

Middlesex Natural Heritage Study: 2013 Update

Steering Committee Notes: October 3, 2012

Location: Komoka Wellness Centre, 1 Tunks Lane

Attendees:

Ministry of Natural Resources: Kate McIntyre (representing Amanda McCloskey)

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority: Tracey McPherson (representing Geoff Cade)

St. Clair Region Conservation Authority: Patty Hayman & Michelle Fletcher

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority: Valerie Towsley

County of Middlesex: Durk Vanderwerff and Adam Scott

Municipality of Strathroy-Carodoc: Paul Hicks

City of London: Michael Tomazincic

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority: Jeff Brick, Terry Chapman & Tracy Annett

Regrets:

Municipality of Thames Centre: Stewart Findlater

Kettle Creek Conservation Authority: Joe Gordon

Durk thanked everyone for attending and for their participation at this meeting. Introductions of those able to attend were given and the names of those who would be attending future meetings were also provided.

Jeff gave a more detailed account of the MNHS history and how the methodology has evolved since the 2003 study. The main purpose of the Steering Committee meeting today was to finalize the Proposal/Draft Terms of Reference for the project.

The presentation “*Middlesex Natural Heritage Study: Update Project Steering Committee Meeting #1 October 3, 2012*” began.

Durk provided the background for the County’s perspective and the need for an updated Middlesex Natural Heritage Study (MNHS).

The available Natural Heritage Mapping for the 1997 Official Plan was not adequate, to address this concern a natural heritage study was undertaken to identify Significant Woodlands in the County. In 2006, as part of the last OP review the Woodlands were included as a Schedule. Now, the study has become dated, the science has moved on, the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (MNR) has been revised to reflect a ‘systems’ approach to Natural Heritage. The County is in the middles of a 5 year update and this is an opportunity to update the MNHS. The bonus is that the study is County wide for ease of implementation.

Jeff noted that Conservation Ontario just circulated the Draft Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) has the ‘systems approach’ wording incorporated in policy.

It was stressed that the MNHS is not a UTRCA report; it is a County Project which covers the Geographic Boundary of Middlesex. Recommendations were only targeted to the County, but the report was also valuable to the City of London in OPA 403 to give context to the City’s Woodlands policies.

(Slides 7 & 8) Jeff discussed the project structure, emphasizing that it is very science based methodology and we need to keep the science separate from the policy in order for the “science to be kept pure”. The 2003 methodology was reviewed as Jeff proceeded through slides 9 to 25.

Terry discussed the components of the Natural Heritage System and the criteria used in the more recent Huron County Natural Heritage Study.

Kate asked to what level Ecological Land Classification (ELC) was completed. Terry confirmed that the ELC was completed to Level 1. She wondered if further breakdown was provided where more detailed studies had been completed through Development Assessment Reports (DAR). Durk, Jeff and Tracy agreed that there probably have only been about 20 DAR’s completed since the MNHS was undertaken and of those studies few have provided digital data. Kate shared that MNR is compiling data from DAR/EIS’s to provide through Land Information Ontario (LIO), but was uncertain at what stage the data had been compiled or if it was available electronically, but recommended further discussion with MNR GIS staff in advance of the project.

Jeff then reviewed the Final Draft Proposal to seek input in order to finalize the proposal through comments received today. A handout was available for discussion purposes; *Middlesex Natural Heritage Study (2013) Project Proposal (Draft), dated September 27, 2012.*

Discussions involving the following occurred:

- 1) **First Nation Participation:** It was agreed that the project would be limited to the Corporate Boundaries of the County of Middlesex and the City of London and therefore would not include First Nations Lands. Once completed, the project results should be shared with First Nations representatives. There was no disagreement with this approach.
- 2) **Technical Committee:** (slides 35 & 36) Timing and Location to be confirmed, tentative date of October 31st has been set. Further brainstorming on which experts should sit on the Technical Committee.
 - GIS specialists
 - Biologists
 - County Forester
 - Planners
 - City Forester / Ecologist / planner
 - MNR

ACTION ITEM: Suggestions for whom to invite to the Technical Committee Meeting are to be e-mailed to Jeff and provide; their Name, Job Title, and e-mail address.

Discussion on who should be invited occurred as:

Michelle suggested Carolinian Canada – Jarmo or Daria

University of Western Ontario – Jane Bowles

Jeff had a contact from Ducks Unlimited Darrell Randal and Durk has a second contact who had requested to be involved with the project (Durk will send Jeff the contact).

Terry Suggested the Nature Conservancy – Cara Copeland

The question was raised if a representative of EPAC should be included – Michael, needed to think about if they should be just reviewing the report or if they should be included in the product. He will discuss with other City staff and let Jeff know.

It was suggested that other neighbouring County's, that are undertaking Natural Heritage Studies, may want 'observers' to attend: Oxford – Paul Michiels and Lambton – Dave Posliff

OMAFRA, OFA, Soil and Crop – Terry Suggested that OMAFRA provided data for the Huron study, maybe they have someone local. It was discussed that if there was one agricultural organization invited to participate then all agricultural groups would need to be invited. Instead, it was suggested that OMAFRA could be the agricultural representation on the technical committee if they have an ecological expert available.

ACTION – Durk will advise if there is an ecological technical expert at OMAFRA that should sit on the Technical Committee.

Tracy also questioned if MMAH would want to observe like those planners in adjacent counties. Jeff suggested that if there are a number of planners in the Technical Committee, the day could be broken into two streams for the afternoon portion of the meeting. This would allow in depth discussion of the science by the ecologists and biologists and the planners could discuss other implementation tools and policy development.

ACTION: Durk will advise if a MMAH planner should be invited.

Jeff continued through the slide deck. The question was raised on how the peer reviewer will be chosen. Durk and Jeff will need to further discuss how to choose a peer reviewer.

Slide 47 – It was emphasized that the Steering Committee needs to approve the Final Report. It was acknowledged that the City may have a different approach. Michael suggested having the report presented to Council may be sufficient.

Budget, Slides 50 & 51 – it was noted that Durk may be asked to pay ABCA or SCRCA for portions of the project. That will need to be sorted out. Jeff noted that he needs to add the City of London to the Budget table in the project handout, consistent with what was outlined in slides 50 and 51.

ACTION: Contacts for Technical Committee members to be sent to Jeff this Friday.

ACTION: Jeff to complete Final Report by the end of the day on Tuesday, any comments from the Steering Committee will be needed prior to that time.

Patty asked when should the CA's review the project with their Board of Directors. Jeff suggested that it could be presented in 2 parts; 1) in a FYI to the Board now and then 2) a presentation be provided at the end of the process for each Board of Directors.

Terry noted that Ian Thornton and Donald Kirk of MNR Guelph participated in the Huron NHS.

Durk is coordinating the County to host a webpage for the Project. Jeff will circulate the ULR once it is set up. There will be three sections of the site; 1) General information, 2) Steering Committee; and 3) Technical Committee. All documents related to the project will be accessible through this website.

Val indicated that both her and Jason Wintermute will be representatives on the Technical Committee.

With no other questions or comments received, the meeting was adjourned.