

Natural Heritage Strategy: Phase 1 Update & Completion

Technical Committee Meeting #3

January 19th, 2005, 9.30 to noon

Committee Room B

Meeting Minutes

Chair: Helen Powers – Environmental Planner (City of Guelph)

Present: Drew Cherry – Planner (Wellington County Stewardship Council), Astrid Clos – Planner (Guelph Development Association / Guelph and Area Homebuilder's Association), Mark Haennel – Planner / GIS (City of Guelph), Andrew Lambden – Developer (Guelph Development Association /Guelph and Area Homebuilder's Association), Glynis Logue – Local Environmentalist (Green Plan Steering Committee/Guelph Environmental Leadership), Don Kudo – Manager of Infrastructure Planning (City of Guelph), Terry Schwan – Forester (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources – OMNR), Helen White – Park Planner (City of Guelph), Val Wyatt – Local Naturalist/Consulting Ecologist (Guelph Field Naturalists), Tony Zammit – Ecologist (Grand River Conservation Authority – GRCA), Bob Thompson – Manager of Roadside Operations (City of Guelph) Ken Ursic - Ecological Consultant (Dougan & Associates) and Margot Ursic – Ecological Consultant (Dougan & Associates).

Regrets: None

Copy: Linda Chapman (Building and Zoning, City of Guelph)

1. Introductions

2. State of the Project Report - Helen Powers

2a) Helen Powers explained delay in project progress related to the former Environmental Planner's departure (September 2004) and her needing some time to familiarize herself with this (and other) projects since filling the position in late November 2004.

2b) Helen Powers provided a brief update on the state of the project as follows.

Completed to Date (Phases 1 & 2A, Feb. 2004 to Dec. 2004)

Review of existing data on natural areas in City of Guelph:

- o subwatershed and watershed studies
- o EIS's from development applications
- o 2001 air photos of City (most recent available)
- o review of other relevant City studies and documents

Review similar studies (eg. Natural Area studies) by other municipalities in southern Ontario.

Preliminary community consultation:

- o workshop and community forum to introduce project, receive initial feedback

Preparation of preliminary mapping of natural areas based on:

- o previous studies
- o aerial photographs
- o selective field work done in 2004 (verified major air photo discrepancies, amphibian surveys in specific areas)

Development of preliminary criteria for defining local significance:

- to screen existing data to see which natural areas are captured
- testing of criteria (to be presented at next meeting in mid-March)
- subject to further refinement / testing in next phase

Next Steps:

Finalization of Phase 1 Report (Final Draft submitted to the Technical Committee (TC) for review January 5, 2005)

Finalization of Phase 2A (preliminary test run of working criteria based primarily on secondary source data to be presented for next TC meeting in March 2005)

Initiation of Phase 2B (comprehensive field assessments & re-analysis of criteria)

Landowner Contact

- to specific landowners on whose property we wish to conduct inventories
- contact package will include explanation of project

Site inventories to be in terrestrial components of preliminary Natural Areas identified through review of existing data

- currently designated "core" greenlands to be excluded – focus to be on "non-core" greenlands (eg. does not include any provincially significant wetlands, floodplains, fish habitat)
- inventory methodology to be confirmed by TC as part of Phase 1 finalization
- inventories beginning early April 2005, finishing end of summer 2005

Compilation of inventory data – FALL 2005

- refined mapping based on inventory data (update boundaries)
- database on each natural area (flora, fauna, disturbance factors etc.)

Analysis of inventory data – FALL 2005

- which areas have significant species, more refined Ecological Land Classification category (eg. Ecosite) including provincial status, relative proportions of each type of natural area within the City, how areas are or could be connected, significant ecological functions of sites
- which LSNA criteria does the Natural Area meet, if any
- are the LSNA criteria creating a reasonable natural heritage system or do the criteria need to be re-worked
- determination of workable targets for different types of habitats (how much does Guelph need)

End Products of Phase 2

- up to date mapping of Guelph's natural heritage
- inventory database on each natural area
- defined areas of local significance

Phase 3 (2006)

Will include:

- strategic thinking about how to use the NHS data and mapping to protect what we will then know is locally significant
- recommendations to the City for locally significant areas and the natural heritage system in general:
 - management and monitoring recommendations
 - policy and mapping changes
 - reporting requirements for EIS's, EIR's, TCP's
 - other strategies to improve the natural heritage system

3. Identification of key issues by each Committee member (in relation to three major goals of the meeting – LSNA Working Criteria, Fieldwork Methodology and Final Report’s General Tone, Content and Direction)

Everyone present was invited, in turn, to provide their comments on the Final Draft Phase 1 Report (Jan. 5, 2005).

Bob Thompson, Don Kudo and Mark Haennel of the City of Guelph stated they had no major concerns at this stage.

Terry Schwan expressed concern that (a) the criteria are too numerous and/or too complex, (b) wondered why 2 criteria were being considered for qualifying an area as an LSNA and (c) noted there is no discussion of small mammals. Consultants (a) feel the criteria are not too complex but perhaps appear so because of the detail provided, (b) agree it is too early to decide how many criteria should be required and will revise the report to leave it open, and (c) will address small mammals in the City as part of the Phase 2 report.

Drew Cherry noted inconsistency between Executive Summary – which states 8 LSNA criteria are NOT equally weighted, and the report itself which states they are. Margot Ursic replies this was an oversight that should be corrected.

Astrid Clos expressed concern about including Provincially designated areas (ie. Core Greenlands) as part of Criteria 1. Margot Ursic explained it is important to include ALL natural areas, regardless of designation at this stage in the screening in order to have a “systems” approach. Helen Powers reiterated this stage is background technical work that will be the basis for policy recommendations, but will not be taken as policy itself. Astrid Clos requested clarification in the report regarding (1) the intent to separate Provincially significant areas from Locally significant features in future policy, and (2) the need to have landowner notification and consent before identifying any potential restoration areas on private lands. Agreed by consultants and Helen Powers. Astrid Clos also feels criteria should be simplified (as per her digital comments provided), and that the application of buffers needs to be clarified.

Helen White expressed some concern about lack of clarity in the report regarding linkages, buffers and potential restoration areas. Also commented on importance of considering social and cultural criteria from a Parks & Recreation perspective. Margot Ursic agreed to clarify.

Glynis Logue expressed opinion that criteria #2 – Hydrological Significance – so important that this 1 criterion should make a natural area locally significant.

Andrew Lambden re-iterated comments from last meeting that Guelph is an urban area and that the criteria need to be scientific. Also requested, with Astrid Clos, that LSNA’s be accepted for parkland dedications, and expressed concern about the implications of future LSNA designations. Helen Powers replied it is too early in the study process to discuss the details of policies that will come out of the NHS; these are decisions to be made during Phase 3. Andrew Lambden also requested refinement of criterion #3 to be closer to GRCA policy. Margot Ursic to explore this further.

Val Wyatt pointed out a few errors / inconsistencies in the report (as per her digital comments) with respect to treatment of agricultural lands. Margot Ursic to correct. Also suggested change of “forest interior” to “habitat for area-sensitive species”, inquired as to how “representative” ELC communities would be identified and inquired if there were any Significant Wildlife Habitats (SWH) in the City. Margot Ursic to make suggested correction, research methods for identifying representative communities, and follow-up with Art Timmerman at OMNR regarding SWH.

Tony Zammit (as per his digital comments) requested clarification regarding data ownership between GRCA and OMNR (ie. GRCA maintains wetland data layers, but OMNR is their “owner”). GRCA

would like to see ALL wetlands recognized as locally significant. Also commented on GRCA policy defining steep slopes associated with wet areas as at least 15% and 2 m high. Believes there is SWH in the form of deer yards.

Digital comments were submitted by Astrid Clos, Tony Zammit, Val Wyatt, Helen White and Terry Schwan, as well as Helen Powers, via email or separate file attachments and are to be reviewed and addressed by the Consultants in their Final Phase 1 Report, in conjunction with comments received at today's meeting.

4. Discussion of common key issues

Helen Powers put forward a 'motion' to garner consensus on the current 8 working criteria for Locally Significant Natural Areas (LSNA's) as a basis for moving forward with the Phase 2 inventory and preliminary analyses, and on acceptance of the Phase 1 Final Draft in terms of it's general content and tone. All present supported this motion except for Astrid Clos who abstained.

5. Discussion of other issues

Please provide any further comments to Helen Powers by the end of January 2005.

Next TC meeting to be scheduled for March 2005.

*Minutes prepared by M. Ursic of Dougan & Associates April 5, 2005.
Reviewed and revised by H. Powers of the City of Guelph April 12, 2005.*