

Planning for Guelph's Natural Heritage Strategy is Underway

~ The City is Seeking Your Input!

As a first step towards implementing the City of Guelph's Environmental Action Plan (2003), the City has initiated a process for developing a City-wide Natural Heritage Strategy (NHS). The first phase of this process will involve determining what makes local natural areas significant and identifying priority terrestrial features (i.e. dryland as opposed to wetland and aquatic features).



The City is seeking input from the Guelph community at this stage of the process. During the recent Smart Guelph consultations (2002-2003), a greener, non-polluted environment with connected natural areas was identified as the highest priority in the community's vision for Guelph. This is your opportunity to help make this vision a reality!

This Green Frog is one of the many native species of fauna that inhabit Guelph's natural areas. Photo: Karl Konze

Why does the City of Guelph need a Natural Heritage Strategy (NHS)?

- ⇒ An NHS is needed to ensure the protection of Guelph's natural areas and identify opportunities for enhancement of these areas while still accommodating development within the City.
- ⇒ Protecting and enhancing Guelph's natural areas benefits everyone. Among other benefits, natural areas provide habitat for native flora and fauna, help maintain and improve air, soil and water quality, replenish aquifers that supply drinking water and feed Guelph's lakes and rivers, help protect properties from flooding, help moderate extreme temperatures, and provide passive recreation opportunities.
- ⇒ An NHS will result in a better understanding and assessment of the City's remaining natural areas. This information will help us determine priorities and management needs, and continue to improve development guidelines.
- ⇒ Many municipalities across Ontario have completed or are in the process of developing an NHS; these efforts are in keeping with provincial, national and international initiatives.

Guelph Natural Heritage Strategy Phase 1



The NHS will build on past and current initiatives to protect and enhance Guelph's natural areas, such as: areas designated as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; areas under the jurisdiction of the Grand River Conservation Authority; Greenlands designation and other policies as outlined in the City of Guelph Official Plan (2001/June 2002); the City's naturalization program; and, the many voluntary initiatives undertaken by organizations and individuals within the City.

Yellow Lady's slipper is among the many beautiful native plants that are found in Guelph's natural areas.
Photo: Ken Ursic

The NHS will consist of seven interrelated components:

1. mapping and inventories of existing natural features
2. mapping of potential expansion and linkage areas
3. determining priority areas for protection and enhancement
4. education and other resources to support protection, enhancement and management/stewardship
5. improved guidelines for development
6. policies and by-laws as needed
7. monitoring of natural areas.

The City will encourage partnerships and community involvement in planning and implementing the NHS.

The process for developing the NHS will occur in 3 phases as follows:

Phase 1: Assembly of Background Information; Preliminary Community Consultation & Education; Criteria for Locally Significant Natural Areas; Inventory & Monitoring Methodologies; Identify Priority Terrestrial Areas; Review Guidelines for Conducting Environmental Studies (*February–April 2004*)

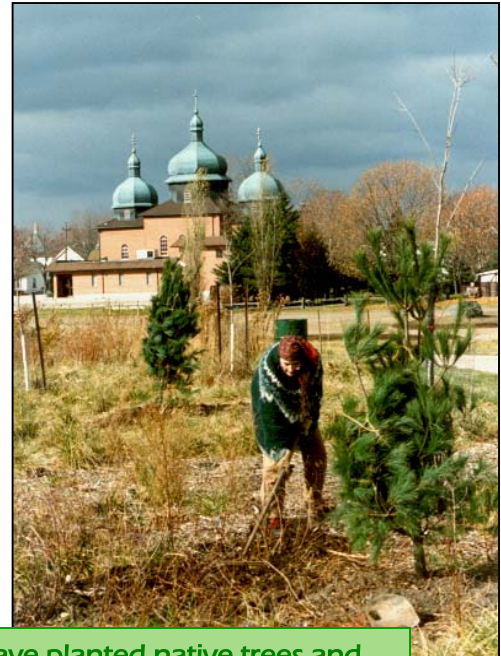
Phase 2: Landowner Contact; Inventory & Assessment of Natural Areas (*April–October 2004*)

Phase 3: Develop City-wide Monitoring & Management Systems; Adjust the Official Plan (if required); Secure Funding for Future Monitoring & Inventory Work; Identify Additional Next Steps (*2005*)

Guelph Natural Heritage Strategy Phase 1

Community consultations in **Phase 1** are intended to garner input on *what makes local natural features significant to the citizens of Guelph*. Community values will be integrated with accepted scientific principles when identifying natural features and priorities. The consultations will also present an opportunity to increase awareness about Guelph's natural heritage, hear a variety of perspectives, and identify concerns about the NHS.

Although aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems will be included in the NHS, initial **Phase 2** inventories will focus on terrestrial ecosystems, such as forests, hedgerows and other features identified through the process (rather than wetlands, streams, rivers and lakes). The City hopes to identify priority terrestrial features and initiate inventories of these areas in the Spring of 2004, so is seeking input by early April.



Countless volunteers have planted native trees and undertaken other activities to help protect and enhance Guelph's natural areas. Photo: OPIRG Guelph

At this time, your input can be provided through:

- ⇒ responding to a **Community Survey** (available in mid-March). The questionnaire will be available on the City's website (<http://www.city.guelph.on.ca>) or at the Planning Department, City Hall. Please note that the response deadline is **April 12, 2004**.
- ⇒ attending a **Community Forum** to be held on Wednesday, **April 7, 2004**, at the River Run Cooperators Hall from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. Participation at the Community Forum will be limited to 70 persons, so pre-registration is required. To confirm your attendance at the Community Forum please contact Cheryl Coutts at 519-837-5616 or ccoutts@city.guelph.on.ca.

The City will also host a **Key Stakeholder Workshop** for representatives of specific sectors. There will be further opportunities for input and involvement as the NHS proceeds beyond **Phase 1**.

A preliminary map of Guelph's natural areas is available on the City's website. This map will be updated as the NHS process proceeds.

For more information on the status and results of this process:

- ⇒ check the City's website on a regular basis
- ⇒ contact Shannon Smith, Environmental Planner, City of Guelph at 519-837-5616 x 2283 or ssmith@city.guelph.on.ca.

We look forward to your input as we move forward with Guelph's Natural Heritage Strategy!

March, 2004