

## **Appendix K: Niagara Parks Commission Staff Consultation**

- The Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program Update - Presentation to Niagara Parks Commission Staff (Thursday, September 24, 2020)
- Niagara Parks – Environmental and Cultural Stewardship [Presentation to Niagara Region Staff] (October 1, 2020)



making our mark

# **NIAGARA**

## OFFICIAL PLAN

# **The Niagara Official Plan & Natural Environment Work Program Update**

**Presentation to Niagara Parks Commission Staff**

**Thursday, September 24, 2020**



# Planning Hierarchy in Ontario

## PLANNING MANDATE FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT IN NIAGARA

### ONTARIO HOUSING SUPPLY ACTION PLAN





# What is an Official Plan?

- The Niagara Official Plan will be a long-range, policy planning document used to guide the physical, economic and social development of Niagara
- It will contain objectives, policies and mapping that form the Region's approach to managing growth and the economy, providing infrastructure and protecting the natural environment, cultural resources and agricultural land



# Framework for the Niagara Official



## **GROWING REGION**

How we manage growth and development, with a range and mix of housing forms, including affordable housing

## **CONNECTED REGION**

How we improve connections with transit, recreation and trails, infrastructure and technology

## **COMPETITIVE REGION**

How we increase our competitiveness by supporting employment opportunities and protecting agricultural lands

## **VIBRANT REGION**

How we enhance the vibrancy of communities by supporting strong urban design and protecting cultural heritage

## **SUSTAINABLE REGION**

How we protect our natural environment and plan for climate change



# Timeline for the Niagara Official Plan





## Virtual Public Information Centres (Zoom Webinars)

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

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Natural Heritage System

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

Topic: Natural Environment -  
Water Resource System

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Topic: Infrastructure, Water  
and Wastewater, Stormwater,  
Transportation

# Niagara Official Plan Consultation

## Also this Fall/Winter:

- Official Plan Online Surveys
- Range of Stakeholder Engagement Sessions (virtual)
- Local Council Workshops
- 1:1 Meetings with Local Planning Departments



# Natural Environment Work Program

## Phase 4: Identification and Evaluation of Options



# Project Overview – Natural Environment

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

# Overview of Phase 4

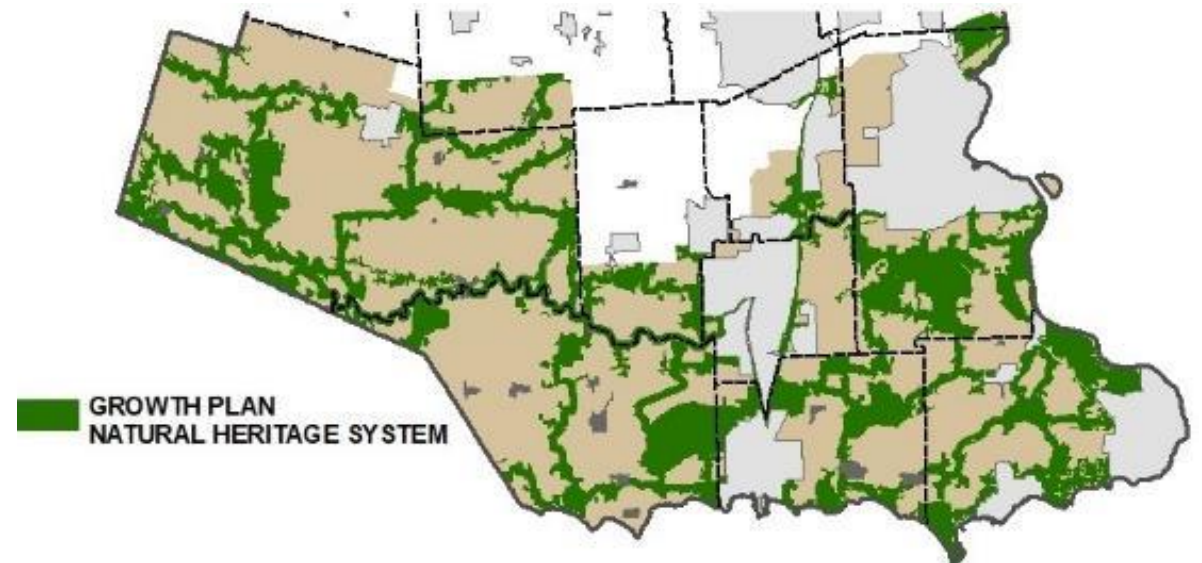
- Incremental step between the background reports and the mapping and policy development process
- Goal is to establish the overall direction for the natural heritage system (NHS) and water resource system (WRS)
- Based on concepts for the natural systems only. Mapping, criteria, and policies were developed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





# Provincial Direction – Natural Environment

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



# Policy Direction – Water Resource System (WRS)

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



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



# Development of Options

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

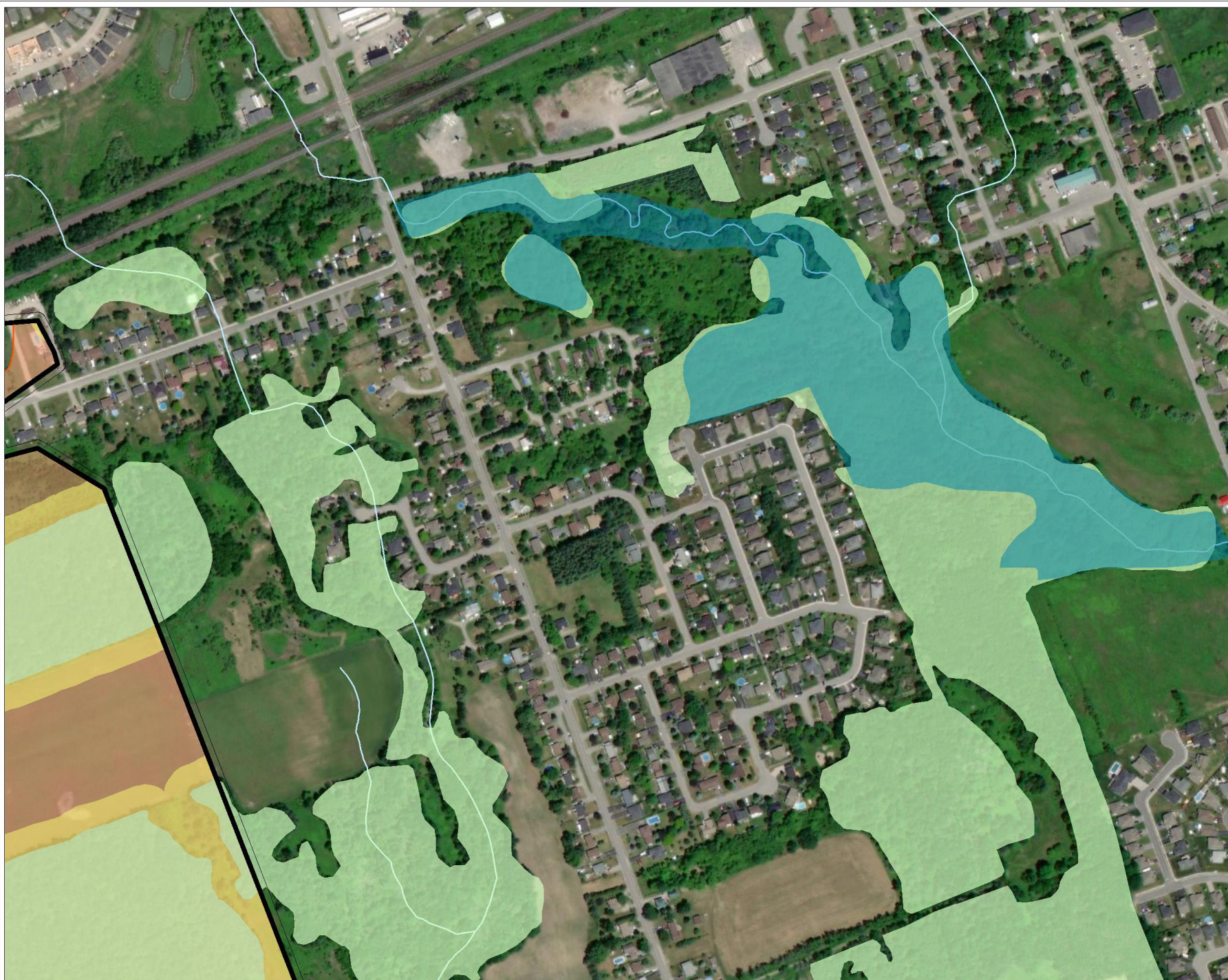


# Natural Heritage System Options

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







# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 1 and 2

## Legend


 Settlement Area

## Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

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

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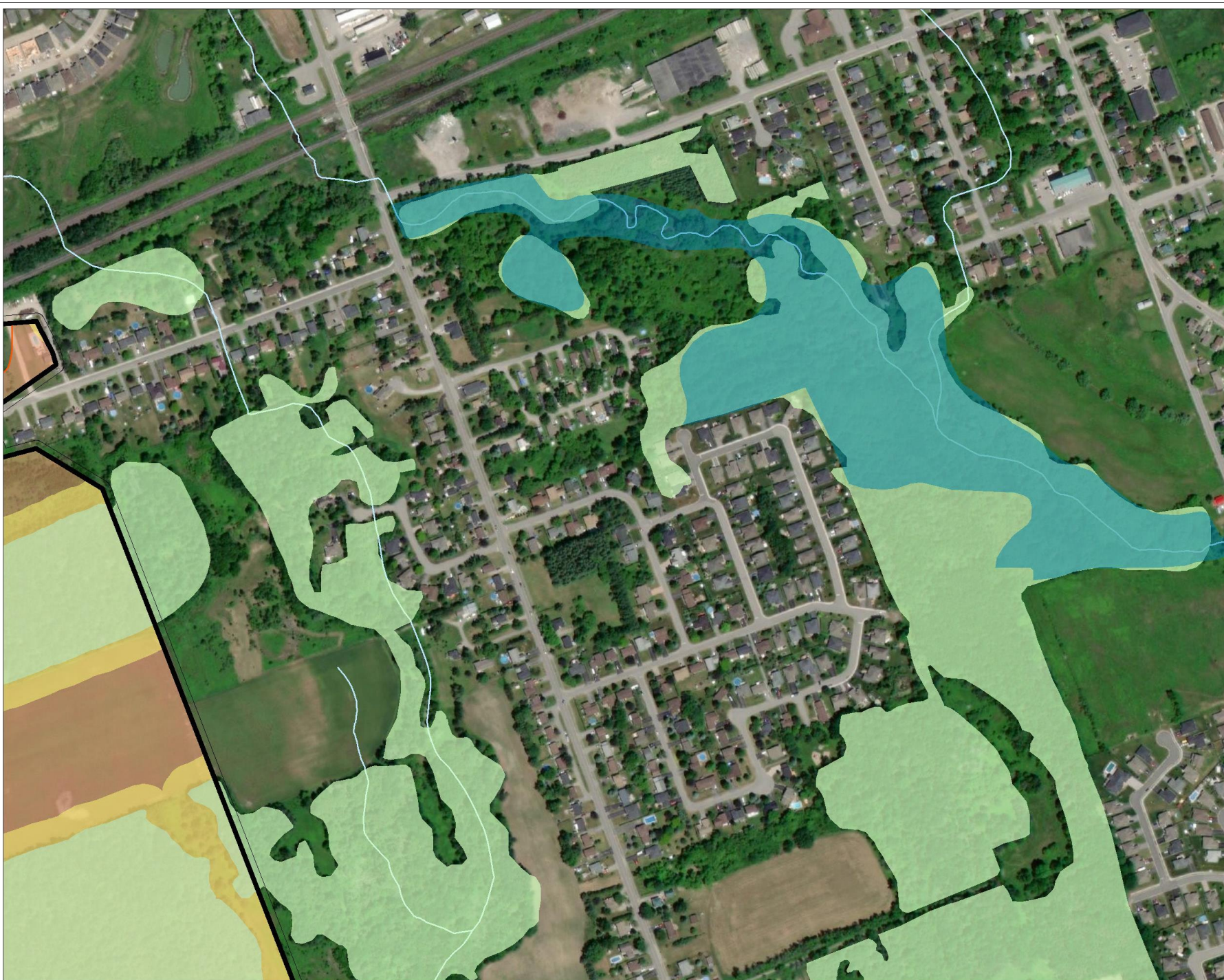
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# Comparison of Option 3A, 3B, & 3C

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






# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend


 Settlement Area

## Required Components

 Growth Plan Natural Heritage System

 Vegetation Protection Zones

 Significant Woodlands

 Provincially Significant Wetland

 Watercourses

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3A

## Legend

### Required Components



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

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Linkages

-  Large Linkage (400m)
-  Mandatory Buffers

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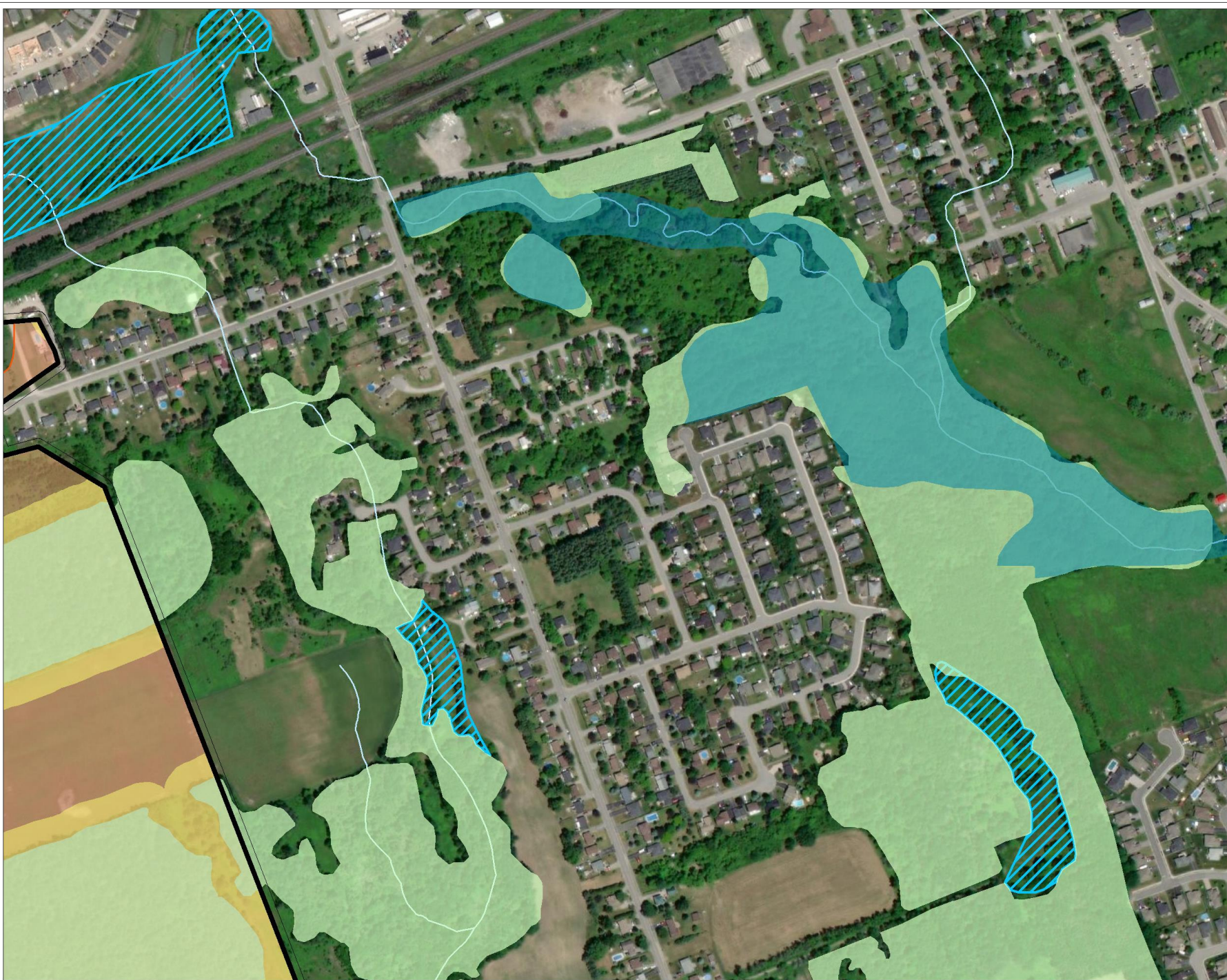
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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend


 Settlement Area

### Required Components

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

### Optional Components

Other Key Features

-  Wetland (non-Provincially Significant)

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System Outside Settlement Area Option 3B

## Legend

### Required Components

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

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

- Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

#### Supporting Features and Areas

- Enhancement Areas
- Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

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

- Mandatory Buffers

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# 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**
  - Other Woodlands
  - Enhancement Areas
- Linkages**
  - Small Linkage (100m)
  - Minimum Buffers

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# Conceptual Natural Heritage System: Outside Settlement Area Option 3C


## Legend

### Required Components



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

### Optional Components

#### Other Key Features

-  Wetlands (non-Provincially Significant)

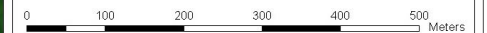
#### Supporting Features and Areas

-  Enhancement Areas
-  Other Woodlands

#### Linkages

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

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# What is a Water Resource System?

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





# Water Resource System Options

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

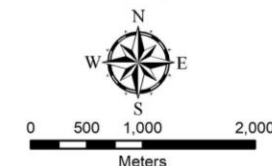
### Key Hydrologic Features

-  Wetlands
-  Waterbodies
-  Watercourses

### Key Hydrologic Areas

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

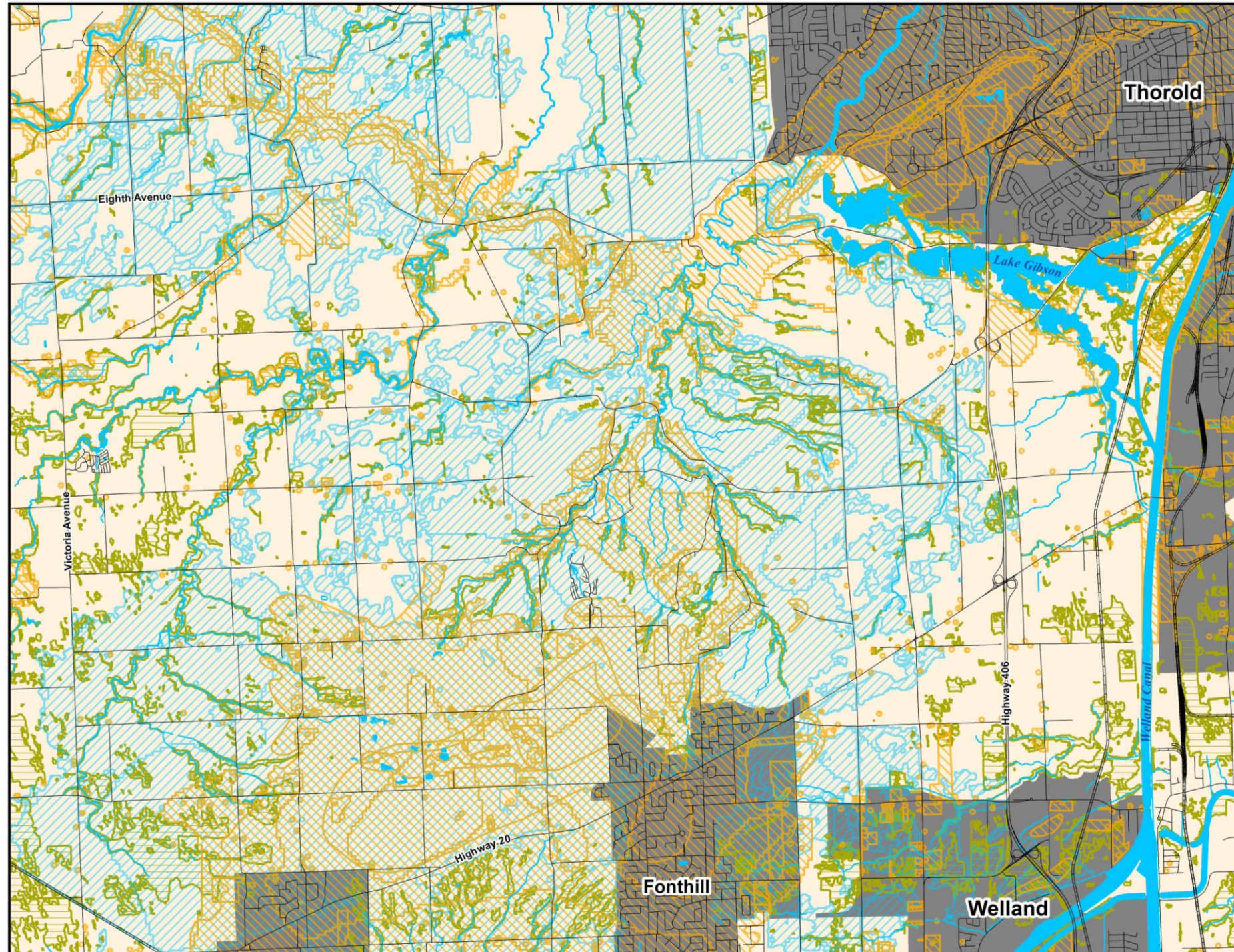
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discussion purposes only



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June 11, 2020





# Updates on Supporting Projects

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



# Next Steps



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







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# Environmental and Cultural Stewardship

October 1, 2020





# Introduction and Overview



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About Niagara Parks









# Guiding Principles

Prior to the opening of the original Park, the Commissioners were guided by two general principles which were regarded by the Government of the day as indispensable conditions:

- there should be no permanent financial burden on the Province, but that the Parks should become self-supporting
- the Park should, as far as possible, be free to the public

These indispensable conditions continue to guide our operations.



A close-up photograph of a bee on a lavender flower, with other lavender flowers in the background.

# PRESERVING AND PROMOTING the natural & cultural ..... HERITAGE ALONG THE ..... NIAGARA RIVER CORRIDOR



## Mandate and Vision

- An innovative example of sustainability as the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River corridor
- A welcoming, accessible and inspiring place offering world-class natural, historical, and authentic experiences
- A source of national pride and identity
- One of the most spectacular Parks in the world





# NPC stewards 1,325 hectares of land along the entire Niagara River corridor.

1	Experiences	Attractions, Events, Educations, Eco-tourism, Active Living, Adventure, Natural Wonders
2	Infrastructure	56 Km Niagara Parkway, 53 Km Recreation Trail, Attractions, Facilities, Parking Lots, Service Roads, Golf Courses
3	Gardens and Parks	Queen Victoria Park, Botanical Gardens School of Horticulture, Queenston Heights Park, Kings Bridge Park
4	Natural Areas	Niagara Falls, Niagara Gorge, Niagara Glen, Niagara Escarpment, Niagara River Shoreline, Species at Risk
5	Heritage	Old Fort Erie, Chippawa Battlefield, Laura Secord Homestead, McFarland House, Queenston Heights





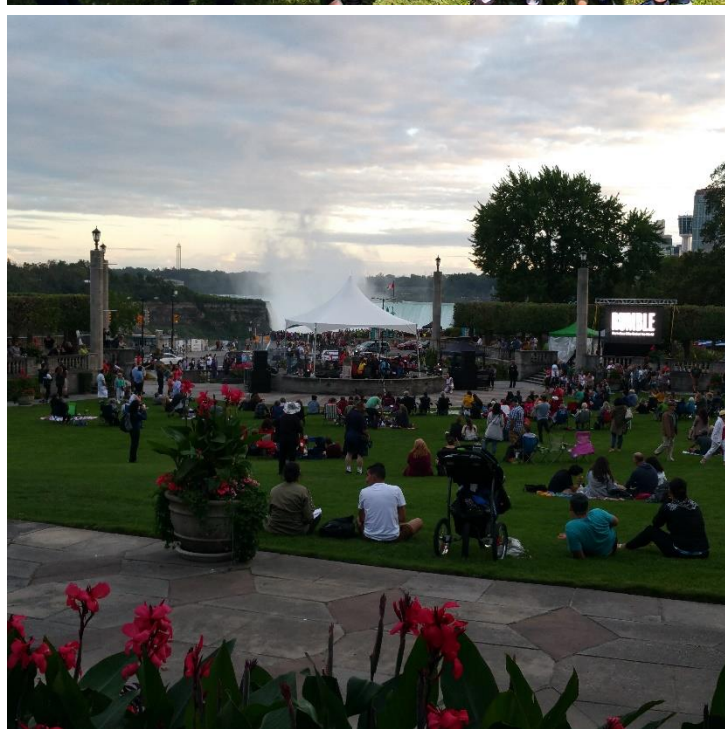
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# Cultural Connections and Stewardship





# Cultural Connections









# Landscape of Nations

- Memorial dedicated to the warriors who fought and died during the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812 and all warriors who participated in the War of 1812
- Unveiled in October 2016 at Queenston Heights Park
- Landscape of Nations 360 connection





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# Environmental Stewardship





## Fostering Collaboration

- Over 65 stewardship partners, including government agencies, non-government organizations, and grass-root organizations.
- Bi-national collaboration
- MOU's with Forests Ontario, Canadian Wildlife Federation,
- Work with Educational Institutions - Brock University and Niagara College







## Niagara Parks Golf & the Audubon Society

2014 Legends on the Niagara Golf Complex became Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary

- protecting significant wetlands,
- naturalizing turf grass,
- reforestation,
- reducing chemical and fertilizer use,
- conserving water,
- enhancing water quality,
- educating golf course staff, players and community members





# Brock University and the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Initiative







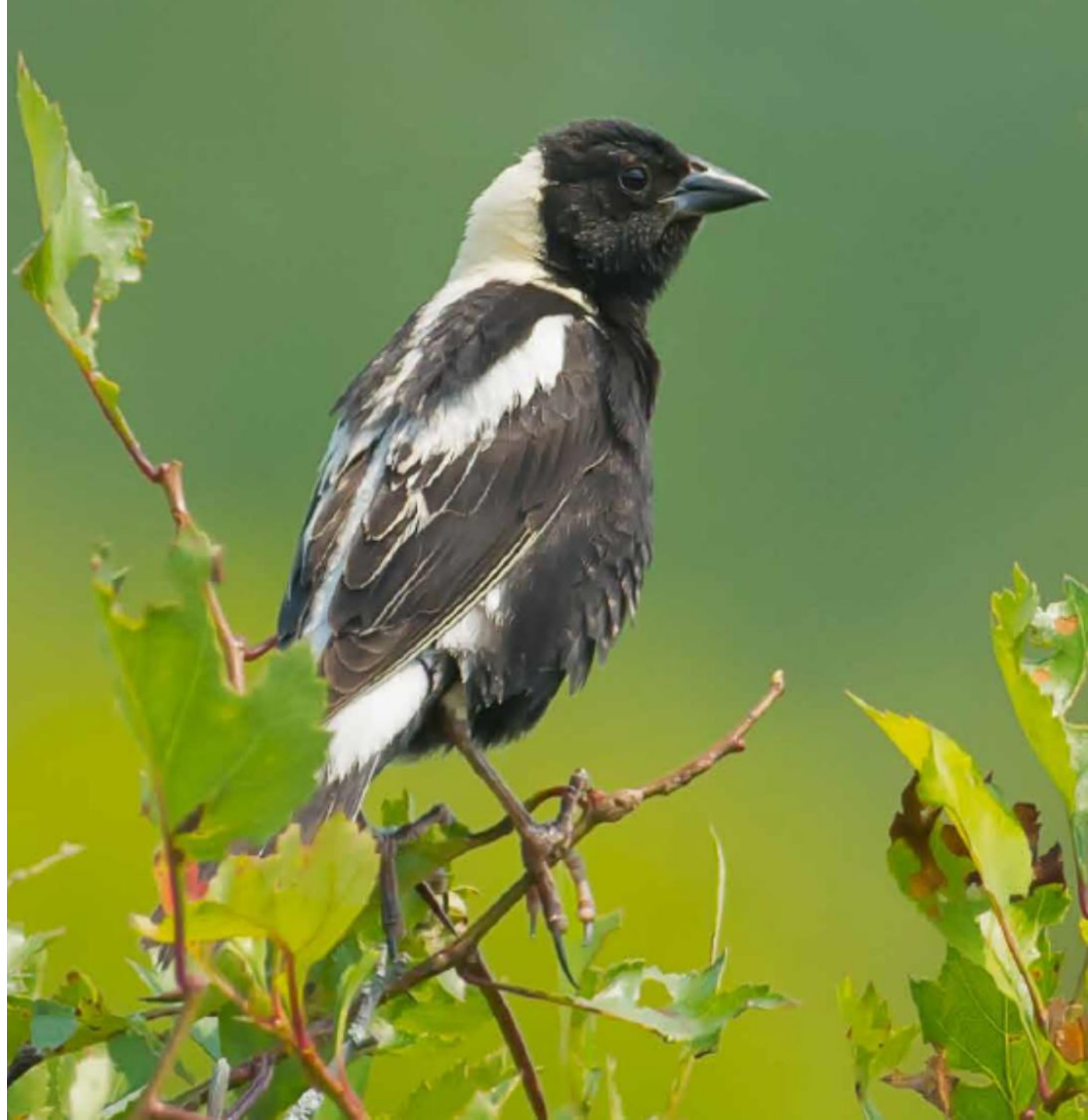
## Experiencing the Natural Niagara River Corridor

- Providing Hands-On Educational Opportunities
- Workshops and Seminars
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Student Projects and Field Trips
- Guided Hikes
- Tree Planting Events
- Niagara Glen Nature Centre





## Caring for Species at Risk







## Invasive Species Management

- Emerald Ash Borer
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
- Tree of Heaven
- Buckthorn
- Garlic Mustard
- Dog-Strangling Vine
- Phragmites – Common Reed





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# Pollinators, Shoreline Habitats and Urban Forestry

# Urban Forestry Management Strategy Goals

## Maintain and Increase Canopy Cover



- 35% canopy cover
- 75% shoreline vegetation

## Increase Species & Habitat Diversity



- Utilize 5-10-20 rule when developing planting plans

## Mitigate Impacts



- Invasive species monitoring
- Climate change
- Recreational use

## Increase Awareness & Promote Stewardship



- Engage partners
- Develop seed sources
- Build relationships with nurseries

## Improve Data Collection & Monitoring



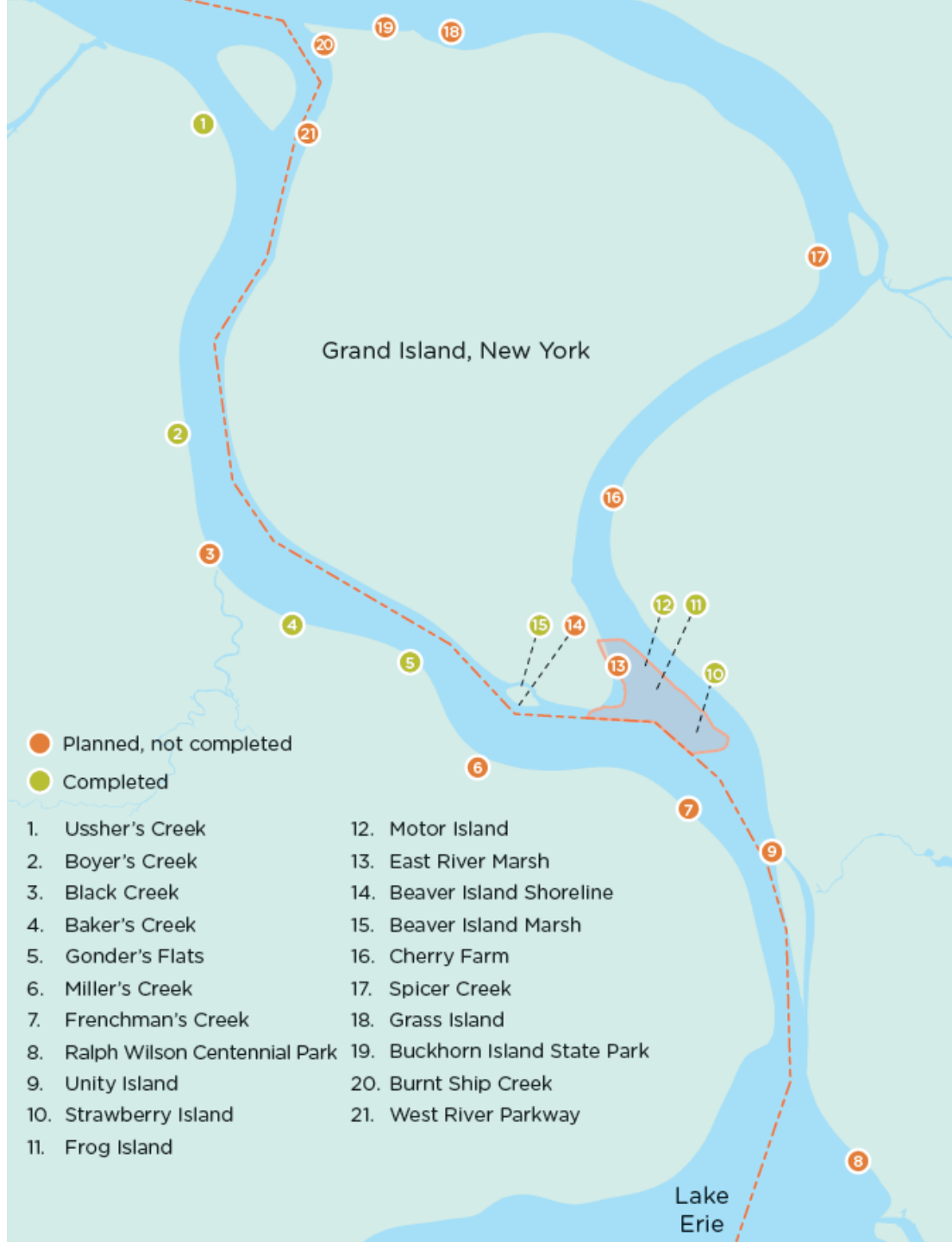
- Tree mapping
- Plant inventories
- Tree health assessments



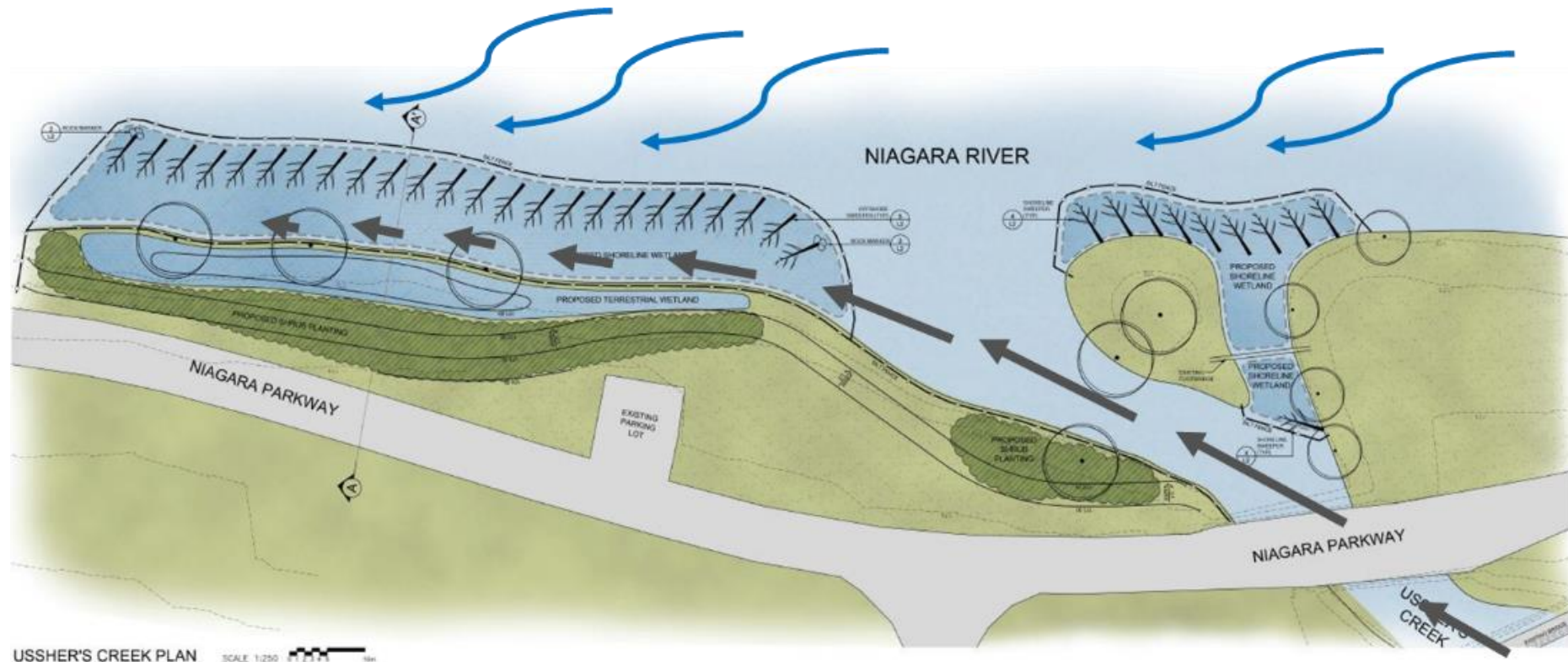


## Niagara River Coastal Wetland Restoration Project

- Seven sites selected at creek mouths in the upper Niagara River
- Work is completed during the winter
- Partners:
  - MNRF (COA)
  - Environment Canada
  - Niagara River RAP
  - New York Department Environmental Conservation



## Concept Designs







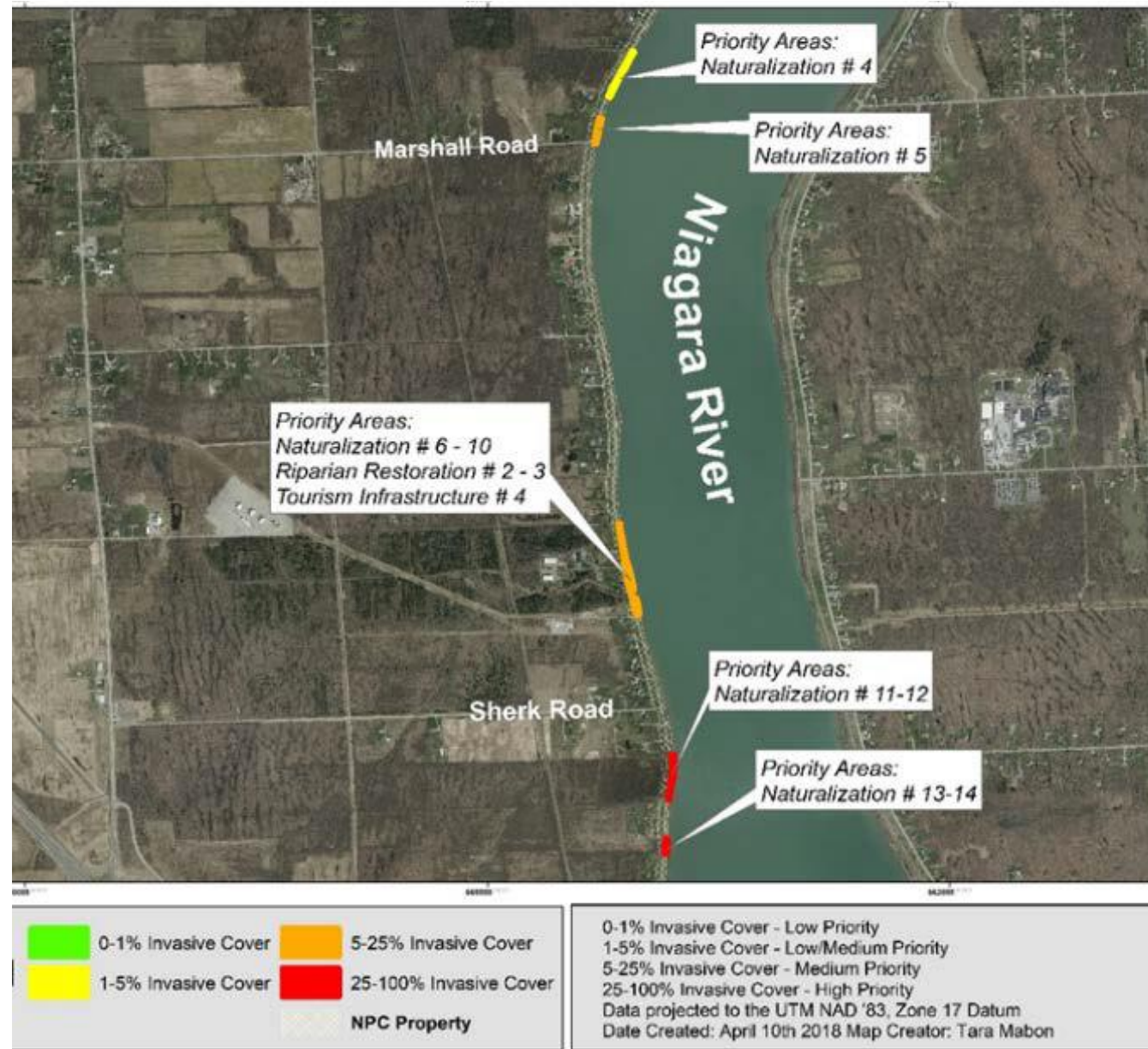




## Restoring Riparian Zones of the Niagara River

- Restore and expand 2km of riparian buffers by planting over 15,000 native plants annually
- Goal to restore 75% of the shoreline with native vegetation cover
- Benefits:
  - provide wildlife habitat
  - improve water quality,
  - prevent erosion
  - mitigate flooding

### Niagara Parks Restoration Inventory Zone 2 Invasive Species Presence



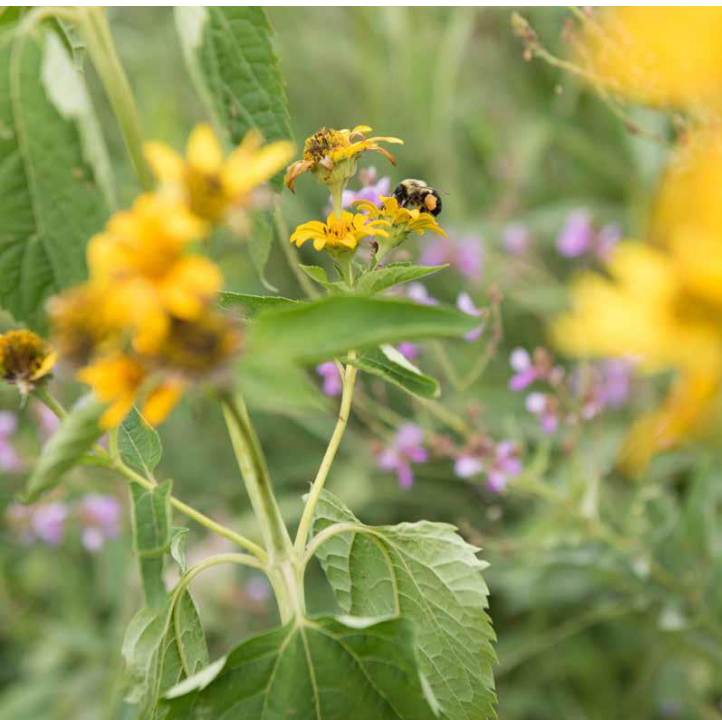












## Pollinator Garden Route

- Established and enhanced 12 pollinator garden habitats
- Planted 15,000 wildflowers and shrubs
- Interpretive signs include content inspired by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Anishinaabe
- Continuing to expand the route with the addition of new pollinator garden habitats



# Chippawa Grassland Bird Habitat Project

- Restoration of 120 acres of fallow agricultural fields into tallgrass prairie
- Provides essential habitat for grassland nesting bird species and pollinators
- Funded by Environment Canada, MNRF and corporate sponsors
- Managed by the Prescribed Burn program, seven sites total







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Looking Ahead



## The Future

- Programs for target audiences
- Communication strategies for reporting progress
- Future projects – Parks Canada, additional fish habitat restoration grants
- New Memorandum of Understanding with Brock University
- Working with partners to leverage a larger communication network





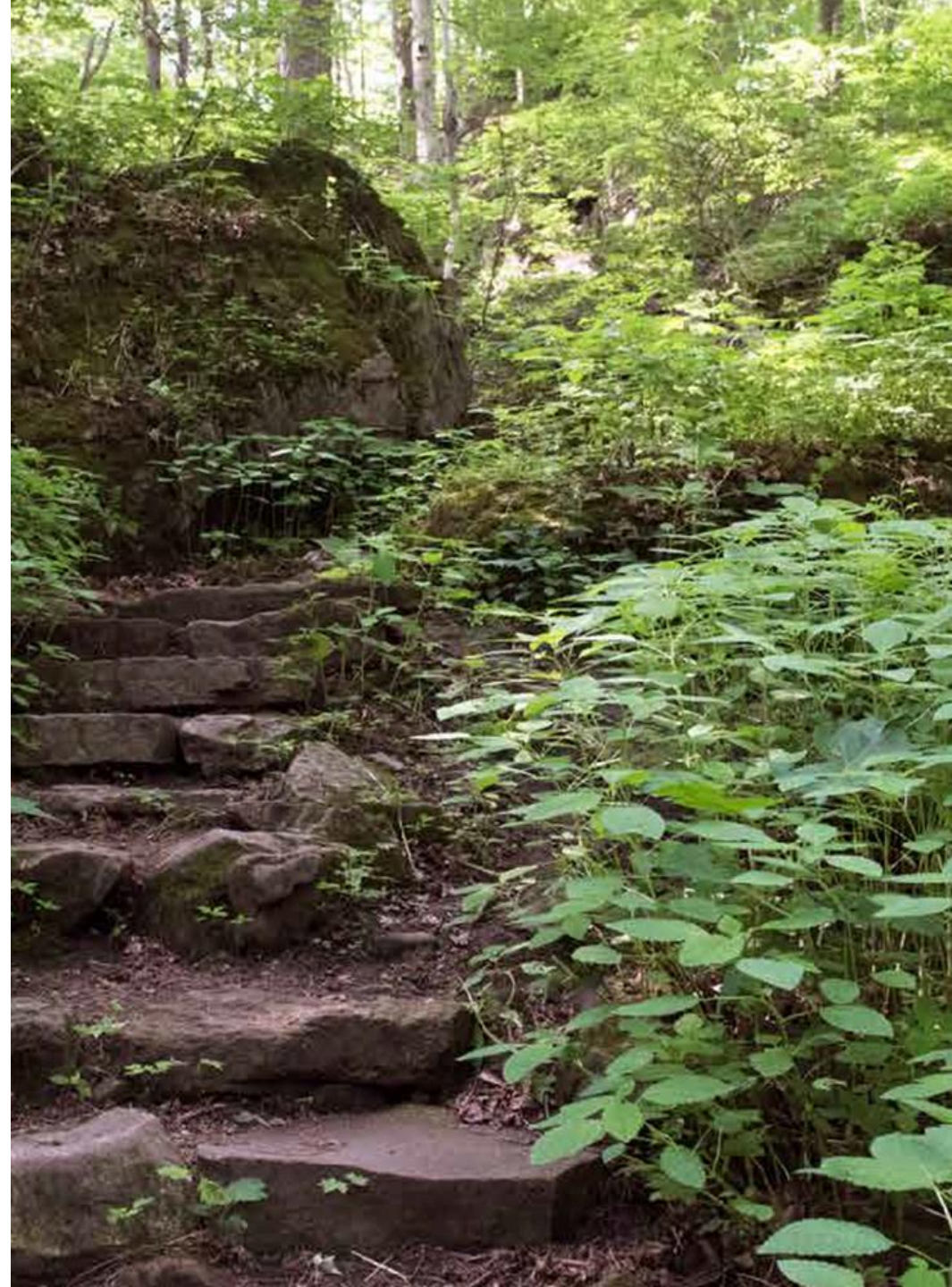
# Environmental Stewardship Action Plan

## Vision

To be an innovative example of sustainability as the environmental and cultural stewards of the Niagara River corridor

## Goals include:

- Stewardship planning strategy
- Experience
- International leadership
- Monitoring and evaluation








## Growing Collaboration





The Niagara River corridor:  
An environment that will continue to inspire,  
engage, educate and amaze for the next 13  
decades and beyond.