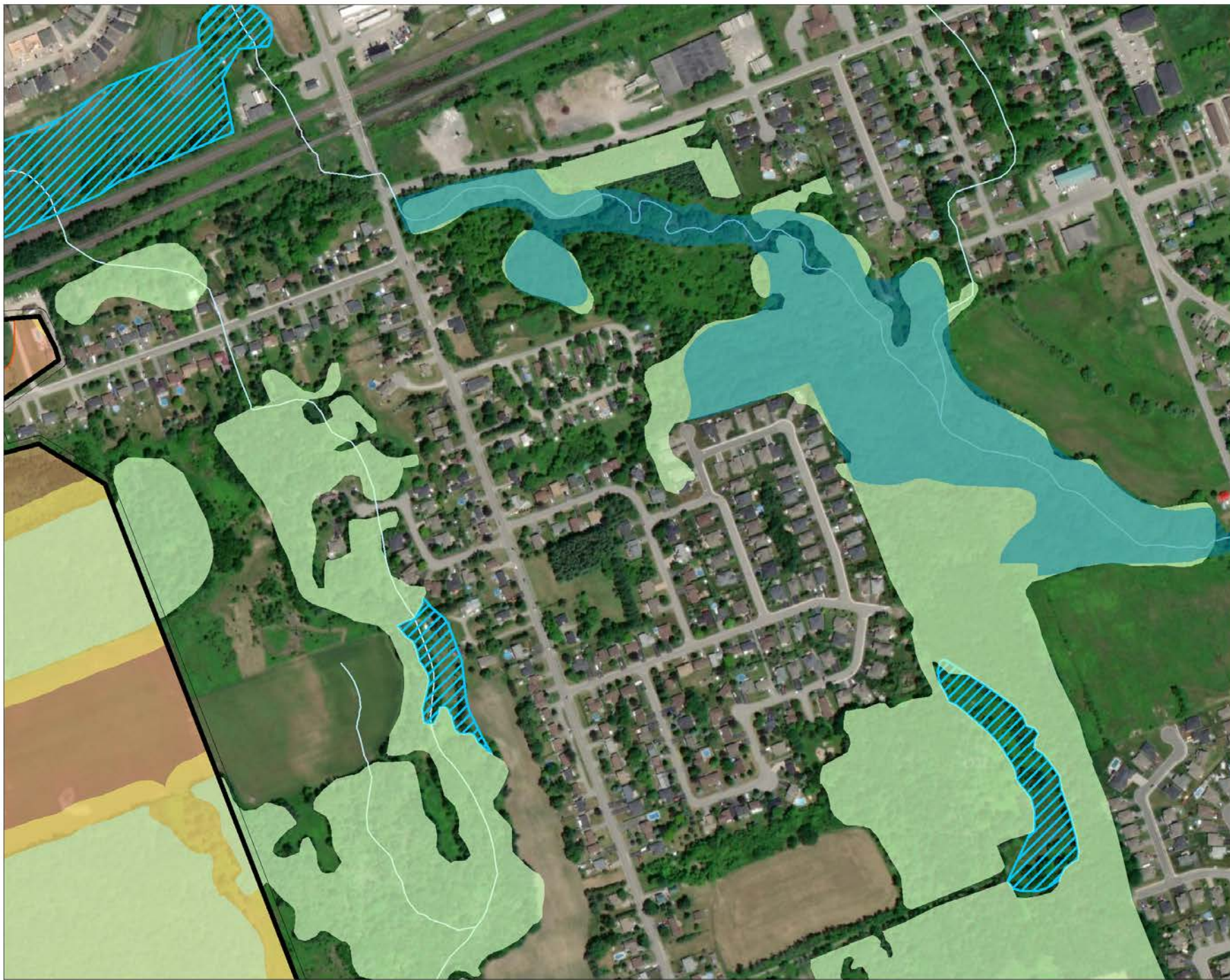
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Conceptual Natural
Heritage System
Settlement Area
Option 3B

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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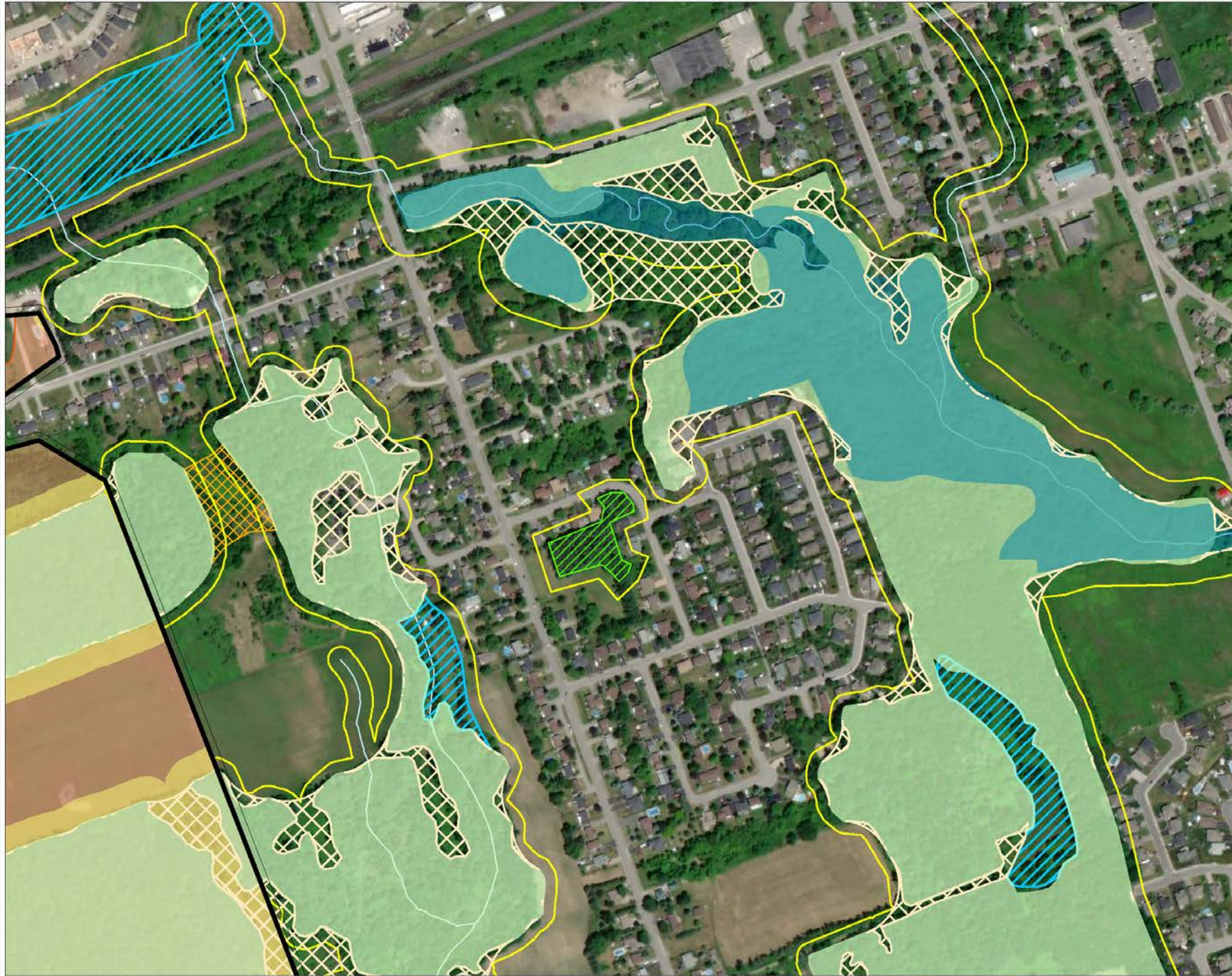
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SUSTAINABLE REGION NATURAL ENVIRONMENT





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)
 - Mandatory (non-prescribed) Buffers
- Linkages**
 - Small Linkage (100m)
 - 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)
- Small Linkage (100m)
- Minimum (prescribed) 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



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

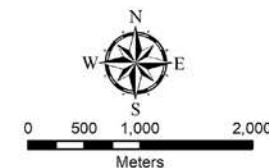
Key Hydrologic Features

- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

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

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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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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 NHSs, 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 polices? 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
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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.

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

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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 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

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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 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.