



Above: New DUC wetland restoration project in Tiny Township

## Cleaning up Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay, one wetland at a time

DUC has teamed up with Severn Sound Environmental Association, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, and Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to further wetland conservation throughout the region. What have we been up to?

The Collaborative, has worked with more than 75 landowners across the region to restore wetlands, enhance wildlife habitat and raise awareness about wetland values. From installing nest boxes and livestock exclusion fencing, to full wetland restoration efforts, the program completed nine projects in its first year.

Now entering our second year, we're ready for another successful year putting wetlands back on the ground, and providing habitat for countless species. **We still have funding available for interested landowners, so please contact us with your project ideas!**

On top of getting our feet wet in the field, DUC has been busy on dry land talking to municipal councils, commenting on Official Plan reviews, and providing tools and resources to assist in planning. We've seen great examples of municipalities going above and beyond provincial policy to protect natural assets like wetlands (see *Dufferin County's new Official Plan is good news for wetlands, on page 2*), and we're looking forward to more in the coming year.

Our research program has also taken flight, with updated information on wetland loss in the Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay region. Having a better understanding of what we've already lost and why will help efforts to protect and restore wetlands through municipal planning and conservation.

### Conserving Georgian Bay's pristine wetlands

Did you know that Georgian Bay has some of the most pristine intact wetlands left in all the Great Lakes? Its true. However they are under increasing threat from a variety of pressures such as climate change, invasive species, changing water levels and development.

The Lake Simcoe Georgian Bay Wetland Collaborative is undertaking new research to better understand these emerging threats, map wetland loss and help to conserve these unique features for future generations. Stay tuned!



### Contact Us

Do you have a great example of municipal leadership in natural heritage or just want to learn more? Contact us at:

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Ducks Unlimited Canada

## MUNICIPAL MARSH MONITOR

Municipal Newsletter - Special Lake Simcoe/Georgian Bay Edition

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## Wetlands and municipalities

Land-use planning may be the single most important vehicle for the conservation of Ontario's natural areas. Municipalities with comprehensive and well developed plans that include a balanced approach to development and conservation, are living proof that multiple stakeholders in a community can work together towards a sustainable future.

*"We have not historically built infrastructure to take advantage of natural opportunities to mitigate against impacts of extreme weather... municipalities should be thinking about natural environments as part of their green infrastructure system."*

- MAYOR JEFF LEHMAN, CITY OF BARRIE

### Going above and beyond

The Province of Ontario sets minimum standards for the protection of natural areas and their functions, but some municipalities implement innovative and practical solutions that go beyond the provincial 'call of duty'.

This newsletter celebrates municipalities leading the way on natural heritage, and provides tools, resources, and other key information to facilitate strong natural heritage planning.

### Valuing nature

Conservation and restoration of natural heritage areas such as wetlands provides municipalities with services including cleaner water, drought prevention, flood impact reduction and benefits to the economy. **They are also a key resource in adapting to a changing climate.**

### IN THIS ISSUE

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## What the 2014 PPS means for wetlands

The new Ontario Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), in effect since April 2014, provides new protection for all coastal wetlands in southern Ontario and the near North, and requires municipalities to identify their natural heritage systems.

The PPS also now encourages municipalities to invest in green infrastructure. Did you know wetlands are a form of natural green infrastructure? They can help with stormwater management, water purification, and nutrient runoff. Investing in wetlands can even offset some of the costs of traditional “grey” infrastructure!

All these wetland green infrastructure services will become increasingly important as climate change brings more extreme weather, flooding and nutrient runoff.

## The future of urban nature

Aurora’s proposed Community Wildlife Park is a model for integrating natural and built landscapes

It’s a sight you don’t see every day: cattail marsh, green herons, painted turtles and wood ducks... in the middle of an urban subdivision. Yet these all coexist in the Town of Aurora, where the municipality has taken a novel approach to balancing development with the need to conserve wildlife habitat.

Despite being a relatively small area in a rapidly urbanizing city, the Ivy Jay property contains 136 different species of birds, 23 mammals, five reptiles, seven amphibians and 26 butterfly species.

Built around two existing conservation land parcels (including one held by Ducks Unlimited Canada), and the identification of a natural heritage system in its fast-growing northeast corner, the Town has committed to create a unique urban ‘community wildlife park.’

The park space will be anchored by a provincially-significant wetland complex along a small creek, rare grasslands, old hardwood forest and other important habitat. Once development is complete on the lands adjacent to the park, new homeowners will be able to appreciate



Above: an aerial view of the wetlands and surrounding subdivision. Below: Ivy Jay Farm wildlife area in Aurora.

the natural features and biodiversity of the area without impacting wildlife and their habitat... just steps from their front door. Town Council has supported the park plans, and construction is expected to begin in 2017.

Creating space for nature in urban areas is good planning...and also good business. Property values for houses that border the park are higher than those that don’t, and preserving the ecological functions of the wetland and other natural areas will help maintain a clean water supply and protect against flooding and drought.



## Getting policy right, from the start

New Official Plan is good news for Dufferin County wetlands

Wetlands in Dufferin County got a boost last year with adoption of the County’s first Official Plan (OP). A change in the Planning Act now requires all upper tier municipalities in Ontario to have an OP; in September 2013, Dufferin County started the process from scratch. After a year of public consultations, several draft reports, and presentations to local councils, the OP was adopted unanimously by County Council on September 11, 2014 (it is now awaiting approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing).

Notably, the new OP affords protection to all wetlands, including unevaluated and locally significant, in addition to Provincially Significant Wetlands. It also requires

evaluation of any unevaluated wetlands identified through development applications, prior to their approval. Given that more than half of Dufferin County’s wetlands are unevaluated or locally significant (and therefore not protected under the PPS), this is a positive development for wetland protection.

With the new OP recently approved by the Province, Dufferin County has set a standard by including strong wetland protection from the start in its first OP. Going forward, the County has committed to developing a Natural Heritage System strategy in time for the OP’s first five-year review.

## Important Upcoming Events

Ontario Climate Consortium:  
Climate Change Research Symposium  
Hamilton – May 11, 2015

Ontario Biodiversity Summit  
Niagara Falls – May 19-22, 2015

Grey to Green Conference  
Toronto – June 1-2, 2015

Latonnell Conservation Symposium  
Alliston – November 17-19, 2015

## Check out these great planning resources!

Ontario Nature Best Practices Guide  
[ontariounature.org/discover/resources/PDFs/reports/nhs-guide-web.pdf](http://ontariounature.org/discover/resources/PDFs/reports/nhs-guide-web.pdf)

Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve  
Species at Risk Habitat Screening Tool  
[gbbbr.ca/our-environment/species-at-risk/building-in-the-biosphere/](http://gbbbr.ca/our-environment/species-at-risk/building-in-the-biosphere/)

Nature Clearview Blog  
[natureclearview.org](http://natureclearview.org)

ICLEI Canada, Building Adaptive & Resilient Communities  
[icleicanada.org/programs/adaptation/barc](http://icleicanada.org/programs/adaptation/barc)

## 2015 Coordinated Plan Review: The future of wetlands across the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Province of Ontario has launched a coordinated review of the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment Plans, and the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Wetlands in these Plan areas generally have more protection than elsewhere in the Province, but there is room for improvement. **The following are Ducks Unlimited Canada’s recommendations for strengthening wetland policy through the 2015 Coordinated Review:**

➔ Maintain the current level of protection for wetlands under the Plans, and strengthen protection where possible (especially areas of the GGH outside the three main Plan areas).

- ➔ Include an overarching objective to protect and restore wetlands to achieve a net gain in wetland extent and function.
- ➔ Incorporate a mitigation sequence (avoid, minimize impacts and compensate as a last resort) that includes compensation for activities not currently governed by the Planning Act (eg. infrastructure).

### Have your say!

Visit the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website and submit comments to the 2015 Coordinated Review until May 27, at [www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10882.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10882.aspx)