

Appendix D: Virtual Public Information Centres

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



ADD YOUR VOICE TO NIAGARA'S OFFICIAL PLAN

NIAGARA IS GROWING!

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

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

YOU'RE INVITED

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

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

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

STAY INFORMED

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

VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRES

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

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

Topic: Natural Environment -
Natural Heritage System

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

Topic: Natural Environment -
Water Resource System

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Topic: Infrastructure, Water and Wastewater,
Stormwater, Transportation



making our mark

NIAGARA
OFFICIAL PLAN

Virtual Public Information Centre Wednesday, September 23, 2020

Natural Environment - Natural Heritage System

makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Planning Hierarchy in Ontario

PLANNING MANDATE FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN NIAGARA

ONTARIO HOUSING SUPPLY ACTION PLAN



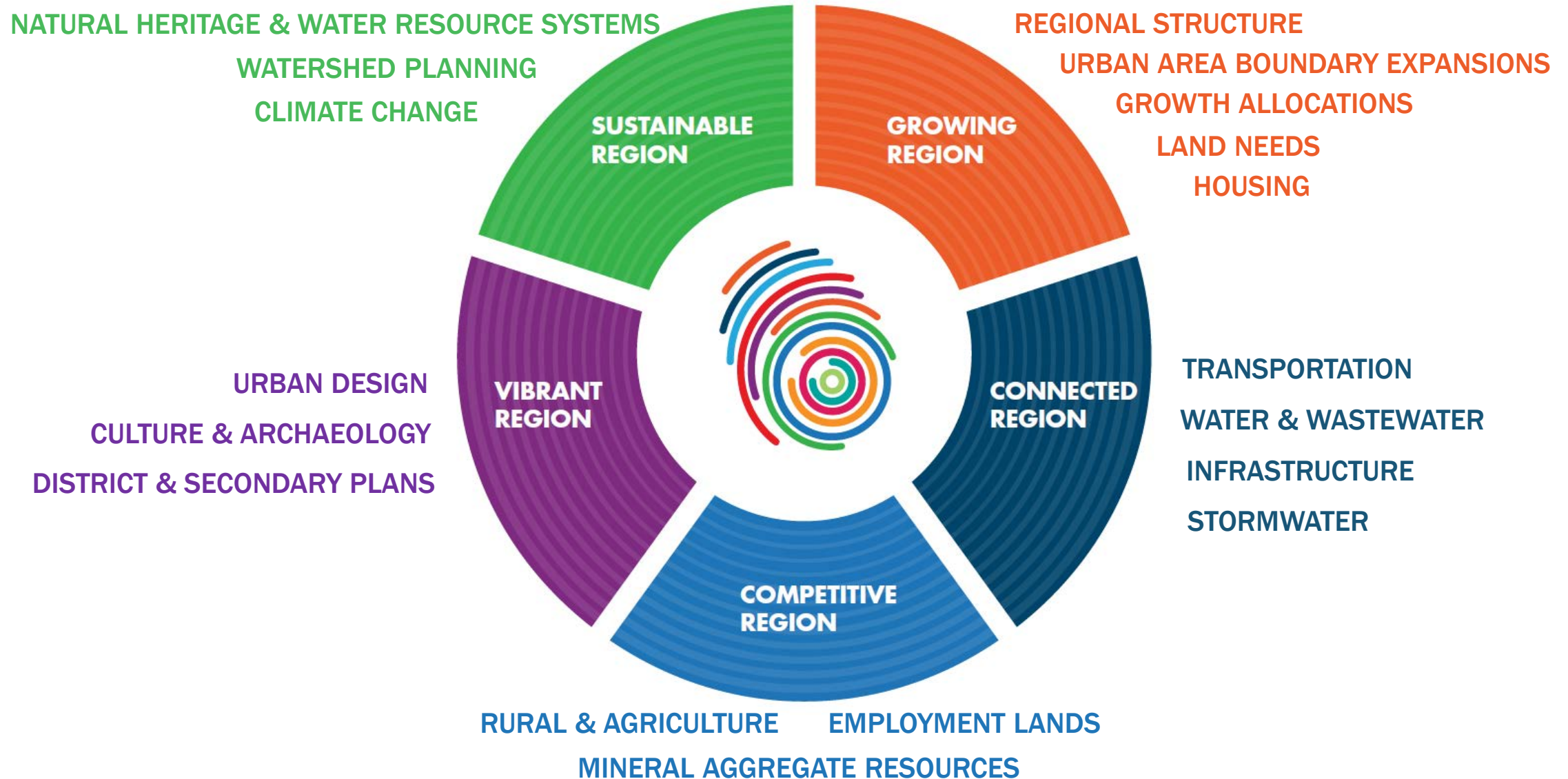
PROVINCE-WIDE POLICIES

AREA SPECIFIC POLICY PLANS

NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN



Niagara Official Plan



Natural Environment – Natural Heritage System



makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



Project Overview – Natural Environment

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



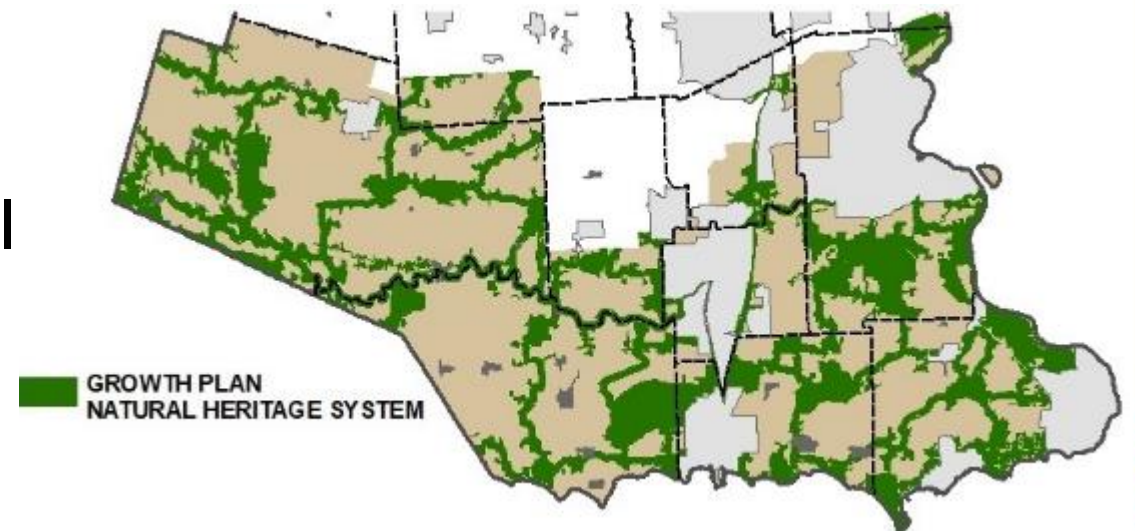
Overview of Phase 4

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



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

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



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System



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



Policy Direction – Natural Heritage System and Agricultural System

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



Developing Options for the Natural Environment System

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



Planning Direction – Natural Heritage System Components

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



Natural Heritage System Options

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



Components of Natural Heritage System

- **Key Natural Heritage Features and Areas**

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

- **Other Key Natural Features and Areas**

- Non-PSW

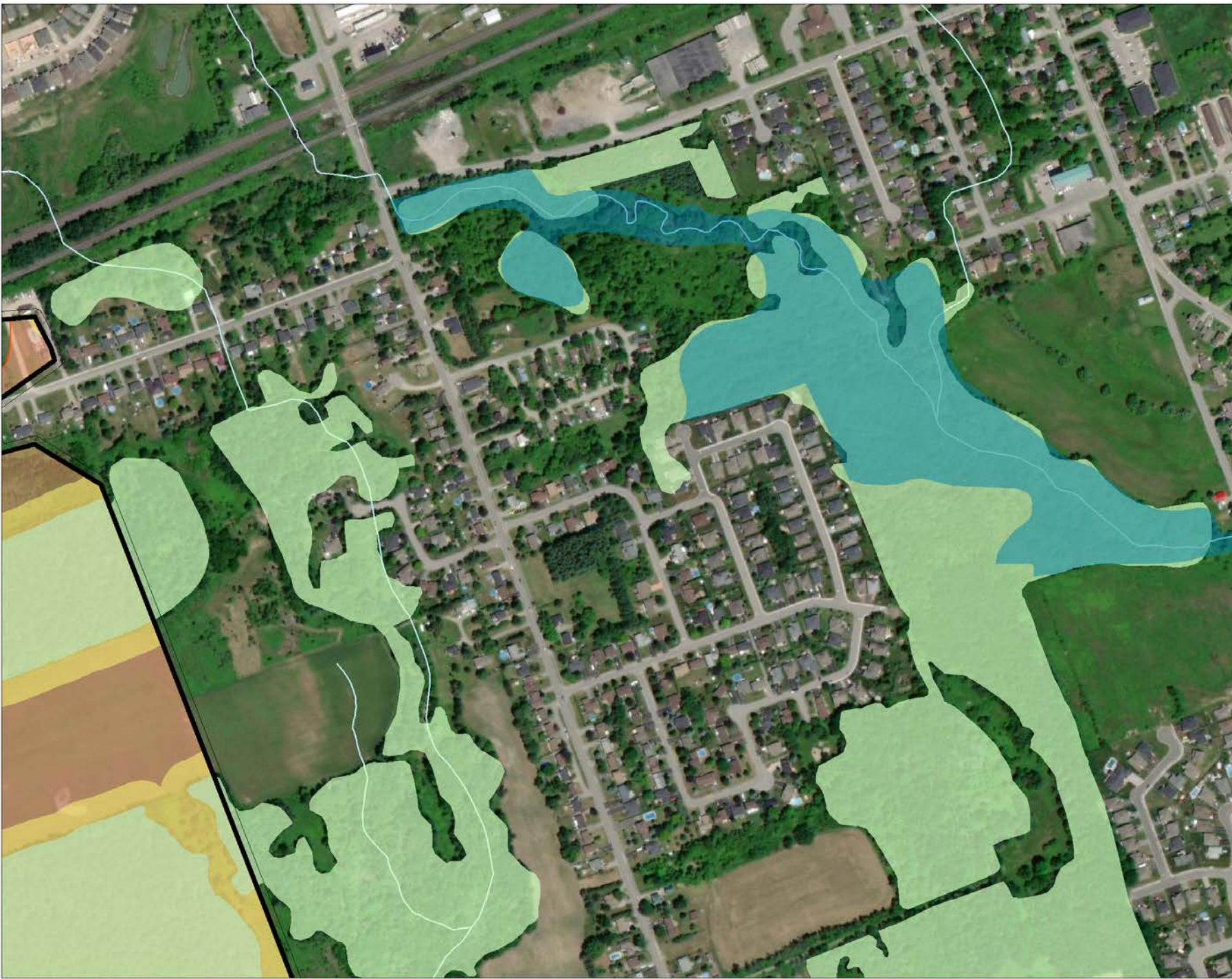
- **Supporting Features and Areas**

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

- **Linkages**

- **Buffers/Vegetation Protection Zones**





Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

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

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



| | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------|
| Project Number 20-1149 | Date: 2020-09-09 | N ▲ |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--------|

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



Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

Legend

Required Components

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

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0 100 200 300 400 500 Meters

Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



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



| | N.H.S. 3A | N.H.S. 3B | N.H.S. 3C |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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

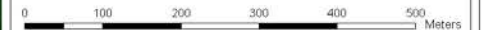
Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

Linkages

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

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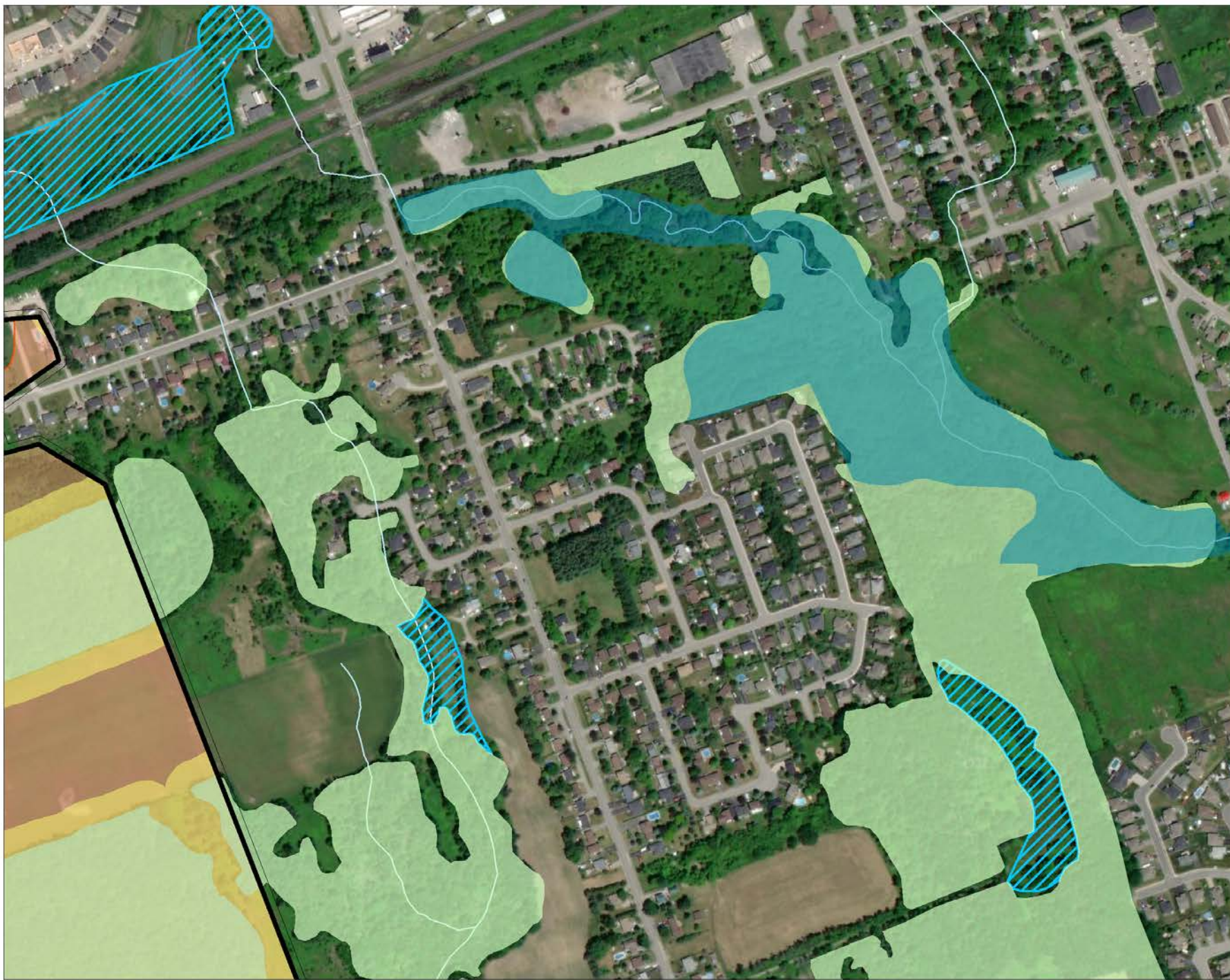


Project Number
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

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

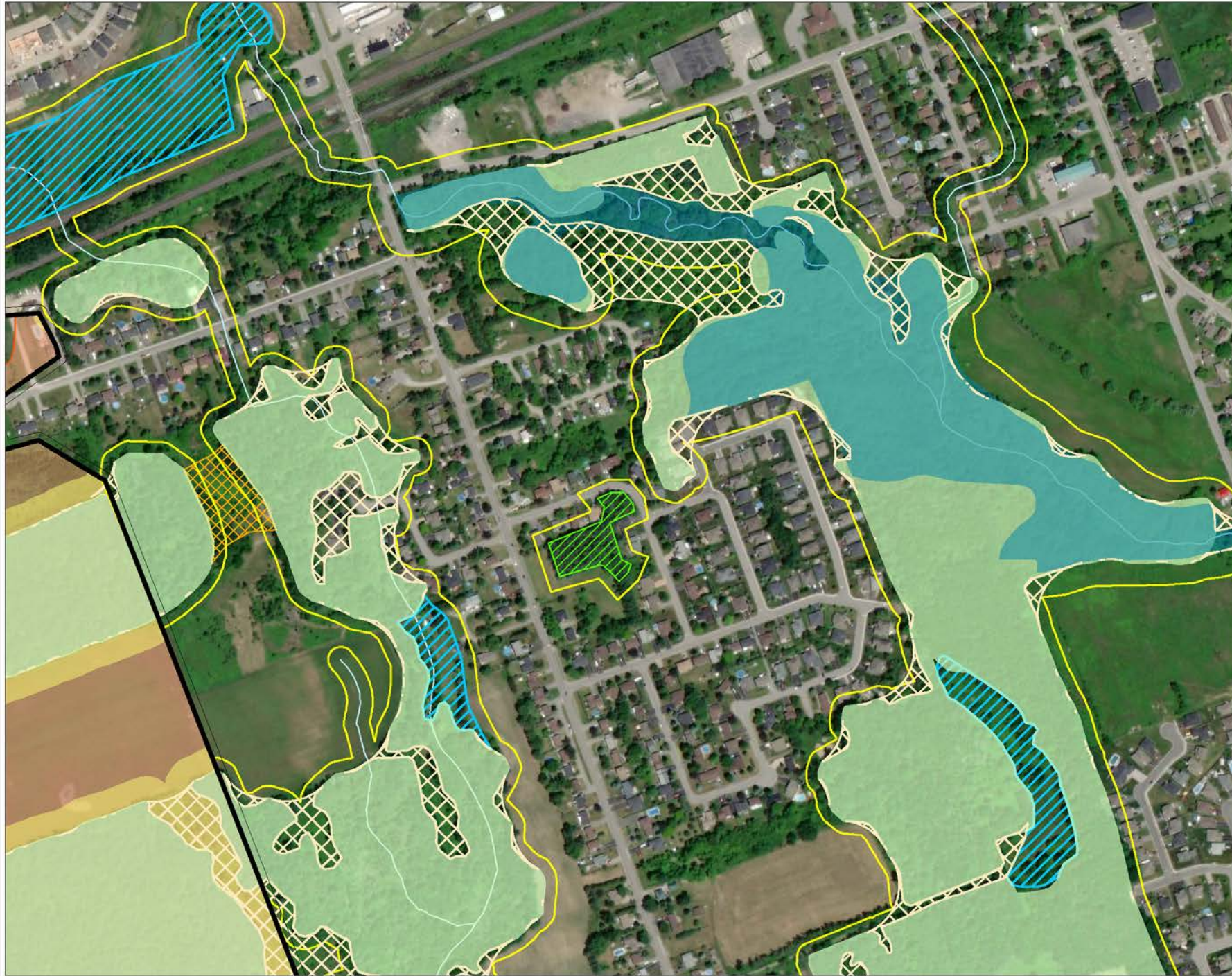
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Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3C

- 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.



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

Legend

Required Components

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

Optional Components

Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

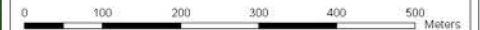
Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

Linkages

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

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



Project Number
20-1149

Date:
2020-09-09



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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 polices 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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NIAGARA
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Virtual Public Information Centre

Thursday, September 24, 2020

Natural Environment - Water Resource System & Niagara Watershed Plan

makingourmark@niagararegion.ca



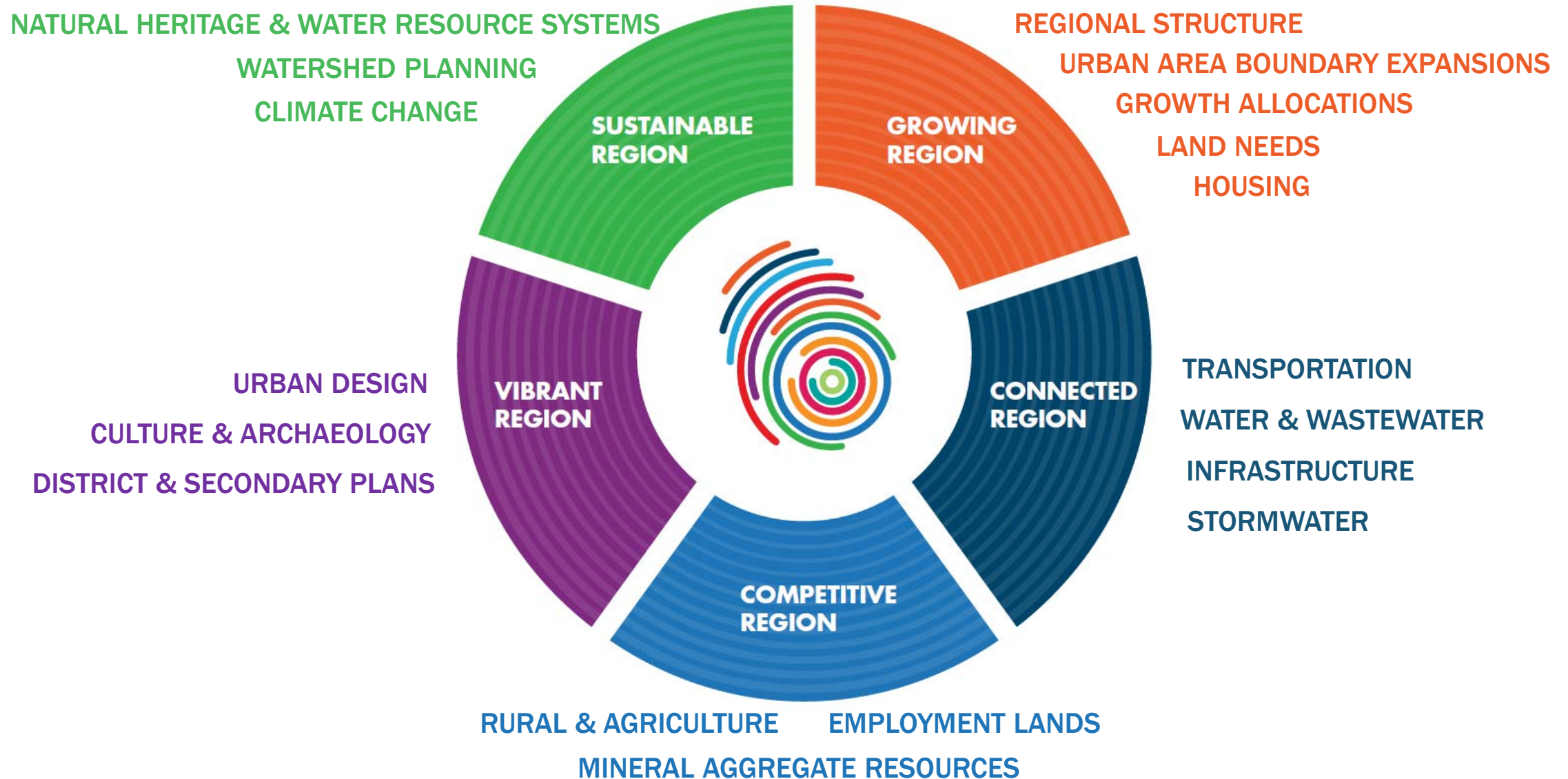
Planning Hierarchy in Ontario

PLANNING MANDATE FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN NIAGARA

ONTARIO HOUSING SUPPLY ACTION PLAN



Niagara Official Plan



Part I

Natural Environment - Water Resource System



Project Overview – Natural Environment

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



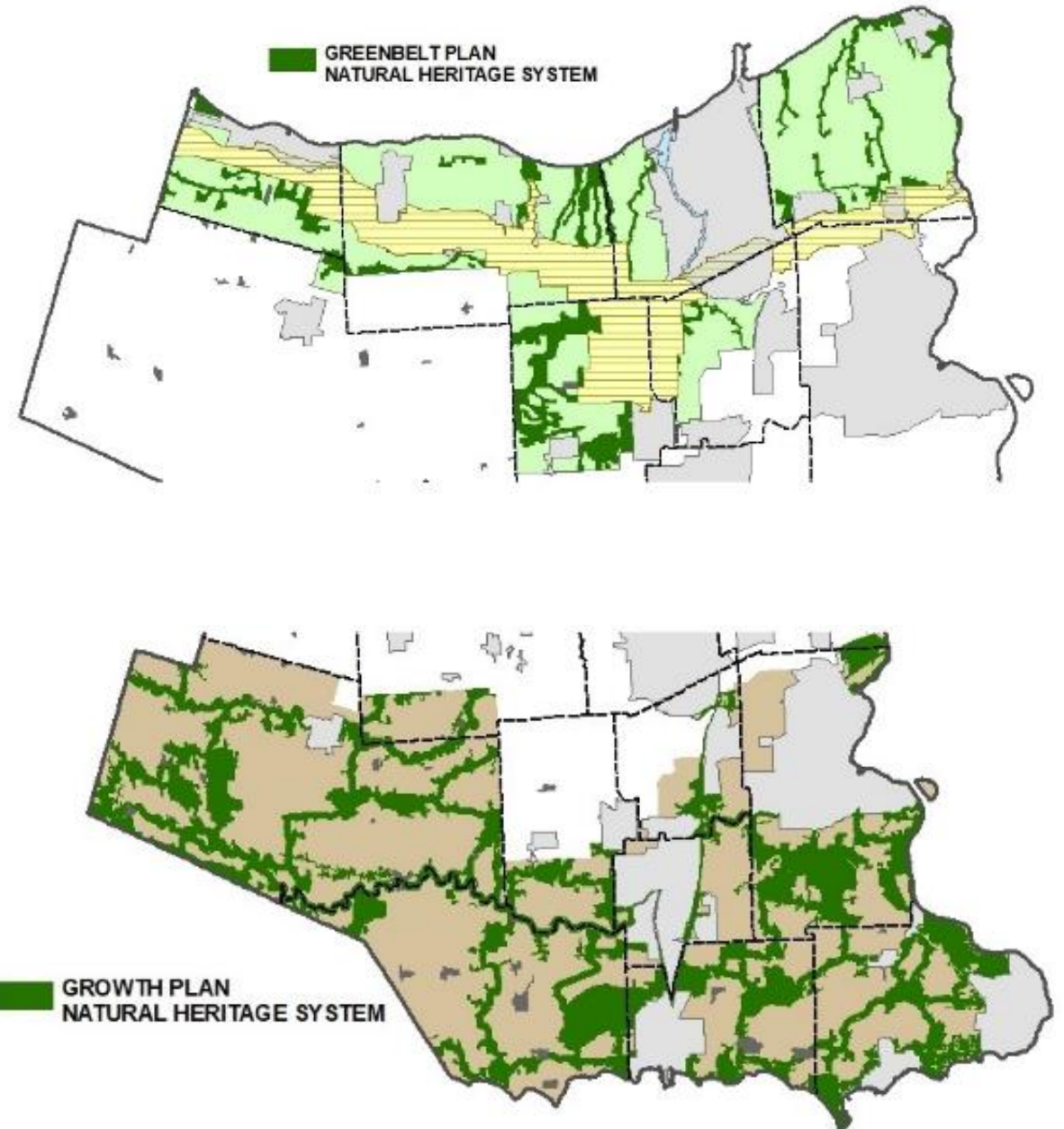
Overview of Phase 4

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



Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

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



Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

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

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



What is a Water Resource System?

- “A system consisting of ground water features and areas and surface water features (including shoreline areas), and hydrologic functions, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption. The water resource system **will** comprise **key hydrologic features** and **key hydrologic areas**”. (Growth Plan 2019)



Components of a Water Resource System

- Key Hydrologic Features (required)
 - Provincially Significant Wetlands and other wetlands
 - Permanent and intermittent streams
 - Inland lakes and their littoral zones
 - Seepage areas and springs
- Key Hydrologic Areas (required)
 - Significant ground water recharge areas
 - Highly vulnerable aquifers
 - Significant surface water contribution areas
- Hydrologic Functions
- Groundwater features
 - Recharge/discharge areas
 - Ecologically Significant Groundwater Recharge Areas
 - Water tables
 - Aquifers and unsaturated zones
- Surface Water Features
 - Headwaters
 - Recharge/discharge areas
 - Associated riparian lands
- Shoreline Areas
- Vegetation Protection Zone



Development of WRS Options

- Range of considerations were reflected in the development of options including:
 - Impacts on agricultural community and rural development
 - Provincial requirements to accommodate growth and plan for complete communities in settlement areas
 - Best practices and recent issues and trends in natural environment planning including climate change
 - The range of input received through the 1st point of engagement
 - The range of local needs and priorities across Niagara
- All of the options identified:
 - Conform with provincial requirements
 - Represents a new comprehensive system in the Region



Water Resource System Options




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








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

Legend

Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

Key Hydrologic Areas

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



Conceptual figure for
discussion purposes only



0 500 1,000 2,000
Meters

north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



June 11, 2020



Your Feedback is Requested



Implications for Water Resource System Planning

- Flexibility will be required in policy
- More fully developed definitions and criteria will be required
- Water Resource System components and policy to be informed by 'Niagara Watershed Plan' Equivalent project
- Guidelines to support the appropriate identification and/or refinement of W.R.S. component features will be required (i.e. similar to EIS guidelines)



Next Steps - WRS



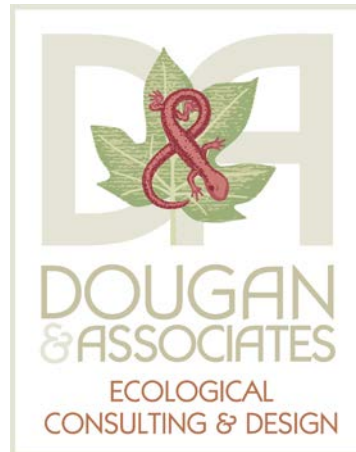
1. Receive feedback through 2nd point of engagement with public, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups
2. Analyze the input received to recommend the final preferred options
3. Seek Regional council endorsement of final preferred options
4. Refine W.R.S. based on input from the Niagara Watershed Plan equivalent project to provide input to the detailed design of the preferred option and policy recommendations for the OP



Part II

Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent Project

wood.



north-south
ENVIRONMENTAL



Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: What is it and why is it important?

- Purpose is to inform the new Niagara Official Plan in accordance with Provincial direction including the identification of a water resource system and decision on the allocation of growth
- Provides a framework for future watershed planning in the Region, that will:
 - Protect water resources
 - Manage human activities, land, water, aquatic life, and resources
 - Assess cumulative, cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts

What is an Equivalent Watershed Plan (WP)?

The Province allows for the development of an Equivalent WP informed by existing desktop material (i.e., no new fieldwork or modelling) to support official plans.



Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: What is it and why is it important?

- Focuses on priority areas of known concern related to:
 - Heightened development or resource pressure
 - Management needs for water quality and quantity
- Informed by review and evaluation of existing work on:
 - Natural Heritage System
 - Water Resource System
 - Natural Hazards
- Provides guidance on issues identified by Niagara community

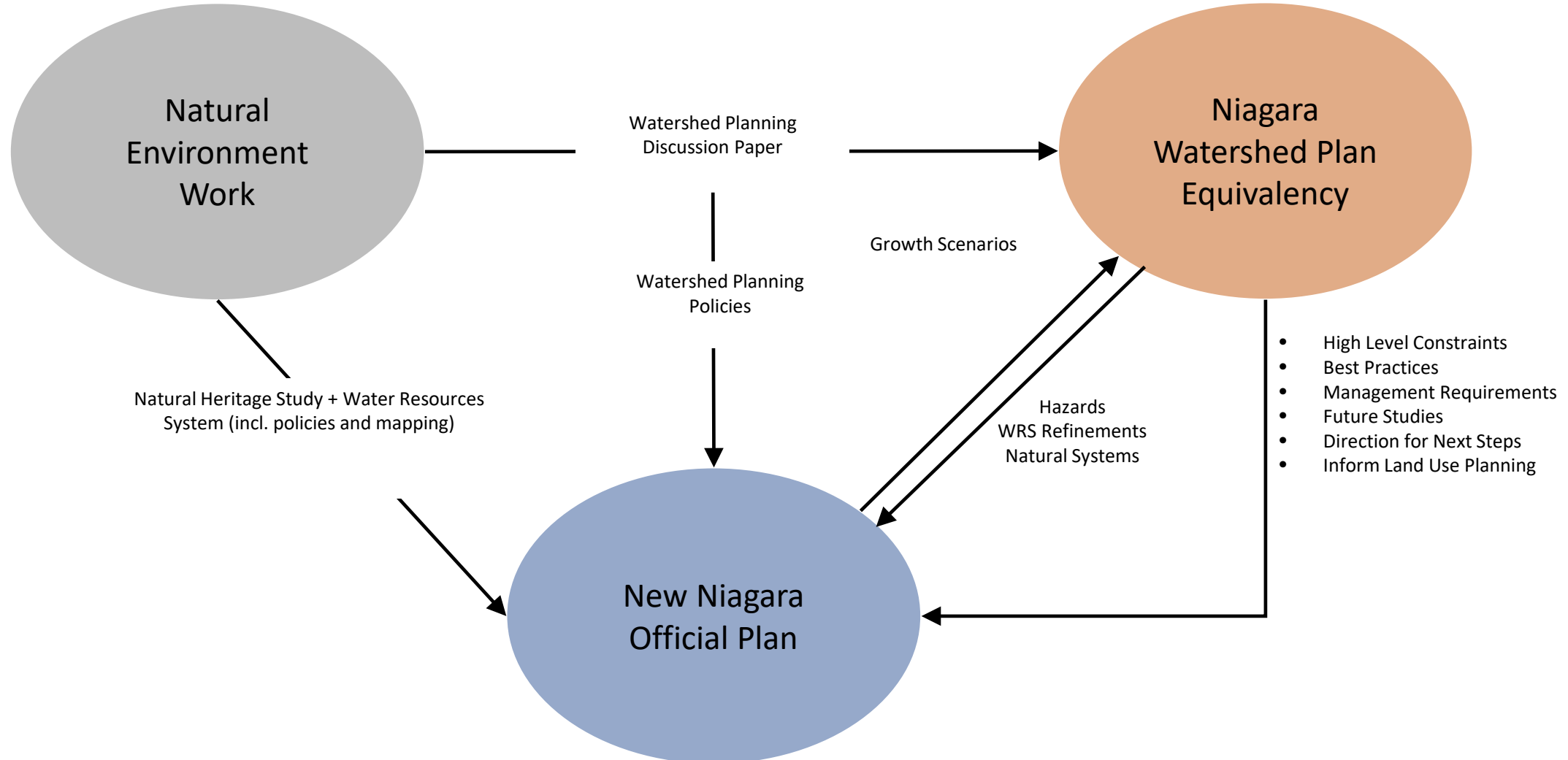


Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: Key Activities

1. Confirm Study Boundaries and Establish Priorities
2. Develop Watershed Planning - Goals and Objectives
3. Characterize Existing Conditions (Desktop)
4. Integrate Natural Heritage System (N.H.S.) and inform the Water Resource System (W.R.S.)
5. Define Watershed Elements and Best Practices & Provide Guidance for Future more Detailed and Local Studies



Niagara Watershed Plan Equivalent: Role



Niagara Region Watersheds

Watersheds are areas of land that drain rainfall runoff and snowmelt into waterways toward a single, common outlet.

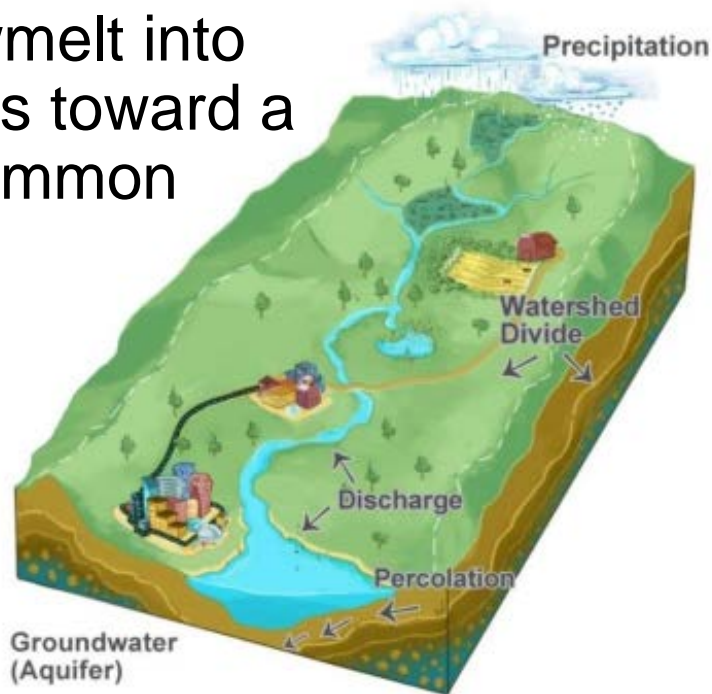
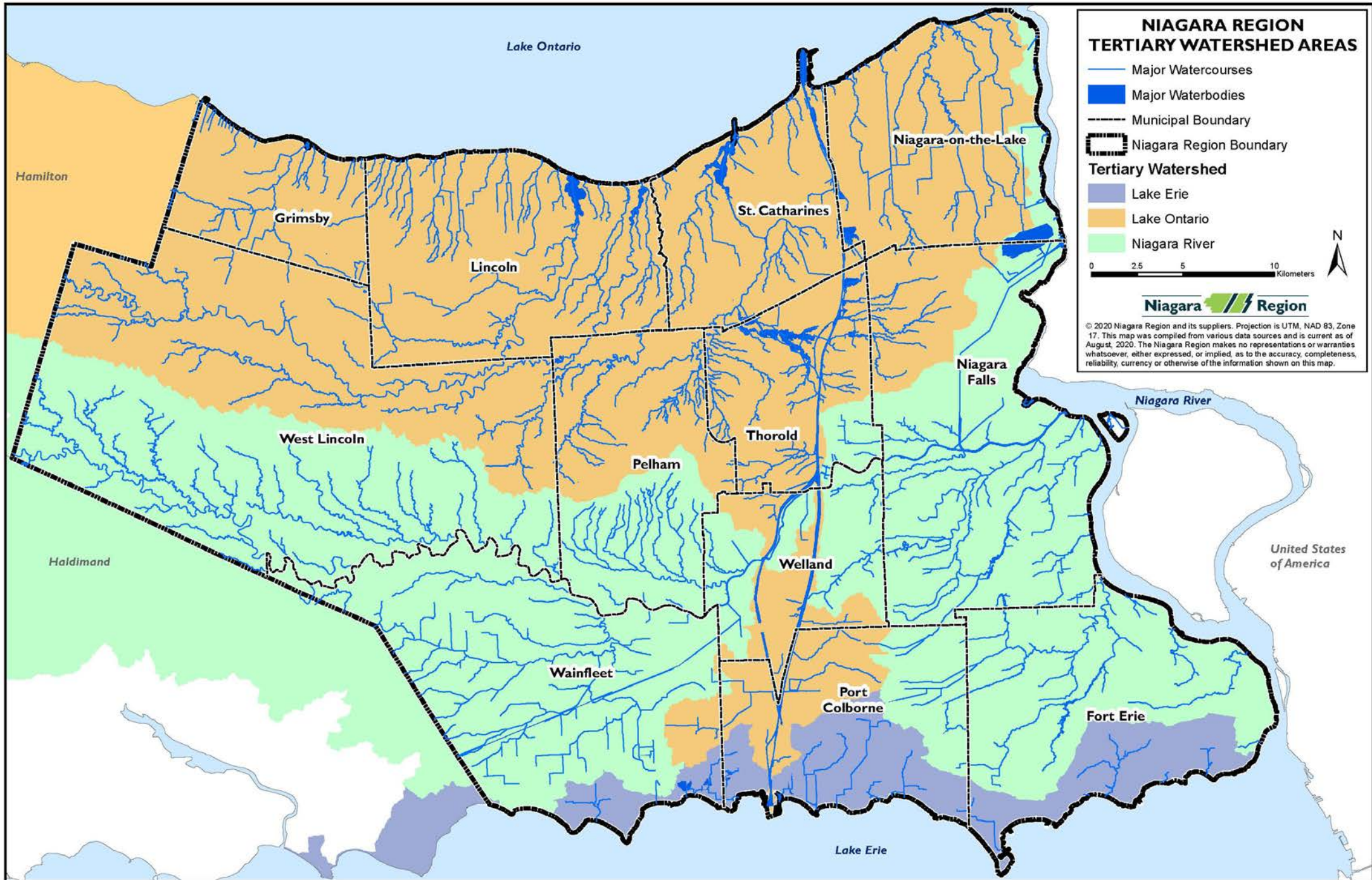


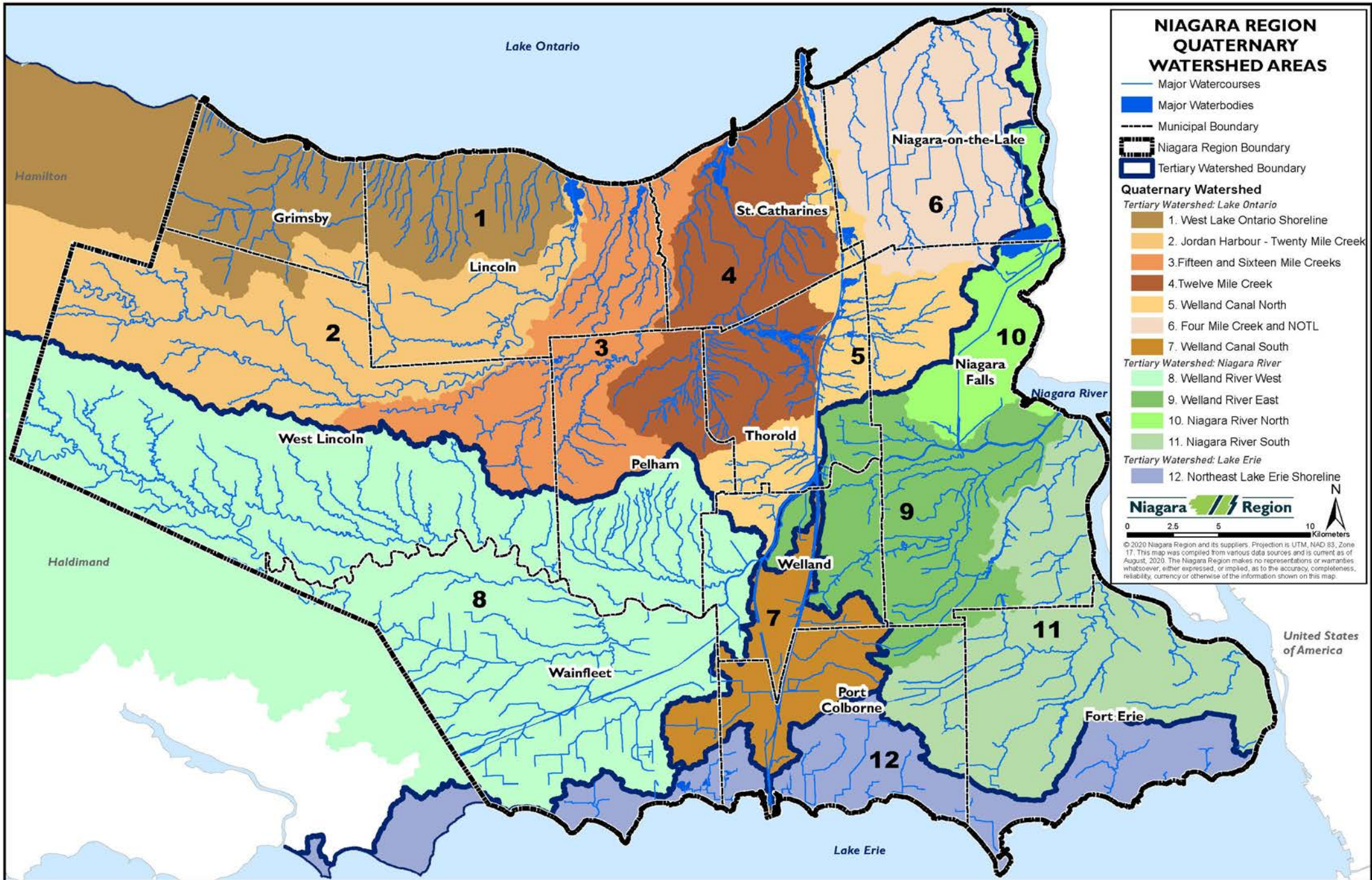
Figure 1 - A simple watershed with the boundary determined at the watershed divide



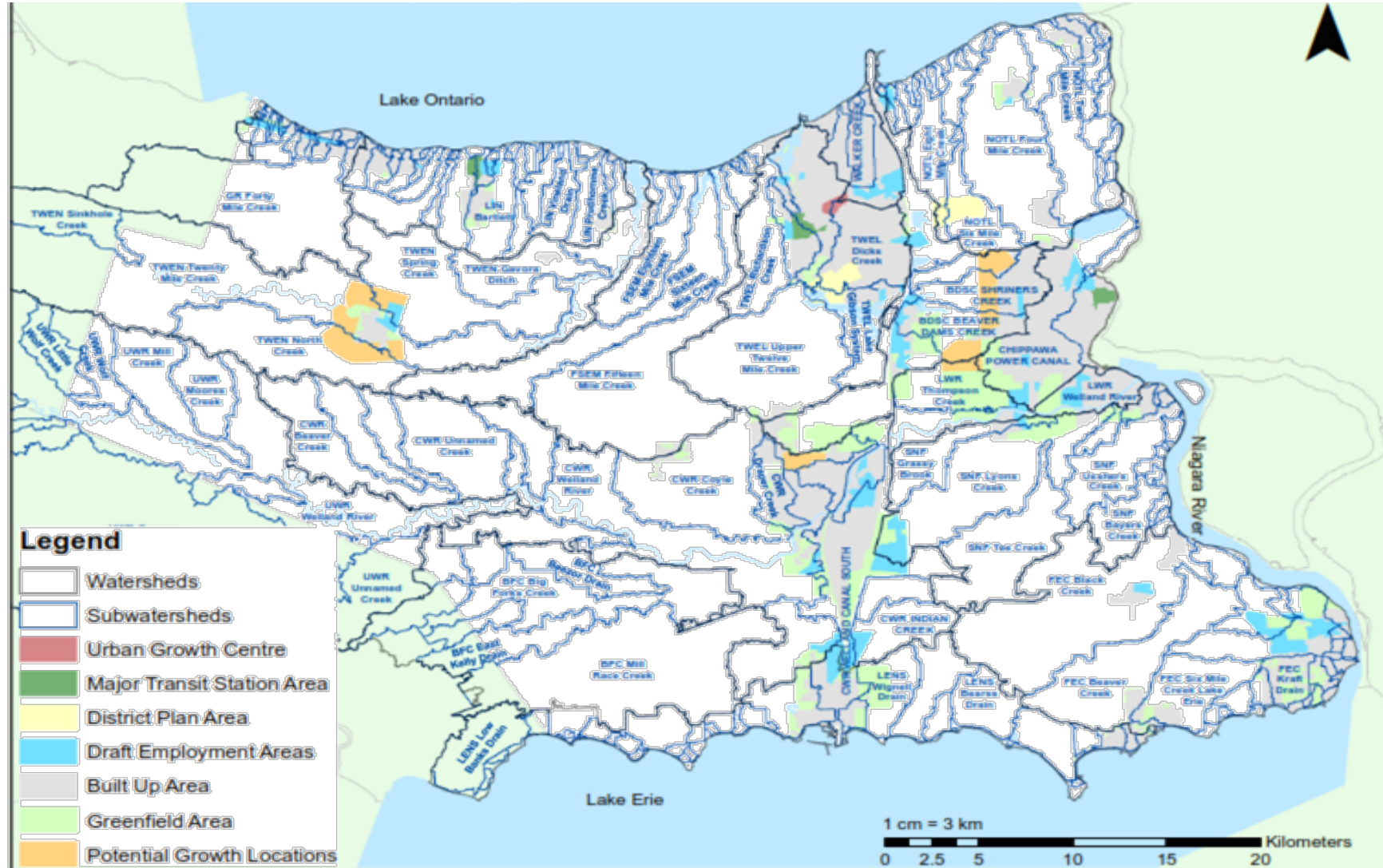
Watersheds in Ontario are categorized as primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. Niagara Region is responsible for watershed planning at the tertiary and quaternary level. The Region will work with local area municipalities (LAMs) to complete subwatershed planning to support growth through Secondary Plans or similar planning exercises.







Niagara Region Watersheds - Subwatersheds



Map prepared by: ANKIT JOSHI,
Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions



Goals & Objectives

1

Establish and Maintain Contemporary and Accurate Understanding/Mapping of the Watershed

- Define and map the Water Resource System
- Identify watershed and subwatershed boundaries
- Describe existing conditions
- Map key natural and developed water features



Goals & Objectives

2

Protect Water Quality and Water Quantity

- Develop a water budget
- Identify best practices for water conservation and quality management



Goals & Objectives

3

Adaptively Manage and Monitor the Watershed

- Identify existing monitoring programs and gaps
- Develop holistic monitoring framework
- Define guidelines and terms of reference for future monitoring for subwatershed studies
- Recommend approach to filling data gaps and prioritization of future studies



Goals & Objectives

4

Protect and Enhance Interactions between the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System

- Define/acknowledge the Natural Heritage System (existing conditions; gaps and deficiencies)
- Define interactions between the systems
- Identify restoration and protection targets
- Identify best practices for invasive species, buffers and management of specific land use water features and practices



Goals & Objectives

5

Ensure Land Use Planning is Informed by Watershed Planning

- Review growth scenarios and assess for potential change in relation to Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System
- Identify best practices that support protection, restoration and enhancement of water resources
- Recommend approach to filling gaps and prioritization of future work



Goals & Objectives

6

Create Resilient Communities to Protect Human Health and Safety, and the Natural Environment

- Review and incorporate natural hazard mapping
- Identify and consider potential impacts related to climate change
- Identify flood vulnerable areas
- Identify best practices and provide recommendations regarding environmental indicators and thresholds for cumulative impact assessments



Goals & Objectives

7

Engage the community to ensure the Watershed Plan Equivalent reflects community-identified priorities & local conditions

- Consider input received from the community through previous and current engagement
- Engage with Indigenous communities to identify interests and knowledge
- Define future outreach and engagement opportunities



Key Activities & Next Steps

1. Confirm Study Boundaries and Establish Priorities - **complete**
2. Develop Watershed Planning - Goals and Objectives – **draft: seeking feedback**
3. Characterize Existing Conditions (Desktop) - **ongoing**
4. Integrate Natural Heritage System and Inform Water Resource System
5. Define Watershed Elements and Best practices & Provide Guidance for Future more Detailed and Local Studies



Questions and Feedback - NWP:

1. Are there Goals and Objectives which you do not support?
2. Are there Goals and Objectives that you would like to see added or changed?
3. Are you aware of specific issues or opportunities which you would like to see considered as part of the current or future watershed planning efforts?
4. Do you have resource information about Niagara's watersheds which you think would be beneficial to this process?





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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

**Comments and Unanswered Questions Matrix
Virtual Public Information Centre – Natural Heritage System
Options September 23, 2020 6:00 - 8:00pm**



Question and Response Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents all input received in comment form and the unanswered questions from the September 23, 2020 Virtual Public Information Centre. The project team response is included. For a record of all questions that were asked and answered - a recording of the PIC is available on the website for the new Official Plan. <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>

| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Dave Nicholson | Sometimes an area used for recreation and/or active transport may not include key natural heritage features and so not acquire planning protection. I would suggest that such areas should be added to the list | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |
| Cindy Niceforo | Given that the provincial standards are inadequate and constantly are being loosened in a time when the concerns and need for environmental action are increasing, how could any option other than 3c be a serious consideration? I see with my own eyes in Thorold the massive development taking place. For example, there is a proposal to develop 77.9 hectare parcel of land on the northside of Chippawa Parkway. I see development taking place on Beverdams road which is in the middle of wetlands. When do we get to hear the take of the indigenous community. Our canopy is only 17.5%. We need to do better and that must take priority over development especially in green field spaces. | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |
| Derek Jones | I believe there is an oversight in not recognizing the Province's Growth plan | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |



| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| | <p>is significantly flawed. It's a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to recognize regional geography, and limitations. Niagara Region is a perfect example that crystallizes the Province's Growth plan's deficiencies. Geographically, we are an island, surrounded on three sides by Water, which constricts, and conflicts with our ability to grow responsibly, as it pertains to rapid real estate growth, and population growth. This puts enormous pressure on local Environment features, and is currently being realized in Niagara.</p> <p>How do you mitigate Municipalities with independent agendas? Who have no climate plan, and who are willing to work to overrule PPS and best practices?</p> <p>I appreciate the amount of time and effort that has gone into this. But why are these the only options presented? From the perspective of Environmental Conservation during a Climate Crisis, and with all due respect, none of these options are optimal or acceptable. I humbly request that staff go back to the drawing board and present a plan that more effectively addresses the urgency, and imminent impact of climate change. I cannot stress enough, that first and foremost, this needs to be visualized</p> | |



| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| | <p>through the lens of climate change with applicable sense of urgency. This must be the top priority to preserve what we all love about Niagara. We cannot blunder our way through this, as recent Developer Violations at Thundering Waters clearly demonstrate. The options currently being presented and recommended by staff are not the best options for the Environment. And the most protective options offered, are at best a weak compromise, if our Natural Heritage is to be properly protected for future generations.</p> | |
| John Bacher | <p>Not just regarding fish habitat there is a lot of problem with lands which could be corrected through Significant Wildlife Habitat designations. Mapping of these lands right now is largely limited to deer wintering areas. It seems that a lot of work has to be done.</p> | <p>Comment received. Thank you for your input.</p> |
| William Rapley | <p>the city of Toronto has a very good approach and it posted on the website. Hamilton is working on a Biodiversity plan. can this approach be</p> | <p>Comment received. Thank you for your input.</p> |
| John Bacher | <p>regarding forest cover the NPCA did a study which should a large area in agriculturally zoned lands which is actually reverting to forests naturally. I don't know what the actual percentage of the landscape this is. From looking at these maps it seems quite substantial. If this area was known the goal of 30 per cent might seem more realistic. These</p> | <p>Comment received. Thank you for your input.</p> |



| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| | lands will likely become mature forests eventually if the agricultural designations are maintained and the land is not urbanized. | |
| Dorothy Bothwell | Bill 68 requires municipalities to demonstrate how they will maintain, protect and enhance the tree canopy and natural vegetation in the municipality. The option that best meets this (3C) should be strongly considered by the Region. | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |
| Dorothy Bothwell | Please ensure that all questions and answers, and those that cannot be answered within the time allotted, are answered and posted on the Region's website with the PIC background documents for full transparency. | This document is a record of all the question that were not answered as well as the project team's response. This document is also a record of all input that was made in comment form. The entire PIC was recorded and will be made available on the website for the new Niagara Official Plan. All of the PIC slides will be posted on the Official Plan website. All of the background studies, staff reports, and previous presentations are also available on the website. https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/ |
| John Bacher | Regarding Peer review the current system on relying on provincial agencies has recently been weakened by the reduction in the commenting role of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. (MNRF) Also two letters by MNRF which were critical of environmental work by developer proponents in the case of Thundering Waters were never released to council or the public. I also received them with the help of the now disbanded Local Planning Review Support Center. This pattern would seem to show that a stronger provision in the regional plan | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |



| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| | needs to be added regarding peer review. | |
| John Bacher | Regarding claims that protection of natural areas would create pressures to expand urban boundaries most of these lands are already protected to some degree and excluded from development potential. The exclusion of lands as enhancement areas would likely be limited in scale. The urban boundaries are quite large, especially because of the expansion in Fort Erie just south of Niagara Falls (Douglas Town) which came out of a judicial battle and has yet it seems to be recognized in urban boundary capacity. | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |
| John Bacher | Paradise Grove is a good example of a savannah habitat. These need to be recognized and protected in the official plan review. Right now protected ECA lands are all forests. | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |
| Robert Carson | How will cumulative effects be considered as proposals are assessed over time? | Currently, the Region's Environmental Impact Study (EIS) Guidelines require cumulative environmental impacts be assessed as part of an EIS being completed in support of a proposed development. These studies generally consider impacts, including cumulative impacts at a large scale (or within an adjacent to the site). We will be making recommendations that the Region and agency partners monitor the state of the Natural Heritage System to ensure the NHS is achieving its intended purpose, which includes assessing cumulative impacts (both positive and negative) over time. |
| | In the Technical report, under the evaluation criteria Ensure protection of the natural environment system, | The natural environment work program is a land use planning exercise. There is a need to evaluate the options from a range of perspectives. In addition to protecting the NHS and identifying a |



| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| | <p>you state that Option 3C best ensures the protection of a region-wide N.H.S, including within settlement areas. If there is an option that ensures the best protection and provides a resilient and I would add healthy and sustainable natural environment why shouldn't we pursue that option (i.e Option 3c)?</p> | <p>Region-wide system, there is a need to accommodate growth in the region and protect the agricultural system. We are given growth targets from the Province that the Region must allocate as part of the Official Plan. If we are not able to allocate the growth within our existing urban boundaries, we may have urban boundary expansions that were not anticipated. This would have impacts on the natural environment and agricultural land base in the Region. So while Option 3C results in the largest area identified as part of the NHS, it reduces opportunities to direct growth to urban areas and increases potential for urban area expansion, which we want to avoid.</p> |
| Ken Kawall | <p>In section 5.0 (page 53) of the technical report you identify preliminary preferred options based on the criteria noted on the prior pages. I assume the coloured circles are your recommendation for each specific evaluation criteria. Option 3C has 3 green circles and option 3B only has 2 and ¾, so can you help us understand the rationale for recommending Option 3B as a preliminary preferred option?</p> | <p>The circles do not represent weighting or scoring, the circles should not be translated into a scoring evaluation. The evaluation of options itself was a relative qualitative comparison of how each option achieves the criteria. The evaluation is not a scoring, weighting or quantitative analysis of each option; it is largely a value-based exercise, informed by a the review of best practices, consideration of feedback received from the 1st Point of Engagement, and professional opinion, that is intended to identify the option(s) which best fulfill the criteria, and ultimately satisfy the desire of the Region, stakeholders, and the public to provide policies and mapping that will achieve the goals and objectives for the natural environment system.</p> |
| Kostyn Petrunick | <p>Reagarding Discussion Question #2: Why are we provided with two non-option options (1 and 2), two bare minimum options (3a and 3b) and only one substantial option (3C)? Why are there not more options that do more than the bare minimum?</p> | <p>NHS Option 1 & 2 were developed based on the minimum provincial standards in accordance with the Provincial Policy Statement and Provincial Plans – they represent real options that confirm with Provincial requirements. NHS Options 3A, 3B, & 3C present 3 scenarios that exceed minimum standards. The intent of providing a range of options was to allow for feedback on those options and ultimately determine which option best fits with the Region's (including the public and other stakeholders) desire to identify a NHS.</p> |



| Received From: | Unanswered Question/Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| Ashley Pollock | How do I get on this committee (committees)? You seem to not have a member-of-the-public (or members). Despite the importance of experts, the public probably needs to be involved here - not just at public meetings like today. | The Committee that was referenced during the presentation and the Q & A session was the Region's Planning and Economic Development Committee. This is a Committee of Regional Councillors, and is not open to the public. A public committee was formed for the new Official Plan project called the 'Planning Advisory Committee'. The application process was in 2018. |
| Marcie Jacklin | Great discussion. Thank you. | Thank you for participating. |
| Ashley Pollock | Thank you - a good & informative meeting. | Thank you for participating. |
| Marcie Jacklin | Where can we find the provincial NHS mapping? | Provincial NHS mapping is available from the following website: https://www.ontario.ca/page/make-natural-heritage-area-map |





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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WORK PROGRAM FOR THE NIAGARA OFFICIAL PLAN

Comment Matrix

**Virtual Public Information Centre – WRS Options and Watershed Planning
September 24, 2020 6:00 - 8:00pm**



Comment Matrix

The following is a matrix which documents all comments received at the September 24, 2020 Virtual Public Information Centre. The project team response is included. For a record of all questions that were asked and answered live a recording of the PIC is available on the website for the new Official Plan. <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/>

| Received From: | Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| Ashley Pollock | Comment - not question: Ontario government has a watershed flow assessment tool - https://www.ontario.ca/page/watershed-flow-assessment-tool as does Brock University as does Ministry Northern Development and Mines, Ontario Geological Survey | Thank you for the comment! As part of our background review we are considering all sources of data, including some of the Provincial data and tools you have mentioned. |
| Ashley Pollock | Sidestepping drinking water, wastewater management, etc & their infrastructure ... How good are our water resources in Niagara region? Will the following be considered? - as in recreation - fishing, swimming, shorelines/beaches, etc - as in flood control, water table - as in utilization by agriculture, industry, the Welland Canal, and urban developers - as in utilization by the indigenous population (hunting, fishing rights) - as in "how many exceptions?" - particularly ones that aren't efficient or safe or climate-friendly and so on. | Thanks for your input. If you have any further comments about the goals and objectives after the presentation. Please let us know. |



| Received From: | Comment: | Project Team Response: |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>It seems we haven't had a good report card score for a long time - we're pretty polluted. Really like the Goals & Objectives.</p> | |
| Robert Carson | <p>Reference material suggests that 2B is the better choice for water resources system for region-wide features because it includes settlement areas. It is essential to choose the best Option 2B which includes linkages in the settlement areas, appropriate for a continuous hydraulic/hydrologic WRS 2B provides better protection for small linkages and features in and out of settlement areas as well as buffers.</p> | <p>Comment received. Thank you for your input.</p> |
| John Bacher | <p>I am concerned about the orange coloured areas marked for watershed studies based on future urban expansions. This is the first time I have learned of any urban expansions being considered through this plan review. On a need basis there is no reason for any urban expansions since this is supposed to be calculated on a regional basis. An attempt a few years ago to have an urban expansion in the Smithville area was rejected by the province since the rationale of a separate western need area was rejected by the province as a violation of both the Growth Plan and the PPS.</p> | <p>Thank you for your comment. Please attend our Growth Management webinar on October 7th to learn more about the settlement area boundary review process.</p> |
| Lorie Tokola | <p>We NEED Niagara Region to protect our drinking water. Without CLEAN</p> | <p>Comment received. Thank you for your input.</p> |



| Received From: | Comment: | Project Team Response: |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | drinking water there is no reason for jobs... | |
| John Bacher | The one area that I see an urban expansion concern is the Douglastown area of Fort Erie. This is because this area was essentially imposed by the province through the courts. A watershed plan re urban growth would be a helpful form of damage control. | Thank you for your comment on UAB expansions. As mentioned our Oct. 7th webinar will discuss this process in more detail. |
| Josef van Ruyven | Please suggest possible responsible uses for exhausted aggregate quarries where quarrying has been done into an aquifer. | Aggregate quarries generally operate in accordance with a Provincial licence which provide rehabilitation requirements. |
| John Bacher | I was also shocked to see urban expansion areas proposed for north west Niagara Falls. Urban needs could be served within the urban boundaries in the Chippawa area. This is one of the reasons that the region is going ahead with the new sewage treatment plant here, so that infrastructure capacity problems in south Niagara Falls do not stop growth on lands which are appropriately zoned. | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |
| John Bacher | There was no discussion of strategies to clean up ground water contamination. This is a serious problems. Such situations on lands such as the former General Motors site are a big barrier to needed intensification. Seeing clean up costs as part of a strategy to curb ground water pollution is an important way to get action on this problem | Thank you for the comment on groundwater. We will consider this and note your comments. |



| Received From: | Comment: | Project Team Response: |
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| Ashley Pollock | How polluted are we? | Part of the work of the watershed plan is to characterize existing conditions. That work is still ongoing. |
| Chuck McShane | appreciated you bringing forth my questions , however i never recieved an answer or commitment of when the mapping would be availble. and to blame the provincial government is certainly a kop out!!! | It is our goal to have draft mapping completed in 2021. |
| John Bacher | I witnessed illegal dumping in Niagara Falls. This is known to the city council but nothing seems to be done about it. Could stopping such actions be part of a strategy to protect ground water. | Thank you for the comment and suggestion, we will note this. |
| Jessica Abrahamse | It is excellent that the Region is taking a progressive stance with respect to meeting the policies outlined in the PPS 2017 for the Growth Plan and Greenbelt Plan. Thank you for acknowledging the NPCA and the RAP program as a valuable partner. Karst formations were mentioned an area of potential future study, as a hazard area will the NPCA be involved with this study? Will a copy of the slide presentations be available after the meeting? | A copy of the presentation as well as a recording of the PIC will be posted on the website for the new Official Plan. https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/ |
| John Bacher | There are streams that go through car wreckage yards in Niagara Falls and Fort Eire. Should not these streams be diverted from these areas to avoid future contamination? | Thank you for the comment and suggestion, we will note this. |
| Ashley Pollock | I think that because contamination / pollution seems to be quite a concern, this portion of planning should address | Comment received. Thank you for your input. |



| Received From: | Comment: | Project Response Team: |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| | this issue. Please don't ignore your public. | |



Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Thank you again for registering for our virtual Public Information Centre on September 23 (Natural Heritage System Options)

We now have all of the material from the session posted on the website for the Niagara Official Plan including:

- A recording of the session
- A copy of the presentation
- A table with all of the input submitted in comment form and the answers to questions that we did not get to live

The information can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.niagararegion.ca/official-plan/public-information-centres.aspx>

Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

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

Norman, Sean

Sent:

Cc:

Subject:

Thank you again for registering for our virtual Public Information Centre on September 24 (Water Resource System Options and Watershed Plan)

We now have all of the material from the session posted on the website for the Niagara Official Plan including:

- A recording of the session
- A copy of the presentation
- A table with all of the input submitted in comment form and the answers to questions that we did not get to live

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Regards,

Sean Norman, PMP, MCIP, RPP

Senior Planner

Planning and Development Services, Niagara Region

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