

RECOMMENDATIONS

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SOE Reporting

This SOE Report represents a beginning, and sets a baseline against which progress can be measured. Regular updating is needed to effectively monitor the state of the environment in the Region, trends, and progress towards achieving goals. Many of these recommendations address Regional initiatives that are already underway. The SOE Report will help to coordinate and re-focus efforts on these important initiatives.

- 1 | **Recommended that the Region update the State of the Environment Report at three year intervals.**

Information Gaps

Many of the Region's resources are protected by policies, regulations and by-laws enacted by federal, provincial, regional or municipal governments. Whether these policies, regulations and by-laws are effective or not is not always easy to comprehend. There are 72 Environmentally Significant Areas in the Region, for example, but it is not known if all of these ESAs are healthy and functioning as they should. A Regional Greenlands System has been identified, but the Region does not have good information on the extent and health of individual greenlands management units. Filling these data gaps is vital in terms of understanding the health of the environment.

- 2 | **Recommended that Regional staff continue to liaise with relevant staff of municipalities, ministries, departments and organizations to fill the data gaps identified as benchmarks through out the report.**

Oak Ridges Moraine

The Region has initiated discussions with the Regions of Durham and Peel on developing a regionally led long term strategy for the Moraine. Development of this should proceed as quickly as possible. Monitoring of the health of the Moraine (its resources and ecological functions) should continue.

- 3 | **Recommended that the Region, together with the Regions of Durham and Peel, continue to develop a regionally led long term strategy for the Moraine that protects its natural functions and features.**
- 4 | **Recommended that the Region continue to work with the Province, Conservation Authorities, the Geological Survey of Canada and others to maintain and update information on the conditions of the Moraine's resources and ecological functions.**

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The Region has initiated discussions with Durham and Peel regarding a long term strategy for the Oak Ridges Moraine.

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Wetlands need continued protection in order to be able to support wildlife populations.

Greenlands

The Region has commenced a “Greening of York Region Initiative” to provide a context for the review of natural environment decisions, to help to identify partnering opportunities, to identify action areas, and to form the basis and background for the Greening of York Initiative Symposium to be held in June 2000.

Local greenlands protection strategies are needed to augment the Regional Greenlands System and identify natural heritage resources at a finer scale. These have been carried out (or are being carried out) by most of the area municipalities.

- 5| **Recommended that a Greening of York Region Strategy be prepared to turn policies related to York Region’s forests, greenlands and natural features into action.**
- 6| **Recommended that the Region continue to work with area municipalities to refine local greenlands strategies.**
- 7| **Recommended that the Region examine the feasibility of acquiring priority greenlands areas and identify potential acquisition methods and funding sources.**

Wetlands

Wetlands play many important roles with respect to storing surface water, filtering pollutants and supporting wildlife populations. Continued protection is needed to preserve these functions.

- 8| **Recommended that the Region and area municipalities continue to protect both provincially and locally significant wetlands from development and alteration.**
- 9| **Recommended that the Region support MNR's re-evaluation and complexing of wetlands and, where appropriate, make amendments to the Official Plan to provide continued protection to wetlands as they are re-evaluated and complexed.**
- 10| **Recommended that the Region encourage area municipalities to adopt fill by-laws to control filling and alterations to wetlands.**

Forests

The current extent of forest coverage - 15% to 18% - is significantly lower than the target of 25% set in the Regional Official Plan. A concerted effort by the Region, area municipalities, organizations and the public will be needed to meet this target. To stop the loss of forest cover, area municipalities should be encouraged to pass tree by-laws.

- 11| **Recommended that the Region develop a Forestation Strategy aimed at achieving a target of 25% forest cover. The Strategy should examine enlarging existing Forest Tracts, linking woodlots, forest blocks and greenlands management units, naturalizing abandoned farmlands and stewardship and acquisition strategies.**
- 12| **Recommended that area municipalities be encouraged to pass tree by-laws.**

Lake Simcoe

Lake Simcoe is an invaluable regional resource that suffers from many stresses. Its water does not meet the Provincial Water Quality Objectives for phosphorus, and its coldwater fish community is in decline as a result. Phosphorus comes from many sources including agricultural soil erosion, livestock and stormwater from urban areas. To restore Lake Simcoe to health, phosphorus inputs need to be reduced by 25% to 75 tonnes a year.

- 13| **Recommended that the Region continue to work with area municipalities, other municipalities in the Lake Simcoe drainage basin, and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to improve the quality of Lake Simcoe including the reduction of phosphorus in the lake.**

Water Quantity

Maximizing the efficient use of water is beneficial to the environment and the economy. Effective strategies to reduce water consumption need to target all users: farms, industries, commercial establishments, institutions and homes.

- 14| **Recommended that the Region continue comprehensive water efficiency initiatives to reduce non-essential use of treated drinking water.**

Water Quality

Safe drinking water and healthy lakes, streams and rivers are vital to human and ecosystem health.

- 15| **Recommended that the Region continue to use the most effective technologies in new water supply infrastructure to meet the highest practical water quality standards.**
- 16| **Recommended that the Region continue to use the most effective technologies in new wastewater treatment systems to meet the highest practical effluent quality standards.**



To restore Lake Simcoe to health, phosphorus inputs need to be reduced by 25% to 75 tonnes a year.



Good agricultural practices can significantly reduce the impacts of agriculture on the natural environment.

- 17| **Recommended that the Region encourage local municipalities and Conservation Authorities to continue implementing stormwater treatment in new developments and consider strategies to retrofit stormwater treatment technologies in existing developments.**

Agricultural Practices

Good agricultural practices (such as no till farming, the preservation of stream buffers, and separation of feedlots from surface waters) can significantly reduce the impacts of agriculture on the natural environment.

- 18| **Recommended that the Region work with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to encourage area farmers to use best agricultural practices.**

Solid Waste

Only 25% of the municipally-collected solid waste in the Region is diverted from disposal by recycling or composting. Higher diversion rates can be achieved with two and three bin systems and increased promotion of home composting.

- 19| **Recommended that Region continue to work with area municipalities to explore more effective systems for waste diversion that will increase the overall diversion rate for solid waste.**

Air Quality

Air pollutants come from many sources - including industries, power plants, furnaces, solvents and automobiles - and in many forms. Successful local strategies to improve air quality should target important local sources, involve key stakeholders, and include public awareness initiatives. Such local strategies could include such elements as promoting car pooling, using "green fleets" (e.g., alternate fuel vehicles), promoting use of wind or energy power, proclaiming Regional Clean Air Week, etc.

- 20| **Recommended that the Region continue to develop and implement a Corporate Clean Air Strategy aimed at improving air quality.**

Transportation

The transportation sector (in particular, the automobile) is the largest source of many common air pollutants. In comparison to the average Ontario resident, York Region residents drive cars more often and use public transit, cycle and walk less. Development of an integrated transit system for the Region and across the GTA will provide alternatives to car use. Promotion of pedestrian systems and higher density developments will reduce land consumption and encourage public transit use, walking, and cycling to local destinations.

In the year 2000, the Region will begin to develop a Transportation Master Plan dealing with all aspects of surface transportation needs (roads, rail, highways, trucks, transits, bicycling and walking) to the year 2031.

- 21| **Recommended that the Region continue to promote the development of an effective, integrated transit system within the Region and across the GTA.**
- 22| **Recommended that the Region continue to encourage higher density residential and commercial development.**
- 23| **Recommended that the Region promote the development of other alternatives to reduce automobile use such as pedestrian systems, use of bicycles, work at home and car pooling.**

The Region as Leader

The Region can play many roles; one of these is to lead by example. Within its own buildings, the Region can conserve water, use renewable energy sources, use energy efficient lighting, aim for a "paperless" and "garbageless" workplace, develop green procurement policies, use green fleets, promote car pooling, discontinue the use of pesticides, naturalize lawns, etc.

- 24| **Recommended that the Region consider declaring its buildings "Green Buildings" and develop programs to reduce its corporate impact on the natural environment.**

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