

# Natural Heritage Discussion Paper

## Written Comments

June 12, 2007

Mr. John Waller  
Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning  
Regional Municipality of York  
Planning and Development Department  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, Ontario  
L3Y 6Z1

Re: York Region Natural Heritage Discussion paper

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Region of York Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

The Town of Markham is currently undertaking the Environmental Policy Review and Consolidation Study (EMPR). Much like the Natural Heritage Strategy proposed by the Region, the Town's study is aimed at ensuring the Town's Natural Heritage policies and mapping are current and relevant and address new requirements introduced by the Province through the Provincial Policy Statement, Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. We appreciate the Region's support in providing input through the Study's Technical Advisory Group and plan to continue to consult with the Region throughout the study process. Attached for your information is the report to Committee on this study including the Study Terms of Reference.

The Town shares the Region's approach and principles for a linked and integrated natural heritage system. We concur that components of the natural heritage system within the 'Places to Grow' Whitebelt lands in Markham should be connected to the surrounding natural heritage system and address a sustainable balance between natural heritage and other community priorities. The specific requirements set out in the Region's Discussion Paper for the Whitebelt lands include:

- Identify the system in the white belt for protection (includes the cores and linkages);
- Target key elements of the system for securement;
- Strategically identify areas for enhancement/restoration to maximize the quality of the entire system;
- Ensure that policies are in place to implement the goals of the system; and,
- Involve extensive consultations on this strategy without implementation partners and stakeholders.

There is no apparent conflict with the Region's approach to identifying the natural heritage system in the Whitebelt relative to the study goal and objectives in the Town's Environmental Policy Review and Consolidation Study. Regional and Town objectives are the same for a strengthened and linked natural heritage system.



Markham Council has identified natural heritage protection as a corporate priority and has approved a comprehensive study process to include all current and relevant environmental policy by senior level governments, including Provincial Greenbelt conformity and proposals by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. As our study is underway, we are proceeding in advance of the Region in addressing natural heritage protection and Greenbelt conformity. The Town will be seeking the Region's support in ensuring that Markham is able to move forward with this important initiative and that issues involving the Region can be coordinated and addressed in a timely and efficient manner.

The Town also wishes to support the Region in establishing a Regional Trail network and an effective approach to infrastructure planning which are also important objectives for the Town.

We look forward to working with the Region on their Natural Heritage Strategy and expect that the work underway by Markham through the Environmental Policy Review and Consolidation Study will provide valuable and useful input into the preparation of the Strategy. The Town has targeted completion of EMPR by the end of 2007.

Should you have any questions regarding the Town's Study please contact myself at 905-477-7000 extension 4713 or Lilli Duoba at 905-477-7000 extension 7925.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Valerie Shuttleworth, MCIP, RPP  
Director of Planning and Urban Design  
Town of Markham

C. Members of Council  
Mark Schollen, Schollen and Company



Sent By Facsimile Only: 905-895-3482

IMS NO.: NNHC1C3

June 28, 2007

Karen Antonio-Hadcock, Senior Planner  
Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

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20 Bayview Parkway  
Box 282  
Newmarket, Ontario  
L3Y 4X1

Dear Ms. Antonio-Hadcock:

**RE: Natural Heritage Discussion Paper - June 2007**  
**York Region**

York Region has long been a leader in the recognition of the importance of the integration of natural heritage into planning for sustainable communities. The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority has been a supporter of York Region in its many initiatives including the Significant Woodlands Study and the Greening Strategy.

The Natural Heritage Discussion Paper draws together initiatives and issues in York Region related to natural heritage in the context of the challenge of accommodating the projected growth.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) has, as mentioned in the paper, developed a Natural Heritage System (NHS) that is based on a different methodology from that of the Toronto Region Conservation Authority. While the approaches are different, both Systems are based on principles of conservation biology and landscape ecology vetted through the South-Central Ontario Conservation Authorities Natural Heritage Discussion Group. This is in keeping with the direction set out in the Provincial Policy Statement for watershed-based planning. Of particular benefit is the common boundary between the LSRCA and the TRCA being that of the Oak Ridges Moraine, wherein the Provincial Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan takes precedence. As such, we see any possible issues arising around multiple natural heritage systems (at least between the LSRCA and the TRCA) as being easily overcome. We believe that policy implementation is key in achieving a sustainable natural heritage system. The policies should be reflective of the goals of integrated planning, taking into consideration the factors of water quality and water quantity. We hope that we can work with York Region in implementing the LSRCA Natural Heritage System through the York Region Official Plan as we work together to ensure sustainability of York Region's Natural Heritage System.

**A**  
**Watershed**  
**for Life**

The following comments are provided specifically to York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper:



Page 2 of 4  
Karen Antonio-Hadcock, York Region  
June 28, 2007  
IMS NO.: NNHC1C3

*Action 1: Update the Natural Heritage System*

We concur that 'cores' are an integral component of any natural heritage system. The features listed are a mix of policy-based features (e.g., ORM Natural Core), features identified by others (e.g., MNR - ANSIs) and features that have not particularly been identified (e.g., Fish and Wildlife Habitat). It would be beneficial to provide a definition for what is considered to be 'core' lands within the York Region NHS.

While connectivity is an important component of the natural heritage system, we caution that based on recent literature, the connecting (or re-connecting) of the landscape should be done with intent and with function in mind.

A review of recent scientific literature in preparation for the LSRCA NHS identified the importance of having large areas of woodlands, or 'Big Woods' areas. These large woodland areas provide sufficient habitat for area-sensitive birds and provide for biodiversity. The LSRCA has identified nine such areas, three of which are within York Region. Within these areas, all efforts should be made to retain all existing woodlands (even the small woodlands) and to further increase woodland cover.

*Action 2: Incorporate the Greenbelt Plan into the Regional Official Plan*

The Greenbelt NHS has been overlain on the LSRCA NHS to identify which features are contained within the NHS and thus, subject to the policies of the Greenbelt Plan. The Greenbelt Plan states that natural heritage features outside of the NHS are subject to the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS). The LSRCA NHS also identifies those features outside of the Greenbelt NHS to which the policies of the PPS apply.

*Action 3: Make Connections in New Communities*

The LSRCA NHS can be used to identify the natural heritage system within secondary plan areas in the White Belt. The LSRCA NHS ensures that connectivity outside of the secondary plan area is achieved and that features are valued in the context of the watershed.

*Action 4: Restore and Strengthen the Natural Heritage System*

We concur that the NHS as it exists today is far from ideal. Restoration and enhancement of the system should be undertaken with specific goals in mind, such as increasing interior conditions, creating a corridor for mammals, or linking two features for recreation purposes. The type and location of



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Karen Antonio-Hadcock, York Region  
June 28, 2007  
IMS NO.: NNHC1C3

restoration will vary depending upon the goal. For example, while increasing urban cover has multiple benefits to citizens and 'urban wildlife' (e.g., racoons, squirrels, etc.), it will have limited benefit to area-sensitive breeding birds. Further, care should be taken when considering connecting two features currently isolated. Recent literature recommends that possible negative factors such as the movement of invasive species and pathogens should be considered before connecting features.

*Action 5: Adopt A New Approach to Infrastructure*

The NHS should be given due consideration when planning for infrastructure. The LSRCA recommends the replacement of any loss NHS features as a result of projects undertaken through the Environmental Assessment process to ensure there is no net loss of the NHS within York Region. New road development should also plan for wildlife corridors and mitigation to reduce vehicle - wildlife collisions.

*Action 6: Establish a Regional Trail Network*

Carefully considered and strategically located, the development and enhancement of recreational trails can provide opportunities for strengthening the NHS.

*Action 7: Advance the Greening Strategy*

The LSRCA recognizes the significant contribution of the Greening Strategy to the NHS over the last few years. The concept of 'replacement' of the loss of features to development ties directly into the Greening Strategy as the locations for the replacement of features can be strategically identified to continue to contribute to the NHS.

*Action 8: Continued Awareness and Dialogue*

We encourage the Region to continue their dialogue and communication around the NHS with all sectors of the community. The LSRCA would like an opportunity to present our NHS to the Region and its local municipalities later this summer to examine opportunities to support the Regional NHS and Greening Strategy through the LSRCA NHS.



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Karen Antonio-Hadcock, York Region  
June 28, 2007  
IMS NO.: NNHC1C3

The LSRCA is pleased that York Region continues to be a strong community supporter of the NHS approach and implementation. We look forward to enhancing our existing partnerships and to finding new ways in which we can work together to protect our natural heritage system.

Yours truly,

Kim Baker, B.Sc.  
Senior Natural Heritage Biologist



nesra

**North East Sutton Ratepayers Association Inc.**

*NESRA is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization in the Lake Simcoe Basin*

*Member of Volunteer Canada and the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance*

Margaretha Vandervelden, PhD Director, Box 592, Sutton West, Ontario L0E 1R0

Tel 905.722.6958 E-Mail grethav@rogers.com

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24 July 2007

Mr. Bryan Tuckey, M.C.I.P., R.P.P. Commissioner of Planning and Services  
The Regional Municipality of York  
Planning and Development Services Dept.  
17250 Yonge Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1  
**Attention: Karen Antonio-Hadcock**

Re: Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, Draft, June 2007

Dear Mr. Tuckey,

On behalf of the North East Sutton Ratepayers Association Inc. [NESRA], we would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recently received Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

NESRA is a not-for-profit, incorporated community organization representing many hundreds of families in the Village of Sutton: as yet semi-rural and remaining comparatively rich in forests and wetlands. In other words, this place on the shores of Lake Simcoe is a recognized natural heritage resource in York Region.

From its inception seven years ago, NESRA has commented, in oral and written submissions, on land-use planning initiatives, locally, regionally, and provincially. Within the Town of Georgina, we have been and continue to be dedicated to constructive community participation in land-use change.

From our experience in the Town of Georgina, we learned that, as the progressive urbanization of the Region extends ever further into its most northern parts, so has and will, deforestation and associated negative impacts to wetlands, riverine landscapes and Lake Simcoe. The reality is such that much of the economic development in Georgina is so called “Greenfield” housing development. As NESRA has learned, the land-use planning process to date favours the business viability interests of the out-of-town

development industry. This, in our understanding, is at the expense of extant natural heritage, which is essential to a healthy Regional natural heritage system (e.g., *Deconstructing Forest Significance, Conservation versus Development in York Region*, Vandervelden, 2004).

As such, and in reference to page 7 of the Summary of Key Messages (bullet 4), we venture to say that treatment of the natural heritage system in the northern settlement areas of York Region (still largely not built-out) is just as critical in determining the overall success and health of the system, as in the new “Whitebelt” communities.

NESRA members strongly endorse the principle, as stated in the Foreword of the Discussion Paper, that a robust natural heritage system is key to ensuring the sustainability of York Region and that a *healthy natural heritage system is fundamental* and of simultaneous benefit, environmentally, socially, and economically (*emphasis ours*). In other words, a healthy natural heritage system is now recognized as a fundamental value of first-rank priority (e.g., see also, Joe Cortright, “Portland’s Green Dividend”, in *CEOs for Cities*, July 2007).

It is from our experience when we stress that the recognition that a healthy natural heritage system is fundamental to the triple bottom line is, in reality, incompatible with a commitment to identification and protection (let alone restoration and enhancement) of the Region’s Natural Heritage System through *Vision 2026* which “supports and promotes this commitment by balancing growth and the environment” (page 3, paragraph 1 of the Discussion Paper).

We say this, because, so far, growth (e.g., urbanization) has been a main cause of natural heritage loss, aided and abetted by the maxim of “balancing growth and environment” in guiding the development approval process or in the writing of policy—in the review and updating of municipal planning documents.

That is, so far, growth and protection of the natural environment have been incompatible, a trend that must be reversed if future growth is to be environmentally (and consequently economically and socially) sustainable. The present land-use planning and approval process is the culprit. The solution: to change that process by prioritizing, in policy and implementation, what is recognized in the Discussion Paper as fundamental: sustaining a healthy natural heritage system as the bottom line to social and economic sustainability.

In our comment on Implementing the Vision: The Regional Greening Strategy (page 4 of the Discussion paper), whereas NESRA endorses all nine of the Greening Strategies Action Areas listed, we stress the importance of Legislation (Action Area 6). That is, we consider the development of effective policies to protect remaining “natural heritage at all levels” as a critical precursor to Action Area 7. Urban Forest. We agree that urban forest plays a very significant role in greening, but emphasize that protection of extant urban forest logically (and economically!) precedes increasing urban green space.

Therefore, NESRA recommends that legislation protecting natural heritage be entrenched in the policies of both regional and municipal planning documents and, by extension, to the land-use approval process.

Furthermore, we recommend that land-use planning policies are *explicit* in setting priorities for the natural environment in conflict resolution: for example, through the use of Open Space designations and clear definitions.

As a corollary to the above, we also recommend that priorities for the natural environment be based on operationally explicit definitions of terms such as *significant* or *sensitive*. Presently, these terms can be used to either enhance or denigrate natural heritage, whatever the user's particular preference.

For that reason, and in reference to page 9 of the Discussion paper: Action 1: Update Our Natural Heritage System, NESRA strongly supports that the updated natural heritage system for York Region incorporate the findings and recommendations of the *Significant Woodlands Study* (2005). Inclusion of this Study in the Region's Official Plan will make a major contribution to the public-interest cause of forest conservation—provided that this Study will equally inform land-use planning in the Region's municipalities, in conformity with Regional policies for woodland protection.

Kindly confirm.

Respectfully submitted for the North East Sutton Ratepayers Association:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaretha Vandervelden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Margaretha Vandervelden, PhD, Director  
Peter Sibbald Brown, MFA, Director

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**From:** Harold Reinthaler [mailto:hreinthaler@schaeffers.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, July 06, 2007 2:35 PM  
**To:** FutureYork  
**Cc:** Paula Tenuta; Al Steedman; David Kellershohn; Fraser Nelson  
**Subject:** Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, Draft, June 2007

York Region Planning & Dev. Services Dep't.

Attention: Karen Antonio-Hadcock

I briefly reviewed the draft discussion paper and one thought came to mind with regards to infrastructure within Greenbelts etc.

Amongst other matters, we are involved in the conceptualizing, design and construction of stormwater management (SWM) ponds. Often agencies insist on these ponds being placed outside of valleylands etc. and instead on tableland. Too often I have seen SWM ponds placed at inappropriate locations resulting in massive cuts in tableland to provide the required depth to service the surrounding lands resulting in inefficient infrastructure.

When I see these situations I am reminded how, in some cases, these SWM ponds are more appropriately placed in valleys near their outlets while at the same time respecting flood plain requirements. There are several advantages to this, as follows:

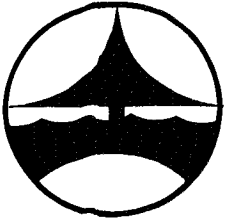
1. If SWM ponds are placed in the valleys, they are placed in the most logical place since the obvious fact that water flows downhill, resulting in more efficient infrastructure.
2. With the SWM pond placed in the valley it can complement the natural features of the valley in supplying water to the flora & fauna of the local environment
3. From a landform perspective, a SWM pond blends in much better to the topography of the valley rather than a massive excavation on tableland

Naturally, the design of a SWM pond within a Greenbelt etc. will have to be done properly and with sensitivity to the existing environment.

In summary, the main point I wish to make is to not make sweeping policy bans of placing any infrastructure within Greenbelts etc., since in some cases, it may be of actual overall benefit.

Regards,

**Harold F. Reinthaler, P.Eng., O.L.S.,**  
Associate Director  
Schaeffers Consulting Engineers



# TOWN OF GEORGINA

26557 Civic Centre Rd., R.R. #2, Keswick, Ontario L4P 3G1

REGION OF YORK  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

JUL 27 2007

BT

July 24, 2007

Regional Municipality of York,  
Planning and Development Services Department  
17250 Yonge Street,  
NEWMARKET, Ontario  
L3Y 6Z1

Attn: Bryan Tuckey, Commissioner

Dear Mr. Tuckey:

Re: Natural Heritage Planning

Town Council at its meeting held on July 16, 2007 received your correspondence requesting comments on the Region's 'Natural Heritage Discussion Paper'.

Your correspondence was referred to Harold Lenters, the Director of Planning and Building, for disposition.

Sincerely,  
FOR THE TOWN OF GEORGINA,

Carolyn Lance  
Administrative Assistant to the Town Clerk

cc: Harold Lenters, Director of Planning and Building

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**From:** Susan Swail  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 19, 2007 11:17 AM  
**To:** FutureYork  
**Subject:** Re: feedback re: natural heritage discussion paper

Dear Planning and Development NH planners,

Herein are my comments on your discussion paper. As a resident of King I appreciate the natural environment in our municipality. While I imagine the forest targets for the Region are mainly achieved through private land ownership in King I would suggest the need to strengthen the strategy to continue forestry management on private lands.

I find the strategy heavy on forestry and deficient in protecting wetlands in the Region. The Region has an opportunity to lead, by promoting green communities that go beyond regulation to ensure healthy liveable communities that protect our natural water systems.

One way you can go beyond is to protect locally significant wetlands. How many of the locally significant wetland are mapped and designated in OP's? What protection are we affording LSW? We could begin a sign program to identify our natural features.

Once we have the connectivity in place to protect natural core and linkage areas we could look to opportunities to expand it by encouraging developments to establish community trails connecting to the Oak Ridges Trail and other regional trails systems.

I would like to see York encouraging more green communities, East Gwillimbury is going the right way with their policies. How about encouraging grey water reuse and green communities by providing incentives for developers like a quicker turn around on planning approvals if they bring in green practices.

As a growing region, York has an opportunity lead by example. You have made many gains and I hope you will continue.

Please keep me informed as you continue the process.

Susan Lloyd Swail

Outreach and Program Manager

*Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation*

68 Scollard Street, Suite 201

Toronto, Ontario M5R 1G2

[www.ourgreenbelt.ca](http://www.ourgreenbelt.ca)

Our living countryside

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**From:** Harold Sellers, ORTA Executive Director  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 12, 2007 11:29 AM  
**To:** FutureYork  
**Subject:** Re Natural Heritage Discussion Paper

To Whom It May Concern:

I have received this document and have reviewed its content.

On behalf of the Oak Ridges Trail Association I can confirm our interest and willingness to participate in this project.

In particular, we would be supportive of Action 6, Establish a Regional Trail Network. The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail would be a "backbone" to such a network, and thus we will be most happy to assist in any way that we can.

Sincerely yours,

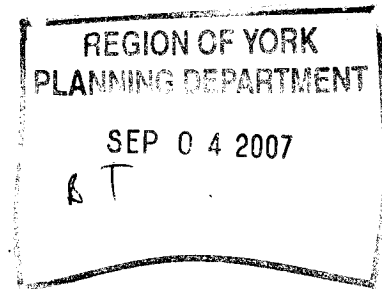
Harold Sellers  
Executive Director  
Oak Ridges Trail Association  
[www.oakridgestrail.org](http://www.oakridgestrail.org)  
(905) 833-6600

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August 29, 2007

Mr. Bryan Tuckey  
Commissioner of Planning and Development Services  
The Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, Ontario  
L3Y 6Z1



Dear Mr. Tuckey: *Bryan*

Please accept my apologies in taking so long to acknowledge receipt of your report entitled "Natural Heritage Discussion Paper".

I appreciated receiving this information and would like to congratulate the Region in preparing such a comprehensive and informative document.

I was particularly pleased to see references to land securement, restoration and trails. As you are aware, these are three of the five program areas that the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation supports and several of them have been supported in York Region. At this time, I would like to reiterate our commitment to maintaining the partnership that has been established with York Region and would encourage your staff to approach the Foundation for funding when opportunities arise that would support these program areas.

I wanted to bring to your attention, the Caring for the Moraine Project which has been coordinated by the Foundation over the last two years. The Caring for the Moraine Project model is unique. It coordinates 28 organizations across the moraine into a proactive, efficient collaboration of partners focusing on stewardship activities in key priority areas across the moraine. By bringing all of the key stakeholders together, we are avoiding duplication, pooling resources and expertise and delivering a co-ordinated program. The project is comprised of two components: landowner contact and on-the-ground stewardship projects. Landowner contact activities have included activities such as targeted letter mail-outs, follow up phone calls and property visits. Stewardship projects have included tree planting, wetland enhancement/creation, stream rehabilitation and prairie restoration projects. Caring for the Moraine has proven to be a cost-efficient manner in which to deliver private land stewardship incentives and assistance while making it easy for the landowner to better understand who does what and where.

OAK RIDGES  
MORaine FOUNDATION  
THE GATE HOUSE  
13900 DUFFERIN STREET NORTH  
KING CITY, ON L7B 1B3  
TEL: 905 833 5733  
FAX: 905 833 8379  
EMAIL: info@ormf.com


...2/



The Foundation has also been supporting the Oak Ridges Trail Association who is striving to permanently secure the trail for use and enjoyment by our local communities. Over the last few years, it has become evident that this is a timely and costly venture. If in fact we are to make any headway in securing and promoting the trail, it will be important to forge stronger relationships with both our local and regional municipalities. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further the trail initiative with your staff.

We commend the Region for their foresight into ensuring that our natural heritage systems across your Region, the Oak Ridges Moraine and southern Ontario are restored and protected for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Gavine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "G".

Kim Gavine  
Executive Director  
Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation



Town of  
**East Gwillimbury**

CWC 2007- 195 DLS

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE COUNCIL**

MOVED BY *[Signature]*

DATE : August 13, 2007

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** Development and Legal Services Department Report P2007-67 dated August 13, 2007, regarding Comments on York Region’s Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, be received;

**THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Region of York’s Long Range and Strategic Planning Department as the Town’s preliminary comments on the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, which include the following:

- York Region should continue to coordinate their Natural Heritage System (NHS) planning with the work currently being done by Beacon Environmental on behalf of the Town and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), by hosting regular consultation sessions and incorporating the Town’s detailed field investigations and four-tiered NHS policy work into the regional NHS;
- Significant wooded areas identified in the York Region’s Significant Woodlands Study through the North South Environmental work require additional investigation and field work before being included in the NHS mapping, and
- The Town supports the Region’s position that the NHS and associated policy framework should address the need for a more flexible policy approach to NHS planning within the Places to Grow “whitebelt” areas of the Region in order to promote the development of complete and connected communities;

**THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to Beacon Environmental and referred to the Town’s Natural Heritage System Update and overall Official Plan Review process.

CARRIED

DEFEATED

TIED (LOST)

*[Signature]*  
Councillor J. Halseman, Chair



# Town of East Gwillimbury

## **DEVELOPMENT AND LEGAL SERVICES REPORT P2007-67**

To: Committee of the Whole Council  
Date: August 13, 2007  
Subject: Comments on York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper  
Origin: Development and Legal Services Department  
Policy Planning Branch

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. THAT Development and Legal Services Department Report P2007-67 dated August 13, 2007, regarding Comments on York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, be received;
2. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Region of York's Long Range and Strategic Planning Department as the Town's preliminary comments on the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, which include the following:
  - York Region should continue to coordinate their Natural Heritage System (NHS) planning with the work currently being done by Beacon Environmental on behalf of the Town and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), by hosting regular consultation sessions and incorporating the Town's detailed field investigations and four-tiered NHS policy work into the regional NHS;
  - Significant wooded areas identified in the York Region's Significant Woodlands Study through the North South Environmental work require additional investigation and field work before being included in the NHS mapping, and
  - The Town supports the Region's position that the NHS and associated policy framework should address the need for a more flexible policy approach to NHS planning within the Places to Grow "whitebelt" areas of the Region in order to promote the development of complete and connected communities;
3. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to Beacon Environmental and referred to the Town's Natural Heritage System Update and overall Official Plan Review process.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper to Council for their review and comment, as part of the Region's stakeholder consultation.

### **BACKGROUND**

York Region has faced significant growth over the past 25 years, placing considerable pressure on the Region's Natural Heritage System (NHS). The Region's Natural Heritage Discussion

Paper is intended to raise awareness of the issues related to NHS protection in light of the growth challenges faced by the Region.

In June 2006, Regional Council received the final report of the Towards Sustainability in York Region (TSYR) Advisory Group, which provided recommendations for the establishment of a linked NHS and to develop a Transportation Master Plan that would respect the integrity of a Regional NHS.

In November 2006, Regional staff held a Natural Heritage Workshop to discuss how to protect and enhance the Region's NHS and how to make infrastructure planning more sustainable.

In March 2007, the Region's draft Sustainability Strategy was received by Regional Council for review and consultation. The Draft Sustainability Strategy provides a framework for making smarter, more sustainable decision. The Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper demonstrates the Region's commitment to protect the health of the NHS to ensure overall sustainability, thereby providing an inherent connection between the Sustainability Strategy and the future of natural heritage planning.

As a result of these forums and initiatives, the Region researched and prepared a Natural Heritage Discussion Paper that addresses several issues, including:

- Updating the Regional NHS (Greenlands System) with the addition of significant Woodlands;
- Incorporating the Greenbelt Plan into the Regional Official Plan (ROP);
- Establishing principles for a linked NHS of cores and corridors within the Region;
- NHS within whitebelt areas;
- Establishing a conceptual trail network within the NHS;
- Fully integrating infrastructure planning, design, and construction with natural heritage principles; and
- Updating the Region's Greening Strategy.

Results of the comments on the Discussion Paper will be brought back to the Planning and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council in the Fall of 2007 and a draft NHS is expected to be circulated to area municipalities and various stakeholders by the end of 2007.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Guiding Principles and Action Areas**

Both York Region and the Town are faced with the challenge of coordinating provincial and emerging LSRCA policies to ensure a comprehensive approach to NHS planning. There have been a number of provincial initiatives, including the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan,

the Greenbelt Plan, the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), as well as LSRCA's natural heritage studies which have refined NHS planning within the Lake Simcoe watershed.

On July 27, 2007, the LSRCA's Board of Directors approved the Lake Simcoe Watershed NHS Phase 1: Components and Policy Templates, which established a four-tiered policy approach to NHS planning and the development of GIS-based mapping identifying environmental features. Phase 2 will commence in August 2007 as the LSRCA begins to develop a restoration, enhancement and securement strategy.

The Region's approach to natural heritage planning is based on five key principles:

- Ensuring sustainability of York Region's NHS;
- Raising awareness for the importance of the NHS;
- Creating new and nurture existing partnerships in natural systems planning;
- Integrating NHS goals and infrastructure planning, design and construction;
- Identifying action areas for implementation.

The discussion paper examines the current Greenlands System, the changing provincial and local policy context and informs a new approach by identifying eight Natural Heritage Action Areas for implementation, which are outlined below:

- Update the Region's NHS
- Incorporate the Greenbelt Plan into the ROP
- Make Connections in New Communities
- Restore and Strengthen the NHS
- Adopt a New Approach to Infrastructure
- Establish a Regional Trail Network
- Advance the Greening Strategy
- Continued Awareness and Dialogue

The discussion paper does not provide any great level of detail in the specifics of the various strategies contained in the document. Town staff request an opportunity to review and comment once more detailed work is established and throughout the Region's NHS work.

#### Town of East Gwillimbury NHS Update

The Town's *Thinking Green!* strategy and NHS update will address many of the same issues and explore similar policies and initiatives that the Region has outlined in their discussion paper, with respect to increased natural cover, improved trail networks, and enhanced greening strategies.

As part of the Official Plan (OP) Review, the Town's NHS is being reviewed and updated by Beacon Environmental, in consultation with the LSRCA and the Region of York to further

protect and enhance the environment. Beacon's work involves the identification and mapping of all natural environmental features together with a policy framework to deal with environmental protection and enhancement. The Town will work with Beacon to tie together all of the various environmental designations and policy approaches from the various community plans, in order to provide a more comprehensive and cohesive approach to a contiguously linked system throughout the Town.

Beacon will be completing fieldwork this summer, working towards a more detailed analysis of the Town's natural environment. Beacon will then create a strategy to implement the policies of the NHS and similarly to the Region's work, it is intended that the NHS will be linked through a comprehensive trail network. The Town's NHS policy work is to be completed this fall, with a final report to Council in November. The Town will continue to work closely with the Region and ask that Beacon's comprehensive field work and policy initiatives be incorporated into the Region's NHS work.

#### Consultation and Coordination

The Region will be completing their NHS work in-house and as a result, the Region's NHS approach differs from the work that Beacon has done for the LSRCA and is currently refining for the Town. Town staff recommend that the Region coordinate their NHS work with the LSRCA and the Town's by taking into consideration Beacon's four-tiered strategy that implements provincial policy regarding natural heritage, protects significant environmental features, and achieves a balanced approach to development.

Also, the Region's large-scale NHS work will not be as sensitive to the detailed field work being done at the local level. Town staff recommend that the Region incorporate the Town's refined NHS policy work and field investigations at the local level into the Region's NHS work. To ensure that the Region's NHS work is coordinated with Beacon's work for the Town and the LSRCA, the Town has incorporated consultation meetings with representatives from the Region, LSRCA, Beacon and the Town, into our NHS process.

#### Comments and Concerns

It is recommended that the Committee of the Whole Council receive this report as information and indicate its general support for the Region's initiative with the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper. In addition, it is recommended that the various strategies identified in the discussion paper be supported, particularly in the area of sustainable infrastructure planning (pg.16-17), as the Town is exploring similar policies and initiatives through our Master Plan work. Examples of sustainable infrastructure planning include enhanced transit options, more efficient infrastructure services, and innovative construction techniques that account for environmental features.

The Town also supports the Region's position that the NHS and associated policy framework should address the need for a different, more flexible policy approach to the NHS within the Places to Grow "whitebelt" areas of the Region. It is our general observation that the extent of marginal environmental areas and the potential need to provide extensive buffers and protections may undermine the ability to achieve an appropriate built form and connected new communities in accordance with the community building objectives of the PPS and Provincial Growth Plan. In order to create complete communities, some innovative compensation and enhancement programs will have to be created and this is one area in particular that the Town could work cooperatively with the Region.

One area of concern with the Region's NHS work is the incorporation of the Significant Woodlands Study, completed by North South Environmental in 2005. Significant wooded and forest areas identified by the Region of York through the North South Environmental work require additional investigation and "ground-truthing" before being included in the NHS mapping. It is staff's understanding that the Significant Woodlands work was compiled on a large-scale based on remote sensing and aerial photography. The North South Environmental work incorrectly identified some marginal woodland patches of successional growth with poor connections or linkages to other NHS features as significant woodlands. It is recommended that the Region not adopt the findings of this study without completing further work and conducting field investigations. It is recommended that the detailed field work being done by Beacon Environmental at the local level be adopted into the Region's NHS work.

There is also a general concern at the local level with the number of overlapping policy regimes, from the provincial level, down to the conservation authority level. Staff are concerned about being overrun by conflicting Natural Heritage Systems and potential issues that might arise with conformity exercises when finalizing our NHS update. As a result, consultation and coordination are a very important component to the Town's and Region's NHS work.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None identified at this time.

### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN**

York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper is aligned with the first Strategic Pillar of the Strategic Plan; to Protect and Enhance the Environment. It also aligns with the objectives of the Town's *Thinking Green!* Strategy by contributing to the establishment of more sustainable communities and protecting the natural environment.

## NEED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Both York Region and the Town of East Gwillimbury have and will continue to incorporate public consultation sessions into their NHS work and OP Review processes.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper provides a sustainable approach to natural heritage planning. While the discussion paper advances the state of natural heritage planning, it needs to provide a more detailed methodology, including more specific actions and initiatives. The comments outlined in this report summarize the Town's preliminary comments and more detailed comments will be developed through the Town's work with Beacon. The Town will continue to work cooperatively with York Region in updating our NHS, in order to ensure conformity with provincial and regional initiatives.

## ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1 – York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper  
(Distributed under a separate cover)

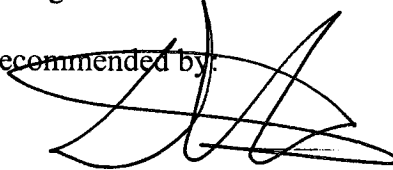
This Report has been reviewed by the senior management team.

Prepared by:



Robin Skinner, B.E.S.  
Environmental Planner

Recommended by:



Dan Stone, MCIP, RPP,  
Manager of Policy Planning

Submitted by:



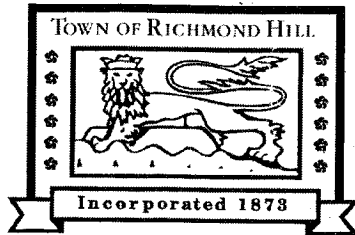
Don Sinclair, General Manager  
Development and Legal Services

Approved for Submission:



Thomas R. Webster  
Chief Administrative Officer

Encl.  
(August 2007)



Town of Richmond Hill

P.O. Box 300  
225 East Beaver Creek Road  
Richmond Hill, Ontario  
Canada L4C 4Y5  
(905) 771-8800  
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September 24, 2007

John Waller, Director of Long Range and Strategic Planning  
The Regional Municipality of York  
Planning and Development Services Department  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Mr. John Waller:

**Re: York Region Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, Draft June 2007**

We have reviewed the York Region Natural Heritage Discussion Paper and submit the following comments for your consideration:

1. We would like to express our support for the recommendation that the Region focus on improving the environmental protection component of infrastructure planning and construction.
2. We encourage the Region to investigate and perhaps showcase (through the Regional Natural Heritage Strategy) successful natural heritage projects and programs that have been recently undertaken in York Region. For example, the Town of Richmond Hill Healthy Yards Program is a very successful initiative that is partly funded by the Region's Greening Initiative. Other municipalities could use showcased programs as templates for developing their own programs.
3. It would be our preference that the final York Region Natural Heritage Strategy define the Regional Natural Heritage System using terminology set out in Part V, Section 2 (clauses 2.1.3 and 2.1.4) of the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement issued under the Planning Act R.S.O. 1990. We believe that consistency with the PPS terminology will provide for the best protection of natural features possible through the development process.
4. The 8 action items outlined in the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper describe a Natural Heritage Strategy predominantly focused on delineating the Region's Natural Heritage System. Action Item 5— Adopt a New Approach to Infrastructure, discusses mitigation of the natural heritage impacts associated with siting and constructing infrastructure. We recommend that this action remain focused on infrastructure coordination, but that it also consider other negative impacts to the Natural Heritage System (e.g., pesticide use, encroachments, human disturbances).
5. We're somewhat concerned about the manner in which the concept of "sustainability" is used in various sections of the document. The term "sustainable development", when originally coined by the Bruntland Commission, was intended to foster decision-making processes that give equal consideration to environmental, economic and social issues. To

John Waller  
August 1, 2007

2

use the phrase “environmentally sustainable” is counterproductive to the fostering “sustainable development” as it disregards the need to balance economic, environmental and social considerations by focusing exclusively on the environment. The semantics of “sustainability” may not seem particularly important, but the idea of balance is central to the usefulness of the term.

6. We would be very interested in exchanging natural heritage data with the Region. We encourage the Region to take the lead in coordinating the sharing of natural heritage data collected by various organizations. Additionally, the Region is well-positioned to coordinate the consolidation of digital mapping information related to nature trail systems in order to establish interjurisdictional connections.
7. We feel it is essential that trail funding strategies be investigated and that alternative approaches to trail funding are developed as a component of any discussion regarding the expansion of, and improvements to, the Regional trail system.
8. The Town of Richmond Hill would like to confirm its interest in continuing to partner with the Region to implement natural heritage programs. Existing Town of Richmond Hill—York Region partnership programs, such as our Healthy Yards Program, tree planting programs and the Pesticide Reduction Strategy, have been extremely successful.

In summary, we commend the Region for initiating discussions regarding a regional natural heritage system and natural heritage strategy and look forward to partnering to implement natural heritage projects and programs. If you have any questions regarding the comments above please contact Tracey Steele, Manager of Parks Planning and Natural Heritage; 905-771-2476 or [tsteele@richmondhill.ca](mailto:tsteele@richmondhill.ca).

Sincerely,

Tracey Steele B.Sc. M.E.S. CCEP  
Manager of Parks Planning and Natural Heritage  
Parks Development and Design Division

cc: Mayor David Barrow  
Lynton Friedberg, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Culture  
Audrey Hollasch, Director of Parks Development and Design  
Ann Marie Farrugia, Natural Heritage Coordinator

 **TORONTO AND REGION**  
**Conservation**  
*for The Living City*

BT  
JBW  
BJ

September 6, 2007

Ms. Karen Antonio-Hadcock  
Planning and Development Services Department  
The Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Newmarket, Ontario  
L3Y 6Z1

Dear Ms. Antonio-Hadcock:

**Re: York Region Natural Heritage Discussion Paper, Draft June 2007**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Natural Heritage Discussion Paper. We are extremely pleased to see the Region's commitment to the successful implementation of an updated natural heritage system through the white belt area and enhancements through the intensifying urban areas. The Region's intent to integrate the natural heritage system into infrastructure planning, design and construction is also to be commended.

We agree that the successful implementation of the natural heritage system will be critical to creating healthy, livable communities. The prominence of a "systems" approach is strongly supported by TRCA. It is also good to see that the need for enhancement and restoration of the natural system is one of the key messages in the document, as this is also one of the major recommendations of the TRCA's Terrestrial Natural Heritage System Strategy (TNHSS).

Taking a triple bottom line assessment for regional initiatives, integration of natural heritage goals with York's transportation master plan and restoring and strengthening the natural heritage system dove-tail nicely with York's Sustainability Strategy.

We would like to offer the following specific comments:

- In the Forward on Page 1 "climate change adaptation" should be added to the list. A healthy natural heritage system that supports bio-diversity will provide the habitats and connectivity to allow species to move and adapt to changing climate thus sustaining bio-diversity over the long term.
- On page 9 the list of features could also include: Key Natural Heritage/Hydrological features as described in the ORMCP, sand barrens, savannahs, tall grass prairies, alvars, and seepage areas/springs. As well, regional forests could also be added.
- It should be noted that the TRCA's terrestrial natural heritage system does not use the terms "core" and "corridor". Nevertheless, our system design model does incorporate all the listed features on Page 9 and the resulting system allows for connectivity a many scales.

C:\york NH discussion Paper comments.doc

*Member of Conservation Ontario*

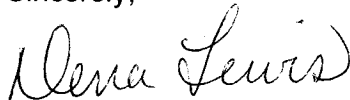
5 Shoreham Drive, Downsview, Ontario M3N 1S4 (416) 661-6600 FAX 661-6898 [www.trca.on.ca](http://www.trca.on.ca)



- Page 11 "Ecological Connectivity" is extremely complex. While physical connections can be important, functional connectivity can also be achieved by other means. Insuring that good quality habitat is well distributed throughout the landscape is also vitally important.
- We strongly support Action #4 (Page 14) "Restore and strengthen the Natural Heritage System". We believe that the tools that TRCA has developed as part of its TNHSS will be valuable in helping direct and prioritize restoration actions. We are currently working on an "ecosystem recovery" program that will provide additional tools to refine priorities and set vegetation community and species objectives for restoration.

This discussion paper is a demonstration of York Region's continued leadership in natural heritage protection and sustainability and I again thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Should you have any questions regarding these comments please do not hesitate to call me at 416.661.6600, extension 5225.

Sincerely,



Dena Lewis  
Manager, Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology  
Ecology Division

cc: Brian Denney, TRCA  
Deb Martin-Downs, TRCA

**Ministry of Public  
Infrastructure Renewal**

Ontario Growth Secretariat  
777 Bay St, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Suite 425  
Toronto ON M5G 2E5  
Telephone Toll Free: 1-866-479-9781  
Fax Number: (416) 325-7403

**Ministère du Renouveaulement de  
l'infrastructure publique**

Secrétariat des initiatives de croissance de l'Ontario  
777, rue Bay 4<sup>e</sup> étage,  
Toronto ON M5G 2E5  
Téléphone (sans frais): 1-866-479-9781  
Télécopieur: (416) 325-7403



**Memo to:** John Waller,  
Director, Long Range and Strategic Planning,  
York Region

**From:** Trevor Bingler,  
Manager, Growth Policy,  
Ontario Growth Secretariat

**Subject:** York Region – Natural Heritage Discussion Paper

**Date:** October 23, 2007

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Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comments on York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper. Overall, the paper reads well, and reflects the need to coordinate planning for a sustainable natural environment, healthy communities and economic vitality in the Region while accommodating the growth projected for the Region to 2031 and beyond.

Our comments will be made in the context of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006. We suggest that you contact other relevant provincial ministries to discuss this paper in the context of their mandates.

**OVERALL COMMENTS:**

We understand that this paper is one of several that are being developed by York Region, dealing with a wide range of growth-related issues. It is encouraging that the Region is working on the discussion papers for natural heritage, growth scenarios and infrastructure at the same time, since decisions made regarding one issue may dramatically impact outcomes in another.

One example of this symbiotic relationship is the linkage between urban form and densities in the existing built-up and designated greenfield areas, and the amount of land that can be protected in the "whitebelt" until 2031. Developing the built-up and Designated Greenfield areas in the region at densities that meet or exceed the minimum Growth Plan targets will allow the region to address long term growth projections without prematurely extending development into the "whitebelt". The Growth Plan recognizes that the PPS precludes development in some areas, such as provincially significant wetlands and significant habitat of endangered and threatened species, and allows such areas to be excluded from the density calculations for these density targets. With appropriate design, it may also be possible to protect locally and regionally significant natural heritage features and restoration areas in the built-up and Designated Greenfield Areas, while still meeting the Growth Plan targets.

We assume that the work that is being done in the studies noted above will give the Region a good idea of how much land will be required for development and intensification, and will assist in the identification of the most important natural heritage areas for protection. While it is not always possible to design major transportation and infrastructure routes to avoid all natural heritage

features and areas, taking a comprehensive approach will assist decision-makers in establishing priorities related to route selection.

**SPECIFIC COMMENTS:**

The section on Conservation Authority Strategies on page 6 gives the impression that the natural heritage systems identified by the CAs are automatically protected under the land use planning system. In fact, this information is one input into the development of official plan policies and designations at the local level. You may wish to change the words “protects and restores” in line 1 of paragraph 2 to “proposes the protection and restoration of”. Similarly, it may be appropriate to change the first two sentences of the third paragraph to “As part of the ...LSEMS, a proposed natural heritage system...has been identified by LSRCA. The LSRCA is identifying a proposed natural heritage system for the Lake Simcoe watershed and proposing wording for municipalities to consider in the development of official plan policies and designations to implement the provisions of the PPS regarding natural heritage systems.”

As was discussed above, we suggest that wording similar to that used in the Greenbelt Plan be used to address the location of infrastructure in the natural heritage system.

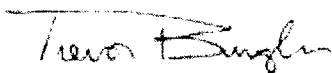
As was indicated above, we suggest that the list of natural heritage features and areas listed on page 9 be reviewed in the context of section 2.1 and 4.6 of the PPS.

Further, we would be happy to meet with you to discuss ways of protecting an integrated natural heritage system while recognizing the different circumstances that apply in the Greenbelt, the Whitebelt, Designated Greenfield Areas and the built-up area.

Further, in light of the discussion above regarding the linkages between growth management, infrastructure planning and natural heritage planning, we suggest that the last paragraph on page 12 be revised to clarify that the identification of natural systems and the consideration of growth management and infrastructure needs will be an iterative process.

We would be happy to continue to work with you as you finalize these discussion papers and develop draft official plan policies to implement the PPS, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Greenbelt Plan. If you have any questions or would like to discuss these comments further, please call me at 416-325-5974 or Norma Forrest, Senior Associate, at 416-325-7346.

Yours truly

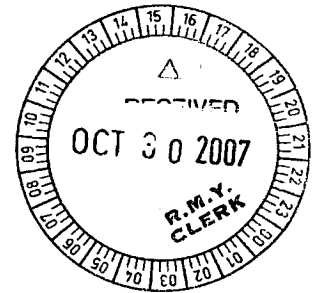


Trevor Bingle  
Manager, Growth Policy  
Ontario Growth Secretariat



# TOWN OF NEWMARKET

Anita Moore  
Town Clerk  
905-953-5300, ext. 2202  
amoore@newmarket.ca



October 24, 2007

PO7

Mr. Denis Kelly  
Regional Clerk  
Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 4V9

Dear Mr. Kelly:

**RE: Legal and Development Services Report – Planning 2007-45  
York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper**

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I am writing to advise that the above referenced matter was considered by Council at the regular meeting held on Monday, October 22, 2007.

The following recommendations were adopted:

**THAT Legal and Development Services Report – Planning 2007-45 dated September 19, 2007 regarding York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper be received and the following recommendations be adopted:**

1. **THAT this report be forwarded to the Regional Clerk as the Town of Newmarket's comments on York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper;**
2. **AND THAT all comments contained within the attached report be considered by the Regional Municipality of York and more specifically:**
  - a. **priority financial assistance be provided to local municipalities to acquire natural heritage properties within urban areas that restore and strengthen local municipal natural heritage systems adjacent to or within the Regional Greenlands system for their value related to heritage significance and cultural and quality of life emphasis.**

**Newmarket's vision: A community well beyond the ordinary**

395 Mulock Drive, P.O. Box 328, STN MAIN NEWMARKET, ON L3Y 4X7  
Direct Dial: 905-953-5300 General Information: 905-895-5193 Fax: 905-953-5100

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: [www.newmarket.ca](http://www.newmarket.ca)

A copy of Legal and Development Services Report – Planning 2007-45 is attached for your information and action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Anita Moore".

Anita Moore

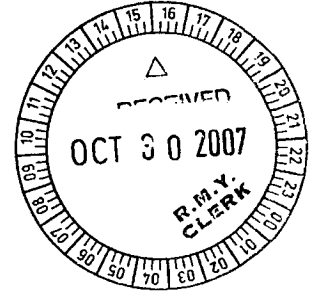
Town Clerk

AM:jb

cc—Mr. R. Nethery, Director of Planning



13.1  
**TOWN OF NEWMARKET**  
Legal and Development Services  
Planning Department  
planning@newmarket.ca



September 19, 2007

**LEGAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT – PLANNING 2007 - 45**

TO: Committee of the Whole  
SUBJECT: York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper  
ORIGIN: Planning Department and Office of the CAO

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**THAT Legal and Development Services Report – Planning 2007-45 dated September 19, 2007 regarding York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper be received and the following recommendations be adopted:**

- 1) **THAT this report be forwarded to the Regional Clerk as the Town of Newmarket's comments on York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper;**
- 2) **AND THAT all comments contained within the attached report be considered by the Regional Municipality of York and more specifically:**
  - a. **priority financial assistance be provided to local municipalities to acquire natural heritage properties within urban areas that restore and strengthen local municipal natural heritage systems adjacent to or within the Regional Greenlands system for their value related to heritage significance and cultural and quality of life emphasis.**

**COMMENTS**

**Brief Overview**

The Region of York has requested comments on the Region's "Natural Heritage Discussion Paper". The discussion paper acts as a gap analysis providing a framework for Regional level opportunities to strengthen the Regional Greenlands System. The paper reviews the status of the Region's commitment to the identification, protection, restoration and enhancement of the Region's Natural Heritage System as stated in the Region's Vision 2026. It describes the current state of policy direction from the Province and the results of the Region's on-going public consultation. Opportunities for Newmarket to get involved and be recognized as a partner in this Regional initiative will become more evident at the implementation stages.

**Newmarket's vision: A community well beyond the ordinary**

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The paper describes 8 actions to direct natural heritage planning in order to strengthen the Regional system:

- update the Natural Heritage System;
- incorporate the Greenbelt Plan into the Regional Official Plan;
- make connections in new communities;
- restore and strengthen the Natural Heritage System;
- adopt a new approach to infrastructure;
- establish a Regional Trail Network;
- advance the Greening Strategy; and
- continued awareness and dialogue.

### **Relationship to Newmarket's 2006 Official Plan**

The 2006 Official Plan contains a new land use designation called the Natural Heritage System, which is intended to provide a local context for the Regional Greenlands System. The Natural Heritage System policies build on the data collected through the 2003 Natural Heritage Project undertaken jointly between the Town, the Region, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The policies and direction contained in the 2006 Official Plan for the Natural Heritage System are consistent with the following action items outlined in the Region's Discussion Paper:

Incorporate the Greenbelt Plan into the Regional Official Plan: While the Town of Newmarket is outside of the Greenbelt, the 2006 Official Plan will show the river valley connections as shown on the Greenbelt Plan, together with an associated policy stating that development and site alteration must be in accordance with the Greenbelt Plan.

Restore and strengthen the Natural Heritage System: Protection and enhancement of the Town's Natural Heritage System is one of the 2006 Official Plan's core goals. It is the objective of the Natural Heritage System policies to preserve and enhance all elements; to maintain, restore and enhance the ecological functions; to preserve the cultural heritage aspects; and to protect the system from the negative effects of development through the use of appropriate management and mitigation techniques. Newmarket's Natural Heritage System objectives therefore serve to strengthen the Regional system.

Establish a Regional Trail Network: New to the 2006 Official Plan are two schedules detailing both on-and off-street trails (Schedules D and E). Of particular note is the Off-Street Trails Plan which contemplates connections to Newmarket's neighbouring municipalities to the south, west, and north within the Town's Natural Heritage System identified on Schedule B to the 2006 Official Plan. Enhanced connections could be considered in the southwest quadrant of Town within the Oak Ridges Moraine and the core natural heritage area of the northwest quadrant of Town as opportunities arise.

Advance the Greening Strategy: York Region has an overall Regional target for tree coverage of 25%. Recognizing that Newmarket is an urban municipality within the Region, the 2006 Official Plan nevertheless states that Council shall promote and establish programs to increase the tree cover of the entire Town from its current level of 9% to 12%. A number of methods are described to achieve this target, thereby assisting the Region in achieving their coverage targets.

York Region's Natural Heritage Discussion Paper does not appear to hinder or restrict the Town from implementing the Natural Heritage System policies of the 2006 Official Plan. Although the focus is primarily on "regional" scale natural heritage systems, it is recommended that the Discussion Paper be strengthened to recognize the cumulative impact and importance of local municipal policies, particularly in urban areas, which assist in the strengthening and restoring the Regional Natural Heritage System.

### **Integrating with Newmarket's Direction**

Staff have reviewed the Discussion Paper as it pertains to Newmarket's direction in Natural Heritage inventoring, current practices, and future directions for preservation, protection, restoration and enhancement as stated in the 2006 Official Plan, and we are confident that the Town of Newmarket is well positioned to participate in Regional initiatives and to partner with the Region to implement the eight Action Plan Items. Notwithstanding this, the following comments are provided for consideration by the Region in completing its Natural Heritage Discussion Paper.

### **General Comments**

1. As previously noted, in 2003 the Town partnered with the Region, Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, and the Ministry of Natural Resources in a pilot project to produce a "Natural Heritage Study" that identified opportunities to strengthen Newmarket's Natural Heritage system. Staff recommends that the Town's Natural Heritage Study be recognized as part of the "successes" identified on Page 4 of the paper.
2. The Discussion Paper should also include examples of the Region's successes in strengthening and restoring Natural Heritage systems throughout the Region, including the various partnerships wherein the Region has assisted local municipalities with land acquisitions of both local and Regional significance as part of or connecting to the Regional Greenlands system. For example, Newmarket partnered with the Region in the acquisition of 11.3 ha. of forested lands in Newmarket's northwest quadrant in an effort to preserve additional natural heritage lands within a developing area. The Town of Newmarket is also entering into a partnership with two other land owners in the North West Quadrant, being East Gwillimbury and the Region of York, to develop a management plan for a significant natural heritage area. This cooperative effort is designed to bring a standard to the management of this significant asset of the communities and therefore give direction with respect to the resources necessary to maintain these (natural heritage) areas. With respect to the development of trail connections, discussions would need to be held between the Region and area municipalities with respect to trail design standards and seasonally impacted service levels which will have operating budget impacts on the municipal level.

### **Specific Action Items Identified in the Region's Discussion Paper**

1. Action 1 – Updating Our Natural Heritage System - should recognize natural heritage lands preserved by the local municipalities in addition to "lands owned by TRCA and LSRCA" as core areas to establish the foundations of the system. Locally significant and municipally-owned natural heritage lands represent opportunities for the Region to

"make connections" to strengthen the system, and also represent another contribution towards updating the natural heritage system.

2. Action 2 – Incorporate the Greenbelt Plan into the Regional Official Plan – All municipalities affected by the Greenbelt must bring their Official Plans into conformity with the Greenbelt Plan. With the exception of the Oak Ridges Moraine area, which is governed by the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the balance of Newmarket is not within the Greenbelt area. Notwithstanding this, Town and Regional staff are working together with the Province to support the Greenbelt policies through illustrating river valley connections in the 2006 Official Plan schedules. Newmarket notes again that at such time as the Greenbelt Plan is revisited by the Province, the lands on the east side of Highway 404 should, with the concurrence of Newmarket's neighbouring municipalities, be removed from the Greenbelt Plan in order to maximize the use of this existing infrastructure. The Highway 404 transportation corridor disrupts the continuity of the natural heritage system in this area and, as such, restoration, preservation and enhancement efforts should focus on natural heritage systems and connections in other areas.
3. Action 3 – Make Connections in New Communities - does not directly apply to Newmarket as this action item is directed at the Region's "whitebelt" communities, being rural areas of the Region that are to be developed in the future. Nevertheless, staff supports this action item as it will help facilitate a fully connected system.
4. Action 4 – Restore and Strengthen the Natural Heritage System - applies to Newmarket and current Town directions and initiatives as it supports the strengthening of the existing natural heritage system and an increase in natural cover within existing urban areas that will be the subject of future intensification. It is imperative that the Region recognize the importance of a strong urban canopy and its role in helping to meet targets for enhanced natural cover and to recognize local municipal activities and initiatives that encourage the strengthening and restoration of local natural heritage areas that are either part of or connected to the Regional Natural Heritage System. Efforts within identified natural heritage areas within existing urban areas beyond tree cover should be identified and encouraged as part of this strategy. It is also recommended that the acquisition of floodplain lands be included as an opportunity to strengthen local and regional natural heritage systems, especially within urbanized areas and municipalities.
5. Action 5 – Adopt a New Approach to Infrastructure - minimizes impacts on the Natural Heritage System and is supported by staff, however, the language used to describe the action should be strengthened. For example, on page 17 of the paper, the first sentence under Design should read, "Infrastructure design *will* protect..." instead of using the word "should" and the first sentence under Construction should read, "Construction techniques *will* be examined..." instead of using the word "can". In order to ensure the implementation of the new approach to infrastructure is planned, designed and constructed to minimize impacts on the natural heritage system, stronger wording is required to ensure it will happen.
6. Action 6 – Establish a Regional Trail Network - to connect with local municipal trails is supported by staff. The Region has retained the services of Marshal Macklin Monaghan to undertake a Natural Heritage Trails Concept Study. The vision guiding the

study is "to create a regional trail system that connects local municipal trail systems, provides residents with the opportunity to experience the natural heritage system throughout York Region". It is noted that local municipalities are considered key stakeholders in the study, and that Town staff are to be invited to participate in meetings. This section should recognize existing efforts and accomplishments such as the Nokiidaa Trail system that crosses three municipal boundaries as a component of the Regional system and recognition that partnerships between municipal governments and with private property owners work to achieve the goals of natural heritage preservation and restoration.

7. Action 7 – Advance the Greening Strategy - needs to ensure that all municipalities receive fair funding for assistance in advancing the Greening Strategy. Local Natural Heritage features in urban areas such as Newmarket should not be overlooked as part of their role in achieving the goals and objectives of strengthening a regional scale Natural Heritage System. Regional financial assistance to acquire natural heritage properties that restore and strengthen Newmarket's natural heritage system that restore and strengthen the Regional system should be considered for priority funding.
8. Action 8 – Continued Awareness and Dialogue - staff supports on-going consultation with all stakeholders on the Natural Heritage System and its relationship to growth management, healthy communities, and economic vitality as the Region continues to face significant growth.

#### **BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES**

The comments and recommendations contained in this report for the Region's consideration are in alignment with the Community Strategic Plan, the Town's new 2006 Official Plan and the Natural Heritage Study.

#### **CONSULTATION**

No public consultation was required as part of this review of the discussion paper.

#### **BUDGET IMPACT**

##### Operating Budget (Current and Future)

The Town is currently undertaking a joint study with the Region and the Town of East Gwillimbury to establish a management plan for the NWQ Natural Heritage area that can serve as a standard and form a basis for budgeting operating cost for the protection and maintenance of that area. In addition, standards for trail design and maintenance would need to be resolved between the municipal and regional jurisdictions prior to the implementation of the proposed policies. Those budget impacts will be presented in conjunction with annual budget submissions.

##### Capital Budget

Capital budget impacts for the protection and maintenance of natural heritage areas will be reported to Council in conjunction with annual budget submissions.

CONTACT

For more information on this report, contact:


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November 1, 2007

Karen Antonio-Hadcock  
Senior Planner  
Long Range & Strategic Planning Branch  
Regional Municipality of York  
17250 Yonge Street  
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1

Dear Ms. Antonio-Hadcock:

**Re: YORK REGION NATURAL HERITAGE DISCUSSION PAPER, DRAFT JUNE 2007**

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The Don Watershed Regeneration Council (DWRC) (see enclosure for the committee's history and goals) is pleased to have been given the opportunity to review and provide comment on the Natural Heritage Discussion Paper and commends the Regional Municipality of York for your commitment to incorporating the natural heritage system as a fundamental component of your overall approach to growth management and sustainability within the Region.

We would like to provide the following comments regarding the paper:

- The DWRC strongly supports an integrated, linked green system in the rural and urban areas and the Region's continuing efforts to protect, restore and enhance the system. In addition, we support using the draft Sustainability Strategy as the primary filter for evaluating development proposals and new initiatives, of which, a sustainable natural environment is a key consideration.
- We support all measures to reduce the 'human footprint' including water conservation, the reduction in auto travel and the promotion of public transit and alternate forms of travel as proposed through the development of other regional growth planning initiatives such as the updates to the Transportation Master Plan, Water and Wastewater Master Plan and Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan.
- There is no mention in the Discussion Paper of the protection of the agricultural land base; a component of the natural heritage system as well as the economic structure of the Region.
- We also suggest that the reference to "mitigating the impacts of climate change through carbon sequestration" found in the Foreword to the Discussion Paper be broadened to state that a healthy natural environment also requires 'adaptation' to a climate where

major and rapid changes are possible. This should be a key consideration in the preparation of the Region's Natural Heritage Systems Strategy.

The TRCA is currently developing a watershed plan for the Don River. Similar to the Region's sustainability initiatives, this watershed planning process was initiated in response to a number of recent policy and planning developments, including the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act; as well as a need to update the original management strategies outlined in *Forty Steps to a New Don* created over 12 years ago in 1994. This updated watershed plan will draw on new information and science such as a target terrestrial natural heritage system and will include specific management recommendations which will serve as another valuable tool in assisting with York Region's growth and sustainability initiatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours truly,



Phil Goodwin  
Chair, Don Watershed Regeneration Council

/Encl.

cc. Deborah Martin-Downs, Director, Ecology, TRCA

### *Don Watershed Regeneration Council*

*The Don Watershed Regeneration Council (DWRC) is a volunteer, watershed-wide advisory committee established by Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) in 1994 to help restore the Don River watershed to a healthy, sustainable natural environment. The DWRC is a sub-committee of the TRCA's Watershed Management Advisory Board. The Council is composed of community members, elected officials and representatives from agencies, businesses, environmental non-governmental organizations and academic institutions located within or concerned with the future of the watershed.*

*A comprehensive strategy – Forty Steps to a New Don – was completed in 1994 and, through the efforts of thousands of volunteers and in partnership with municipalities and environmental groups, we are achieving progress towards the goals of the strategy. Three major principles guide us:*

- 1. protect what is healthy,*
- 2. regenerate what is degraded; and*
- 3. take responsibility for the Don.*

*A new, updated Don Watershed Plan is in preparation which will reflect broader watershed issues of sustainability including water and energy efficiency and emerging challenges such as climate change.*

*As well as advising TRCA, the DWRC provides comments to other government agencies (federal, provincial and municipal) on matters pertaining to the interests and activities of the environmental nongovernmental organizations which are members of the Council. The enclosed comments are the views of the DWRC and are not necessarily the views of TRCA.*