

Grey County Natural Heritage Systems Study

Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #2

Monday, June 22, 2015

Seminar Room

Present: Candace Hamm, SVCA; Suzanne Robinson, MNRF; Andy Sorenson, GSCA; Ann Balaban, City of Owen Sound; Judy Rhodes-Munk, NEC; Katharina Walton and David Stephenson, NRSI

County Staff present: Sarah Morrison, Scott Taylor, Alisha Buitenhuis, Shalaka Jadhav and Monica Scribner (recording secretary)

Regrets: Dave Featherstone, NVCA

Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves to the group.

Presentation by Natural Resource Solutions Inc.

Katharina Walton presented.

The first TAC meeting was end of February.

The flight video footage covers the entire Grey County area. It was recorded on May 6, 2015 and will be available to the County. Cloud Ahoy internet site hosts the videos, which were taken in sections.

Ann Balaban commented that the Greenbelt area footage is interesting to check out.

Feel free to add comments today and/or take time and get back to Katharina.

Notes for Minutes

Map	Title	Comments	Discussion
1	Study Area	No substantive change. County boundary was made more accurate on this map and all others.	
Notes: - County boundary was off from the shoreline so that was corrected. - Include 2 islands within County Boundary.			
2	Woodlands and Deer Wintering Areas	Previously Map 3.	Bright green are the significant woodlands, dark green are non-significant woodlands.
Notes: -			
3	Aquatic Features	Previously Map 5. Major river systems were identified and revised based on TAC meeting #1 discussion. Mapping of Significant Valleylands based on these systems.	Have major rivers been identified and mapped correctly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note Beaver River @ Eugenia Lake <p>-It is a working map -Major tributary network is a light blue line on this map -A challenge faced was where do you stop with water courses? There are probably a few more in GSCA watershed that could be shown. The purpose was to show the significant valleylands. Are the significant valleylands mapped correctly?</p>
Notes: There is a branch of the Beaver Review from Flesherton known as the Boyne River that should be added.			
	Map comparing major river systems to "Major Tributary Network" (ON Nature Greenway)	Generally lines coincide pretty well. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note Beaver River @ Eugenia Lake 	
Notes: -			
	Significant Valleylands mapping (Bighead River example)	Significant valleylands based on mapping of major river systems (Map 3). Bighead River example mapped data from Grey Sauble CA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineered flood lines • Flood prone areas • Meander belt width • Erosion areas • Regulated areas • Valleys 	Policy to include recommendations on identifying Sig. Valleylands through site specific surveys and studies. Recommended approach is taken from Huron and Middlesex County NHS Studies: <p><u>Significant Valleylands</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The valley must be ≥ 200 m wide and ≥ 2 km long. • The valley banks must be ≥ 3 m in height (extrapolated from 5m contours)

		<p>Saugeen Valley CA does not have these layers, therefore would have had to use 2 different approaches.</p> <p>Also, very mapping intensive.</p> <p>Decided to map as 200m wide corridor and describe Significant Valleylands through policy to be identified and mapped on site specific scale.</p>	<p>at 1:10,000 or better information where available).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where valley slope is 3:1 on one side with no slope on the opposite side of the watercourse, the opposite valley limit is delineated using either 200m from centreline of the watercourse or the limit of the floodplain to create a continuous valley feature, whichever is greater. • Where 3:1 valley slopes occur on both sides of the river, but they are not continuous, the floodplain limit (or contour information and professional judgment) is used to delineate a continuous valley feature. <p>Do you agree with this approach?</p> <p>Closer scale so we can make sure the County level matches with the lower tier municipalities.</p> <p>200m corridors have been placed on this map which includes all Provincially significant wetlands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All life ANSI's - Earth ANSI's - Deer wintering yards <p>Earth science ANSI's were not mapped because they don't tend to have above ground natural heritage features.</p>
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There were some questions about why earth science ANSI's are not shown on the mapping when they are currently included in the County's Official Plan Appendix mapping.

NRSI will show an earth science ANSI layer that goes over top of the significant features map.

NRSI noted that with earth science ANSIs (or other geologic features) we need to be cautious of the principals of identifying the NHS, as the earth science areas may not always match some of these principles. In some cases earth ANSIs do not always have a natural feature on top of the land, which would add to the NHS, where there may be geologic features underneath. Furthermore, the delineation of earth ANSIs is not as precise as other natural heritage features, where we have recognizable features atop the landscape.

Deer wintering areas- Stratum 1 and 2 are mapped, however there could be concerns that people may think that these are the only deer wintering areas. Other significant wildlife habitat and endangered species habitat are not explicitly shown on the maps, though they will overlap with other mapped features. In general there is a lack of data, and it would be a very large task to map other such habitat types. For example, grassland features are not explicitly included on the maps. Mapping the grasslands for the whole county would be a huge task and such features are not static and evolve in/out of grasslands over time.

4	Significant Features	Based on previous Map 2. Significant Valleylands have been added and	Significant features include: i) Wetlands (both PSWs and non-
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		<p>mapped as a 200m wide corridor along major river systems identified in Map 3. Refinement of Significant Valleylands to be addressed in policy recommendations.</p> <p>Deer wintering areas have been added to map. All Significant Features as included on this map together create the NHS.</p> <p>Grasslands have not been mapped, and will be addressed through policy recommendations.</p>	<p>PSWs) (identified by the MNRF and CAs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Significant Woodlands (identified by the County) iii) Significant Valleylands (major river systems identified by the TAC, mapped as 100m wide corridors by NRSI) iv) Life Science ANSIs (identified by the MNRF) v) Deer wintering areas (identified by the MNRF) – included as it is the only form of Significant Wildlife Habitat (SWH) we have mapped. Coincides mostly with Significant Woodlands. <p>Together, NRSI proposes these features form the basis of the NHS. Do you agree?</p> <p>Significant Wildlife Habitat and Habitat of Endangered and Threatened Species. NRSI considered including large grasslands within the NHS as they provide SWH and habitat for Species at Risk (SAR). However, grasslands are not mapped in Grey County. In addition, Grey County contains many grasslands (percentage is not known), including grasslands of very large size. Grasslands are also transient and vary in space and time. As such, it is suggested that grasslands not be mapped as part of the NHS at this time, but be addressed through policy focused on SAR and SWH. Other habitats, such as thickets, have also not been mapped or included in the NHS. Policies must address SWH and habitat for SAR that are not included in the NHS such as hedgerows, agricultural fields, man-made structures, etc.</p> <p>Do you agree with this approach?</p>
Notes:			
5	Natural Heritage System – Connection Routes	“Priority Stewardship Area Connection Routes” were identified by Ontario Nature in their Greenway mapping for Grey County. These have been applied to Map 5 with modifications. We’ve	Ontario Nature and the Nature Conservancy of Canada have identified Greenways for Grey and Bruce Counties, which include corridors between identified Priority Stewardship

		<p>shown the “NHS Connection Route” as 100m wide corridors. “Connections” are intended to be part of the NHS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Connection Route” terminology was used to be consistent with ON Nature Greenway; however this will likely be changed to “Linkage” for final mapping and report. 	<p>Areas (PSA). Rather than ‘reinvent the wheel’, NRSI suggests using the connection corridors they identified through their work. Their “PSA Connection Routes” are 1.5km wide. NRSI has mapped these as 100m wide corridors, consistent with other corridor approaches in southern Ontario.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree with this approach? • Do you agree that these corridors become part of the NHS? • Do you agree with the width of these corridors? • What is the implication of this designation?
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How were connection routes identified?

Ontario Nature looked at 1000+ hectare features or patches of woodland originally and connections between such areas. NRSI are hoping to just use this Ontario Nature Greenway mapping vs. re-creating the wheel. The mapping utilized terrestrial connections and wooded areas. One of the key considerations of looking at such linkages was minimizing any gaps or breaks in the linkages. A number of groups participated in the Ontario Nature Mapping including the NEC, and the County on a very early peripheral level. The priority connection routes are shown in red. Linkages should consider not just what exists today, but also policy for what can be further established over time to strengthen the NHS.

The Natural Heritage Reference Manual (NHRM) 2010 says the adjacent lands (or buffer) to most natural heritage features is 120 metres, should we do the same? In some of the mapping this 120 m buffer has been built into the ‘green’ mapping, which creates a ‘blob-like’ effect connecting more areas, rather than showing the buffer separately which then results in ‘fingers’ or ‘sliver-offshoots’ of natural heritage features being shown.

While the ‘blob-approach’ may be easier to read there needs to be some recognition of the fact that such buffer areas are not considered as ‘no-development areas’, but rather can be developed with the proper environmental study. Furthermore with the mapping being imprecise on some features (based on desktop studies), including this buffer as part of the feature mapping, and then setting it as a no-development zone, could further exacerbate some existing issues. One suggestion was to map the features and then show the buffer areas as a hatched or dotted lines surrounding the features.

We also need to be cognizant of political realities of implementing the results of this NHSS report. Including all of the features and the buffers, would leave very little developable land left within Grey and would not be feasible politically. Furthermore this would be going above and beyond the requirements of the Provincial Policy Statement and could conflict with other provincial objectives/resources such as the wise use of land for agriculture and aggregate extraction. It is key that we do look to maintain our good quality environmental features at a County/Regional scale, but in doing so it will not necessarily mean mapping and protecting all features across the County. The NHSS should identify those features which are truly significant at a County/Regional scale and rely on individual feature mapping or municipal implementation to catch some of the small site-specific matters.

A question was raised about possibly setting different natural heritage standards for designated settlement areas, where lands are already zoned for development. For example, landowners and municipal councils currently have

trouble understanding how commercial zoned land could still require further study (e.g. an environmental impact study for significant woodland) prior to being able to get a building permit. It was noted that there are other areas which may have such policy stratifications in this regard and the Region of Halton was cited as a possible example.

It was further noted that County Council's original intent behind the NHSS was to recognize that natural heritage protection in the County needs to be cognizant of a working landscape. This includes opportunities for economic development, tourism, farming and resource use, all while balancing the natural environment.

6	Natural Heritage System – 120m Adjacent Lands	NHS is shown with 120m adjacent lands highlighted in bright green. NHS Connection Routes (Map 5) do not include 120m adjacent lands.	<p>A 120m adjacent lands zone has been added to the entire NHS (other than the Connection Routes) as a way to smooth the outer boundary; deal with small mapping discrepancies, small areas otherwise not included within the NHS, “fingers” protruding from the NHS.</p> <p>The 120m adjacent lands could be included within the NHS and development applications could be addressed through policy. A policy approach could be the following:</p> <p><i>Any development proposed outside the NHS (i.e. outside the 120m adjacent lands zone) may proceed with minimal environmental study, i.e. SAR and SWH still need to be addressed.</i></p> <p>Any development proposed within the NHS (including within the linkages) must complete site specific studies, including an EIS. The EIS must identify the natural heritage feature boundaries. Development is not permitted within any natural heritage features of the NHS (i.e. not allowed within any wetland, any Significant Woodland, any Significant Valleyland, etc.). Development may be permitted outside of natural heritage features once appropriate boundaries and buffers have been identified and impacts from proposed development proposals have been addressed.</p> <p>Buffer widths are recommended as 30m from all natural heritage features, unless an EIS identifies a larger (different?) buffer is required.</p>
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			<p>Do you agree with this approach?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you agree with incorporating the 120m adjacent lands within the NHS? • Do you agree that development and site alteration shall not be permitted in any natural heritage feature? (This goes beyond the PPS). Note that input from the Open Houses was in favour of a NHS and protecting as much of the Grey County natural environment as possible. • Do you agree with the suggested policy addressing proposed development within the NHS (i.e. within the outer 120m of the NHS)?
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NHS needs to maintain functionality and connectivity. Look for cores and linkages, as PPS already protects features. - Need stratified approach with regards to NHS and policy. Restrictive policy would require a scoped NHS. 			
7	Natural Heritage System	The entire NHS, comprised of Significant Features (Map 4), NHS Connection Routes (Map 5), and 120m adjacent lands (Map 6).	Should watercourses and waterbodies be included in the green mapping? Should the 120m adjacent lands zone be added to these?
Notes: -			
	NHS and ON Nature Greenway	For comparison purposes only.	ON Nature Greenway based on large forested areas only.
Notes: -			
8	Natural Heritage System and Other Protected Areas	The NHS, along with other protected areas for comparison purposes: lands owned by Conservation Authorities, provincial parks (Craigleith PP), Niagara Escarpment area, properties owned/managed by the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy.	Are there other protected areas and properties that should be shown?
Notes: Add County Forests, MNRF lands, lands owned by Bruce Trail Conservancy			
9	Aggregate Pits & Quarries	The NHS and licensed aggregate pit locations. NHS has not been deleted from these sites.	<p>Should the licensed aggregate pits be removed from the NHS or, should they be left in, with policy to address these uses?</p> <p>Some properties are not active currently and may never be or may not become active for a long time. As aggregate pits close and sites are rehabilitated, they can be considered for inclusion into the NHS in the future.</p>
Notes:			

Map 9 - Add 'quarries' to the title of this map.

The maps the County uses in the Official Plan show licensed pits and quarries, but may not be reflective of the most recent license data in this regard as there appear to be a few approved extractive operations missing. It is recommended that the most recent data be accessed from Land Information Ontario (LIO) to ensure the data is correct in this regard.

As for rehabilitation, we have existing land use designations underlying the extractive designation on these locations. The County Official Plan does however contain policies which speak to rehabilitation considering linkages to natural heritage features or bolstering the feature itself as part of the progressive rehabilitation plans.

			<p>Biodiversity Offsetting It is recommended that the identified NHS be used to guide the location of any biodiversity offsetting measures that may occur when natural features are removed through approved development. For example, policy should outline that any grasslands or thickets that have to be retained or created to address overall benefit permits from the MNRF or through biodiversity offsetting measures prescribed by municipal governments be located adjacent to or contiguous with the NHS. Do you agree with this approach?</p> <p>Should areas of recommended NHS Enhancement be mapped? (These would be smaller areas that are encircled by NHS).</p>
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Big green map does not show watercourses which would add even more green to the map.

Are there any existing municipal policy approaches towards bio-diversity offsetting? It was noted that the City of Guelph may have some policies with respect to this subject matter. It was further noted that the NEC is not in favour of compensation for the destruction of features in this regard. The current Endangered Species Act and implementing Regulations does offer some situations where offsetting may be possible but avoidance or mitigation need to be examined first. It's also important to note that it's not simply 'compensation', but rather it's 'overall benefit'. The group discussed the pros and cons of compensation.

			<p>Rename title of study: Natural Environment Study is ambiguous. We are getting comments on things such as noise pollution, light pollution, human health impacts, etc. Should the study be renamed to Natural Heritage Systems Study?</p>
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We have received lots of comments about natural environment issues but not natural heritage features. At the next open house we will be clarifying that for people and on the website also. At this stage we will keep name the same so it doesn't confuse people, but try to further educate people on the scope and purpose of this study.

Other General Items Discussed:

- Map 8 should also show County Forest properties alongside the publicly owned lands. It was noted however that sustainable forest management practices are utilized within these forests. County staff can share a GIS layer showing County forest boundaries.
- Map 8 may also want to show the Bruce Trail lands and any Provincial lands (e.g. lands owner by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry). Most of these GIS layers should be available from the Province.
- Future policy options regarding conservation severances/easements would also be useful. The County has been experiencing a higher demand for such applications in recent years.

Next Steps

- Revise mapping
- Writing NHSS report
- Developing policy recommendations
- TAC meeting #3 – end of September
- Open House – mid October
- Public, Municipal and Stakeholder comment period
- Finalize report
- Presentation to Planning and Community Development Committee – November
- Presentation to Council – December

*The above dates and timeframes are subject to change depending on feedback and comments received.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.