

A “Greenprint” for Action

You have just learned that a favourite wetland or woodland will soon be destroyed by development unless you do something. Fast action is needed to save the area. What do you do? Below are the important steps you should take.

Find out who is doing what and why.

- 1. Call your municipal clerk and/or planner.** Be cordial and diplomatic. He/she can be an invaluable ally. Make sure that these questions are answered:
 - What type of development is proposed?
 - When was the application for development made?
 - Has the development proposal been given the go-ahead, and by whom (municipal staff, your municipal council, a committee of council)?
 - Is an official plan amendment needed?
 - What is the current zoning and is a new zoning bylaw or bylaw amendment needed?
 - Has there been or will there be a public meeting hosted by the municipality?
 - Does the natural area have any special status in your municipality's Official Plan, for example as an Environmentally Sensitive/Significant Area (ESA), or as a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW), or Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), the latter two being provincial-level designations?
 - Do wetlands and woodlands have any protection afforded to them in the official plan?
 - Has the official plan been updated to make it consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement under the *Planning Act*? If not, when will this be done?
 - Are there any government reports, consultants' studies or municipal documents on the development proposal or the natural area? Can you get copies or take a look at them at the municipal office?
 - When can you come in to look at the official plan and zoning bylaws, or are they available online? Are there any secondary plans, and where can you access these as well?
 - Will the clerk arrange to notify you of any municipal action affecting this area?

- 2. Talk to your Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) district office** to find out what they know. You can find the phone number in the blue pages of the phone book, or online at www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/csb/message/mnroffices.html. Be sure to ask them:
 - Do they know anything about the proposed development?
 - What is MNR's position, if any, on the proposal?
 - Will they give you copies of the DLUG (District Land Use Guideline) and ANSI reports and maps?

If the affected area is a wetland:

- Is the wetland “provincially significant”?
- Is it “regionally” or “locally significant”?
- Has the wetland been evaluated to determine if it is provincially, regionally or locally significant? If not, will it be evaluated before approval for the development proposal is considered and who is going to do the evaluation?

What do all these terms mean? Many of the definitions can be found in the *Glossary of Environmental Terms*, which can be found on the website of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario: www.eco.on.ca

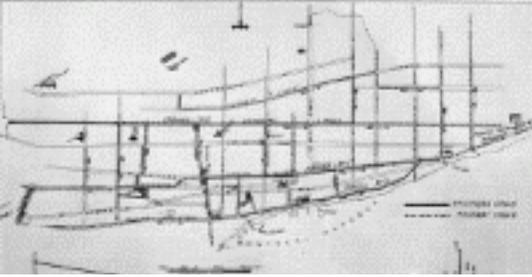
The Provincial Policy Statement under the *Planning Act* defines “significant” as:

- In regard to wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest, an area identified as provincially significant by the Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the province, as amended from time to time.
- In regard to the habitat of endangered species and threatened species, means the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, that is necessary for the maintenance, survival, and/or the recovery of naturally occurring or reintroduced populations of endangered species or threatened species, and where those areas of occurrence are occupied or habitually occupied by the species during all or any part(s) of its life cycle.
- in regard to woodlands, an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history.
- In regard to other features and areas in policy 2.1, ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or natural heritage system.

The Provincial Policy Statement can be viewed online at:

www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_23137_1.html





Keep detailed records of contacts, conversations, meetings and other communications.

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If the area is a woodland or other natural area:

- Are there any reports or studies available for the area?
 - Have any ecological/biological studies or evaluations been conducted in the area?
 - Is it an ANSI? Is it a significant woodland, valley land or fish and wildlife habitat?
 - Is it habitat for endangered or threatened species, or any other species at risk?
3. **Talk to your local conservation authority (CA)**, if one exists in your area, to find out what they know. Here are some questions to consider:
- Are there any watershed or subwatershed studies of this area?
 - Are there any intentions to undertake these studies? If not, why not?
 - Is the site a significant valley land? Does the CA know of any significant species or habitats there?
 - Request copies of fill and flood regulations, and any ESA maps that the CA might have.
4. **Pay attention to word-of-mouth information.** You'd be surprised what the local storekeepers know!

Evaluate your information and get more.

1. **Compare what the municipal office, MNR and CA told you.** Take a look at the material available:
- If the wetland or woodland is significant, is the municipality giving it proper consideration through the official plan?
 - Is the proposal consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement?
 - Is the municipality, MNR or CA overlooking something?
2. **Get more information.** Contact the local naturalist club (see Ontario Nature's website for a club near you: www.ontarionature.org), local environmental groups, provincial conservation organizations, or the Natural Heritage Information Centre (www.nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/nhic_cfm)
- Do these groups know what is going on?
 - Do they have records or inventories for the site?
 - Is there anything significant that the municipality, CA or MNR overlooked?

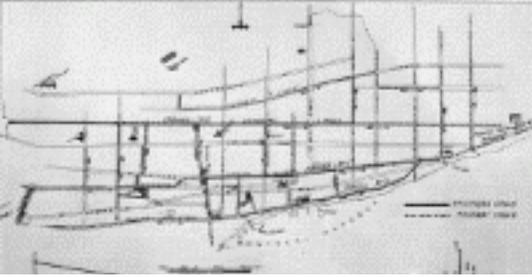
- Do they want to help save the area? What can they do to help?
3. **Summarize the site's natural significance.**
4. **Check records of the *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Ontario*** (www.birdsontario.org) to see if any bird species at risk are in your general area (based on 10 x 10 km grids).

Be aware that specific land use programs like the Niagara Escarpment Plan, Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, Ontario Parks or Parks Canada may affect the site.

Now, how do you plan a campaign?

Write a letter to your mayor and all members of council immediately and express your concerns, even if they are not detailed. You can always write a follow-up letter later, by yourself or as part of a group. Remember to always ask questions in your letter. This way the mayor and council will be obliged to respond.

1. Find out who your allies are
 - Inform neighbours and groups with interests and concerns similar to yours.
 - Contact other groups who may have an interest in the issue (ratepayers, anglers and hunters, local university or college).
 - Approach local politicians (ones likely to support you).
2. Hold a meeting of your group
 - Examine your opportunities for approaching the municipal council.
 - Establish an attainable solution to your problem. You want to save this area, but you might have to be flexible about how this is accomplished.



- 5. Check historical naturalists' records** of the site through your local or area naturalist club.
- Decide on an approach or approaches, such as:
 - ◆ Delegations and submissions to council;
 - ◆ Letter-writing campaign;
 - ◆ Support from provincial-level organizations;
 - ◆ When to write to appropriate ministries and/or ministers;
 - ◆ When to go to the media and how;
 - ◆ Getting broader community support;
 - ◆ The possibility of acquiring (purchasing) the land;
 - ◆ The need for a lawyer.
 - Find out what expertise and connections your group has.
 - If a municipal election is on the horizon, look at the possibility of having a member of your group run for a seat on council.
 - Assign people in your group specific responsibilities.



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- Think about creating a more formal group to save the natural area (Friends of . . .) that becomes incorporated and that even may seek status as a registered charity.
- Be prepared to negotiate seriously with the landowner, the developer and/or the municipality.
- Be prepared for the long haul.

How do You Keep the Pressure On?

This is challenging. How do you keep everybody pushing along as the weeks and months drag by without a decision?

- Keep focused on your goal.
- Be creative and keep re-evaluating your strategy. If one approach isn't working, try something else.
- Be professional, even if things get nasty. That means being polite and courteous, and not getting angry (at least not publicly).

- Don't get sidetracked. Once you start, a dozen other related projects will come up.

Finally, remember that the people whose minds you're trying to change are human and there is a way of reaching them.

Above all, keep your SENSE OF HUMOUR!

Ontario Nature protects and restores nature through research, education and conservation action. Ontario Nature champions woodlands, wetlands and wildlife, and preserves essential habitat through its own system of nature reserves. It is a charitable organization representing 25,000 members and over 140 member groups across the province, connecting individuals and communities to nature.

If you wish to support Ontario Nature or learn more about current conservation issues in Ontario visit: www.ontarionature.org



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