
Grey County Natural Heritage Systems Study

Open House #2 – Markdale

Thursday, December 10, 2015 – 1-3 p.m.

Centre Grey Recreation Complex

Presentation made by Katharina Walton (Natural Resource Solutions Inc., NRSI) and Lorelei Jones (Macaulay Shiomi Howson). David Stephenson (NRSI) also in attendance. Grey County staff in attendance were Sarah Morrison and Monica Scribner.

17 people attended the Open House. 6 maps were on display as hard copy posters for people to view as they came into the hall:

Map All Natural Heritage Features

- Map of all natural heritage features (watercourses and waterbodies, significant valleylands, wetlands, provincially significant wetlands, woodlands, significant woodlands, Life Science ANSIs, deer yards and wintering areas)

Map 5 Significant Natural Features, Core Areas, and Linkages

- Map of all significant features identified in the study (significant valleylands, wetlands ≥ 2 ha, provincially significant wetlands, significant woodlands, Life Science ANSIs, deer yards and wintering areas), along with the Core Areas and Linkages

Map 6 Natural Heritage System

- Natural Heritage System shown (dark green), otop of significant natural features (light green), and aquatic features (watercourses and waterbodies; blue)

Map 8 Increased Protection Policy Areas

- Areas with increased protection shown (i.e. NHS that does not coincide with a PSW or other protected property as per Map 9)

Map 12 Newly Protected Areas

- NHS that does not coincide with a significant natural heritage feature, as per Map 5

Map 9 Natural Heritage System and Other Protected Areas

- Comparison between the NHS and lands already protected by a variety of agencies or in public ownership (Bruce Trail Conservancy properties, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy properties, Conservation Authority properties, County Forest, Crown Land, Federal Land). NHS not covered by one of the additional layers are private lands.

Lorelei explained that the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is part of the Provincial Planning Act. It needs to be considered as a whole and provides direction on planning matters in the province, including on natural heritage. The County's Official Plan needs to be consistent with the PPS and may be more restrictive. In the same way, municipal Official Plans need to be consistent with the County's Official Plan.

Questions and Answers

What are Linkages comprised of?

For the most part, Linkages are comprised of significant natural features. Only in few cases do Linkages not contain natural features. Map 12 identifies areas of the NHS that do not overlap with a significant natural feature (although in some cases they may overlap with a non-significant natural feature such as a woodland). They were delineated based on the significant natural features, while trying to keep the shortest distance between Core Areas.

Can houses be built within Core Areas or Linkages?

Existing lots of record can be developed but will require an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) as per the proposed policies.

How are Core Area boundaries established and can they be changed?

Details on how the boundary is delineated on a site specific basis will be provided in the report. Refinements to the boundary can be made through site specific studies, but may not include dramatic reductions. It is recommended that Core Areas can be expanded but not reduced.

Landowners should not have to pay for an Environmental Impact Study.

According to current policy, an EIS is required for development or redevelopment regardless of whether the area is within the Natural Heritage System or not. EISs are required where development or redevelopment is located within the adjacent lands of a natural heritage feature. An EIS is scoped with agencies according to

the development proposal; it may or may not require 3 season surveys. EISs generally range in price between \$2,000 and \$20,000.

What if my house is in a Core Area or Linkage and it burns down? Would I be required to complete an EIS?

Such a case would be considered a re-build and not new development, therefore an EIS is likely not required.

What is essential infrastructure? Does it include gravel pits? Wind turbines?

May include: roads, hydro corridors, gas pipelines.

Was lighting addressed in this study?

No.

Was a climatologist consulted in this study? What will happen when forests die because of climate change? "Green in Grey" may become "Brown in Grey".

A climatologist was not involved in the study. The NHS protects natural features that exist currently. In the future, even if natural areas change because of climate change, they will be protected in a natural state and will provide habitat for wildlife, even if different from today.

Are there tax breaks for having a property that overlaps with the Natural Heritage System?

Zoning included in municipal documents is part of the basis for taxes. There may be opportunities for tax breaks, but we are not qualified to speak to this.

Who will be implementing the policies?

Grey County, once the study is approved by County Council. The policies will then have to be incorporated into the next Official Plan Amendment update.

What is sustainable forestry? It should be defined.

The County has regulations regarding sustainable forestry.

Study looks wonderful, but is not yet final. Once it is final, what is the process? The County needs to lead the municipalities.

Once the report is drafted, there will be a review period. Once it is finalized, NRSI and MSH will make a presentation to the Grey County Planning and Community Development Committee and the study will go to Grey County Council for approval. Once it is approved, it will have to be incorporated into the Official Plan. An Official Plan amendment is planned for later on in 2016/2017.

How will changes be made in the Official Plan? Can policies refer to provincial documents and processes?

The Official Plan is reviewed every 5 years. If there are significant changes during this time, 'housekeeping' amendments can be made more frequently.

The Official Plan should generally not refer to specific provincial documents (e.g. such as the MNR's Natural Heritage Reference Manual), as these are updated from time to time or may become obsolete.

Were aggregate sites considered in the study?

Yes, approved aggregate sites have been mapped. Aggregate sites, where they overlap with the NHS were not excluded from the NHS. Some aggregate sites may never become active, and others will be restored. They are governed by their own policies and regulations.

Comments

Don't forget about the people in Grey County. We don't want to be a "graveyard" for Toronto. I want to be able to manage my property the way I want. I object seriously to another level of rules being imposed on me as a landowner. It seems that more protection is given to the cougars the Ministry is releasing than to people. I have to provide protection for the cougars and can't build a house for refugees on the corner of my property.

Suggest using lot lines to delineate Linkages so they do not cut through properties. Currently it is unclear where the boundaries of Linkages are.

General consensus at the meeting was support of restoration areas within 'gaps' of Core Areas.

"Restoration", as in restoration areas, has a negative connotation (brings to mind contaminated soil). Consider using "Conversion areas" instead.

General consensus at the meeting was support to include the NHS in a Schedule of the Official Plan.

If a property is located in the middle of a Linkage, the County should buy the property.

I oppose any new structure in a Linkage.

General consensus at the meeting was support of the 200m width of linkages. Someone added that the width of Linkages should consider the requirements of wildlife, therefore may have to be wider in some circumstances.

Suggest drawing the Linkages diagrammatically.

Conservation easements should also be mapped on Map 9.

Policy needs to be fair to all and not favour big business.

I would have liked to see some text on how comments provided after the first Open House were considered and incorporated into the study.

“Essential infrastructure” should be defined. It should be ensured that infrastructure that is to cross the NHS is truly essential.

There needs to be a mechanism to deal with faulty mapping. E.g. revising a Core Area boundary if it is based on a faulty mapping layer.

Aggregate quarries are a big issue in Grey County. The County’s Official Plan shows aggregate resource areas, which should be incorporated into your study. The conflict between aggregate sites and natural heritage protection should be acknowledged in the study.

The presentation and maps will be posted on the project’s website.

Comments should be provided to Sarah Morrison by January 15, 2016.

Minutes prepared by Katharina Richter, NRSI.