

# Huron Natural Heritage Plan Implementation Strategy



# DRAFT

**September 2016**

## Table of Contents

Introduction: A Sustainable Huron Approach to Natural Heritage Planning.....	1
1 Sustainable Economic Development.....	2
1.1 Forest Cover and Agriculture.....	2
1.2 Forest Products Industry .....	2
1.3 Forest Cover and Recreation .....	3
2 Natural Heritage Planning.....	4
2.1 Provincial Policy Statement 2014 .....	4
2.2 Huron County Official Plan .....	6
2.3 Local Official Plans .....	7
2.4 Municipal Zoning By-laws.....	11
3 Regulatory Tools for Natural Heritage Planning .....	11
3.1 Forest Conservation By-laws .....	11
3.2 Provincial and Federal Legislation .....	11
4 Supporting a Stewardship Ethic .....	11
4.1 Provincial Policy Statement direction for Stewardship Efforts .....	12
4.2 A Collaborative Approach to Stewardship .....	12
4.3 Stewardship Programs.....	12
4.4 Publicly Owned Forest Tracts as Demonstration Sites .....	13
4.5 Outreach and Education.....	14
4.6 References .....	15
Appendix 1: Natural Heritage Policies for Local Official Plans.....	16

## Introduction: A Sustainable Huron Approach to Natural Heritage Planning

The Huron Natural Heritage Plan (HNHP) defines the natural heritage system within Huron County, and identifies tools to enhance and protect these features.

The HNHP consists of two documents:

- The HNHP Technical Document , which describes the methodology used to identify significant natural features and the natural heritage system in Huron County
- The HNHP Implementation Strategy, which defines the approach to protecting natural heritage features

The Implementation Strategy identifies a suite of tools to protect and enhance natural heritage features in Huron County, including:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Section 1 | Supporting economic development related to forestry, forest products and recreation in natural areas   |
| Section 2 | Recognizing and protecting natural heritage systems within municipal Official Plans  |
| Section 3 | Recognizing existing regulatory tools including the Forest Conservation By-law   |
| Section 4 | Recognizing and supporting the efforts of private property owners, community organizations and agencies in sustainable forestry management and stewardship efforts |

The Take Action for Sustainable Huron: Community Sustainability Plan (Huron County 2011) advocates a balanced approach to developing local solutions while understanding connections to global trends. The Sustainable Huron Plan recognizes the connection of environmental, social and economic systems (see Figure 1) and promotes strategies to recognize and support all three. As informed by the Sustainable Huron Plan, the HNHP Implementation Strategy employs economic development and stewardship tools as well as planning policies and regulation to protect and enhance Huron County's ecological resources.

The HNHP Implementation Strategy recognizes that the vast majority of natural features in Huron County are on privately owned land. The success of the NHP depends on the ability of landowners, municipalities and agencies to work together.



*Figure 1: Three spheres of sustainability—Environment, Society & Culture, Economy.*

# 1 Sustainable Economic Development

As informed by the Sustainable Huron Plan, the Huron Natural Heritage Plan recognizes that forests are a valuable natural resource that contribute to the livelihoods of Huron County residents. In 2014, the County of Huron adopted *Forests For Our Future: Management Plan for the County Forests Recommendations for Tree Cover Enhancement* (Huron County, 2014).

*Forests For Our Future* provides recommendations for management and utilization of the Huron County forest tracts for 2014 to 2033. The plan outlines challenges and opportunities for both County forests and privately owned forests throughout Huron. *Forests For Our Future* recognizes the integral role of forest cover to the Huron County economy.

## 1.1 Forest Cover and Agriculture

The agricultural industry in Huron County has gross sales of about one billion dollars per year. This amount exceeds the individual outputs of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. With the increasing intensity of adverse and extreme weather events, the benefits provided by maintaining a balance of agricultural and forested land are becoming more evident. Woodlands and windbreaks reduce topsoil erosion caused by wind and water. Woodland soils and associated wetlands recharge groundwater aquifers and help to equalize increasingly volatile water flow patterns in streams and rivers. Studies in Ontario and around the world have also demonstrated crop yield increases by strategic placement of windbreaks and forest cover.

### Recommendation:

- *Continue outreach and education on the benefits of forest cover to agricultural production.*

## 1.2 Forest Products Industry

Huron County is home to a thriving forest products industry. While woodland owners generate millions of dollars annually from timber and firewood sales, the County also supports over a dozen commercial sawmill operations. In addition, numerous local manufacturers, woodworkers and other artisans utilize forest products from both local sources and sources outside of the County.

Well managed woodlands in Huron County have the potential to produce more income per acre per year than conventional field crops. The greatest challenge to this fact is lack of previous forest management and lack of planning for marketing. Most property owners only market timber from a woodlot three or four times in their lifetime. In addition, the rapid specialization and expansion of farm operations often leaves woodlots as an afterthought to the overall management plan of a farm. More than ever, support from knowledgeable professionals and peers is critical for long term success. To support good forest management, the County of Huron offers a “Forest Management Plan and Woodlot Enhancement” grant through the Huron Clean Water Project. Information about the Huron Clean Water Project is available on the Huron County website <http://www.huroncounty.ca/plandev/water.php>

Other programs in Ontario promote collaboration within the forest products industry.

- “Ontario Wood” is a provincial program that supports the connections between local wood products, sustainable forest management and a strong economy. <http://www.ontario.ca/business-and-economy/ontario-wood>
- Ottawa Valley Wood is an award winning program in Renfrew County to promote local businesses in the forest product and wood industries. <http://www.ottawavalleywood.com/>

**Recommendations:**

- *Using existing County economic development strategies, increase promotion of forest products and wood related manufacturers, artisans and retailers with targeted promotional programs similar to “Ottawa Valley Wood”.*
- *Promote the use of provincial awareness programs like “Ontario Wood” to local forest industry partners.*
- *Facilitate the development of value added markets for local forest products and to promote beneficial relationships between local wood producers and manufacturers.*
- *Continue the Forest Management Plans and Woodlot Enhancement Grant through the Huron Clean Water Project.*

### 1.3 Forest Cover and Recreation

Nearly every resident in Huron County lives within a ten minute drive of an accessible woodland, whether it be a County forest tract, conservation area or community trail. Tourism is central to the County’s economy, and much of the attraction to “Ontario’s West Coast” is based on the natural environment. Many Huron County destinations are associated with forest cover, including the Lake Huron shoreline, the Maitland Trail, the Hullett Wildlife Management Area, Point Farms Provincial Park and the conservation areas managed by the Ausable-Bayfield and Maitland Valley Conservation Authorities. With increased management and oversight, the County forests have great potential to be an integral part of future tourism promotions as diverse destinations for various recreational activities.

**Recommendation:**

- *Further enhance partnerships among County departments, the Huron County Health Unit, community organizations and conservation authorities to increase the accessibility and utilization of trails by pedestrians in community owned forests and on nature trails throughout the County.*
- *Explore strategies for protecting the forest cover along the Lake Huron Shoreline. Possibilities include, but are not limited to: enhance collaboration between Conservation Authorities, Huron County Forestry, lakeshore municipalities and Huron County Planning and Development; local Forest Conservation By-laws; a development permit system for lakeshore areas.*

## 2 Natural Heritage Planning

Local Official Plans provide a vision for a community's future. Official Plans outline what is valued in the community, and how growth and development will balance environmental, social and economic factors. The HNHP Technical Document defines and identifies natural heritage feature and the natural heritage system within Huron County. Section 2 provides recommendations for incorporating the Huron Natural Heritage Plan into the County Official Plan and local Official Plans.

### 2.1 Provincial Policy Statement 2014

The 2014 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS; OMMAH 2014) is issued under the authority of Section 3 of the Planning Act and came into effect on April 30, 2014. Section 3 of the Planning Act requires that decisions affecting planning matters "shall be consistent with" policy statements issued under the Act. The PPS is to be read in its entirety. Relevant sections to the Huron Natural Heritage Plan include:

- Section 2.1 Natural Heritage
- Section 2.2 Water
- Section 2.3 Agriculture
- Section 2.5 Mineral Aggregates
- Section 4.0 Implementation

PPS Section 2.1 Natural Heritage is below.

*2.1.1 Natural features and areas shall be protected for the long term.*

*2.1.2 The diversity and connectivity of natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems, should be maintained, restored or, where possible, improved, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features.*

*2.1.3 Natural heritage systems shall be identified in Ecoregions 6E & 7E, recognizing that natural heritage systems will vary in size and form in settlement areas, rural areas, and prime agricultural areas.*

*2.1.4 Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in:*

- a) significant wetlands in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E1; and*
- b) coastal wetlands.*

*2.1.5 Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in:*

- a) significant wetlands in the Canadian Shield north of Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E;*
- b) significant woodlands in Ecoregions 6E and 7E (excluding islands in Lake Huron and the St. Marys River);*
- c) significant valleylands in Ecoregions 6E and 7E (excluding islands in Lake Huron and the St. Marys River);*
- d) significant wildlife habitat;*
- e) areas of natural and scientific interest; and*
- f) coastal wetlands in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E1 that are not subject to policy 2.1.4(b) unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions.*

*2.1.6 Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in fish habitat except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements.*

*2.1.7 Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in habitat of endangered species and threatened species, except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements.*

*2.1.8 Development and site alteration shall not be permitted on adjacent lands to the natural heritage features and areas identified in policies 2.1.4, 2.1.5, and 2.1.6 unless the ecological function of the adjacent lands has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or on their ecological functions.*

*2.1.9 Nothing in policy 2.1 is intended to limit the ability of agricultural uses to continue.*

Regarding **water**, the PPS states (in part):

*2.2.1 Planning authorities shall protect, improve or restore the quality and quantity of water by:*

- a) using the watershed as the ecologically meaningful scale for integrated and long-term planning, which can be a foundation for considering cumulative impacts of development;*
- b) minimizing negative impacts, including cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts;*
- c) identifying water resource systems consisting of ground water features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas, and surface water features including shorelines, which are necessary for the ecological and hydrological integrity of the watershed;*
- d) maintaining linkages and related functions among surface water features, ground water features, hydrologic functions and natural heritage features and areas, and surface water features including shoreline areas; ...*

Definitions from the 2014 PPS:

*Ecological function: means the natural processes, products or services that living and non-living environments provide or perform within or between species, ecosystems and landscapes. These may include biological, physical and socio-economic interactions.*

*Negative impacts: means...*

- b) in regard to policy 2.2, degradation to the quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their related hydrologic functions, due to single, multiple or successive development or site alteration activities;*
- c) in regard to fish habitat, any permanent alteration to, or destruction of fish habitat, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the Fisheries Act; and*
- d) in regard to other natural heritage features and areas, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or ecological functions for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive development or site alteration activities.*

Regarding **mineral aggregates** the PPS states (in part):

- 2.5.1 *Mineral aggregate resources shall be protected for long-term use and, where provincial information is available, deposits of mineral aggregate resources shall be identified.*
- 2.5.2.2 *Extraction shall be undertaken in a manner which minimizes social, economic and environmental impacts.*

Regarding **agriculture** the PPS states (in part):

- 2.3.1 *Prime agricultural areas shall be protected for long-term use for agriculture.*
- 2.3.3.2 *In prime agricultural areas, all types, sizes and intensities of agricultural uses and normal farm practices shall be promoted and protected in accordance with provincial standards.*

Section 4.0 **Implementation and Interpretation** provides direction for implementing the Huron Natural Heritage Plan. The PPS states (in part):

- 4.4 *This Provincial Policy Statement shall be read in its entirety and all relevant policies are to be applied to each situation.*
- 4.7 *The official plan is the most important vehicle for implementation of this Provincial Policy Statement. Comprehensive, integrated and long-term planning is best achieved through official plans.*  
  
*Official plans shall identify provincial interests and set out appropriate land use designations and policies. To determine the significance of some natural heritage features and other resources, evaluation may be required. ...*
- 4.9 *The policies of this Provincial Policy Statement represent minimum standards. This Provincial Policy Statement does not prevent planning authorities and decision-makers from going beyond the minimum standards established in specific policies, unless doing so would conflict with any policy of this Provincial Policy Statement.*

## 2.2 Huron County Official Plan

The following amendments are recommended to the County of Huron Official Plan. In the County and lower-tier Official Plans, the terms ‘natural heritage’ and ‘natural environment’ are used interchangeably.

### 2.2.1 Recommended Policy Amendments

Amendments to the County of Huron Official Plan are proposed for the Natural Environment policies (Section 6) and Extractive Resources policies (Section 5). Policies to be added are shown in **bold and underline**. Policies to be removed are shown with a ~~strike through~~.

Section 6. Natural Environment, paragraph 4 refers to the natural heritage features and areas in the County.



**Recommendation:** *Section 6 paragraph 4 be amended to refer to natural heritage systems and the natural heritage features and linkages defined in the Natural Heritage Plan Technical Document.*

Proposed amendment for Section 6 paragraph 4:

The County **natural heritage system** contains a diversity of natural features, ~~and areas~~ **and linkages** including: wetlands, shoreline areas, woodlands, valley lands, **surface and ground water features, life science and earth science areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs)** and wildlife habitat. These features, where mapping is available, are shown on the Natural Environment Resources Map.

The County Official Plan Section 6.3.2 refers to the Natural Heritage Plan.

**Recommendation:** *Section 6.3.2 of the County of Huron Official Plan be amended to recognize the completed Natural Heritage Plan*

Proposed amendment for 6.3.2:

The County, in consultation with stakeholders, the public and the Province, ~~will~~ **has developed** a Natural Heritage Plan. The Natural Heritage Plan ~~will~~ **builds** on existing information relating to the identification and evaluation of natural heritage features, areas of local, and provincial significance, and ~~hazard lands and~~ will identify opportunities for linkages, restoration and enhancement as part of a natural heritage system. ~~The~~ **Updated** Natural Heritage ~~policies Plan~~ **may result in amendments to the County and/or will be incorporated into the** Local Official Plans, ~~in order~~ to reflect the recommendations of the Natural Heritage Plan.

## 2.2.2 Recommended Mapping Revisions

The Huron County Official Plan Natural Environment Resource Map is a reference map and is not an interpretation of the Natural Environment policies, nor does it represent land use designations (Huron County Official Plan Section 1.2).

It is recommended that the Natural Environment Resource Map be revised:

- *to include all significant and candidate patches as identified in the HNHP Technical Document Appendix A: 'Significant and Candidate Natural Heritage Features'*
- *to remove existing natural heritage features on the Natural Environment Map that are not identified in the HNHP Technical Document Plan Appendix A: 'Significant and Candidate Natural Heritage Features'*

## 2.3 Local Official Plans

The following policy changes are recommended for the local Official Plans. Draft local Official Plan policies are included in Appendix 1.

### 2.3.1 Natural Heritage Policies

- *Add a policy to refer to "How Much Habitat is Enough?" (Environment Canada 2013). This guideline provides thresholds for ecological requirements on a watershed scale.*
- *Define the following natural heritage features and functions: adjacent lands, areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI), coastal wetlands, fish habitat, habitat of endangered and threatened species, natural heritage system, negative impacts, significant, significant*

*woodlands, valleylands, watershed, wetlands, wildlife habitat, woodlands with definitions from the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement and refer to the Natural Heritage Plan Technical Document*

- *Add a policy to refer to Natural Heritage Schedules identifying natural features: wetlands (provincially significant, provincially significant coastal, locally significant, coastal wetlands), woodlands, life science and earth science areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs), wildlife habitat. An Official Plan Amendment to revise the Natural Environment Schedules will be required*
- *Add a policy reference to the Natural Heritage Plan including reference to the Natural Heritage Plan Technical Document*
- *Add a policy to define watersheds as the ecologically meaningful scale of planning that can be used as the foundation for considering cumulative impacts of development*
- *Remove policy reference to woodlot size in the local Official Plans*
- *Add a policy to describe the natural heritage systems approach which supports connectivity and linkages between natural heritage features. Refer to Natural Heritage Systems Schedule mapping*
- *Add a policy stating that development in the area of significant habitat for threatened and endangered species cannot proceed unless in conformity with the Federal and the Provincial Species at Risk legislation*
- *Revise the adjacent lands policies in the local Official Plan to define adjacent lands as 120 metres from all natural heritage features. An Environmental Impact Study may be required for development within the adjacent lands.*
- *Add a reference to the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Maitland Valley Conservation Authority, Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Watershed Report Cards where applicable*
- *Add a policy recognizing stewardship programs will work to increase natural cover and improve linkages and connectivity between natural features*
- *Add a policy to encourage development to give consideration to increasing natural cover and improving linkages*
- *Add a policy to allow natural features, and functions and linkages to be protected through site plan control*
- *Add a policy defining the Natural Heritage System*
- *Add a policy requiring that Environmental Impact Studies consider alternate development options, the possibility of avoiding impacts of development on natural heritage features and the impact on connectivity of natural heritage systems. Environmental Impact Studies must have regard for the Natural Heritage Systems Study in the Huron Natural Heritage Plan Technical document.*

### **2.3.2 Agricultural policies**

- *Add a policy reference to protecting natural heritage linkages in Agricultural ‘Goals’*

### **2.3.3 Urban Settlement, Village and Hamlet, Lakeshore Residential, Recreational and Residential Park policies**

- *Clarify that an Environmental Impact Study may be required for development within or adjacent to natural heritage features in Urban Settlement, Village and Hamlet, Lakeshore Residential, Recreational and Residential Park designations*

- *Clarify that development will be in accordance with the Huron County Forest Conservation By-law in Urban Settlement, Village and Hamlet, Lakeshore Residential, Recreational and Residential Park designations*
- *Add protection of natural heritage features, functions and linkages to the Site Plan Control policies*

#### 2.3.4 Mineral Aggregate policies

The PPS establishes a provincial interest for both protecting mineral aggregate resources and natural heritage resources. In the Huron County landscape, natural heritage and mineral aggregate resources commonly overlap.

The Huron County Aggregate Strategy (2005) recommended that local Official Plans designate primary and secondary aggregate deposits where there are zero constraints or one constraint. Natural environment constraints are defined by the 2005 Aggregate Strategy as: locally significant wetlands, locally significant life science ANSIs, significant woodlands, sinkholes, significant valleylands and floodplains. This means that where the Huron County Aggregate Strategy has been implemented as recommended in the local Official Plans, and there is only one natural heritage feature (according to 2005 natural heritage mapping), an existing aggregate resource has been designated Mineral Aggregate.

The Natural Heritage Plan provides updated mapping and modeling of the natural heritage features and systems in Huron County.

#### **Recommendations:**

- *Assess the policy implications of the Huron Natural Heritage Plan on the Mineral Aggregate Strategy*

Further, it is recommended that the following policies be added to local Official Plans that have implemented the Mineral Aggregate Strategy.

- *For Mineral Aggregate deposits that are designated Mineral Aggregate: Local Official Plans require an Environmental Impact Study prior to rezoning. EIS policies to include requirements for considering the impact of development on natural heritage systems (landforms and waterways) as identified in the HNHP Technical document 'Appendix B: Natural Heritage System in Huron County'. Policy to require that development and site alteration shall not be permitted in:*
  - *provincially significant wetlands*
  - *Significant woodlands, significant valleylands, significant wildlife habitat and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, or on lands adjacent to the foregoing features, unless the ecological functions of the feature and of the adjacent lands have been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural heritage feature or area, or on their ecological functions*
  - *Fish habitat and habitat of endangered species and threatened species, except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements*
- *For Mineral Aggregate deposits that are not designated Mineral Aggregate: Add a policy stating an Environmental Impact Study may be required for proposed mineral aggregate operations. EIS policies to include requirements for considering the impact of development on natural heritage features and natural heritage systems (landforms and waterways) as identified in the HNHP Technical document 'Appendix B: Natural Heritage System in Huron County'. Policy to require that development and site alteration shall not be permitted in:*

- Provincially significant wetlands
- Significant woodlands, significant valleylands, significant wildlife habitat and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, or on lands adjacent to the foregoing features, unless the ecological functions of the feature and of the adjacent lands have been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural heritage feature or area, or on their ecological functions
- Fish habitat and habitat of endangered species and threatened species, except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements

## 2.3.5 Mapping Recommendations

### 2.3.5.1 Natural Environment Designations within Agricultural Areas

- Include all significant and candidate patches as Natural Environment designations identified by the HNHP Technical Document 'Appendix A: Significant and Candidate Natural Heritage Features' mapping
- Where lands that are currently designated Natural Environment in local Official Plans but are not identified as significant or candidate in the HNHP Technical Document 'Appendix A: Significant and Candidate Natural Heritage Features' the Natural Environment designation may be changed to Agriculture

### 2.3.5.2 Natural Environment Designations within Urban Settlement, Village and Hamlet, Lakeshore Residential, Recreational and Residential Park Areas

- Significant and candidate patches identified in the HNHP Technical Document 'Appendix A: Significant and Candidate Natural Heritage Features' mapping be designated Natural Environment and/or recognized in a Natural Heritage Schedule. An Environmental Impact Study of natural heritage features may be required.
- Review lands that are designated Natural Environment in the local Official Plans and not identified in the HNHP Technical Document 'Appendix A: Significant and Candidate Natural Heritage Features' mapping. Where justified revise Natural Environment designation to appropriate designation.
- Local Official Plans to differentiate between 'natural heritage features' and 'parkland and open space' in Urban Settlement, Village and Hamlet, Lakeshore Residential, Recreational and Residential Park designations. Natural Environment mapping to be shown on the 'Natural Environment Schedules' including areas to be designated 'Natural Environment'. Parks and/or open space to be designated 'Parks and Open Space'.

### 2.3.5.3 Natural Heritage Schedules

It is recommended that Natural Heritage Schedules be added to the local Official Plans to identify natural features and the natural heritage system.

- Include Natural Environment Schedules in the local Official Plans identifying natural features: wetlands (provincially significant, provincially significant coastal, locally significant and coastal wetlands), woodlands, life science and earth science areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs), wildlife habitat. Official Plan Amendments are required to revise the Natural Environment Schedules.
- The HNHP Technical Document 'Appendix B: Natural Heritage System in Huron County' identifies the components of the natural heritage system including natural heritage features, and linkages

*(waterways and landforms.) Local Official Plans to include appendix mapping illustrating the linkage components of the natural heritage system: landforms and waterways. The natural heritage systems appendix will state that the natural heritage systems mapping is not a designation. Official Plan Amendments are required to revise the natural heritage system appendix mapping.*

## 2.4 Municipal Zoning By-laws

As required by the Planning Act Section 26(9), the municipal Zoning By-laws will be updated following five year Official Plan reviews to be consistent with the Official Plan.

**Recommendation:** *Update local Zoning By-laws to recognize natural environment features with following the direction of the HNHP Technical Document and the local Official Plan, with Natural Environment zones. Within Urban Settlement, Village and Hamlet, Lakeshore Residential, Recreational and Residential Park areas –Holding zones may be used to recognize natural heritage features*

## 3 Regulatory Tools for Natural Heritage Planning

The HNHP Implementation Strategy recognizes the Huron County Forest Conservation By-law and provincial and federal legislative tools for protecting natural heritage in Huron County.

### 3.1 Forest Conservation By-law

The Huron County Forest Conservation By-law 38-2013 regulates all woodlots greater than 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) and woodlands greater than 1 hectare (2.47 acres). The size of a woodlot/woodland is not determined by property boundaries but by the number of trees per hectare of a certain size. The larger the trees, the fewer that are required per area for the by-law to apply.

### 3.2 Provincial and Federal Legislation

Natural heritage features may be considered under the legislative framework of the following provincial acts: Conservation Authorities Act; Drainage Act; Endangered Species Act; Environmental Assessment Act; Migratory Birds Convention Act; Aggregates Act; Nutrient Management Act; Clean Water Act.

Federal legislation which protects natural heritage features includes: Species at Risk Act; Fisheries Act.

## 4 Supporting a Stewardship Ethic

Stewardship is defined as voluntary personal actions to care for, protect, conserve, enhance and improve a resource. The natural heritage features in Huron County have benefitted from a long history of stewardship completed both independently and with the assistance of agencies and government.

Stewardship can take several forms: projects, management decisions and most importantly, a conservation ethic. The majority of land in Huron County is privately owned and landowner stewardship is critical to not only protecting but improving natural heritage. Even agricultural lands that have no or limited natural cover can still perform natural functions such as infiltration, groundwater recharge, and

provision of habitat for species movement, feeding, or migration. Voluntary stewardship based on a conservation ethic has the potential to have the greatest positive, long-term effect on natural heritage.

#### 4.1 Provincial Policy Statement direction for Stewardship Efforts

Stewardship projects, management and ethics are consistent with Section 2.1 of the PPS (OMMAH 2014).

Landowner knowledge and a stewardship ethic will protect natural features and areas for the long term. (Section 2.1.1)

Native plant species are used in restoration projects. Although many tree planting projects use conifers, these are the best species for establishing forests and many native species fill in around the conifers to provide biodiversity. New plantations are colonized by vegetation that provide habitat for pollinators and birds. Over several decades, conifer plantations are naturally converted to a mix of deciduous species. (Section 2.1.2)

Natural areas are part of effective agricultural systems as less productive, erosion-prone land is retired from agriculture, allowing fuel and crop inputs to be used effectively and cost-efficiently on the best farmland. (Section 2.1.9)

A combination of a stewardship ethic and programs will reduce the planning and regulation applications to develop and alter habitat, wetlands, woodlands, valleylands and other areas of natural and scientific interest. (Section 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.6, 2.1.7, 2.1.8)

#### 4.2 A Collaborative Approach to Stewardship

Government, agencies and community groups play an important role in enabling and assisting private land stewardship. Assistance comes in the forms of education, technical assistance and financial incentives. Examples of these programs and initiatives will be discussed further in the document. As landowners, conservation authorities, municipalities, the county, the province and Nature Conservancy of Canada and Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy have an impact on natural heritage in the way their properties are managed.

Since 2004, the County of Huron has supported a multi-stakeholder 'Water Protection Steering Committee' (WPSC) to foster a collaborative approach to land stewardship. Members of the WPSC include Council representatives, provincial ministries, agricultural and lakeshore representatives, industry organizations and conservation authorities. Many innovative approaches to stewardship have been launched as a result of bringing diverse perspectives to a regular forum.

#### 4.3 Stewardship Programs

The majority of stewardship projects in Huron County occur on agricultural land to control soil erosion, control barnyard runoff, and manage nutrients. These conservation farming techniques can improve and protect water quality and quantity. Farm and non-farm rural landowners increase natural heritage features by planting trees on erosion-prone land, around existing forests and in floodplains along watercourses. These projects also reduce the amount of sediment that enters watercourses.



**Local Funding:** Many programs are focusing on increasing and improving natural heritage features. The Huron Clean Water Project (HCWP) began providing technical assistance and financial incentives to county residents in 2005 to undertake stewardship projects to improve and protect water quality. This program has important secondary benefits to natural heritage and the local economy. The project is funded by the County of Huron and delivered by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) and Maitland Valley Conservation Authority (MVCA). More than 1,800 projects have been completed between 2005 and 2014 including planting more than 150 hectares of trees, establishing 100 kilometers of windbreaks and fencing cattle out of 40 kilometers of streams. The HCWP is a good example of a program that improves natural heritage.

**Provincial and Federal Grant Programs:** Several government ministries and organizations provide funding for implementing stewardship projects such as tree planting and stream restoration. Conservation authority and Huron Stewardship Council staff work with the landowners and funders to coordinate projects and optimize the use of funds.

**Watershed Planning:** Community-based stewardship plans protect and improve natural heritage. The provincial Healthy Lake Huron program has targeted stewardship efforts along the Lake Huron shoreline, including three watersheds in Huron County. Watershed plans have been developed for the Main Bayfield, Bayfield North and Glenn Garvey watersheds to protect and improve forest conditions, wetlands, and water quality. Recommendations from watershed plans include establishing buffers and rain gardens, creating wetlands or berms, maintaining crop residue, following nutrient management plans, and planting windbreaks and trees on marginal land. Individual landowners and farmers complete stewardship projects each year. For example, 20 projects were completed in 2014 in the three Health Lake Huron watersheds within Huron.

**Tax Incentive Programs:** Terrestrial natural heritage resources are protected and conserved through tax incentive programs including the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) and Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP). However, non-farm rural landowners may need to pay the full residential tax rate on their natural areas if they do not qualify for the MFTIP or CLTIP programs. This can be a disincentive to retire agricultural land which is producing revenue. Forests on land owned by registered farmers are taxed at the same rate as agricultural land unless the land is taxed at a lower rate because it is designated as an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI).

**Performance Incentives:** The Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program began in Norfolk County and provides annual payments to landowners for providing ecological goods and services on their land. This may include natural heritage features but also includes pollinator habitat, wildlife habitat and carbon sequestration. Grants are available to help establish the projects. There is potential for a similar project in Huron County.

#### 4.4 Publicly Owned Forest Tracts as Demonstration Sites

Woodlands in Huron County have diverse ownership. Approximately 87% of the woodlands in the County are privately owned with the remaining 13% ownership combined between provincial and municipal governments and the Ausable-Bayfield and Maitland Valley Conservation Authorities.

**County Forests:** The County forest tracts total approximately 1521 acres (616 ha) and make up 1.2% of the total forest cover in the County. An additional 512 acres (207 ha) of environmentally significant woodlands are owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, including the Morris Tract provincial nature reserve.

The thirteen Huron County forest tracts are a legacy of the massive reforestation effort across southern Ontario that was undertaken by municipalities in partnership with the province, starting in the early 1900's. The County forests are symbolic of a province-wide effort to reverse serious problems including soil erosion, flooding and water pollution, resulting from non-strategic clearing and lack of forest management by the early settlers of Ontario. With proper management and community partnerships, these forest tracts can serve as valuable sources of environmental protection, education and recreation for current and future generations in Huron County.

#### 4.5 Outreach and Education

Natural heritage features can be degraded or threatened from a lack of understanding of the environmental benefits, goods and services provided. Outreach and education programs increase awareness of the ecosystem services and the benefits of natural features in the lives of the landowner families. The programs also provide practical information to protect and improve natural heritage features.

**Environmental Farm Plan:** Since 1991, the agricultural community has used the Environmental Farm Plan Program to learn about the best management practices to reduce the environmental impact of agriculture while improving profits and protecting natural heritage features. The EFP is delivered by Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and is a voluntary, confidential program. The plans can be used to strategically address environmental issues.

**The Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide:** Developed for rural residents who do not farm, The Rural Landowner Stewardship Guide helps rural landowners who wish to protect and enhance natural features and environmental quality on their properties. This will add value to landowners' enjoyment of their lands as well as contribute to the long-term protection of our natural heritage and clean water for future generations of Ontarians.

**Environmental Education:** Conservation Authorities and the Huron Stewardship Council deliver environmental education programs to school classes and youth that prepare young people to be good stewards now and when they become landowners. The programs connect school curriculum to local environmental issues.

Many local organizations and agencies hold workshops and outreach events. Topics are specific to the interests of the community and can include information that benefits natural heritage.

The Huron-Perth Chapter of the Ontario Woodlot Association is the largest organization dedicated to managing woodlots in a sustainable manner. Activities include information meetings and tours about restoration, biodiversity and caring for woodlots. These events foster relationships between like-minded people who can serve the role of community champions and mentors.



Education increases the conservation ethic and appreciation of nature. A conservation ethic is an ethic of resource use, allocation, exploitation, and protection. Its primary focus is upon maintaining the health of the natural world: its forests, fisheries, habitats, and biological diversity. Secondary focus is on materials conservation and energy conservation, which are seen as important to protect the natural world.

#### 4.6 References

Huron County. 2014. Forests for our Future: Management Plan for County Forests Recommendations for Tree Cover Enhancement. County of Huron. 40 pp. Available on-line at <http://www.huroncounty.ca/plandev/forestry-services.php>

Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (OMMAH). 2014. Provincial Policy Statement, 2014. 50pp.

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). 2010. Natural Heritage Reference Manual for Policy 2.3 of the Provincial Policy Statement. 2nd edition. 233 pp.

## Appendix 1: Natural Heritage Policies for Local Official Plans

The following policy amendments are provided as a template to incorporate the NHP Implementation Strategy in the local Official Plans. Policy wording may be revised to accommodate the format of local Official Plans. Bold underline refers to **wording to be added**; Strikethrough refers to ~~wording to be deleted~~.

SECTION 2.3.1	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES
Add reference to “How Much Habitat is Enough?”	<p>Natural Environment areas consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wetlands;</li> <li>• Woodlands;</li> <li>• Rivers, streams and fish habitat;</li> <li>• Valleys;</li> <li>• Groundwater;</li> <li>• Life science areas of natural and scientific interest;</li> <li>• Earth science areas of natural and scientific interest;</li> <li>• Wildlife habitat;</li> <li>• The lakeshore and lake bank;</li> <li>• Habitat for threatened and endangered species.</li> </ul> <p>Since settlement in the 1800s, extensive areas of natural environment have been diminished through clearing, drainage and development. The remaining natural environment areas take on a greater significance for the health and integrity of the ecosystem. The intent of this Plan is to protect these areas to ensure healthy ecosystems.</p> <p><del>Forests cover about XX% of (name of municipality) land base and provide many benefits for the natural and human environment. A forest cover target of XX% has been established for all (name of municipality) sub-watersheds. This amount of forest cover is achievable without removing any land from agricultural production. A map of sub-watersheds and forest cover targets is included in the background maps.</del></p> <p><b><u>“How Much Habitat is Enough?” (Environment Canada 2013) provides thresholds for ecological requirements on a watershed scale.</u></b></p> <p>These natural features are part of a larger system, and should be protected with a view to enhancing the entire ecosystem. Watershed planning is supported as a comprehensive and integrated approach for conservation. <b><u>The Ausable Bayfield /Maitland Valley/Saugeen Valley/Upper Thames River Watershed report card(s) are/is a valuable tool for measuring change in natural heritage coverage.</u></b></p>

SECTION 2.3.1	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES
Include 2014 PPS definitions for natural environment features and	<p><b>Natural Environment Definitions</b></p> <p><b><u>Natural features are defined below and are further explained in Schedules # to # of this Plan.</u></b></p>

<b>SECTION 2.3.1</b>	<b>NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES</b>
refer to the Natural Heritage Plan Technical Document	<p><u>Adjacent Lands means lands contiguous to a specific natural heritage feature or area where it is likely that development or site alteration would have a negative impact on the feature or area.</u></p> <p><u>Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI) means areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features that have been identified as having life science or earth science values related to protection, scientific study or education.</u></p> <p><u>Coastal wetland means</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>a) any wetland that is located on Lake Huron; or</u></li> <li><u>b) any other wetland that is on a tributary to Lake Huron, and lies, either wholly or in part, downstream of a line located 2 kilometres upstream of the 1:100 year floodline (plus wave run-up) of the large water body to which the tributary is connected.</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Fish habitat as defined in the Fisheries Act, means spawning ground and any other areas, including nursery, rearing, food supply and migration areas on which fish depend directly or indirectly in order to carry out their life processes.</u></p> <p><u>Habitat of endangered and threatened species means</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>a) with respect to a species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species for which a regulation made under clause 55(1)(a) of the Endangered Species Act, 2007 is in force, the area prescribed by that regulation as the habitat of the species; or</u></li> <li><u>b) with respect to any other species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species, an area on which the species depends, directly or indirectly, to carry on its life processes, including life processes such as reproduction, rearing, hibernation, migration or feeding, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; and</u></li> </ul> <p><u>places in the areas described in clause (a) or (b), whichever is applicable, that are used by members of the species as dens, nests, hibernacula or other residences.</u></p> <p><u>Natural heritage system means a system made up of natural heritage features or areas and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species.</u></p> <p><u>Negative impacts means</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>a) in regard to the quality and quantity of water, degradation to the quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their related hydrologic functions, due to single, multiple or successive development or site alteration activities;</u></li> <li><u>b) in regard to fish habitat, any permanent alteration to, or destruction of fish habitat, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the Fisheries Act; and</u></li> </ul>

SECTION 2.3.1	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES
	<p><u>c) in regard to other natural heritage features and areas, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or ecological functions for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive development or site alteration activities.</u></p> <p><u>Significant means it is ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount and contribution to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or natural heritage system. The Huron Natural Heritage Plan Technical document defines significance criteria for natural heritage features and linkages within Huron County, and provides the scientific justification for these features.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Significant, with regards to wetlands, coastal wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest, means an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time.</u></li> <li>• <u>Significant woodlands are areas which are 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. The Huron Natural Heritage Plan Technical Document defines significance criteria for woodlands.</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Valleylands means a natural area that occurs in a valley or other landform depression that has water flowing through or standing for some period of the year.</u></p> <p><u>Watershed means an area that is drained by a river and its tributaries.</u></p> <p><u>Wetlands means lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface. In either case the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic plants or water tolerant plants. The four major types of wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs and fens. Periodically soaked or wet lands being used for agricultural purposes which no longer exhibit wetland characteristics are not considered to be wetlands for the purposes of this definition.</u></p> <p><u>Wildlife habitat means areas where plants, animals and other organisms live, and find adequate amounts of food, water, shelter and space needed to sustain their populations. Specific wildlife habitats of concern may include areas where species concentrate at a vulnerable point in their annual or life cycle; and areas which are important or non-migratory species.</u></p> <p><u>Woodlands means treed areas that provide environmental and economic benefits to both the private landowner and the general public, such as erosion prevention, hydrological and nutrient cycling, provision of clean air and the long-term storage of carbon, provision of wildlife habitat, outdoor recreational opportunities, and the</u></p>

<b>SECTION 2.3.1</b>	<b>NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES</b>
	<u>sustainable harvest of a wide range of woodland products. Woodlands include treed areas, woodlots or forested areas and vary in their level of significance at the local, regional and provincial levels.</u>
Add reference to Natural Environment Schedules	<u><b>Natural Environment Schedules</b></u> <u>Natural Environment Schedules are included for guidance in interpreting the Natural Environment policies and do not contain designations. Schedules #-# include wetlands (provincially significant, provincially significant coastal, locally significant, coastal wetlands), significant woodlands and woodlands, wildlife habitat, significant valleylands, significant earth science ANSIs and life science ANSIs, as identified in the Natural Heritage Plan Technical document. Changes to the Natural Environment Schedules may only be made by amendment to this Plan.</u>
Add reference to the Natural Heritage Plan	<u><b>Natural Heritage Plan</b></u> <u>The Huron Natural Heritage Plan (HNHP) has been prepared for the County of Huron. The HNHP Technical Document defines significance criteria for natural heritage features within the County of Huron, and the Municipality of . It also defines the natural heritage system within the County of Huron and the Municipality of .</u>
Revise reference to watershed planning	<b>Watershed Planning</b> The integrity and function of the ecosystem will be protected, restored and enhanced. Watershed or sub-watershed planning integrates water management, environmental management and land use planning on an ecosystem basis. The Municipality of _____ consists of X sub-watersheds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____ sub-watershed</li> <li>• _____ sub-watershed</li> <li>• Etc ....</li> </ul> <p>The boundaries of watersheds and sub-watersheds provide natural limits for managing the relationships between human activities and the environment. <b><u>Watersheds boundaries will be used as the ecologically meaningful scale of planning and can be used as the foundation for considering cumulative development. Sub-watersheds within the Municipality of are shown in Appendix #.</u></b> The Municipality will participate in watershed and sub-watershed studies in cooperation with the Conservation Authority, adjacent municipalities, community groups and other agencies. Relevant findings of watershed planning may be implemented through amendment to this Plan and/or the Zoning By-law.</p>
Remove habitat for threatened and endangered species from “Natural Environment—Full Protection” to “Natural Environment—	<b>Areas of Natural Environment—Full Protection: Provincially Significant Wetlands, <del>Significant Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species and Fish Habitat</del></b> Natural Environment areas identified as provincially significant wetlands, <del>significant habitat for threatened or endangered species and fish habitat</del> are considered no development zones and are designated as Natural Environment—Full Protection.  <b><del>Areas of Limited Protection</del> Use of Existing Natural Environment Lots – Locally Significant Wetlands, Coastal Wetlands, Significant ANSIs, Significant Wildlife Habitat, Significant Valleylands, Significant Woodlands, <del>Adjacent Lands, Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species</del></b>

SECTION 2.3.1	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES
<p>Limited Protection”</p> <p>Add policy to permit Site Plan Control to protect natural heritage features</p>	<p>Development shall be directed away from forested and other natural areas where an alternative location exists on the property. However in some cases, Natural Environment areas identified as locally significant wetlands, significant ANSIs, significant wildlife habitat, significant valleylands, significant woodlands, may contain a residence and/or accessory buildings without detrimentally affecting the natural environment goals of this Plan. These properties may be rezoned to a special natural environment zone provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no alternative location exists on the property that is outside the Natural Environment designation;</li> <li>• the affected area is not a wetland, floodplain, a hazard area (unstable slopes, soils or sinkholes) or an area of natural or scientific interest;</li> <li>• on valleyland properties, no alternative building site exists outside of the valley land;</li> <li>• the development results in <del>minimal effects</del> <b>no negative effects</b> on the ecological features and functions of the area;</li> <li>• groundwater will be protected, particularly in vulnerable areas;</li> <li>• the local Conservation Authority or other appropriate agencies shall be consulted;</li> <li>• the residence may not be severed from the holding on which it is located;</li> <li>• the proposed dwelling complies with the MDS I formula, using Type B land use;</li> <li>• the site is suitable for construction, the soil is suitable for sewage disposal and an adequate supply of potable water is available;</li> <li>• development is in accordance with the County Forest Conservation By-law;</li> <li>• the site is serviced by a fully maintained municipal road (alternative standards may apply to existing developed areas);</li> <li>• development is in compliance with applicable Conservation Authority regulations; and</li> <li>• development may be conditional on natural environment enhancements, such as forest improvements, linkages, stewardship agreements and conservation easements;</li> <li>• <b><u>Site Plan Control (Section XX) may be used to protect natural features and functions.</u></b></li> </ul>
<p>Add policy referencing Fish Habitat and SAR legislative requirements</p>	<p><b><u>Fish Habitat and Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species</u></b>  <b><u>Development and site alteration shall not be permitted in fish habitat and/or habitat of threatened and endangered species except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements.</u></b></p>
<p>Add a policy defining the natural heritage system</p>	<p><b><u>Natural Heritage Systems</u></b>  <b><u>The natural heritage system includes both natural heritage features such as: woodlands and wetlands; and linkages, such as valleylands, watercourses and hedgerows. Linkages provide connectivity between natural heritage features. The linkage components are shown on Schedule # to this Plan. While the linkage components are not designated Natural Environment in the Official Plan, their importance to the natural heritage system is recognized. Development is encouraged to protect and improve connectivity between natural features. An Environmental Impact Study may include a requirement to evaluate the impact of development on the natural heritage system as shown on Schedule #. Changes to Schedule # will require an amendment to this Plan.</u></b></p>

<b>SECTION 2.3.1</b>	<b>NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES</b>
Adjacent lands are defined as 120 metres from all natural heritage features	<p><b>Lands Adjacent to Natural Features</b></p> <p>Provincial Policies require that lands adjacent to significant natural features be protected from incompatible development within <b>120 metres</b> of significant <b>natural features wetlands</b>.</p> <p><del>50 metres of significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat, significant valleylands, locally significant wetlands, earth and life science ANSIs.</del></p>
<p>Add reference to Watershed Report Cards</p> <p>Add a policy to encourage improving linkages with stewardship projects</p>	<p><b>Community Stewardship</b></p> <p>To become environmental leaders and to create a healthy ecosystem, the efforts and stewardship of the whole community are essential. Numerous individual and community initiatives are necessary for a healthy environment. Initiatives include awareness, water management, septic system maintenance, sustainable agricultural practices and forestry management. The Municipality will work with the Conservation Authorities, the Stewardship Council, the <del>Planning Department</del> <b>County of Huron</b>, the Huron County Health Unit and other community groups to promote a healthy environment. <b>The Maitland Valley/Ausable Bayfield/Upper Thames River/Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority's Watershed Report Card is updated every five years and County 'State of the Environment Report' will monitor and evaluate the natural environment coverage at a subwatershed level.</b> and the Municipality will provide information to the County when available. <b>The Municipality of _____ will rely on the Watershed Report Card to monitor the changing health of the natural environment.</b></p> <p><b><u>Stewardship programs will work to increase natural cover and improve linkages and connectivity between natural features, as identified in Appendix #, to enhance the natural heritage system.</u></b></p>
Remove policy referring to size of woodlot	<p><del>Forested areas greater than 1 hectare and less than 4 hectares are of local importance. Forested areas 4 hectares or larger are of Provincial significance. All of these areas shall be protected.</del></p>
Revise EIS Terms of Reference to consider development location(s) outside natural heritage areas	<p><b>APPENDIX: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY (EIS) TERMS OF REFERENCE</b></p> <p>Environmental Impact Studies should be conducted in two phases with Phase I identifying the suitability of the site for the proposed land use and/or development including an inventory of the natural features and functions present on the site. Phase II should identify conditions for development and any potential mitigation measures. The Phase I report must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate agencies before Phase II is initiated.</p> <p>A pre-consultation will establish the scope of the development proposal, identify the natural heritage/hazard issues to be addressed, detail the accepted methods of evaluation potential impacts, and specify the qualifications of personnel required to carry out these evaluations. The Terms of Reference for any Environmental Impact Study must have regard for the Natural Heritage Systems Study in the Huron Natural Heritage Plan Technical document. The Municipality may develop more specific guidelines; however the EIS will address the following issues at a minimum.</p> <p>Phase I: Site Suitability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An identification and description of the purpose of the proposed land use change and proposed development</li> </ul>

<b>SECTION 2.3.1</b>	<b>NATURAL ENVIRONMENT POLICIES</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Consideration of possible development locations outside natural heritage areas</u></b></li> <li>• The natural heritage features and functions, and/or hazard features present</li> <li>• The <b><u>components of a natural heritage system, including linkages</u></b> existing interconnections or corridors with adjacent natural features</li> <li>• The nature and duration of potential impacts to the site, adjacent lands and ecological processes/functions; and the potential cumulative effects of the proposed development</li> <li>• In the case of natural hazards, information relevant to the slope stability, flooding potential, and existing natural hazard processes will be addressed</li> <li>• The specific location of boundaries or edges of such features and functions, and the location of proposed development or site alteration with respect to these delineated boundaries</li> <li>• A description of the environment, including ecological processes/functions that will be affected by the development, as well as a description of the effects that will be or might reasonably be expected to be caused to the environment.</li> </ul> <p>The data will be reviewed and recommendations will be made to the Municipality on the suitability of the proposal from an environmental perspective. If the proposal is deemed suitable, actions will be identified that are necessary to mitigate the effect(s) on the environment.</p> <p>Phase II may or may not be required as a result of Phase I.</p> <p>Phase II: Development/ Maintenance/ Management Requirements.</p> <p>An assessment of the proposal giving particular attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential or expected impacts on the features or functions or natural hazard conditions,</li> <li>• Opportunities for enhancing the conservation and management or the features or functions,</li> <li>• Expected or proposed mitigation measures,</li> <li>• The applicant is required to complete an appropriate development plan for the proposal, including maintenance and management plans to protect the environment. The plan is to be approved by the Municipality based upon the recommendation of the technical review committee.</li> </ul>

<b>SECTION 2.3.2</b>	<b>AGRICULTURAL POLICIES</b>
Add reference to linkages in Agricultural Goals	To encourage the retention and reestablishment of woodlots, wetlands, <b><u>linkages</u></b> and other natural areas recognizing their benefits for agriculture and the natural environment

<b>SECTION 2.3.3</b>	<b>URBAN SETTLEMENT, VILLAGE AND HAMLET, LAKESHORE RESIDENTIAL, RECREATIONAL and RESIDENTIAL PARK POLICIES</b>
Remove Natural Environment	<b><u>URBAN NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE AND PARKLAND</u></b>



<p>references from Open Space and Parkland policies</p>	<p><del>Urban Natural Environment</del> and Open Spaces <b><u>and Parkland</u></b> serve important functions in urban areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recreation, tourism and beautification</li> <li>• <del>protection of unique or sensitive natural features</del></li> <li>• shaping and guiding urban development, and</li> <li>• providing buffers between conflicting land uses.</li> </ul> <p><b>1. Definition and Location</b></p> <p>The predominant use of land designated <del>Urban Natural Environment</del> and Open Spaces <b><u>and Parkland</u></b> shall be for conservation, recreation and park purposes. This designation covers the broad spectrum of open space and recreational areas in the settlement area from the grassy areas and treescape along roadside boulevards to the continuous open space along water courses. Flood plain policies apply to water courses susceptible to flooding.</p> <p><b>LOCATION:</b> The general location of lands designated <del>Urban Natural Environment</del> and Open Space and Parkland, and the limits of the flood plain area are shown on Schedule B. Specific locations for types of open space uses are shown in the Zoning By-law.</p> <p><b>2. Goals</b></p> <p>The <del>Urban Natural Environment</del> and Open Space <b><u>and Parkland</u></b> planning goals are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to provide the widest possible choice of recreational opportunities;</li> <li>• to beautify and enhance the quality of the urban environment;</li> <li>• to promote tourism in the settlement areas;</li> <li>• <del>to protect unique and fragile natural landscapes and environments such as aquifers, woodlots, floodplains, and fish and wildlife habitats;</del></li> <li>• to creatively use <del>natural environment</del>, parks and open spaces to shape and guide urban development;</li> <li>• to work with neighbourhood residents, service clubs and interested groups, and government agencies in meeting the parks and open space needs of the community;</li> <li>• to undertake a flood plain management program to ensure proper land use, and to minimize the level of risk to life, property damage and social disruption from flooding and the need for large capital expenditures for flood protection purposes.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. <del>Urban Natural Environment &amp; Open Space</del> <b><u>and Parkland</u></b> Policies</b></p> <p>1. Zoning</p>
---	--

	<p>Parks, <b>and</b> open spaces <del>and natural environment areas</del>, both public and private, will be placed under the <del>Urban Natural Environment and Open Space</del> <b>and Parkland</b> designation in the Official Plan and zoned to their specific use in the Zoning By-law.</p> <p>The establishment of new parks and open spaces will proceed by amendment to the Zoning By-law.</p> <p>2. Development and Maintenance of Open Space <b>and Parkland</b></p> <p>The Municipality supports the development and maintenance of <del>Urban Natural Environment and Open Space</del> <b>and Parkland</b> areas and recreational facilities in accordance with community needs and availability of resources.</p>
EIS required in Urban areas	<p><b>Environmental Impact Study</b></p> <p>Natural features and functions designated on Schedule B and/or shown on the Natural Heritage Schedules will be protected <b><u>in accordance with the policies in Section # (Natural Environment Section) of this Plan. An Environmental Impact Study may be required for development within or adjacent to natural heritage features. Where an Environmental Impact Study is required, it will be conducted according to Section # and Appendix # of this Plan.</u></b></p>
Development to proceed in accordance with the Huron County Forest Conservation By-law	<p><b><u>Forest Conservation By-law</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Development shall proceed according to the requirements of the Huron County Forest Conservation By-law and the Municipality of _____ Forest Conservation By-law.</u></b></p>
Natural Heritage Features on Natural Heritage Schedules may be zoned Natural Environment or -Holding	<p><b><u>Where natural features are identified on Natural Heritage Schedules, they may be zoned Natural Environment in the Municipality's Zoning By-law or a –Holding Zone may be used until an Environmental Impact Study is completed as required.</u></b></p>
<b>SECTION 2.3.4</b>	<b>MINERAL AGGREGATE POLICIES</b>
For local Official Plans that have implemented the Aggregate Plan, add a requirement that EIS demonstrate of 'no negative impacts'	<p><b>Proposed Operations in Designated Mineral Aggregate Deposits</b></p> <p>...A number of studies shall be completed to the satisfaction of the Municipality, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and other applicable ministries or agencies before approvals are obtained under the Planning Act (re-zoning) or the Aggregate Resources Act (aggregate license). The required studies are outlined in Appendix #.</p> <p><b><u>An Environmental Impact Study may be required. Where an Environmental Impact Study is required, development and site alteration shall not be permitted in:</u></b></p>

SECTION 2.3.4	MINERAL AGGREGATE POLICIES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Provincially significant wetlands</u></li> <li>• <u>Significant woodlands, significant valleylands, significant wildlife habitat and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, or on lands adjacent to the foregoing features, unless the ecological functions of the feature and of the adjacent lands have been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural heritage feature or area, or on their ecological functions</u></li> <li>• <u>Fish habitat and habitat of endangered species and threatened species, except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements</u></li> </ul>
<p>Where an OPA is required to change the designation to Mineral Aggregates add a policy that EIS demonstrate 'no negative impacts'</p>	<p><b>Proposed Operations Outside Designated Mineral Aggregate Deposits</b>  <u>An Environmental Impact Study may be required for proposed mineral aggregate operations.</u></p> <p><u>Where an Environmental Impact Study is required, development and site alteration shall not be permitted in:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Provincially significant wetlands</u></li> <li>• <u>Significant woodlands, significant valleylands, significant wildlife habitat and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, or on lands adjacent to the foregoing features, unless the ecological functions of the feature and of the adjacent lands have been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural heritage feature or area, or on their ecological functions</u></li> <li>• <u>Fish habitat and habitat of endangered species and threatened species, except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements</u></li> </ul>

SECTION 2.3.5	IMPLEMENTATION
<p>Site Plan Control can protect natural heritage features</p>	<p><b>Site Plan Control</b></p> <p>The site plan control provisions of section 41 of the Planning Act will be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- maximize compatibility between new and existing development and between different land uses;</li> <li>- improve the efficiency, safety and appearance of land uses;</li> <li>- ensure the provision of service and facilities;</li> <li>- widen County highways for a 30 metre wide road allowance;</li> <li>- <b><u>protect natural heritage features, functions and linkages;</u></b> and</li> <li>- implement development agreements.</li> </ul> <p>All land use designations are proposed site plan control areas, except for lands used primarily for one- and two- unit dwellings. Within proposed site plan control areas, Council may pass by-laws designating all or part of the areas as site plan control areas.</p>