

# Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project 2019 - 2025



**Lake Simcoe Region**  
conservation authority

January 2019

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## Executive Summary

The Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project 2019-2025 updates the Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project 2011-2015 and builds upon the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority's (LSRCA) land securement program over the past decade. The update was identified in LSRCA's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan under Goal One – Support a safer, healthier and livable watershed through exceptional watershed management as a priority action to develop a newly focused land acquisition strategy.

This report outlines LSRCA's land securement target areas for natural heritage protection and restoration/enhancement opportunities, tools for land securement, land securement/management funding issues, funding partners, and report recommendations.

The Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project furthers the Conservation Authority's mission, goals and objectives by providing the basis and direction for securing interests in land, through purchases, donations, conservation easements and other methods to protect the watershed's natural heritage features, improve biodiversity and help support provincial and federal climate change initiatives.

The Lake Simcoe watershed is approximately 3400 km<sup>2</sup> and includes 20 municipalities, York and Durham regions, Simcoe County, the cities of Barrie, Kawartha Lakes and Orillia, the First Nations lands of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, together with an additional 21 First Nation Communities and Métis Peoples within the LSRCA watershed. The watershed is home to 35 tributaries as well as important physiographic and hydrologic regions such as the Oak Ridges Moraine, Carden Alvar, Oro Moraine and the Trent-Severn Waterway.

LSRCA currently owns, manages or holds easements over 2,425 ha (5,992 ac) of conservation land across the watershed divided into 35 conservation land holdings embodying a range of landscapes, ecosystem types and recreational opportunities. Since 2011 the LSRCA has secured 120.5 ha of ecologically significant lands through fee simple purchase, donation and conservation easements. The total appraised land value of LSRCA's landholdings is over \$9.6 million (Assessed Values – MPAC). LSRCA's lands provide an estimated \$15 million of annual societal benefit through ecological goods and services through the provision of various services including carbon storage, water supply and filtration, flood control, waste treatment, clean air, natural habitat, pollination and recreation (Valuing Natural Capital in the Lake Simcoe Watershed, Green Analytics, 2017).

In the past decade, funding for LSRCA's land securement program has been provided through various partnerships and sources including: a significant private bequest, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Durham Region, York Region, Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation, Ontario Heritage

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Trust (Natural Spaces Land Securement & Stewardship Program), Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources/Nature Conservancy of Canada Greenlands Funding Program and member municipalities.

In Canada's Conservation Vision: A Report to the National Advisory Panel (2018) it is noted that the two great environmental challenges of our time – biodiversity loss and climate change are interconnected and require urgent action. Canada's 2020 Biodiversity Target 1 was set to meet Canada's international obligations to protect at least 17% of Canada's terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas to reverse the decline of biodiversity. Notwithstanding the identification of early opportunities highlighted in Canada's Conservation Vision (2018), a significant area of land requires protection by 2020 (an additional 284,752 km<sup>2</sup> of ecologically significant lands) to achieve Target 1 and protect and enhance Canada's biodiversity.

The province of Ontario recognizes the importance of biodiversity through its Biodiversity Strategy (2015) which outlines a vision to halt biodiversity loss and advance recovery. Three goals are set out in this strategy 1) incorporate biodiversity in decision making across the province, protect, restore and recover Ontario's genetic, 2) species and ecosystem diversity; and 3) use Ontario's biological assets sustainably. Fifteen target actions are outlined in the strategy, several apply to the development and implementation of LSRCA's land securement strategy, Target 12 identifies the development of natural heritage system plans and biodiversity conservation strategies to be developed and implemented at the municipal and landscape levels.

Regional municipalities and the County of Simcoe have policies and goals to protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity for current and future generations to sustain life, maintain health and provide an improved quality of life for their residents, York Region has established a target of 25% woodland cover by 2031 (currently about 23%).

Through the protection of natural heritage features and ecological functions, the LSRCA is working to preserve the intrinsic values associated with the watersheds flora and fauna, improving air quality and safe drinking water in order to maintain a better quality of life for those living, working and recreating in the Lake Simcoe watershed. These actions will help protect the watershed's natural heritage features, improve biodiversity and support municipal natural heritage systems and federal and provincial biodiversity and climate change initiatives.

Recent studies by the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation have noted some key findings; Climate Change is real and irreversible and the costs of extreme weather are going up significantly, and keeping wetlands intact can reduce flood damage costs to buildings by up to

38%. Other benefits of Natural Infrastructure include; drought reduction, water quality improvements (limit phosphorous loading), retains biodiversity and retains aesthetics. Canada needs to focus on retaining/restoring natural infrastructure and retain existing natural features, restore what has been lost and build what is required. (Dr. Blair Feltmate, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, LSRCA, AGM, January, 2019).

Analysis of features identified in LSRCA's Natural Heritage System & Restoration Strategy (NHSRS, 2018) identified two key areas for consideration: 1) Ecological Protection, and 2) Restoration/Enhancement. Priority ecological protection areas were identified utilizing core feature data from the LSRCA Natural Heritage System & Restoration Strategy (NHSRS, 2018). The core features were mapped and prioritized based on a series of GIS queries, the core features included: Woodlands, Wetlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, Fish Habitat, Valleylands and Natural Areas Abutting Lake Simcoe.

Priority ecological protection priorities were identified based on parcels containing three or more ecological features, and adjacent to or within 100 metres of public lands. Utilizing a minimum lot size of 10 ha, 366 property parcels were identified as priority ecological protection areas. These priority parcels will be evaluated by LSRCA staff through desk top analysis and field investigations following LSRCA's internal review process.

Priority restoration/enhancement areas focused on the two key restoration areas identified in LSRCA's NHSRS (2018) including: Corridor Restoration and Enhancement Opportunities in the Floodplain. Priority parcels were identified utilizing a GIS query which identified parcels within 100 m of the restoration/enhancement areas, minimum lot size 10 ha, containing low vegetative cover (i.e., low biomass, less than 20%), and within 100 m of existing wetland and woodland areas. Based on this analysis 562 property parcels were identified for potential wetland or woodland restoration. These priority parcels will be evaluated by LSRCA staff through desk top analysis and field investigations following the LSRCA's internal review process.

By focusing on these two components LSRCA's land securement program can support LSRCA's Ecological Offsetting Program and improve LSRCA's biodiversity as well as supporting federal, provincial and regional climate change initiatives. Based on a target ecological protection and acquisition/restoration area analysis and history of land acquisitions, LSRCA through the Conservation Lands Division has set a goal to secure between 250 to 300 hectares of protection and restoration land by 2025 (7 years). It is estimated that a budget allocation of between \$139,000 to \$167,000/year would be required to achieve this land securement goal for a total budget of between \$975,000 and \$1,170,000 for the project period. Additional and ongoing land management and maintenance costs would be in addition to land securement costs.

## 1.0 Introduction

The mandate of the Conservation Authority is defined under Section 20 of the Conservation Authorities Act and provides the regulatory power “to establish and undertake, in the area under which it has jurisdiction, a program designed to further the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources other than gas, oil, coal and minerals”. Based on this mandate and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority’s Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020, the LSRCA’s mission has been defined as follows:

**“To work with our community to protect and restore the Lake Simcoe watershed by leading research, policy and action”**

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority strives to achieve its mission based on the following goals:

- Support a safer, healthier and livable watershed through exceptional integrated watershed management,
- Improve knowledge and increase certainty through excellence in research and scientific knowledge,
- Create a more connected and engaged watershed community through education and engagement,
- Build a stronger and more valued organization through business excellence.

This Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project furthers the Conservation Authority’s mission and goals by providing the basis and direction for securing interests in land, through purchases, donations, conservation easements and other methods to protect the watershed’s natural heritage features, improve biodiversity and help support climate change initiatives.

The following sections provide an overview of the project direction, regional context, existing LSRCA landholdings, land securement considerations, land securement priority areas, property evaluation procedures, land securement tools, program funding, and recommendations.

## 2.0 Land Securement Project Direction

In preparing the land securement update LSRCA staff aligned the strategy with LSRCA’s 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, federal and provincial biodiversity and climate change targets and consulted with municipal and conservation organizations as summarized below.

## **2.1 LSRCA Strategic Plan 2016-2020**

In 2015 the LSRCA undertook a review and update of its Strategic Plan 2016-2020. The work included one-on-one dialogue sessions with each watershed municipality to promote strategic imagination and innovative thinking. Through this information gathering process our member municipalities indicated that “... municipalities are looking for purposeful land acquisition. The development of a collaborative Land Acquisition Strategy that identifies specific properties to be targeted for acquisition would ensure that resources are allocated accordingly. There is an ongoing concern with the costs of maintaining properties over the long term. A more rigorous and focused acquisition effort is needed.”

As part of Goal One, the strategic plan identified a priority action to “Develop a newly focused land acquisition strategy in two years”. This report addresses Goal One of LSRCA’s Strategic Plan.

## **2.2 Community Partner Workshops**

LSRCA staff invited municipal staff, members of the land securement community, various industry representatives and other non-government organizations to solicit input and gather insight and advice regarding land acquisition activities around the watershed.

A series of workshops were organized throughout the watershed in April 2017. A total of 25 individuals from conservation organizations participated in one of three events in the workshop series. Additional written comments were submitted by some parties unable to attend the workshops. The full Land Securement Stakeholder Consultation Report is provided in Appendix 1. An overview of input received through these workshops is outlined below.

### **2.2.1 Upper and Lower Tier Municipalities**

Comments received from upper and lower-tier municipalities were focused largely on park and trail requirements, planning development applications and municipal infrastructure needs. The municipalities were largely supportive of natural heritage protection and forest restoration without holding title to the land. Their objectives are forest restoration, healthy communities and active transportation among other priorities. Through cash-in-lieu methods of parkland dedication, municipalities could potentially assist LSRCA with land securement by diverting some of this funding to natural heritage land securement for appropriate projects, subject to staff and council approval.



## 2.2.2 Conservation Organizations

Comments received from conservation organizations (e.g., South Lake Simcoe Naturalists, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Couchiching Conservancy) were supportive and focused on helping LSRCA to achieve mutual land securement priorities. Some conservation organizations are focused on specific target areas and features (i.e., Oak Ridges Moraine) while others have more general goals and priorities set out within their organization's strategy or priorities. Conservation organizations have a membership interest in protecting land that they could also potentially use in the future. They could potentially assist the LSRCA with land securement through landowner contacts as well as project and funding partnerships.

## 2.2.3 Other Organizations

Comments received from other non-conservation organizations (e.g., Ontario Sand and Gravel Association, Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, Holland Marsh Growers Association) were supportive and focused on providing benefit to their membership and geographical areas through protection and restoration efforts (i.e. community tree planting). They could potentially assist the LSRCA with land securement through landowner contacts and project partnerships.

## 2.2.4 Recommendations

Based on the consultation with member municipalities, the land securement community, various industry representatives and other non-government organizations the following recommendations were brought forward for LSRCA consideration:

- Work with municipal staff to prepare communication materials to raise public awareness about land securement including options available to landowners, and to educate partner staff in communicating land securement options to landowners
- Request support from municipalities to hold title for properties that carry a tax burden
- Use partners' networks to reach out to the community. Conversely, LSRCA could assist the partners by utilizing CA contacts
- Prepare a land securement funding strategy, that includes identifying species at risk, climate change mitigation/green infrastructure funding and funds from municipal development charges

## 2.3 LSRCA Internal Working Group

Internal LSRCA staff including; Conservation Lands, Integrated Watershed Management, Corporate Services – GIS, Watershed Restoration Services, Environmental Science and Monitoring, and Planning and Development established a working group to discuss and review priority land securement criteria focusing on areas for acquisition for natural heritage protection and restoration.

There were a variety of opinions on specific criterion for prioritizing land securement initiatives and the need for clear objectives to guide the program e.g., environmental protection, biodiversity, public health, carbon sequestration. Canada's United Nations conservation commitments Target 1 2017 (adopted from Aichi Target 11) to meet Canada's international obligation was raised. This Target committed Canada to protect at least 17% of Canada's terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of marine and coastal areas by 2020.

Discussions led to comments/suggestions related to various environmental data sets prepared and compiled by the LSRCA. Concerns were raised in regard to some data sets which may be dated or incomplete or inappropriate for setting priorities (e.g., Stewardship Priorities and Opportunities Tool, Non-Intensive agriculture data, indicators for public health, public lands data). Additional datasets were completed for LSRCA's Natural Heritage System & Restoration Strategy for the Lake Simcoe watershed (LSRCA, 2018) which would provide key criteria and direction for securement priorities. Further, the opportunity to utilize recent data from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) were also raised, among other criteria this data included areas of low biomass and successional forest to help identify potential areas for ecological restoration activities.

### Recommendations

The LSRCA's land securement project should focus on ecological restoration/enhancement and where possible ecological protection. The basis of the target areas for restoration/enhancement should focus on lands within Corridor Restoration and Enhancement Opportunities in the Floodplain identified in the NHSRS. The basis for target areas for ecological protection should focus on lands within Core Features (Woodlands, Wetlands, Areas of Scientific Interest, Fish Habitat, Valleyland, and Natural Areas Abutting Lake Simcoe) identified in the NHSRS. Where additional data is available (internal and external), the LSRCA will continue to refine target areas through additional analysis.

## 2.4 Federal Considerations

In 2010 as part of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Canada endorsed a 10 year strategic plan to reverse the decline of biodiversity. To meet the goals set out in the 10 year Strategic Plan, in 2015, Canada embedded Aichi Target 11 into Canada's 2020 Biodiversity Targets as Canada's Target 1. This target was set to meet Canada's international obligations to protect at least 17% of Canada's terrestrial areas and inland water, and 10% of coastal and marine areas to reverse the decline of biodiversity.

In the report, Canada's Conservation Vision: A Report to the National Advisory Panel (2018), it is highlighted that the two great environmental challenges of our time – biodiversity loss and climate change are interconnected and require urgent action. In the report the area of Canada's land and fresh water resources is identified as 9,984,670 km<sup>2</sup>, 17% of this area would translate into 1,697,394 km<sup>2</sup>. For some perspective the LSRCA's entire watershed 3,400 km<sup>2</sup> (land and water) would represent 0.2 % of the area as part of Canada's Target 1. Given LSRCA's current landholdings of 2,425 ha (owned, managed and conservation easements) across the watershed, the LSRCA contributes approximately 0.00142% to the Target 1 goal. While the provincial and federal governments have made a commitment to achieve the protection of 17% of Canada's land and inland waters by 2020, there is a significant way to go, even with the early opportunities list for projects and initiatives across Canada there will remain at least a 284,752 km<sup>2</sup> national shortfall by 2020.

It is critical that the LSRCA continues to identify restoration and land securement initiatives that support actions to enhance biodiversity and reduce impacts of climate change to support this national target through its restoration and land securement initiatives.

## 2.5 Provincial Considerations

In 2011, the province of Ontario renewed its Biodiversity Strategy. The vision of this Strategy is **a future where biodiversity loss is halted and recovery is advanced. People value, protect and enhance biodiversity and the ecosystem services essential for human health and well-being.**

Three goals define the conservation path proposed in this Provincial Strategy:

**Goal 1:** Mainstream biodiversity by incorporating biodiversity considerations into decision-making across the province, in different sectors and in our homes, workplaces and schools.

**Goal 2:** Protect, restore and recover Ontario's genetic, species and ecosystem diversity and related ecosystem functions and processes.

### **Goal 3:** Use Ontario’s biological assets sustainably.

The success of the strategy will be tracked through 15 specific targets representing key areas of focus for biodiversity conservation in Ontario. The following targets relate to aspects of LSRCA’s land securement program that align with the provincial strategy to support biodiversity through its restoration and land securement initiatives.

- By 2015, all sectors have initiated the development of implementation plans in support of Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy, and by 2020, those plans are implemented. (Target 4)
- By 2020, all relevant policies and programs integrate biodiversity values. (Target 5)
- By 2015, natural heritage systems plans and biodiversity conservation strategies are developed and implemented at the municipal and landscape levels. (Target 12)
- By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and aquatic systems are conserved through well-connected networks of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. (Target 13 – which aligns with Canada Target 1, see below)
- By 2020, programs and policies are in place to maintain and enhance ecosystem services. (Target 14)

It is critical that the LSRCA continues to identify restoration and land securement initiatives that support actions to enhance biodiversity and reduce impacts of climate change to support this provincial target through its restoration and land securement initiatives.

The province also passed the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (LSPP) which is a comprehensive plan to protect and restore the ecological health of Lake Simcoe and its watershed. The LSPP has identified the need for a greater proportion of natural cover to be in large patches. Policy 6.47 directed the LSRCA to delineate priority areas for restoration, securement and enhancement which was completed in 2018.

## **2.6 Summary**

Since 2011 the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority’s (LSRCA) has acquired approximately 120 hectares of ecologically significant lands through fee simple purchase, donation and conservation easements, LSRCA currently owns and manages 2,425 ha of land including; active recreation, passive recreation, natural heritage, ecological preserves, and conservation easement areas. These lands have been secured with support from a variety of funding partnerships including municipal, provincial, private, non-government organizations, and the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation.

Given the federal, provincial and LSRCA NHSRS recommendations it is important for the LSRCA to continue to protect ecologically significant areas, and work to restore degraded systems throughout the watershed.

LSRCA, through the Conservation Lands Division, has set a goal to secure between 250 and 300 hectares of land by 2025 to support LSRCA's NHSRS restoration targets as well as the federal and provincial biodiversity and climate change initiatives. The land securement program will continue to utilize the technical support from the Watershed Management Division and Geographic Information Services to refine the natural heritage system and identify priority areas for land securement that will further the LSRCA's mission to restore and protect the environmental health and quality of the Lake Simcoe watershed.

### **3.0 Regional Context**

#### **3.1 Jurisdictional Area**

LSRCA is situated within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and is bordered by four Conservation Authorities including: Toronto and Region, Nottawasaga Valley, Kawartha Region and Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authorities. The LSRCA's watershed contains portions of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan areas (Figure 1).

#### **3.2 First Nations and Métis**

The Lake Simcoe watershed contains portions of the ancestral lands and waters of all Indigenous Peoples, who have left their footprints on Mother Earth before us. The watershed is situated within an area covered by several treaties including; Upper Canada Land Surrender (1764 to 1862), Treaty 16 (1815), Treaty 18 (1818), the Williams Treaty lands (1923), and Métis Rights (Ontario).

The Williams Treaties First Nations are: Alderville First Nation, Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation and Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.

Within the LSRCA watershed is the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation who are an Ojibwa people, who reside both on and off the Georgina Island reserve. The Chippewas of Georgina Island are descendants of a larger group known as the Chippewas of Lakes Huron and Simcoe. They are an Anishnaabe people and their language is Ojibwe. Proud and progressive, they continue to assert their Aboriginal rights as guaranteed in the Canadian constitution.

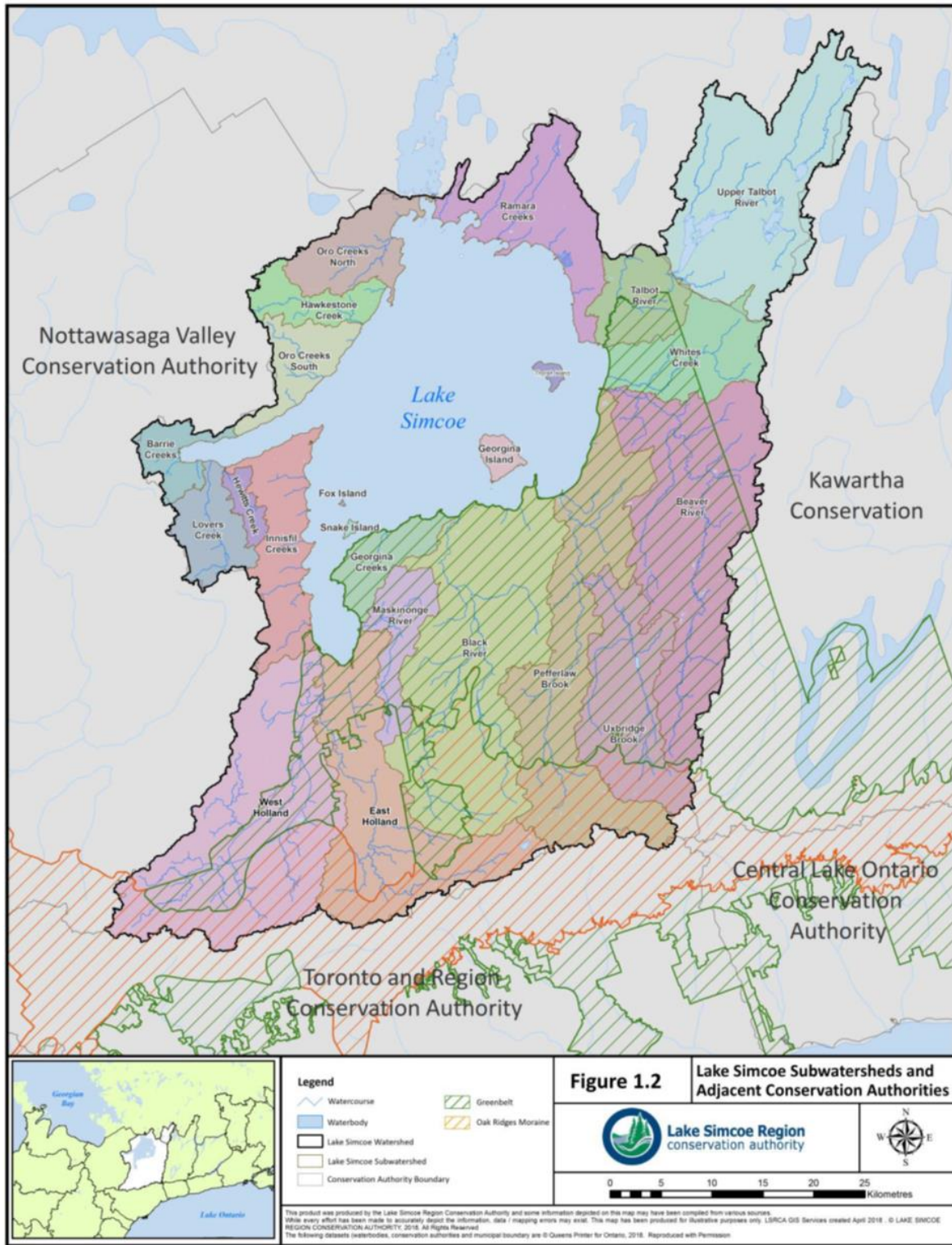


Figure 1

Along with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation there are several related communities within the Williams Treaty including, Alderville First Nation, Beausoleil First Nation, Chippewas of Rama First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation, Hiawatha First Nation and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. An additional 15 First Nation communities are identified in the various treaties. Founded in the 1990's the Métis Nation of Ontario represents the collective aspirations, rights and interests of Métis people and communities within Canada and Ontario. The Métis have made assertions for the presence of Métis Aboriginal harvesting rights that cover the majority of the provincial boundary. The Métis Nation lives within the Homelands of Ontario and promote their common, cultural, social and political, and economic well-being.

As part of LSRCA's land securement program, LSRCA staff would be interested in working with the First Nations Communities, Chippewas of Georgina Island and Métis Nation to identify land securement opportunities that could include areas of mutual interests. LSRCA may be able to offer technical support to First Nations where LSRCA land acquisition priorities may support common goals with First Nations communities.

As a first step it is intended that this report will be circulated to First Nations Communities and that further consultations be undertaken to identify areas where mutual interests can be identified and incorporated in LSRCA's land securement initiatives and future project updates, and opportunities where the LSRCA can partner and work with the various First Nations to incorporate traditional indigenous natural heritage knowledge and history in mutually beneficial initiatives.

### **3.3 Provincial and Municipal Land Use Plans**

The province of Ontario has undertaken various planning initiatives that identify the need and desirability of public ownership of more greenspace for recreational purposes and for the protection of sensitive environmental features. More recently the Province of Ontario through the former Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (now the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks) has emphasized the goal to fight climate change and working to keep our air, land, and water clean to ensure Ontario's prosperity and quality of life for today and for future generations as a top priority.

The Lake Simcoe watershed is also governed by the Lake Simcoe Protection Act 2008 and Lake Simcoe Protection Plan 2009 (LSPP). The Plan addresses the long term environmental issues in Lake Simcoe and its watershed to protect and restore the ecological health of Lake Simcoe and its watershed and the emerging challenges, including climate change and invasive species by:

- promoting immediate action to address threats to the ecosystem, such as excessive phosphorus
- targeting new and emerging causes of stress such as invasive species and climate change
- protecting and restoring important natural areas such as shorelines and wetlands
- restoring the health of the fish and other aquatic life.

Under Shorelines and Natural Heritage (LSPP, Chapter 6), the promotion and protection of the ecological health of the Lake Simcoe shoreline and the watershed’s natural heritage features are noted as important in order to foster a resilient, adaptable, and sustainable watershed. Several targets related to natural heritage features are identified in the plan including;

- Achieve a greater proportion of natural vegetative cover in large high quality patches
- Achieve a minimum 40 percent high quality natural vegetative cover in the watershed
- Achieve protection of wetlands
- Achieve naturalized riparian areas on Lake Simcoe and along streams
- Restore natural areas or features
- Achieve increased ecological health based on the status of indicator species and maintenance of natural biodiversity

Long term protection of these features will need to continue to be strengthened through various provincial plans and policies, and through designations within upper and lower tier municipal official plans.

The LSRCA’s jurisdiction includes features identified as matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As part of Ontario’s policy-led planning system there are several policies and plans which provide direction for the protection of resources of provincial interest, public health and safety, and the quality of the natural and built environment. These areas fall under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan (ORMCP, 2017), The Greenbelt Plan (2017), the Provincial Policy Statements (2014), Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017), and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (2009) and municipal official plans.

It is projected that by 2041, the population within the Lake Simcoe watershed will almost double and the urban area increase by 50%. Through various goals and objectives, these provincial plans provide the framework for implementing the government of Ontario’s vision for building stronger, prosperous communities by better managing growth and protecting the environment. The wise use and management of the provinces natural heritage and water



resources is a key provincial interest. These resources need to be managed in a sustainable way to conserve biodiversity, protect essential ecological processes, public health and safety. Taking action to conserve land and resources avoids the need for costly remedial measures to correct problems and supports economic and environmental principles.

Regional municipalities and the County of Simcoe have policies and goals to protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity for current and future generations to sustain life, maintain health and provide an improved quality of life for their residents, York Region has established a target of 25% woodland cover by 2031 (currently about 23%).

### **3.4 Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Plans / Reports**

LSRCA has undertaken many studies and plans to identify the key natural heritage features and functions of the Lake Simcoe watershed including sub-watershed plans, conservation area management plans, Assimilative Capacity Studies for the Lake Simcoe watershed and Nottawasaga River (2006), LSRCA Integrated Watershed Management Plan (2008), South Georgian Bay Lake Simcoe Source Protection Plan (2015), as well as fisheries and water quality monitoring reports.

Most recently, LSRCA completed an update to the Natural Heritage System for the Lake Simcoe Watershed, Phase 1: Components and Policy Templates study (2007). The updated report is titled LSRCA's Natural Heritage System & Restoration Strategy (NHSRS) for the Lake Simcoe watershed (June 2018). The report defines the Natural Heritage System (NHS) into core features and identified targeted areas that enhance the NHS and buffer areas.

Protection of the natural heritage features and ecological functions not only preserve the intrinsic value associated with flora and fauna within the watershed but also aid in improving air quality, provide safe drinking water, and maintain a better quality of life for those living, working and/or recreating in the Lake Simcoe watershed. Further research is also emerging that is placing an economic value on natural capital and ecosystem services provided by natural systems.

LSRCA commissioned a new study on the value of ecosystem services provided by the Lake Simcoe watershed originally completed in 2007. The updated report "Valuing Natural Capital in the Lake Simcoe Watershed" prepared by Green Analytics, December 2017 defines ecosystem services as follows; "Natural capital is the stock of natural "assets" in a region (i.e., forests, wetlands, grasslands, air, soil and the assemblage of flora and fauna that make up these ecosystems). These assets provide a valuable flow of goods and services, typically referred to as ecosystem services, and broadly defined as the benefits people obtain from nature". The

study identified the non-market ecosystem service values provided by land cover type (based on the Ecological Land Classification System - ELC). The estimated ecosystem service values range from lows of \$440 to \$629 /ha for intensive and non-intensive agriculture to a high of \$8,000/ha or more for some ELC wetland types. In total, the annual value of the Lake Simcoe watershed's key ecosystem services is estimated to be \$922.7 million. (Green Analytics, 2017).

In May 2017 LSRCA approved an Ecological Offsetting Plan (EOP) as part of its development review process (Ecological Offsetting Plan, LSRCA, 2017). The EOP supports LSRCA's strategic plan goal to support a safer, healthier and more livable watershed through exceptional integrated watershed management. The development and implementation of an EOP supports this goal by providing a consistent approach to natural heritage protection, enhancement and restoration throughout the watershed.

The intent of the EOP is to address situations where development proposals result in unavoidable feature loss, despite having followed the standard development review hierarchy and the principle of "no net loss" unavoidable feature loss remains. For some projects even after working to: 1) Avoid project impacts, 2) Minimize project impacts, 3) Mitigate project impacts, there remain some impacts that cannot be mitigated. Examples include: infrastructure projects (roads, sewers) or infill residential developments within settlement areas. In these instances in order to mitigate the full project impacts additional compensation is required. The LSRCA works with the proponent to ensure that the unavoidable loss of feature is appropriately compensated for on the basis of a "net gain".

Generally, the proponent will need to compensate woodlands on a 2 to 1 areal replacement basis and wetlands 3 to 1, plus 1 to 1 for additional buffer requirements. In certain instances, where it may not be feasible for the proponent to independently compensate for the loss of natural heritage feature, cash-in-lieu or land securement may be considered as part of the Ecological Offsetting Strategy. The cash-in-lieu amount will be determined based on the required area of feature replacement, cost to recreate the feature and its ecological function, as well as the ecosystem service value for the area impacted. This overall offsetting calculation does include a portion of the cost towards land acquisition. For further details on how the ecological offset requirements are determined refer to the [LSRCA's EOP](#).

Where cash-in lieu dollars are received by the LSRCA, restoration and lands staff will endeavor to undertake environmental restoration and acquisition projects to implement the appropriate restoration (i.e., wetland, woodland, riparian buffers) to the best of their ability with the funding provided.

Understanding these offsetting priorities (e.g., location, features area) helps to identify land securement target areas and support for priority acquisition decisions within the Lake Simcoe watershed. Based on the summary of restoration/enhancement areas, ecosystem service values, the LSPP, provincial and municipal plans and various watershed studies, lands with high potential for restoration/enhancement activities (i.e., wetland creation/enhancement, afforestation, riparian restoration and buffers), supporting LSRCA's ecological offsetting obligations will be a priority for LSRCA's land securement program.

## 4.0 Existing Land Holdings

LSRCA currently owns, manages or holds easements over approximately 2,425 ha (5,992 ac) of conservation land across the watershed divided into 35 main conservation land holdings embodying a range of landscapes, ecosystem types and recreational opportunities (Figure 2). These include lands for flood control, wetland protection, managed woodlots, passive recreation, and outdoor education, as well as undeveloped natural and environmentally significant areas. As the watershed continues to urbanize, the role of conservation lands for protection and the provision of ecological services will become even more critical.

Key LSRCA properties providing ecological protection and/or public use include, the Zephyr Creek Wetlands, and Pottageville Swamp Natural Heritage Areas, the Beaver River Wetland, Scanlon Creek, Wesley Brooks Conservation Area (Fairy Lake), Willow Beach, and Thornton Bales Conservation Areas and many other smaller properties throughout the watershed.

Since its beginning and through to the mid 1990's, LSRCA had acquired approximately 1,000 hectares of land for flood control, the creation of conservation areas and natural heritage protection (i.e., wetlands, woodlands, environmentally significant areas). Through most of the 1990's, the LSRCA did not have funding to continue to acquire conservation lands. In 2001, the LSRCA was the recipient of a bequest of \$300,000 by Ms. Katharine Symons to acquire and protect 1,000 acres (404 ha) of conservation lands within the Provincially Significant Beaver River Wetland. LSRCA proceeded to actively pursue land acquisitions and in 2005 the first new property was added to LSRCA's landholdings.

By 2014 the LSRCA had utilized all of the Symons funds and acquired 18 properties through fee simple purchase and donation totaling 420.5 ha (1,040 ac.) of ecological priority lands creating LSRCA largest conservation area, the Beaver River Wetland Conservation Area. The total appraised value of these additional lands is over \$920,000.00 with total project costs of \$1,082,000.00 (including; appraisal, survey, environmental investigations, legal, etc.).

The Symons bequest allowed the LSRCA to leverage an additional \$812,000.00 through various partnerships with; Durham Region, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Ontario Heritage Trust (Natural

Spaces Land Securement and Stewardship Program), Nature Conservancy of Canada and Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation to reach this goal.

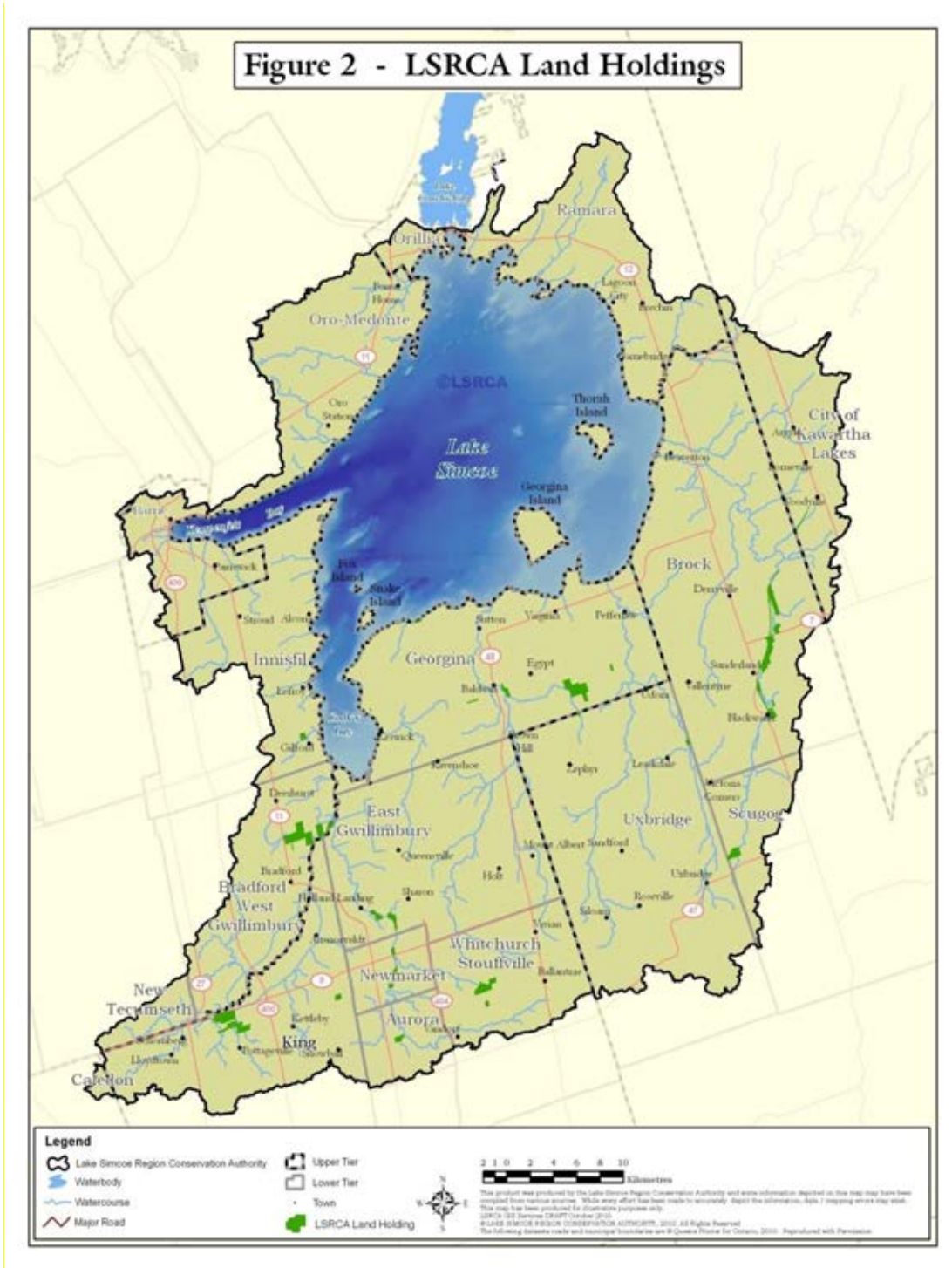


Figure 2

Over the past several years funding for land securement has been limited, staff continues to look for other funding opportunities to collaborate and leverage resources with various government and private funding sources.

## 5.0 Land Securement Considerations

The federal and provincial governments have identified climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem services essential for human health and well-being, as great challenges of our time. The Official Plans for the Regional Municipalities of Durham and York, County of Simcoe, and various lower tier municipalities have also recognized the important role the environment plays in the quality of life within the watershed and have adopted various policies that identify and protect the natural heritage/open space system.

“The two great environmental challenges of our time – biodiversity loss and climate change are interconnected, and they require urgent attention. The escalating loss of biodiversity due to destruction of habitats and impacts of climate change threatens the viability of the Earths ecosystems and thereby the ecosystem services that support all life.” - Canada’s Conservation Vision: A Report of the National Advisory Panel, 2018

“Our vision is a future where biodiversity loss is halted and recovery is advanced. People value, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services essential for human health and well-being.” - Ontario Biodiversity Council, Ontario’s Biodiversity Strategy, 2011 (Reaffirmed, 2015)

“To achieve the goal of Healthy Environment & Sustainable Communities, Durham Region will protect, enhance and where appropriate restore significant water resources, agricultural land, natural heritage and environmentally sensitive areas.”- Durham Region Strategic Plan 2015 - 2019

“A resilient natural environment supports a healthy population with clean and safe drinking water, and clean air. A connected and enhanced natural system is a permanent legacy for the Region that drives economic investment and makes York Region a choice location for new investment, employers and creative and skilled workforce.” - Vision 2051 – York Region’s Strategic Plan

The Lake Simcoe watershed is 340,000 hectares with a land base of approximately 258,100 hectares. LSRCA's NHSRS identified features considered critical to the natural heritage system and whose protection is imperative to the ecosystem functions and services of the Lake Simcoe watershed. The Core Natural Heritage System (NHS - 128,805 ha) is comprised of Watercourses and Fish habitat (38,415 ha – 13%), Natural Areas Adjacent to Lake Simcoe (NAALS) (7,027 ha - 2%), Shoreline (760 ha – 0.3%), Wetlands (50,832 ha – 18%), Woodlands (100,937 ha – 35%), Valley Lands (8,918 ha – 3%) and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (17,425 ha – 6%).

The NHSRS also identified targeted areas beyond the core that could enhance the NHS, these include grassland habitat (12,661 ha), corridor restoration (3,944 ha), restoration/enhancement opportunities in the floodplain (9,133 ha) and linkages (local connections – 1557, regional connections - 59). “These areas support achieving LSRCA’s NHS goals and improving biodiversity of the watershed. It is recommended these features are brought into the NHS when land use designations change in the future, are acquired for restoration and/or long-term management opportunities initiated with current landowners, LSRCA land securement, and/or stewardship programs” (NHSRS, 2018).

The following sections outline the development of LSRCA’s priority areas for land securement for the period 2019-2025. Priority areas were identified in two key target areas; areas for ecological protection and areas for restoration/enhancement identified in the Natural Heritage System & Restoration Strategy.

## 5.1 Ecological Protection

To identify priority areas for ecological protection key components of the LSRCA NHS Core Features (NHSRS, 2018) were mapped identifying key natural heritage features (KNHF's) Figure 3. This area contains 13,057 ha of land comprised of;

- Woodlands
- Wetlands (PSW and Non-PSW)
- Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI – Life Science – provincial and regional)
- Fish Habitat
- Valleylands
- Natural Areas Abutting Lake Simcoe (NAALS)

To identify securement priorities a Geographic Information System (GIS) query was processed to identify ecological protection areas. A series of maps were created to delineate the results. Priority areas were further refined based on those parcels containing three or more ecological features (Figure 4 and 5).

To further refine potential land securement priorities, the priority areas were correlated to identify parcels adjacent to or within 100 metres of public lands. Note as a complete data set of publicly owned lands within the LSRCA watershed does not currently exist, the LSRCA utilized its current data of public lands including; LSRCA properties, York Region Forest lands, Provincial Park lands, Simcoe County Park lands, and provincial crown land.

The search results were compiled in tabular form (Appendix 2). Through this analysis 32,110 property parcels were identified within the core area adjacent to or within 100 m of public lands.. Property size of 10 ha was selected as the minimum for acquisition; smaller properties may be considered if they contain some of the most ecologically significant features or are abutting LSRCA lands. The tabulated data has been sorted by municipality and number of KNHF's within each property, of these 366 parcels contains 3 or more KNHF's which will be carried forward for detailed assessment.

This priority list for ecological protection will be utilized to identify some of the most significant lands within the watershed. The dataset will be utilized to evaluate landowner inquiries associated with offers of donation or sale of lands to the LSRCA. Based on the parcel description and the correlated LSRCA property identifier these initiatives can be evaluated based on the dataset noted above as well as through LSRCA GIS mapping

Where properties contain significant or rare ecological features, they will be further reviewed by LSRCA staff including; desk top analysis, windshield surveys, and site investigations. These will also be evaluated by LSRCA technical staff, and senior management to determine which initiatives proceed to a full property assessment, project budget and presentation to LSRCA's Board for approval. Following Board approval, staff will proceed to negotiate an amicable property transaction with the landowner(s).

## **5.2 Ecological Restoration/Enhancement**

To identify priority acquisition areas for ecological restoration/enhancement two key components of the LSRCA NHSRS were mapped and tabulated (Figure 6). These areas included;

- Corridor Restoration (3,944 ha/9745 ac.)
- Enhancement Opportunities in the floodplain (9,113 ha/22,518 ac.)

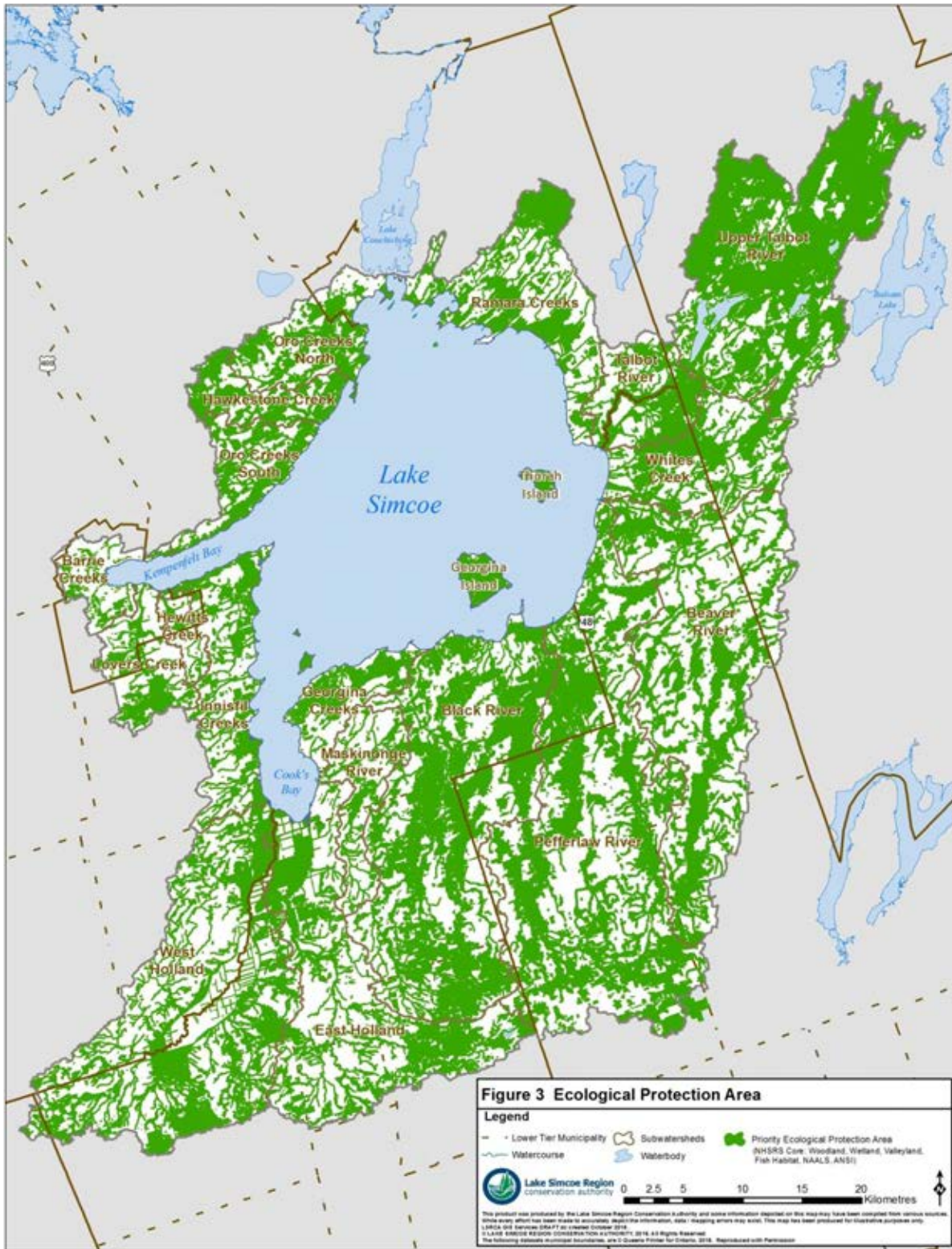


Figure 3  
 Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project  
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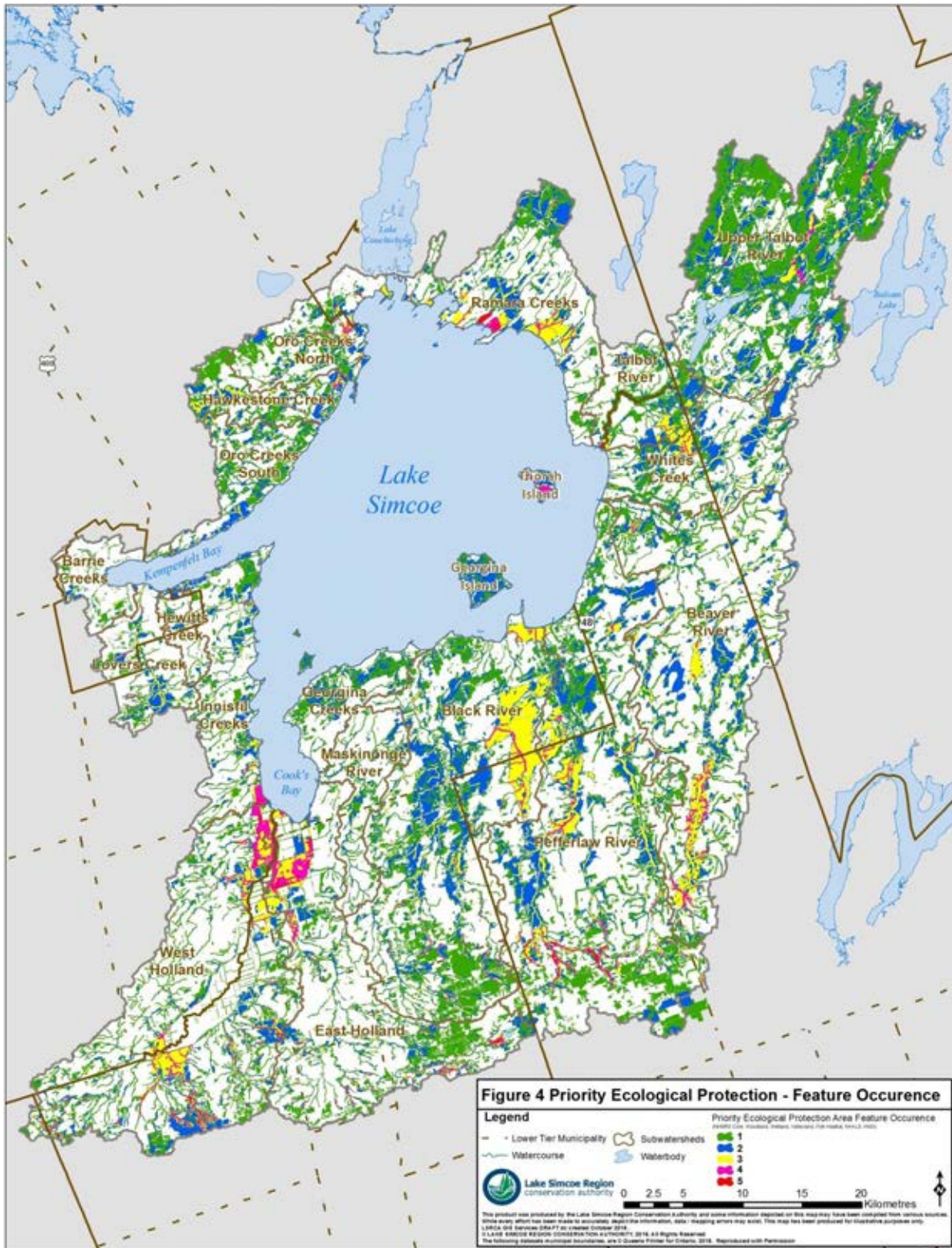


Figure 4  
 Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project  
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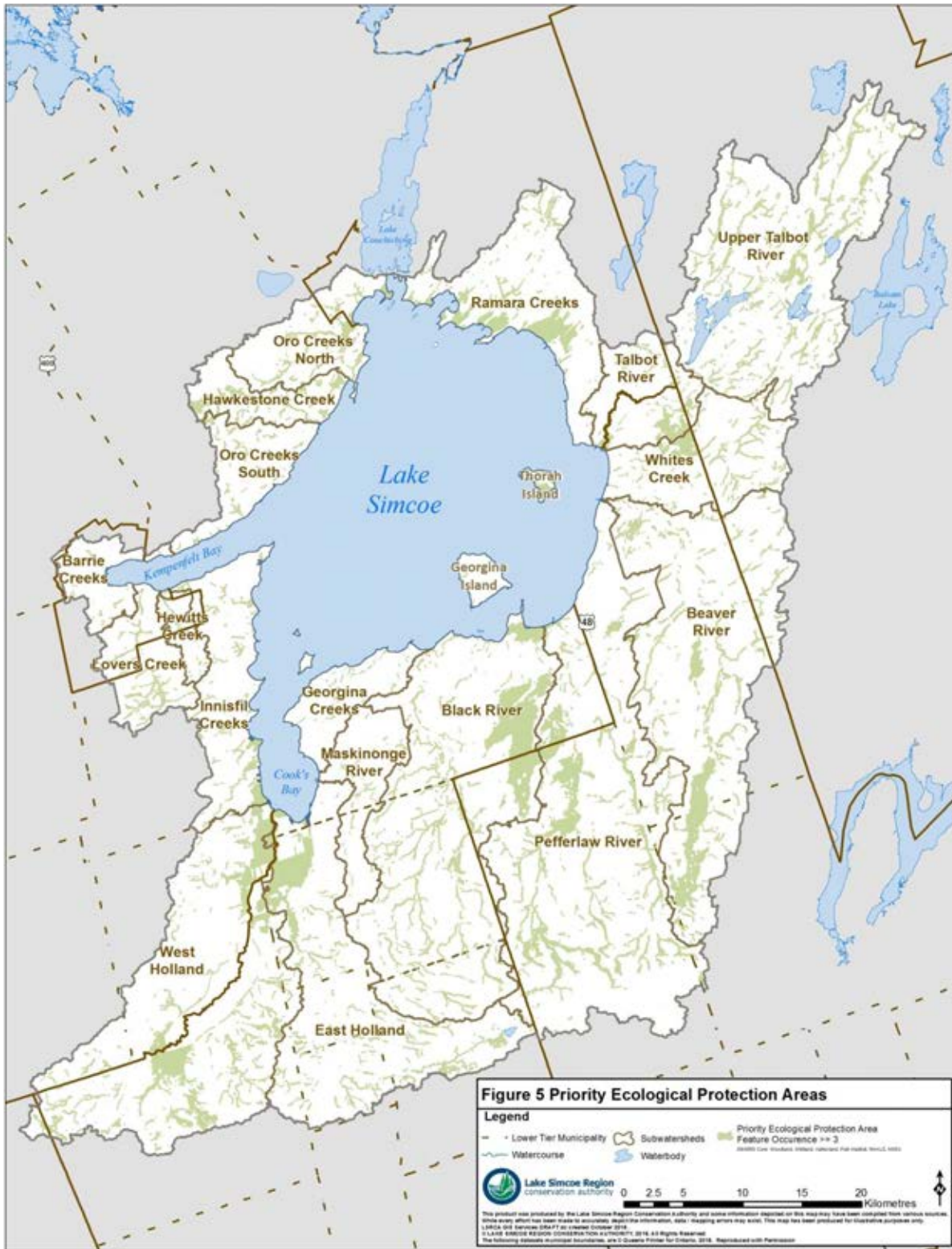


Figure 5  
 Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project  
 2019 – 2025  
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Additional GIS queries were applied to the data set to identify target parcels for land securement in and within 100 metres of the potential restoration/enhancement areas. Utilizing analysis undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF, 2018) parcels with low vegetative cover (i.e., low biomass, approximately 20% percent vegetative cover) were targeted. Properties with low vegetative cover were targeted to identify potential sites for restoration activities situated in or within 100 m of the target restoration/enhancement areas and proximity (in or within 100 m) to existing wetlands and woodlands.

Based on the tabulated results 21,214 parcels were identified adjacent to or within 100 m of the priority restoration/enhancement areas, of these 3,307 parcels were 10 ha (25 acres) or greater and of these 562 parcels had low vegetative cover, and were in proximity to existing wetland and woodland parcels. The results were compiled by municipality and are summarized in Appendix 3. Wetland ecosites provide the highest ecological service value based on the Valuing Natural Capital in the Lake Simcoe Watershed (Green Analytics, 2017) ranging between \$4,000 - \$9,000/ha/year while terrestrial ecosites range between \$2,000 - \$6,000/ha/year. These two areas would be the focus of LSRCA's priorities over the period of this land securement strategy through to 2025.

This analysis will provide LSRCA staff with a starting point to further evaluate priorities for site restoration/enhancement watershed wide and to address requirements associated with LSRCA's EOP. As of 2018 under the EOP, approximately 60 ha of woodland, 12.5 ha of wetland and 180 m of watercourse requires restoration to offset the approved removal of natural heritage features.

The potential parcels identified through the priorities noted above will be further reviewed through a desk top analysis developing a short list of properties to conduct windshield surveys, landowner contacts, and mail outs to develop specific land securement initiatives. These will then be evaluated by LSRCA technical staff, and senior management to determine which initiatives proceed to direct a full property assessment, project budget, and presentation to LSRCA's Board for approval. Following Board Approval staff will proceed to negotiate an amicable property transaction with the landowner(s).

One of the LSRCA's most recent acquisitions, the Ghost Canal property in East Gwillimbury was acquired to facilitate a trail connection, replacement of the Trail Head associated with York Region's widening of 2<sup>nd</sup> Concession and potential for ecological restoration/enhancement. This acquisition provides a great example of the type of lands to be secured by the LSRCA over the period of this land securement project.

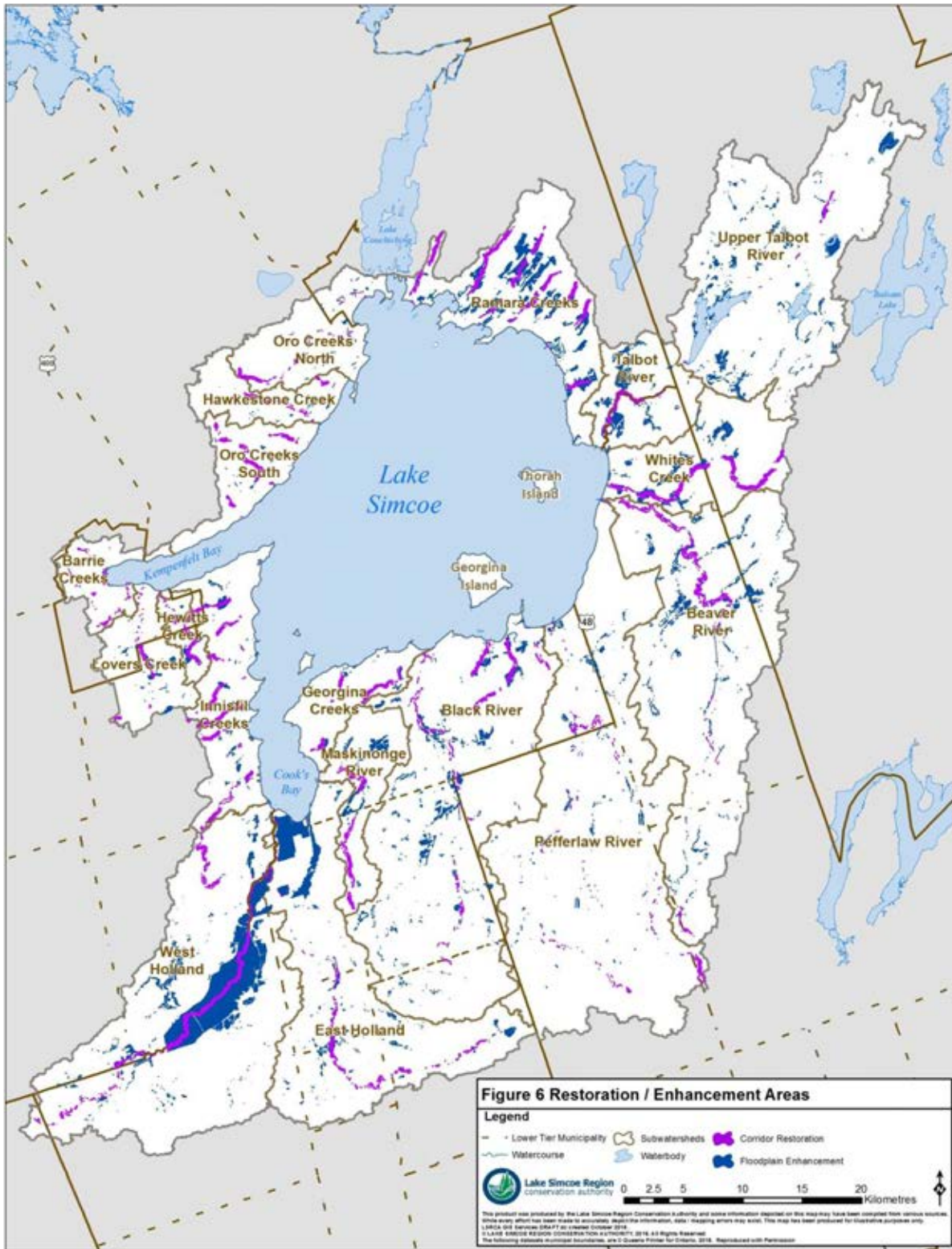


Figure 6  
 Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project  
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Ghost Canal – Pre Construction 2017



Ghost Canal – Wetland Creation Complete 2018

With the wide range of natural heritage GIS information compiled by the LSRCA and the continuous updating of LSRCA's GIS data sets further data queries can be undertaken to identify specific types of restoration opportunities (e.g., wetland creation, afforestation, watercourse buffers, species at risk, public).

The LSRCA also has public opinion data from Environics for Canadian households which capture current demographics, lifestyles, consumer behavior and settlement patterns in Canada. The data also provides what are referred to as Green Living Variables that help identify how residents feel about environmental issues, and government agencies among other variables.

This information can help refine outreach activities based on neighbourhood attitudes and values. It can also be used to identify geographical areas where residents have favorable opinions regarding environmental matters and may be open to undertaking stewardship or land securement projects. Conversely, this data can identify areas where residents do not have strong environmental attitudes or awareness and/or have negative opinions about government which may direct outreach and landowner drop-ins to other areas.

### 5.3 Conservation Land Tax and Ecological Gifts Program Considerations

Whether land securement initiatives are focused on restoration or ecological protection when LSRCA acquires title to land it is important to assess future carrying costs including property taxes. The project review will assess whether the property is eligible for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) and the federal Ecological Gift Program (EGP).

Lands eligible for the CLTIP will reduce the long term carrying costs of the property from a tax liability perspective. The CLTIP program recognizes and encourages the long-term private stewardship (including CA's) of Ontario's provincially important natural areas. Under the CLTIP,

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portions of the property containing eligible natural heritage features may qualify for a 100% property tax exemption (Minimum 0.2 ha./0.5 ac. of feature area). Eligible features include Areas of Natural and Scientific Interests (ANSI), Niagara Escarpment Natural Plan “Escarpment Natural Area”, habitats of endangered species, provincially significant wetlands (PSW) and community conservation lands (restricted to non-profit charitable conservation organizations and conservation authorities) (Appendix 4).

The community conservation category applies to lands owned by eligible charitable conservation organizations which have a primary objective of natural heritage conservation, or conservation authorities. To qualify these organizations must submit an application to the MNRF identifying their conservation lands describing how they satisfy the criteria set out in section 25(3) of O. Reg. 282/98 and provide supporting documentation. To be eligible for community conservation, the property must meet one of a list of eleven conditions identified in the regulation, and all properties under the program must be maintained in a manner that contributes to the natural heritage and biodiversity objectives for conserving the land.

If the property is to be enhanced through stewardship and/or restoration activities then the lands may become eligible under CLTIP following completion of restoration works. This requires consultation with MNRF staff as part of the property evaluation and decision process. These projects will also be considered higher priority opportunities for acquisition.

If the transfer is through a donation or conservation easement the property will be assessed under the federal EGP requirements to ensure that it is eligible for a charitable tax receipt. Under the federal program, each donation of land or a partial interest in land must be certified as ecologically sensitive according to specific national and provincial criteria, before it can be eligible to charitable tax receipts under the Ecological Gifts Program. Appendix 5 outlines the specific categories of qualified lands in Ontario. Where securement is through conservation easements property taxes are not an issue as the landowner is responsible to pay the property taxes and general maintenance of the land.

## **5.4 Land Securement Priorities**

Given the direction from the LSRCA’s Strategic Plan, input from Stakeholder Consultations, LSRCA Internal Working Group and the analysis outlined in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 LSRCA’s land securement program will focus on two key areas; ecological restoration/enhancement opportunities and ecological protection (Figure 7). By focusing on these components LSRCA’s land securement program can support LSRCA’s EOP, improve biodiversity in the watershed and support federal and provincial climate change initiatives.

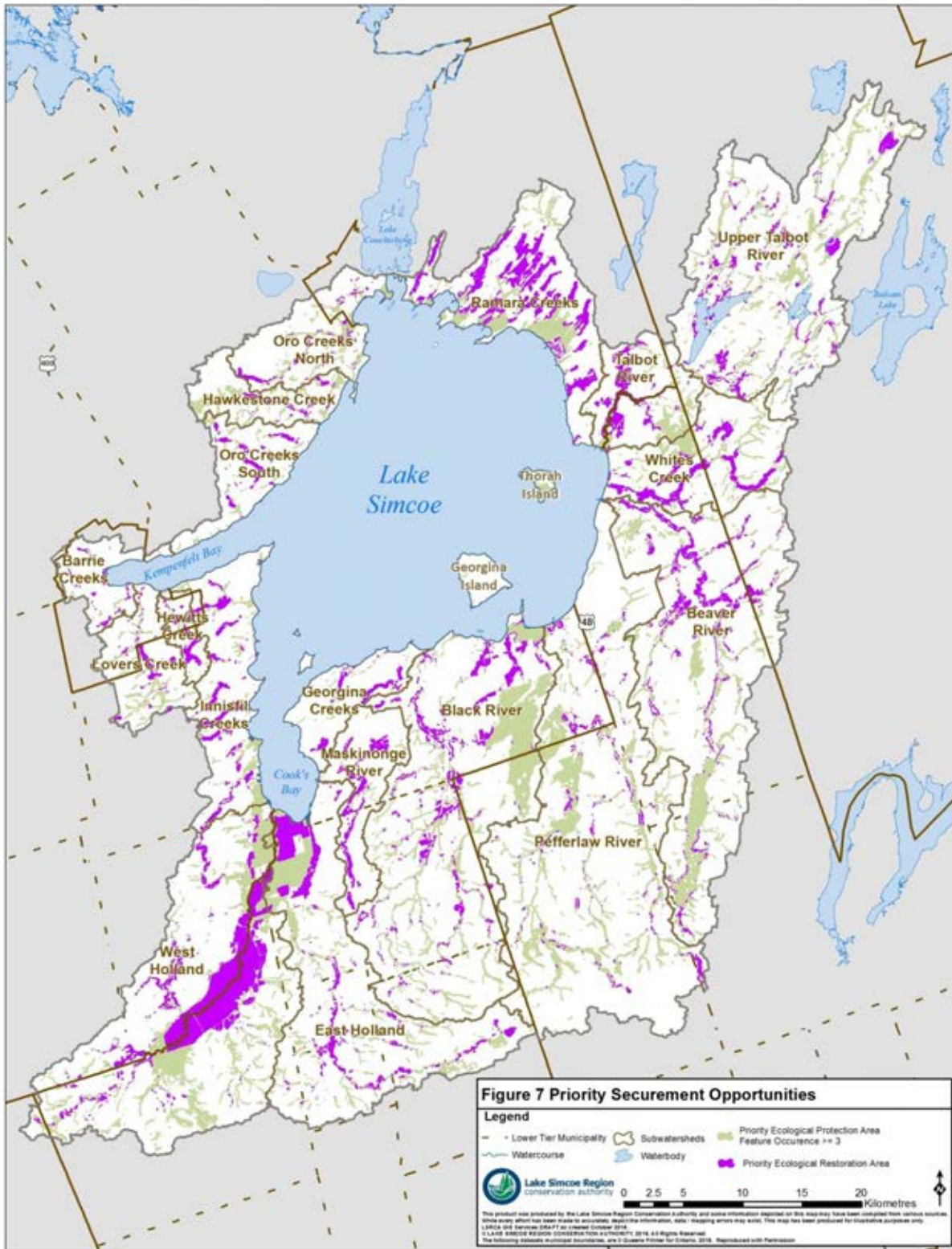


Figure 7  
 Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project  
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LSRCA will continue to consider land securement initiatives presented to the LSRCA that are outside of these focus areas provided that the property is eligible for MNRF's CLTIP and Ecogift program requirements for donations or conservation easements. In cases where candidate lands don't fully meet CLTIP and Ecogift programs, but provide high quality sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities (such as municipal/regional trail connections), partnership potential will be explored and evaluated to offset long term operating expenditures.

LSRCA landholdings are made up of a number of distinct properties/parcels. Between 2005 and 2010 LSRCA secured 24 properties, 4 per year. The average property size was 22 ha with an average project cost of \$43,000. From 2011 to 2015 LSRCA acquired 8 properties, 1.6 per year. The average property size was 15 ha with an average project cost of \$59,000. Since 2015 LSRCA has acquired two additional properties.

Based on LSRCA's recent land securement experience and considering the limited funds available for land securement, LSRCA through the Conservation Lands Division has set a goal to secure between 250 and 300 hectares of land by 2025. The land securement program will continue to utilize internal technical support to refine the natural heritage system and identify and evaluate priority areas for land securement to further the LSRCA's mission to restore and protect the environmental health and quality of the Lake Simcoe watershed.

## **6.0 Property Evaluation Procedures**

### **6.1 Internal Review Process**

Through the analysis of opportunity sites a significant number of property parcels have been identified intersecting with the core features of the natural heritage system (NHS) and restoration/enhancement areas. For ecological protection areas 32,110 property parcels were identified with three to five KNHF's and located within 100 m of public lands. These parcels were further narrowed down to 366 by limiting parcels to those greater than 10 ha.

The GIS query identified 21,214 property parcels within 100 m of the restoration/enhancement areas. Further screening has reduced this to 562 property parcels greater than 10 ha within 100 m of restoration/enhancement areas and public lands. LSRCA's public lands database does not include a full accounting of lands owned by municipalities and other public agencies however; it does provide a significant number of properties to help identify a significant number of ecological protection and restoration/enhancement opportunity sites for further analysis. Each parcel correlates to a unique property identifier that can be searched in LSRCA's GIS map viewer.



These targeted opportunity sites will be evaluated through a desk top analysis to assess existing site infrastructure (i.e., house, barn, outbuildings, old waste dumps, storage tanks, driveways, etc.), potential wetland/woodland restoration areas, property access etc. LSRCA's Land Securement Officer will consult with internal staff including conservation lands and restoration services, ecologist, hydrogeologist, biologist(s), engineering staff and First Nations and Métis communities. The desk top and internal review will identify potential opportunity sites for further analysis.

Following the desk top analysis properties that demonstrate a fit with LSRCA's land securement priorities will be reviewed with the General Manager, Conservation Lands and if suitable proceed to; contact the landowner and complete an initial field investigation of the property, confirm restoration potential and/or feature significance, identify potential issues for further investigation (i.e., abandoned well, historic waste dump, underground storage tanks, property encroachments) and determine landowner interest (i.e., donate, sell, partial taking etc.).

This will provide an assessment of the ecological significance of the property in the context of the land securement priority areas and establish the LSRCA's desire and ability to secure the property through fee simple purchase, donation, or easement. Depending on the property history and preliminary site evaluation, additional environmental or cultural studies may also be recommended (i.e., Phase 1 Environmental Assessment, Archeological Assessment).

When evaluating land securement initiatives to present to the Board for approval LSRCA staff will take into consideration the following;

1. LSRCA priorities – restoration/enhancement, ecological protection or other opportunities.
2. Type of acquisition (donation, purchase, conservation easement).
3. Interests in partnerships and desired process for providing input to identify land securement opportunities with shared interests (i.e., First Nations and Métis communities, municipalities and other conservation organizations).
4. Securement costs (land/easement value, Appraisal, Survey, Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Legal etc.).
5. Property development costs (Baseline Documentation Reports, Existing Conditions Reports, initial fencing and signage and future Conservation Area Management Plans).
6. Carrying costs (taxes, monitoring and maintenance).
7. Funding support.

Properties that meet the securement criteria and have received positive feedback from the landowner will then be pursued for securement upon review and recommendation by LSRCA's CAO, consultations with First Nations and approval of LSRCA's Board of Directors. This will require confirmation of funding for the land securement initiative, and that funding for the long term management of the property can be covered in the Conservation Lands annual budget. Once the securement approach is identified (purchase, donation, and easement) and funding confirmed and/or funding applications submitted, the Land Securement Officer will proceed to negotiate with the landowner(s) to secure the property (including; obtain property appraisal, negotiate agreement, commission survey, environmental review and property transfer or registration of conservation easements).

When assessing the suitability of a property for securement, consideration will be given to the annual property taxes, potential site improvements or remediation requirements and long-term maintenance requirements for the property. Where it is desirable to have a municipality help manage a property, discussion with the respective municipality would be held in advance to develop a mutually acceptable agreement in principle for long term management of the property. Any potential property "betterments" anticipated in partnership will also need to be considered in regards to long term asset management and financial liability. If a management arrangement cannot be made, the decision to proceed with the initiative may need to be re-evaluated.

As opportunities outside of the target priority areas may be identified through landowner or municipal inquiries they will be reviewed in accordance with the same internal review process.

## **6.2 Property Appraisal Procedures**

### **6.2.1 Land Donations**

For land donations the property appraisal costs are normally covered by the donor(s), in special circumstances the cost of the appraisal may be shared by the donor(s) and the LSRCA or paid entirely by the LSRCA subject to approval of the LSRCA's Board. If the donation proceeds and the property ownership/rights are transferred to the LSRCA, the landowner will be reimbursed for the total or partial cost of the appraisal. In the event that the donation does not proceed there is no reimbursement for the appraisal costs.

The appraisal report must meet the requirements for appraisals set out by Environment Canada under the Ecological Gifts Program and is typically commissioned by LSRCA. If the donor wishes to commission the appraisal, the consultant must be acceptable to the LSRCA. The report must follow the terms of reference set out by Environment Canada. The donor will be required to

provide a copy of the draft appraisal report to LSRCA for review and provide a copy of the final report for LSRCA's files along with the requisite copies of the final report required by Environment Canada.

Typically, LSRCA will commission the appraisal and provide a draft and final copy of the report to the donor. Unless directed by the donor, any land donation or conservation easement donation will be processed through the Federal Ecological Gifts Program. A key benefit of the program is that the donor and LSRCA are provided with a Certificate of Environmental Significance and confirmation of Fair Market Value of the donation through a peer review process at Environment Canada. These certificates along with LSRCA's charitable tax receipt are all required by Revenue Canada.

### **6.2.2 Land Purchases**

For land purchases initiated by LSRCA, the LSRCA is responsible for commissioning and covering the cost of the appraisal report for LSRCA's use only. The LSRCA is not obligated to share the full report with the landowner, however, the valuation letter would be provided. For small or low valued lands an appraisal letter may be suitable.

### **6.3 Land Securement Program Challenges**

Despite resource challenges with managing and maintaining conservation land, there have been several opportunities and influxes of funds over the years to support additional land acquisitions. While LSRCA's conservation landholdings continue to grow, the available funds to support land management has not kept pace. In light of these challenges, it is crucial that LSRCA continually reviews its conservation landholdings and endeavor to shift towards a more sustainable approach to conservation land management.

Challenges:

- Funding for acquisitions
- Identification of linkage and restoration priorities
- Funding for property development and maintenance (trails, amenities, privies, fencing etc.)
- Data gaps – public lands information, Rare Threatened and Endangered Species, municipal trail layers

Current funding levels for Conservation Area management, maintenance and development provide the basic resources required to cover property taxes, insurance, staffing, management plan development and minimal maintenance. With the current level of funding, LSRCA is

struggling to effectively manage all of the conservation landholdings. This has led to a concern that safety and liability risks such as encroachments, illegal dumping, inappropriate use, hazardous trees, property fencing, security and trail conditions may not be addressed to LSRCA’s satisfaction or to public expectation.

## 7.0 Landowner Contact

The initial steps associated with landowner contact include developing a landowner contact list for a specific area within the Land Securement Priority Areas, preparing landowner information packages for mail out or drop off. These activities will be undertaken by the Land Securement Officer in consultation with LSRCA communications staff. Landowner contacts include the following activities:

- Mail out to selected landowners (with information package)
- Telephone Solicitation
- Landowner Drop-in (with information package)
- Scheduled Site Visits (with information package)

## 8.0 Land Securement Tools

LSRCA’s land securement program utilizes a number of tools to secure environmentally significant and other lands for restoration and long term protection. Over the past decade LSRCA has typically utilized land donations, property purchases and conservation easements in its land securement program. Table 1 provides a summary of these tools.

Table 1: Land Securement Tools

Method	General Description
Purchase	Involve land purchase transactions (fee simple) with a willing seller.
Donation	Involve land transactions (fee simple) with landowners who wish to transfer title to all or a portion of their property through donation to a conservation body (Conservation Land Act, R.S.O. 1990, c C.28, Section 3(1)).
Partial Taking Process	LSRCA has the ability to create a direct conveyance to transfer a portion of a property for the purposes of flood control, erosion control, bank stabilization, shoreline management works or the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands under a project

Method	General Description
	approved by the Minister. (Section 24, Conservation Authorities Act, Section 50(3)(e) Planning Act).
Conservation Easement Agreement (under the Conservation Land Act, R.S.O. 1990, c C.28)	Conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and the conservation body. The agreement establishes mutually accepted conditions that will ensure the preservation of the ecological features of the property in perpetuity. Specific rights are registered on title and are binding on future owners (i.e., no tree cutting, no hunting, no subdivision of land etc.) Easements can provide for the protection of a resource, trail construction, and rehabilitation works. The landowner retains ownership of the property and is responsible for all maintenance, taxes etc., the conservation body is responsible for monitoring the registered restrictions on the property in perpetuity.
Exchanges	Exchanges are similar to donations where a landowner wishes to donate or bequeath property to the LSRCA that does not contain significant environmental features. The LSRCA may accept these donations with a view to sell the property and direct the proceeds to the land securement and land management programs, the donor would be advised to ensure the donor is aware of LSRCA’s intentions. Lands received and disposed of will follow the LSRCA’s procedures for land disposition.
Trade Lands	Landowners who own property within a valley system, flood plain or environmentally sensitive feature may exchange their lands or portions of their land for surplus land owned by the LSRCA subject to site evaluation, property appraisal and Board approval. These arrangements may bring additional funds to the LSRCA to be used for land securement and/or land management and maintenance. While these transactions traditionally consist of the exchange of fee simple interests, they can consist of any combination of property interests. Note that land exchanges are not necessarily acre for acre, any exchange would be based on appraised value as valley lands would not be valued the same as

Method	General Description
	developable tableland. Trade lands would also apply to municipal or other publicly owned lands.

There are benefits and limitations associated with each of the land securement tools available. A case by case assessment will be undertaken by LSRCA staff to determine the quality and significance of the ecological resources/function of each property. Shortlisted initiatives will be reviewed with senior management. Based on the individual property assessment, landowner preferences and resources available, the conservation authority staff with approval of its Board would determine the most appropriate approach to the securement of a given property to ensure the protection of the land in perpetuity.

Where the securement of a parcel of land or an interest in land is unable to be negotiated between the LSRCA and an individual property owner(s), staff may where appropriate continue to work with interested landowners to foster land stewardship as an alternative non-binding approach to natural heritage protection.

**9.0 Program Funding**

In the past five years the funding available through provincial and federal programs has been significantly reduced. Given the current economic outlook, these funding opportunities have all but disappeared. Previous funding sources have included private donations, Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation, provincial programs, Ducks Unlimited Canada; Durham and York Regions funds are still available, however, these are budget dependent and are available to other organizations as well (i.e., TRCA, CLOCA, KRCA).

The purchase of fee simple interests, easements and receiving land donations is dependent on the LSRCA’s ability to raise funds and requires that only the most suitable lands available through donation, purchase, easement or other arrangement may be secured in any given year.

**9.1 Program Costs**

Since 2005, LSRCA has undertaken 34 land securement initiatives and acquired 688 hectares (1,700 acres) of ecologically important lands through fee simple purchase, donations and conservation easements. Approximately 5% of LSRCA’s landholdings are held in conservation easements. For the fee simple acquisitions the average property size was approximately 20 ha (50 ac.), with average acquisition costs of about \$3,895/ha including; land and all other associated costs (legal, appraisal, survey, etc.). For the conservation easements the costs have



been funded partially by York Region and the balance by the LSRCA. The average cost to complete a conservation easement was approximately \$9,000/ easement. Note the land securement project costs do not include LSRCA staff time.

Based on a target ecological protection and priority restoration/enhancement area analysis and history of land acquisitions, LSRCA through the Conservation Lands Division has set a goal to secure between 250 to 300 hectares of protection and restoration land by 2025 (7 years). It is estimated that a budget allocation of between \$13,000 to \$167,000/year would be required to achieve this land securement goal for a total budget of between \$975,000 and \$1,170,000 for the project period. Additional and ongoing land management and maintenance costs would be in addition to land securement costs.

The costs associated with the land securement program include; land costs, legal, appraisal, survey, environmental audits, demolition and property clean up, land transfer tax, interest charges, fencing, site securement, administration, other related costs and applicable taxes. These expenditures will be supported based on the funding opportunities available through the various programs, and partnerships summarized below.

Additional costs, once land is acquired, include; ongoing taxes, baseline documentation reports, conservation area management plans, ongoing land care, monitoring, maintenance (e.g., fencing signage, mapping, trail base etc.), and administration.

## **9.2 Funding Alternatives**

The following outlines a variety of potential funding sources for land securement.

### **9.2.1 LSRCA Ecological Offsetting**

Based on the LSRCA's Ecological Offsetting Plan in instances where a proponent cannot avoid and mitigate the full project impacts compensation is an option. LSRCA will work with the proponent to ensure that the unavoidable loss of feature is appropriately compensated for on the basis of a "net gain". While the vast majority of the funds are directed at restoration projects there is a percentage of the calculated offsetting dollars that can be utilized in support of land securement initiatives.

Where cash-in lieu dollars are received, LSRCA staff will endeavor to undertake acquisition for restoration to implement the appropriate restoration/enhancement projects (i.e., wetland, woodland, riparian buffers) with the funding provided through the EOP and additional partner funding opportunities.

## 9.2.2 Municipal

The conservation of lands benefits all municipalities within LSRCA’s jurisdiction by maintaining their ability to accommodate the natural functions and features of the ecosystem and providing open space for the enjoyment, health, and well-being of all residents. The conservation of the natural heritage system including water quantity and quality is of benefit to the people of the entire region and will contribute positively to the quality of life for future generations. Resilient natural heritage systems provide recreation opportunities and support the health and well-being of municipal residents.

Where appropriate, as land securement opportunities present themselves, upper and lower tier municipalities would be consulted to determine if there is any funding available to support the securement initiative.

Currently, the Region of York has in place a Land Securement Working Group that provides an opportunity for area municipal, agency and other key stakeholders to network and discuss land securement activities and priorities. This is an important forum for sharing approaches and avoiding duplication of efforts and resource utilization. LSRCA is a member of this working group. York Region also provides funding for land securement initiatives within York Region through their Greenlands Property Securement Strategy and is reviewed on a case by case basis given annual funding allocation. Funding up to 50% of project costs is available for projects that meet York Regions greenland priorities subject to approval.

The Region of Durham has created a land acquisition policy titled “Durham Region Land Acquisition Policy for Conservation Authorities, 2007” for the acquisition of greenlands in the Region of Durham. It sets out environmental and financial criteria and is only available to Conservation Authorities subject to project approval and annual funding allocation. Funding up to 40% of project costs is available for projects that meet Durham Regions greenland priorities subject to approval.

## 9.2.3 Provincial

Over the past decade LSRCA has been successful in obtaining funding from provincial programs that have been made available to Conservation Authorities and the land trust community for the securement of natural heritage lands. These have involved funding through programs including the Natural Spaces Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program, MNRF Greenlands Program in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy of Canada. These programs provided up to 50% funding for securement and stewardship projects. Currently there are no provincial



funds available for land securement initiatives. The LSRCA will continue to participate in provincial funding programs as they are available.

#### **9.2.4 Federal**

In 2018, the federal government announced the Canada Nature Fund; Target 1 Challenge Component, this fund will provide \$175 million over 4 years. The Canada Nature Fund will make it possible to establish protected and conserved areas, secure private land and support terrestrial and aquatic species protection efforts by provinces, territories, Indigenous Peoples, and stakeholders in achieving Canada's protected and conserved areas commitments of conserving 17% of Canada's land and inland waters by 2020.

The primary objectives are to; contribute towards achieving Pathway to Canada Target 1 (hectares conserved, connectivity, ecological integrity), contribute to indigenous reconciliation and capacity building and contribute to priority co-benefits such as species at risk and climate change.

As LSRCA identifies land securement initiatives which meet this program requirements LSRCA staff will submit expression of interest to Environment and Climate Change Canada for consideration and work with other conservation organizations to meet these objectives.

#### **9.2.5 Partner Organizations**

The Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation (LSCF) has provided funding support to LSRCA's land securement program. As securement opportunities arise the LSCF will be approached to provide funding for land securement initiatives for the protection and/or restoration of natural heritage lands within LSRCA's jurisdiction.

Potential funding agencies include the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, Ontario Nature, Ontario Heritage Trust, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and municipal partners. Some of these programs are currently inactive but could be resurrected in some form in the future.

The NCC had limited project areas in LSRCA's watershed that could utilize these funds; however, NCC has recently expanded their Happy Valley Project area to include the Pottageville Swamp area which would allow LSRCA potential access NCC funds.

The LSRCA has also worked with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust and Couchiching Conservancy to identify projects of mutual interest. To date we have been unable to complete

a project but will continue to work with these conservation organizations identify land securement opportunities. Funding is available on a case by case basis subject to approval.

## 9.2.6 Disposition

LSRCA's Conservation Land Holding Assessment, 2016, recommended that the LSRCA develop a Land Disposition Strategy that provides direction for the sale or transfer of conservation land holdings. As outlined in Section 6.3, the LSRCA's land securement and lands program face ongoing challenges including; funding for acquisitions, establishing restoration priorities, funding for property development and maintenance (fencing, gates, etc.), site information (i.e., up to date trail maps and signage) and public land ownership information.

Generally, LSRCA does not endorse selling off conservation lands and currently does not have any plans to do so, however, a review of existing LSRCA properties will be undertaken in 2019. There are several properties that may no longer fit in LSRCA's portfolio as they are not within LSRCA's land securement priorities for protection and restoration identified within this strategy and LSRCA's NHSRS, 2018.

LSRCA's landholdings should be reassessed to determine if there are some lands that could be disposed of privately, to municipalities or other public agencies. The disposition of LSRCA lands can also involve trade or exchange lands. The municipality where the subject property is located would be offered first right of refusal subject to any conditions set out as part of the original acquisition (e.g., condition of the land donation to be held in perpetuity for conservation purposes).

Proceeds from the sale of lands would be directed to the conservation lands division for land securement, property development and maintenance. Properties identified as potential for disposition will be presented to LSRCA's Board for approval.

## 10.0 Recommendations

- 10.1 That LSRCA through the Conservation Lands Division set a goal to secure 250 to 300 hectares of ecologically sensitive land by 2025. This goal will also be identified in subsequent updates to various LSRCA corporate documents including the Strategic Plan, Business Plan, and Divisional Work Plans.
- 10.2 That staff proceed to undertake desk top analysis of the land securement ecological protection priorities identified in section 5.1 and identify candidate sites for evaluation through LSRCA's internal review process. When funding opportunities are available present priority sites to the Board for approval.

- 10.3 That staff proceed to undertake desk top analysis of the land securement restoration/enhancement priorities identified in section 5.2 and identify candidate sites for evaluation through LSRCA's internal review process. When funding opportunities are available present priority sites to the Board for approval.
- 10.4 That LSRCA circulate the Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project to and engage with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation and related communities and Métis communities to identify land securement opportunities to achieve common goals to secure lands to improve the health of the Lake Simcoe watershed and protect important ecological and traditional lands.
- 10.5 That LSRCA undertake a land securement funding strategy to develop a long term funding plan.
- 10.6 That staff work with municipal representatives to prepare communication materials to promote and educate the public and partner staff about land securement options.
- 10.7 That staff continue to work with funding partners to secure financial support for the LSRCA's Land Securement Program and to work with government and non-government agencies to identify and foster new funding partnerships.
- 10.8 That Corporate Services compile public land information for all municipalities to help refine land securement priority parcels.
- 10.9 That Corporate Services provide the land securement data layers available for internal map viewers.
- 10.10 That Planning and Development continue to compile key natural heritage feature data to identify significant ecological features and rare threatened and endangered species and habitats for priority ecological protection.
- 10.11 That Planning and Development continue to undertake natural heritage analysis to identify priority areas for ecological restoration within LSRCA's NHSRS corridor restoration and floodplain enhancement areas.
- 10.12 That Integrated Watershed Management identifies priority areas for protection or enhancement as part of the Lake Simcoe Watershed Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Watershed-wide Carbon Reduction Strategy.
- 10.13 That staff be directed to request the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry or the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks to approve the project pursuant to Section 24 of the Conservation Authorities Act.

- 10.14 That the project be circulated to the watershed municipalities as the basis for funding and land securement opportunities.
- 10.15 That the NHSLSP 2019-2025 be circulated to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Central Lake Conservation Authority, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, and Kawartha Lakes Conservation as the basis for any joint funding and land securement opportunities.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Land Securement Stakeholder Conservation Report**

The Stakeholder Conservation Report is available on request. Please contact [communications@LSRCA.on.ca](mailto:communications@LSRCA.on.ca) to request your copy.

## Appendix 2

### Ecological Protection Priority Parcels

**Appendix 2: Ecological Protection - Priority Parcels >10 ha and within 100 m of Public Lands**

Municipality	Total Parcels Priority Ecological Protection 3 to 5 KNHF's	Total Parcels with 3 KNHF's	Total Parcels > 10 ha with 3 KNHF's	Total Parcels with 4 KNHF's	Total Parcels > 10 ha with 4 KNHF's	Total Parcels with 5 KNHF's	Total Parcels -> 10ha with 5 KNHF's	Total Parcels > 10 ha - Priority Ecological Protection 3 to 5 KNHF's
City of Barrie	536	506	2	30	0	0	0	2
City of Kawartha Lakes	2,791	2,573	31	218	3	0	0	34
City of Orillia	362	303	1	53	0	6	0	1
Town of Aurora	828	693	1	135	0	0	0	1
Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury	1,457	1,048	16	355	12	54	0	28
Town of Caledon	111	92	0	17	0	2	0	0
Town of East Gwillimbury	3,471	2,874	16	532	9	65	1	26
Town of Georgina	2,683	2,385	54	294	4	4	0	58
Town of Innisfil	1,638	1,406	4	215	3	17	0	7
Town of New Tecumseth	112	102	0	10	0	0	0	0
Town of Newmarket	390	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	2,127	1,590	0	474	0	63	0	0
Township of Brock	2,762	2,431	44	331	9	0	0	53
Township of King	4,434	3,239	14	1,056	1	139	0	15
Township of Oro-Medonte	1,637	1,385	15	241	2	11	0	17
Township of Ramara	1,357	1,107	30	219	4	31	2	36
Township of Scugog	982	781	19	193	5	8	0	24
Township of Springwater	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Township of Uxbridge	4,432	3,348	63	948	1	136	0	64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32,110</b>	<b>25,863</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>5,321</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>366</b>



# Appendix 3

## Restoration/Enhancement Priority Parcels

**Appendix 3: Restoration/Enhancement Securement - Priority Parcels (>10 ha)**

Municipality	Total Parcels within 100 metres of Enhancement /Restoration Areas	Total 10 ha Parcels within 100 metres of Enhancement /Restoration Areas	Total Parcels > 10 ha with Low Biomass, within 100 m of Enhancement /Restoration Areas and 100 m of Wetland and Woodland Areas	Total Parcels > 10 ha with Low Biomass, within 100 metres of Enhancement /Restoration Areas and within 100 m of Wetland Areas	Total Parcels > 10 ha with Low Biomass, within 100 metres of Enhancement /Restoration Areas and within 100 m of Woodland Areas	Total
City of Barrie	2,461	47	5	0	0	5
City of Kawartha Lakes	927	414	33	0	0	33
City of Orillia	359	15	1	0	0	1
Town of Aurora	2,043	28	2	0	0	2
Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury	1,284	173	21	0	5	26
Town of Caledon	11	0	0	0	0	0
Town of East Gwillimbury	1,343	331	75	0	4	79
Town of Georgina	2,521	388	97	2	1	100
Town of Innisfil	1,630	232	15	0	3	18
Town of New Tecumseth	91	26	1	0	0	1
Town of Newmarket	1,897	15	0	0	0	0
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	641	95	11	0	3	14
Township of Brock	1,465	442	87	1	5	93
Township of King	1,295	204	25	2	4	31
Township of Oro-Medonte	555	203	18	0	9	27
Township of Ramara	1,545	322	16	0	3	19
Township of Scugog	136	75	12	0	0	12
Township of Springwater	5	2	0	0	0	0
Township of Uxbridge	1,005	295	94	0	7	101
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,214</b>	<b>3,307</b>	<b>513</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>562</b>

## **Appendix 4**

### **Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP)**

The Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) was established in 1998. It is designed to recognize, encourage and support the long-term private stewardship of Ontario's provincially significant conservation lands. It provides property tax relief to those landowners who agree to protect the natural heritage values of their property. The current tax relief offered is a 100 per cent tax exemption on the eligible portion of a property.

#### **Eligible Lands**

While large areas of Ontario are still in a natural state, only lands identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources as provincially significant are eligible for this program. The eligible types of land are:

1. Provincially Significant Wetlands
2. Provincially Significant Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI - Earth and Life Science)
3. Habitat of Endangered Species
4. Land designated as Escarpment Natural Area in the Niagara Escarpment Plan
5. Community Conservation Lands as specified under Section 25(3) of Ontario Regulation 282/98 of the Assessment Act, 1990.
  - 5.1 The land is designated as an escarpment protection area in the Niagara Escarpment Plan under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act R.S.O. 1990.
  - 5.2 The land is located within a Featured Area and contributed to the natural heritage protection objectives established for the Featured Area as set out in the "Ontario Living Legacy Land Use Strategy, July 1999", published by the Queen's Printer.
  - 5.3 The land is a natural heritage feature or area that meets the criteria of the natural heritage provisions of the Provincial Policy Statement as issued and re-issued under section 3 of the Planning Act . R.S.O. 1990
  - 5.4 The land is identified by the Minister of Natural Resources as a regionally significant area of natural and scientific interest using the criteria set out in the Ministry of Natural Resources document entitled "A Framework for the Conservation of Ontario's Biological Heritage", dated May, 1980, or in the Ministry of Natural Resources document entitled "A Framework for the Conservation of Ontario's Earth Science Features", dated October, 1981.

- 5.5 It is a habitat of species that is listed as a special concern Species in Schedule 4 to Ontario Regulation 230/08 (Species at Risk in Ontario List) made under the Endangered Species Act 2007.
- 5.6 The land is identified as having species occurrences or ecological communities with an S-Rank designation of S1-S3, as determined by the Natural Heritage Information Centre of the Ministry of Natural Resources.
- 5.7 The land is designated as a natural core area, natural linkage area or countryside in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan under the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001.
- 5.8 The land is a natural heritage area identified within a regional or watershed plan or strategy developed by a conservation authority under the Conservation Authorities Act R.S.O. 1990 or by another public agency under another provincial or federal statute.
- 5.9 The land is designated as an environmentally sensitive area, environmentally significant area, environmental protection area, natural heritage system or another area with an equivalent designation within a municipal official plan or zoning by-law under the Planning Act R.S.O. 1990.
- 5.10 (a) The land is within, abuts or abuts a road allowance that abuts a provincial park, national park, conservation reserve or provincial wildlife area and contributes significantly to the natural heritage objectives of the park, reserve or wildlife area.  
(b) Despite paragraph 5.10 (a), no part of the land that is more than 1,000 metres from the boundary of the park, reserve or wildlife area is eligible to be classified as eligible conservation land.
- 5.11 The land is an area identified under the Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan described in the "Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan Highlights Report (2000-2003)", published by Environment Canada.

CLTIP does not provide tax relief for buildings or other improvements and associated land.

CLTIP is not a land acquisition program. Participating landowners retain full ownership and property rights.

For more information you can visit the [CLTIP website](#).

## Appendix 5

### Environment Canada – Ecological Gifts Program

The Ecological Gifts Program enables owners of property with sensitive natural features to preserve wildlife habitat. Ecological Gifts are qualified charitable land donations that generate enhanced income tax benefits. Donations of fee simple title and partial interests, including conservation easements, are eligible. In many scenarios the landowner can continue to hold title and/or live on the land.

In Ontario, to qualify as Ecologically Sensitive, land must satisfy at least one criteria from an 'A' List of Specific Categories of Qualified Lands and one or more from a 'B' List of General Criteria for Other Ecologically Sensitive Lands (see below).

Gift recipients include land trusts and other conservation charities, and government agencies chosen by donors and approved by the federal government. Donors of ecogifts receive a donation receipt for the fair market value of the gift.

Ecological gifts (ecogifts) receive tax treatment that is superior to most other charitable gifts.

Ecogift tax advantages include:

- eliminated taxable capital gain on the disposition of the property
- no income limit for calculating the tax credit/deduction
- donation value certified by the Government of Canada
- tax liability for donees that do not protect the gifted land

The process of making an ecological gift is relatively straightforward. The donor will basically have two steps to complete that include providing: (i) information to support the evaluation of the land as ecologically sensitive, and (ii) an appraisal of Fair Market Value by a qualified appraiser along with a signed Application for Appraisal Review and Determination. The donor and recipient will generally cooperate on the application to confirm that the property is qualified as ecologically sensitive. The recipient will also often help the donor arrange for the appraisal of fair market value.

For more information you can visit the [Ecological Gift website](#).

## Provincial Ecosensitivity Criteria – Ontario

### A) Specific Categories of Qualified Lands

Lands, easements or covenants relative to such lands, which fall into one or more of the following categories shall be deemed to be ecologically sensitive lands in Ontario. **This is provided the terms of the easements or covenants have regard for and protect the ecologically sensitive features of the land.**

- A1. Significant portions of the habitat of federally or provincially listed species at risk, including endangered or threatened species, or species of special concern;
- A2. Areas designated as Provincially Significant Wetlands;
- A3. Provincial or regional Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest;
- A4. Designated Areas of Concern for biodiversity purposes as identified in Forest Management Plans;
- A5. Lands that are registered under the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program;
- A6. Areas that are registered under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program that are managed for wildlife habitat conservation purposes under an approved Managed Forest Plan;
- A7. Areas promoting the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity that are identified within a regional or watershed plan or strategy developed by a recognized conservation organization;
- A8. Areas designated as a World Heritage Site for biodiversity conservation purposes, a core area of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, or a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention;
- A9. Areas of biodiversity significance identified in a Canadian Heritage Rivers Management Plan or Strategy;
- A10. Areas designated in the Niagara Escarpment Plan as an Escarpment Protection Area or an Escarpment Natural Area;
- A11. Areas designated as Natural Core, Natural Linkage, Sensitive Hydrological Feature, High Aquifer Vulnerability, Significant Landform, Minimum Areas of Influence or Minimum Vegetation Protection Zones within the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan;

- A12. Areas designated Core Area, Corridor or Restoration Area in the Lake Ontario Greenway Strategy. **Criterion Deleted from the Ecological Gifts Program 2009.**
- A13. Areas designated for biodiversity conservation purposes within Management Plans or Strategies for the Trent-Severn or Rideau Waterways;
- A14. Areas within a municipal official plan or zoning by-law under the Planning Act (Ontario) designated as an Environmentally Sensitive Area, Environmentally Significant Area, Environmental Protection Area, Restoration Area, Natural Heritage System or other designation for similar purposes that are compatible with the conservation of the biodiversity, ecological features and functions of the site;
- A15. Areas within or adjacent to a Provincial Park, Provincial Park Reserve, Conservation Reserve, Conservation Area, Wilderness Area, Provincial Wildlife Area, National Wildlife Area, Migratory Bird Sanctuary, National Park, National Park Reserve or Ecological or Nature Reserve managed by a government or non-government agency;
- A16. Municipal Parks or other protected areas designated or managed for biodiversity conservation purposes. **Criterion Deleted from the Ecological Gifts Program 2009.**
- A17. Areas identified as Carolinian Canada sites or Carolinian core natural areas and corridors as designated by the Big Picture, natural area mapping program;
- A18. Areas designated as Core Natural Area, Natural Area Buffer, Natural Area Link, or Valued Ecosystem Component in the National Capital Greenbelt Master Plan by the National Capital Commission; and
- A19. Areas designated for biodiversity purposes by regional agencies such as the Niagara Parks Commission, St. Clair Parkway Commission, St. Lawrence Parks Commission and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust.

**B) General Criteria for Other Ecologically Sensitive Lands**

Lands, easements or covenants relative to such lands, that meet one or more of the following general criteria may also be considered to be ecologically sensitive lands in Ontario — subject to the approval of the federal Minister of the Environment or a person delegated by the Minister for this purpose (the term "significant" for the purposes below refers to definitions provided in Provincial Policy Statements: **This is provided the terms of the easements or covenants have regard for and protect the ecologically sensitive features of the land.**

- B1. Significant habitats such as alvars, prairies, cliffs, Great Lakes coastal habitats, old growth forest areas, glacial relic communities and sites with enduring geological features that contribute to biodiversity;
- B2. Areas of wildlife concentration such as bat caves, snake hibernacula, heronries, deer wintering yards and sites used by migratory water birds and other species for seasonal staging, feeding, breeding and like purposes;
- B3. Areas identified, designated or protected as ecologically significant or ecologically important by a government or non-government local, provincial, national or international system or body;
- B4. Significant water bodies, rivers, streams, shorelines, valleys, wetlands, groundwater recharge areas, headwaters and aquifers;
- B5. Significant wildlife or fish habitats;
- B6. Significant woodlands;
- B7. Areas that have significant current or potential for enhanced ecological values through restoration, remediation, management or geographic proximity to other ecologically significant properties;
- B8. Natural buffers and adjacent lands around areas identified under other ecologically sensitive lands categories or criteria that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity;
- B9. Natural links or corridors between areas identified under other ecologically sensitive lands categories or criteria that contribute to the conservation of biodiversity;
- B10. Areas used for long-term scientific study or baseline and benchmark monitoring of biodiversity; and
- B11. Areas that contribute to Canada's environmental heritage through the maintenance of the genetic diversity of species, ecosystem health, or landscape biodiversity, and other natural spaces of significance to the environment in which they are located.

The categories and criteria listed above, for the purposes of implementation of provisions in the Income Tax Act for ecological gifts, have been agreed to by representatives of the Governments of Ontario and Canada. This list and criteria may be further elaborated and amended by agreement between Environment Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

## Appendix 6

### Land Securement Property Evaluation Form

Priority land securement opportunities (purchase/donation/easement) will be assessed on the basis of the following project information.

#### A. Property and Owner Particulars

<b>Owner Information:</b>	
Name	
Address	
Phone No.	
Email	
Willing Donor/Vendor (i.e. donation, purchase, easement)	
<b>Property Information:</b>	
Property Location	
Roll No.	
PIN No.	
Lot	
Concession	
Property Size (ha./ac.)	
Property Description	
Current Use/(s)	
Existing Structure(s) (e.g., house, barn, misc. structures, storage tanks etc.)	
Remnant Structure(s) e.g., house, barn, misc. structures, storage tanks etc.)	



Upper Tier Municipality/County	
Lower Tier Municipality	
Sub-Watershed	
Current Official Plan Designation(s)	
Current Zoning Designation(s)	
First Nations cultural, archaeological, natural heritage areas, and designated areas	
Existing Easements (e.g. hydro, sewer, communications etc.)	
Existing Mortgage / Liens (Y/N)	
Assessed Value	
Comments	

**B. Priority Securement Criteria**

<b>Property Attributes</b>	<b>Yes/No/Not Applicable</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Within or adjacent to Priority Ecological Protection Areas (LSRCA NHS Core: Woodlands, Wetlands, ANSI, Fish Habitat, Woodland Wetland Valley, NAALS)		
Within or adjacent to Priority Restoration / Enhancement Areas		
Potential Ecological Offsetting Project		
Adjacent to LSRCA, other public lands or private conservation lands		
Proximity to existing municipal / regional trail connections		
Tax Exempt (CLTIP)		
Eligible for Ecogifts program		
Comments		

**C. Assessment of Land Securement Initiative**

Criteria	Yes/No/Not Applicable	Comments
Are the lands significant in the context of the Ecological Protection Areas?		
Are the lands significant in the context of the Restoration Enhancement Areas?		
History with the LSRCA, Permits, Complaints, Violations		
Availability of funding for securement (purchase, donation, easement, appraisal, legal, survey etc.).		
Availability of funding for ongoing maintenance.		
Is there an immediate threat to the lands? (future development, resource use).		
LSRCA Ecological Offsetting Project(s)		
Willingness of owner to enter into negotiations.		
Sale Price at fair market value.		
Availability to access to the property.		
Potential municipal lease agreement.		
Preferred agency for securement (e.g., CA, Region, Municipality, NCC, ORMLT, OFT).		

**Summary and Recommendation for Securement:**

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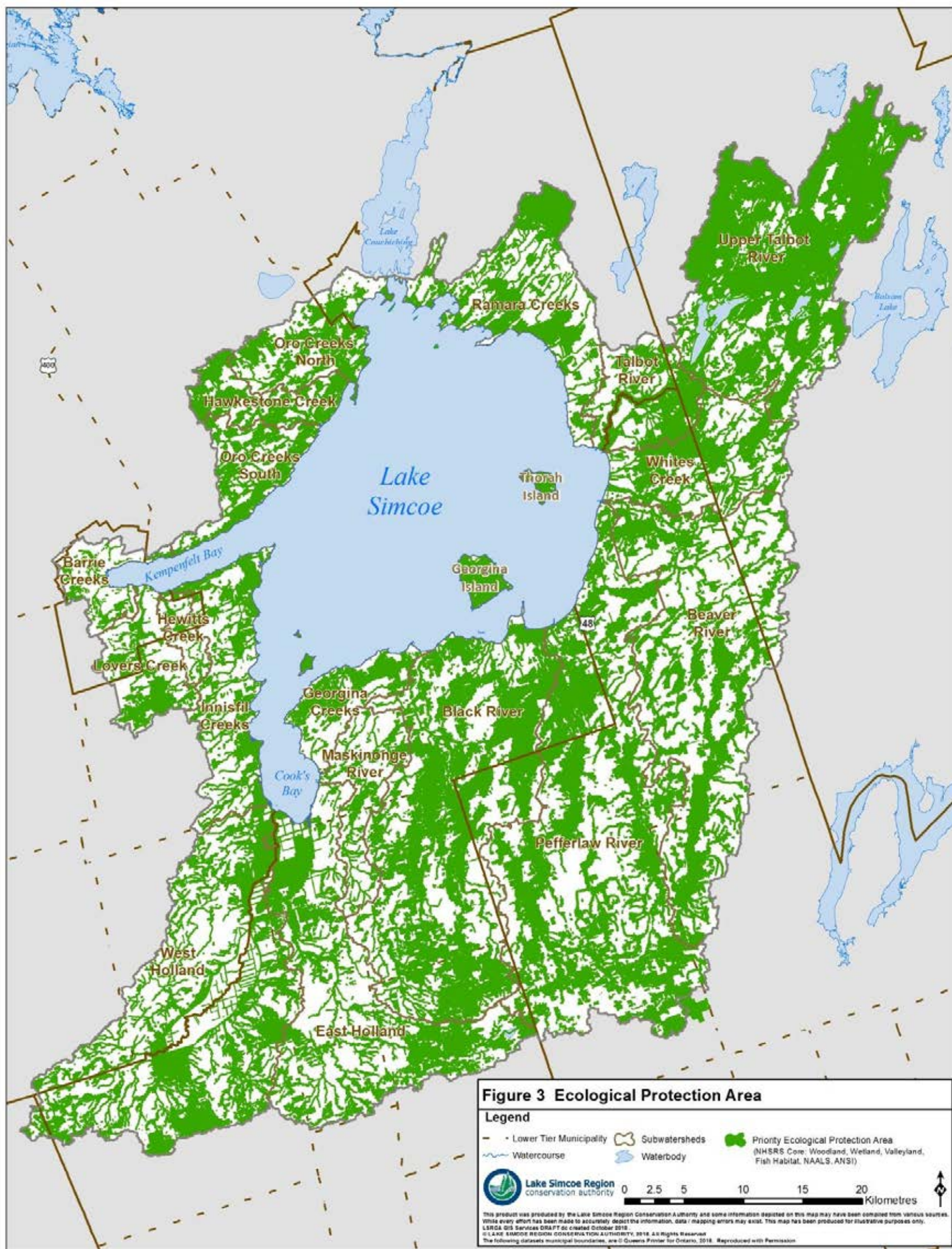


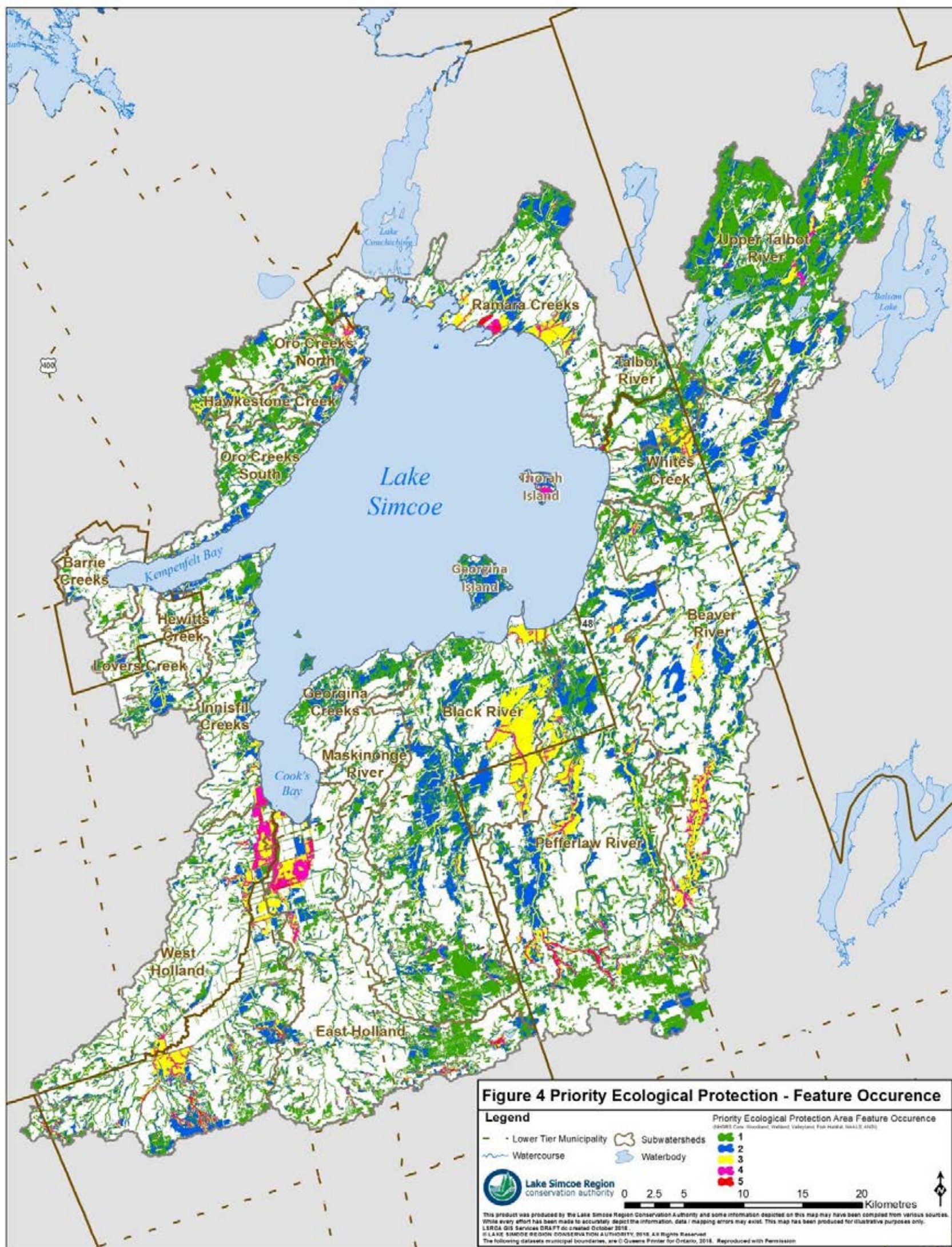
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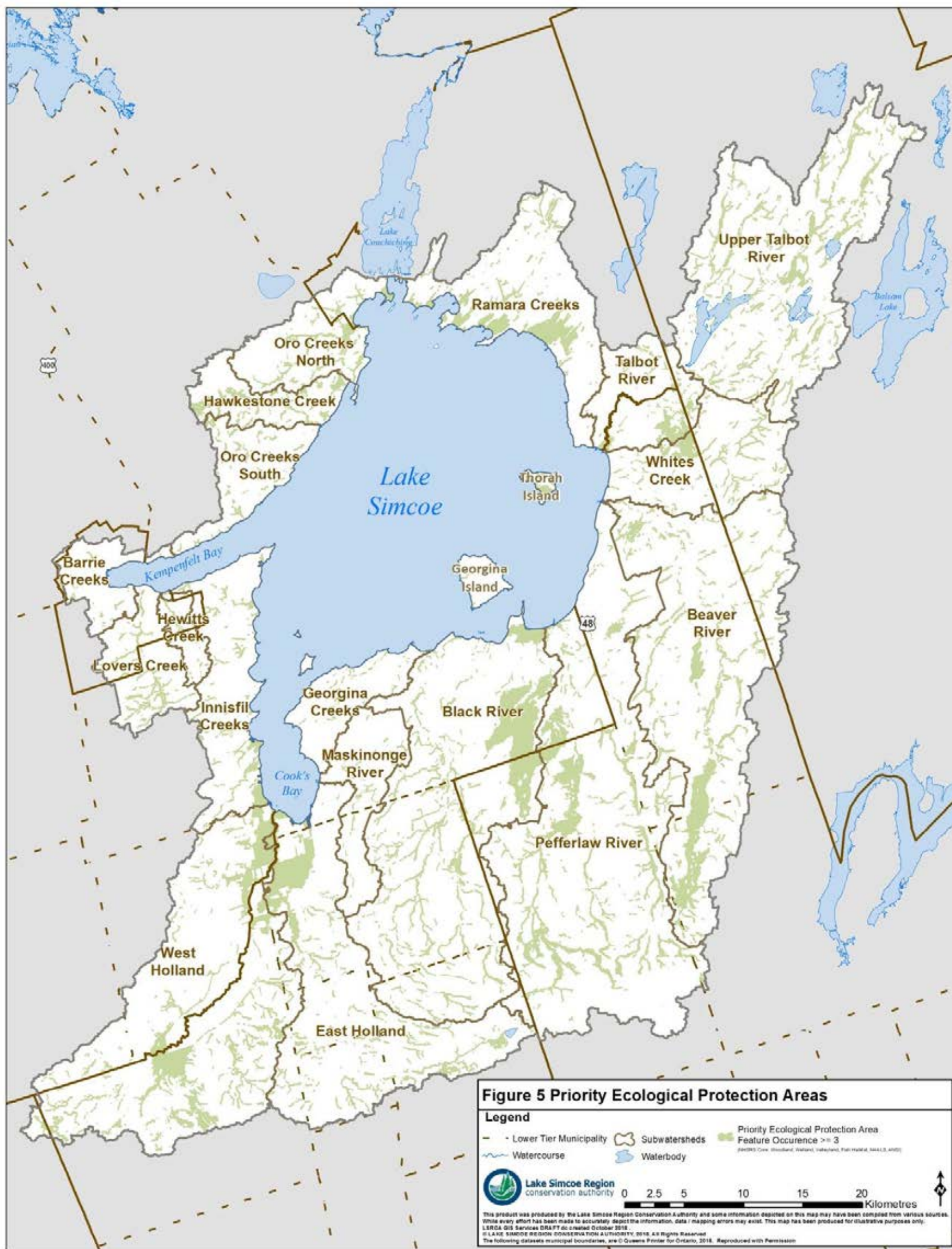
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## **Appendix 7**

### **Maps**







400

48

Lake Simcoe

Cook's Bay

Kempfenfelt Bay

Ramara Creeks

Oro Creeks North

Hawkestone Creek

Oro Creeks South

Barrie Creeks

Hewitts Creek

Lovers Creek

Innisfil Creeks

Georgina Creeks

Black River

Maskinonge River

West Holland

East Holland

Thorah Island

Georgina Island

Talbot River

Whites Creek

Beaver River

Pefferlaw River

Upper Talbot River

Bottom Lake

