



SOUTH NATION  
**CONSERVATION**  
DE LA NATION SUD

## *Land Securement Strategy 2014-2019*



## Acknowledgements

In writing this report and forming a framework for South Nation Conservation's Land Securement Strategy, guidance was sought from the Land Securement Strategy documents of other Conservation Authorities. In particular Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority's Natural Heritage System Land Securement Project 2011-2015 and Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority's 2012 Land Acquisition Strategy were borrowed from extensively. These documents had in turn built upon earlier work by Ausable Bayfield, Grey Sauble, Rideau Valley and Kawartha Region Conservation Authorities.

The work of various SNC staff members, Standing Committees and Board members is also greatly appreciated, with particular thanks going to the Forestry and Communications Committees.



Front Page and Above: Two Creeks Conservation Area, South Dundas

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## Executive Summary

Land securement, by public bodies, is an effective way to protect natural heritage for public benefit. Through the foresight of Board members and Municipalities, South Nation Conservation (SNC) conserves approximately 11,000 acres of land and has a history of land securement going back more than 60 years. SNC lands, in particular forests, provide a natural legacy for the future. This strategy provides **direction** for future land securement.

### Specifically the strategy:

- Provides staff with a framework for recommending land to the Board for securement;
- Serves as a point of reference for funding partners;
- Ensures the wise use of public funds.

Forest cover in the jurisdiction, which is demonstrated to be closely linked to ecological health, has fallen below minimum recommended levels. Population growth and rising agricultural prices increase the pressure to convert natural heritage land to housing and farmland. At the same time, demand for the environmental, social and economic functions provided by natural heritage lands is increasing.

SNC's Land Securement Strategy will be based on four core principles:

- Lands providing **environmental** benefit
- Lands providing **social** benefit
- Lands providing **economic** benefit
- Lands with a **geographic** location which ensures a fair distribution of assets throughout the jurisdiction

SNC will work with willing property owners, Municipalities, and partners to acquire the best possible land for conservation. A case-by-case assessment will be undertaken, to determine the quality and significance of all properties considered for securement. SNC will prioritize the protection of lands by holding title (fee simple) either through **donation or purchase**, and work with conservation partners when easements or covenants are desirable. Participants in land transactions will be willing buyers and willing sellers.

The greatest growth potential in land securement may occur in **land donation**. This method of land ownership should be viewed as both an opportunity and service to property owners. SNC actively encourages donations of land, with such gifts often qualifying as charitable donations under the Federal *Income Tax Act* and SNC is approved to receive donations of land through the Ecogifts program.

The Land Securement Strategy provides guidance for staff by outlining several steps and processes relating to land transactions. These are:

- The Land Securement Process, Figure 7, Page 21;
- Areas of Natural Heritage Significance, Page 22;
- Property Evaluation Criteria for Potential Securement, Figure 8, Page 27;
- Program Funding and Incentives, Page 28;
- Land Disposition Policy, Page 30.

## 1.0 Introduction

Conservation professionals, members of the public and elected officials have all noted a decrease in forest cover within South Nation Conservation's (SNC) jurisdiction. This sentiment was supported by a recent research project undertaken by SNC and its partners that demonstrated a reduction in forest cover since the late 1990's.<sup>1</sup>

Protection of our natural heritage (see Appendix C for definitions of natural heritage features and systems) is one of SNC's primary goals. As the science and awareness of natural heritage protection has improved, the tools used to achieve these ends remain largely unchanged. In Eastern Ontario, most land is privately owned. Education, stewardship programs and land-use planning are the primary methods used to protect natural heritage features. Given growing pressure to convert land from forest and wetland for urban development and farming, these tools require additional approaches.

Land securement, by public bodies, is an effective way to protect natural heritage features and systems for public benefit. Through the foresight of Board members and Municipalities, SNC conserves approximately 11,000 acres of land and has a history of land securement going back more than 60 years (detailed in Section 3.1).

During the Authority's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, the Board of Directors noted SNC land, in particular forests, provide a natural legacy for future generations. Building on this natural legacy ensures an even richer endowment for the future.

This strategy was requested by Board resolution and provides *direction* for future land securement.

### Specifically the strategy:

- Provides staff with a framework for recommending land to the Board for securement;
- Serves as a point of reference for funding partners;
- Ensures the wise use of public funds.

In addition the strategy provides regional context and background, an overview of existing SNC land holdings, and a solid framework for the selection, securement and stewardship of new land. The strategy will be reviewed every five years.

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<sup>1</sup> SNC. 2014. Forest Cover and Trends Analysis.

## 1.1 South Nation Conservation Background

SNC has a strong history in watershed management and leadership applying best management practices. As an agency established under the *Conservation Authorities Act of Ontario* in 1947, SNC has decades of practical experience protecting our environment and engaging communities. SNC's mandate, as provided by the Act, states that a Conservation Authority will *"undertake, in the area over 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."*<sup>2</sup>

Today SNC owns more than 11,000 acres of land in eastern Ontario and leads hundreds of stewardship projects to success. Conservation is our core competency. SNC offers knowledge and experience to help our partners contribute to a healthy watershed. This includes:

- The study of water quality, natural habitats, plants, and animals to help us identify environmental needs, set targets, and restore natural areas
- Management of two community forests
- Sustainable community development to advise partners about land use, development proposals and construction,
- Environmental education to help community members appreciate and sustainably manage their local environment.



South Nation River Headwaters, Edwardsburgh/Cardinal

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<sup>2</sup> Government of Ontario, Conservation Authorities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C27.





### 1.3 The Need for Land Securement

#### Inconsistent Access to SNC Property

GIS analysis (see Appendix A) demonstrates an inconsistent level of access throughout the jurisdiction to SNC conservation land with public day-use facilities. Only 11 percent of the jurisdiction's population is within a 15 minute walk, with 67 percent of people within a 15 minute drive. Many residents in the four corners (northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast) of the jurisdiction have a greater than 15 minute travel time to enjoy SNC property. The northwest section, which is the most densely populated area of the jurisdiction, also has a large number of residents served only by one public access SNC property.

#### Increasing Population and Shifting Demographics

SNC's jurisdiction has recently experienced and will continue to see significant demographic changes. The jurisdiction as a whole is projected to share in Ontario's population growth through 2036. There is however a north-south split within the jurisdiction, with the census divisions closer to Ottawa experiencing the most growth. Between 2012 and 2036, population is expected to grow by over 40% in Ottawa, 15-40% in Prescott & Russell and 0-15% in Leeds & Grenville. Population is expected to decline in Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry.

All census divisions will experience an increase in both total number and percentage share of seniors. The total number of children 14 and under will increase in Ottawa and Prescott & Russell but decrease in Leeds & Grenville and Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry.<sup>3</sup>



Fly Fishing, South Nation River

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<sup>3</sup> Ontario Ministry of Finance. 2013. Ontario and its 49 Census Divisions.

<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/> .

### Decreasing Forest Cover

The 2014 SNC Forest Cover and Trends Analysis<sup>4</sup>, a collaborative study undertaken along with Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR), UCPR, and SDG, found that forest cover in the South Nation jurisdiction decreased by 510.9 hectares per year between 2002 and 2008. Much of the loss can be attributed to the increasing value of agricultural land<sup>5</sup>, resulting in the conversion of marginal land to farmland. Total forest cover in the South Nation watershed was found to be 28.1%, although there are significant differences by municipality and sub-watershed (see Appendix B).

The Forest Cover and Trends Analysis also found the predominance of edge forest (the exterior periphery of forest parcels) throughout the watershed to be 47.6% of total forest cover, due to the fragmented nature of the forest. Large areas of core forest (defined as forest land more than 300 feet from any disturbance) represented just 9.6% of the total. Core forest area provides critical habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Forest cover is currently below 30%, an important threshold for environmental health<sup>6</sup> as measured by factors

including flood attenuation, soil conservation, air quality, water quality, diversity of wildlife habitat and protection of species at risk.



Oak Valley Pioneer Park, North Dundas

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<sup>4</sup> SNC. 2014. Forest Cover and Trends Analysis.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. 2011. Value of Farm Capital - Agriculture Economic Statistics. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/21-013-x/2011002/t002-eng.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Environment Canada. 2013. How Much Habitat is Enough? Third Edition. [http://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/E33B007C-5C69-4980-8F7B-3AD02B030D8C/894\\_How\\_much\\_habitat\\_is\\_enough\\_E\\_WEB\\_05.pdf](http://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/E33B007C-5C69-4980-8F7B-3AD02B030D8C/894_How_much_habitat_is_enough_E_WEB_05.pdf). p61.



### Planning for Present and Future Needs

Population growth and associated development will increase pressures on existing natural heritage lands. At the same time, increasing population, particularly in urban areas and surrounding suburbs, increases the need for recreational opportunities and ecosystem services provided by natural heritage lands. In addition, an aging population will require a new approach to providing outdoor recreation opportunities. Ensuring current levels and quality of natural heritage lands requires a proactive and strategic approach. Securing our natural heritage will ensure the area is a great place to live, work, play, and visit, drawing people from surrounding urban areas such as Ottawa and Montreal, and creating jobs to cater to both residents and visitors.



South Nation River

## 2.0 Regional Context

### 2.1 Provincial and Municipal Plans and Legislation

Policies and legislation at the provincial level are designed to protect natural heritage and trickle down to plans, zoning, and by-laws at the municipal level.

The *Conservation Authorities Act* creates Conservation Authorities and makes them responsible for the conservation, restoration, development and management of natural resources including the development and implementation of programs that achieve these goals.

Provincial direction on the protection of natural heritage systems is also provided by the Planning Act and the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).<sup>7</sup> The PPS states;

*“The Province’s natural heritage resources, water, agricultural lands, mineral resources, and cultural heritage and archaeological resources provide important environmental, economic and social benefits. The wise use and management of these resources over the long term is a key provincial interest. The Province must ensure that its resources are managed in a sustainable way to protect essential ecological processes and public health and safety, minimize environmental and social impacts, and meet its long-term needs.”*

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<sup>7</sup> Government of Ontario. 2005. Provincial Policy Statement. <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1485.aspx#2.1>

The PPS goes on to mandate that;

*“The diversity and connectivity of natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems, should be maintained, restored or, where possible, improved, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features.”*

OMNR’s Natural Heritage Reference Manual “represents the Province’s recommended approach to implementing natural heritage policies under policy 2.1 of the PPS”.<sup>8</sup> The manual defines and validates various natural heritage features before outlining the process by which they are identified and established (see Figure 2). The manual also mandates the level of protection which should be afforded by the municipality.

Because the OMNR delegates the responsibility for delineating some natural heritage features and leaves their definitions open to interpretation, there are invariably differing results in protecting them at the municipal level.

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<sup>8</sup> OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. P6.

**Figure 2 - Natural Heritage Features Establishment and Definitions <sup>9</sup>**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Who Establishes and How</b>
Significant habitat of endangered species and threatened species	MNR identifies such habitat by delineating/describing, reviewing and approving the work of others or establishing methods such as training and standards that ensure that the work of others will be acceptable.
Significant wetlands and significant coastal wetlands	MNR identifies such wetlands by delineating them or reviewing the work of others in accordance with the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System
Significant woodlands	Planning authorities identify such woodlands or approve the work of others using criteria recommended in the manual or municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective as the provincial criteria.
Significant valleylands	Planning authorities identify such valleylands or approve the work of others using criteria recommended in the manual or municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective as the provincial criteria.
Significant wildlife habitat	Planning authorities identify such habitat or approve the work of others using criteria and processes recommended in the Significant Wildlife Habitat Technical Guide and the manual, or municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective as the provincial processes and criteria.
Areas of natural and scientific interest	MNR identifies such areas in accordance with the ANSI confirmation process.

See Appendix C for definitions of Natural Heritage Features.

<sup>9</sup> OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. p39-40.



Official Plans (OP), zoning, and heritage bylaws developed by municipalities must be consistent with the *Planning Act* and PPS. Within SNC's jurisdiction, OPs are in effect for the City of Ottawa, UCPR, SDG, Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal and Township of North Grenville. LG is in the process of creating an OP. All afford some protection to Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) located within their jurisdiction, as mandated by the *Planning Act* and PPS. The extent of the delineation and protection of other natural heritage features varies between the plans.



South Nation River, Crysler

## 2.2 Regional Natural Heritage Plans

Environment Canada recommends 30% forest cover at the watershed scale as the minimum to support a marginally healthy aquatic system and one half of potential species (compared to a similar, intact ecosystem). Upwards of 50% forest cover is suggested as an optimal figure.<sup>10</sup>

Several government agencies and NGOs publish reports on the regional state of natural heritage systems, including plans to increase the amount of land protected.

The OMNR's Kemptville Region Natural Heritage Strategy provides significant guidance on the occurrence of a range of natural heritage features and systems within the Eastern Ontario region. The report outlines Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW), Species At Risk (SAR) along with significant fish and wildlife habitat. A number of "hotspots" for rare species or SAR occurrences are identified, including Alfred Bog and Mer Bleue Bog in SNC's jurisdiction.

Another significant guiding document for regional conservation is the Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Biodiversity, published jointly by the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and OMNR. The report identifies only 2% of land in the South Nation River's watershed as being publically held, with only 5%, or 25,729 hectares, of the

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<sup>10</sup> Environment Canada. 2013. How Much Habitat is Enough? Third Edition. [http://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/E33B007C-5C69-4980-8F7B-3AD02B030D8C/894\\_How\\_much\\_habitat\\_is\\_enough\\_E\\_WEB\\_05.pdf](http://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/E33B007C-5C69-4980-8F7B-3AD02B030D8C/894_How_much_habitat_is_enough_E_WEB_05.pdf). p61.

total area conserved or protected in some way. GIS analysis by SNC (See Figure 3) suggests that the total proportion of SNC's jurisdiction in public ownership and/or protected is approximately 9%. The NCC/OMNR report recommends the protection of large sections of the watershed.<sup>11</sup> Maps from the Blueprint showing key natural heritage features and conservation priorities are shown in Appendix D.

In "Canada's Capital Greenbelt Master Plan" the National Capital Commission outlines areas of land that it proposes bringing into public ownership and adding to the Greenbelt around Ottawa. These parcels include several under SNC jurisdiction, around Leitrim Wetland, Lester Wetland and Mer Bleue Bog. The National Capital Commission presents a strategy to work with partners including SNC, to secure and safeguard natural heritage areas and linkages beyond their jurisdiction.<sup>12</sup>

Another plan from the NCC, the Ottawa Valley Natural Area Conservation Plan outlines a thorough inventory of natural heritage features and a plan for their conservation, for a large region including the northern half of SNC's jurisdiction. The plan also outlines the ecological significance of some of the features found in our region including:<sup>13</sup>

- The Forest Matrix - providing essential linkages between the Laurentians and the St. Lawrence
- Wetland Complexes - hotspots for biodiversity they support globally rare species and provide ecological functions such as flood attenuation and water purification
- Alvars – a globally rare limestone-based ecosystem
- Dunes and Sand Barrens – support SAR and rare vegetation
- Grassland Birds – experiencing continent wide population decrease due to habitat loss

The report was also used by this strategy to compile the list of significant natural heritage areas in Section 4.1.

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<sup>11</sup> Phair, C., B.L. Henson and K.E. Brodbribb. 2005. The Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Aquatic Biodiversity: Volume 2 Tertiary Watershed Summaries. Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. p430-435.

<sup>12</sup> National Capital Commission. 2013. Canada's Capital Greenbelt Master Plan. p109-119.

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<sup>13</sup> Nature Conservancy of Canada. 2013. Ottawa Valley Natural Area Conservation Plan.

**Figure 3 – Protected Land in SNC’s Jurisdiction**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Acres (Area including conservation easements in brackets)</b>	<b>Hectares (Area including conservation easements in brackets)</b>	<b>Percent of SNC Jurisdiction Protected Total area = 1,040,847 acres (Area including conservation easements in brackets)</b>
SNC	11,136	4,507	1.07
UCPR	27,079	10,958	2.60
UCSDG	3,844	1,556	0.37
St-Lawrence Parks Commission	2,572	1,041	0.25
OMNR	31,577	12,779	3.03
NCC	4,199 (9,595)	1,699 (3,883)	0.40 (1.08)
National Capital Commission	9,700 Approx.	3,925 Approx.	0.93
DUC	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,107 (95,503)</b>	<b>36,465 (38,649)</b>	<b>8.65 (9.33)</b>



### 3.0 Existing SNC Land Holdings

SNC currently owns approximately 11,000 acres of land across its jurisdiction. The properties provide a range of environmental, economic and social benefits such as:

- Flood attenuation and control
- Clean air and water
- Soil conservation and erosion control
- Wildlife and Species At Risk habitat conservation
- Passive and active recreational opportunities
- Spiritual and cultural opportunities
- Local economic diversification

See Figure 4 for a breakdown of SNC property area by type.

Property Type	Area (Hectares)	Area (Acres)
Administration	2.64	6.52
Channelization Lands	129.00	318.77
Conservation Area	316.70	782.58
Easements	2.10	5.19
Floodplain Lands	2.86	7.07
Forest Management	3844.20	9499.23
Management Agreement	19.47	48.11
Natural Heritage	60.10	148.51
Protection	91.00	224.87
Reservoir Lands	1.50	3.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>4469.57</b>	<b>11044.56</b>

**Figure 4 - SNC Land Holdings by Property Type**



Picher Plant, Alfred Bog

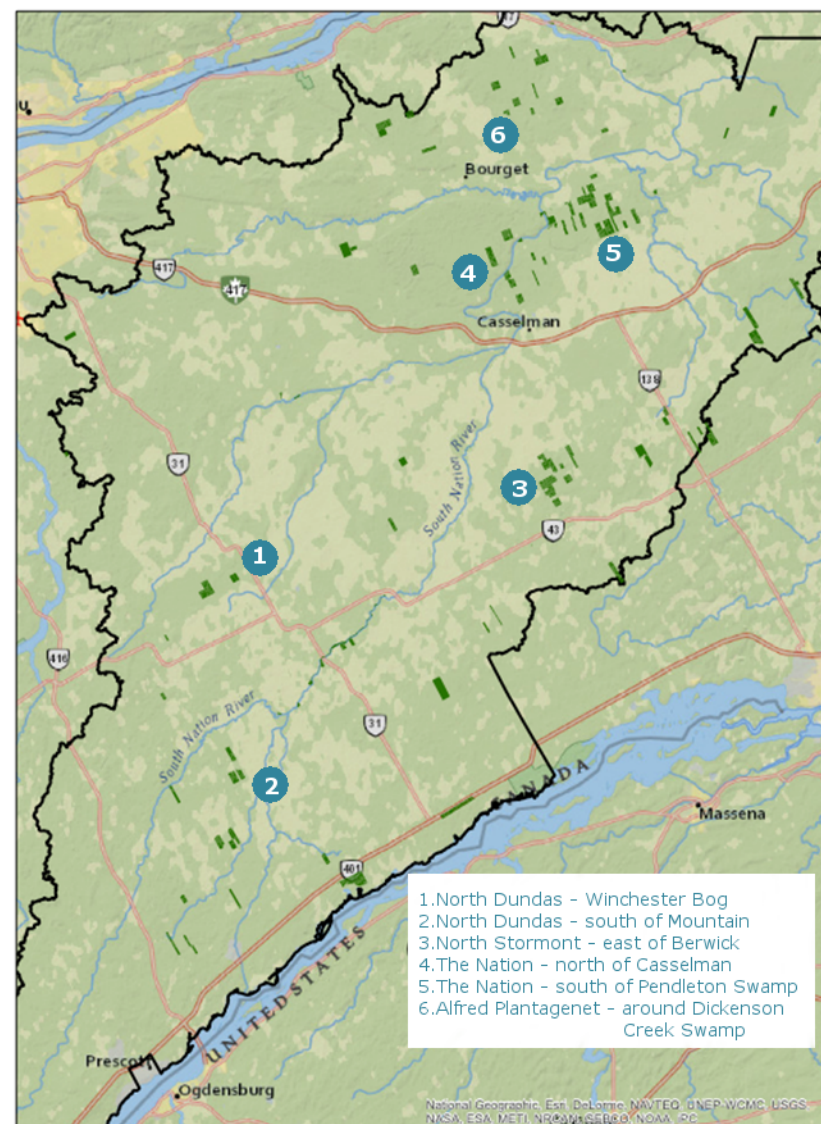
Many of SNC's holdings also feature public day-use facilities, they are:

- Alfred Bog
- Camp Sheldrick
- Cass Bridge Conservation Area
- Leitrim Boardwalk, Findlay Creek
- High Falls Conservation Area
- J. Henry Tweed Conservation Area
- Jessup's Falls Conservation Area
- McIntosh Park Conservation Area
- Oak Valley Pioneer Park
- Reveler Conservation Area
- Robert Graham Conservation Area
- St-Albert Conservation Area
- Two Creeks Conservation Area
- W.E. Burton Conservation Area
- Warwick Forest Conservation Area

Although land is scattered throughout SNC's jurisdiction (see Figure 5), several clusters exist in the following locations:

1. North Dundas around Winchester Swamp/Bog
2. North Dundas, south of Mountain (Many acquired during channelization of the South Nation River)
3. North Stormont, east of Berwick (Warwick Forest)
4. The Nation, north of Casselman (Larose Forest)
5. The Nation, south of Pendleton Swamp (Many parcels acquired around Lemieux Landslide Area)
6. Alfred Plantagenet around Dickenson Creek Swamp

Figure 5 – Existing SNC Land Holdings Map



### 3.1 History of Land Securement

Figure 6 shows SNC land securement from 1960 to 2013. SNC secured its first land in 1962 with the majority secured during the 1960's and 1970's, partially financed under the Provincial Agreement Forest Program. The program continued until the early 1990's when the Agreement Forest Program was terminated. Properties secured between 1960 and 1980 tended to contain significant non-forested area, which was subsequently planted. SNC land, along with County and other Conservation Authority land, contributed significantly to the magnitude and success of regional afforestation through the 20th century.

In 2009, SNC resumed an active land securement program relying on natural heritage conservation programs such as the Ecological Gifts Program (Environment Canada), Natural Spaces Land Acquisition & Stewardship Program (Ontario Heritage Trust) and the Lafleche Wetland Trust Fund. Gifts and donations have been an important source of new securements, with the Reveler Conservation Area being a recent example. Since 2009 SNC has secured approximately 500 acres (202.3 hectares) annually, primarily to conserve natural heritage features including wetlands, significant forests and SAR habitat.

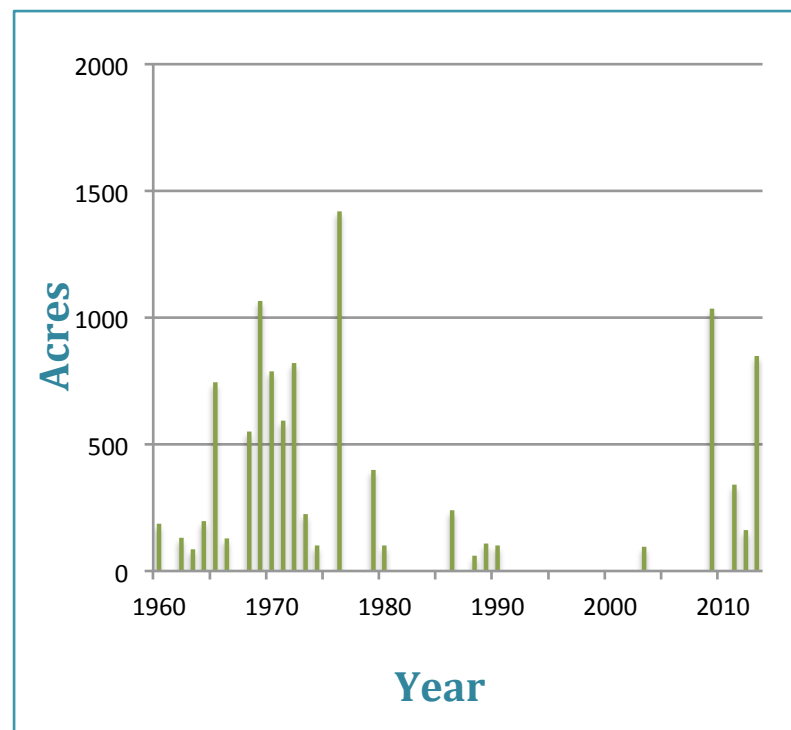


Figure 6 – SNC Land Securement by Year



## 4.0 Land Securement Strategy

To secure the recommended minimum 30% of our forest cover represents an exponential increase in the present rate of land conservation. Thirty-percent of SNC's jurisdiction is 1260 km<sup>2</sup>, or more than 300,000 acres. At a current rate of around 500 acres per year, SNC must be strategic in prioritizing lands for securement to achieve maximum benefit with a limited budget.

The SNC Land Securement Strategy will be based on four core principles:

- Lands providing **environmental** benefit
- Lands providing **social** benefit
- Lands providing **economic** benefit
- Lands with a **geographic** location which ensures a fair distribution of assets throughout the jurisdiction

SNC will work with willing property owners, Municipalities, and partners to acquire the best possible land for conservation. A case-by-case assessment will be undertaken by SNC to determine the quality and significance of all properties considered for securement. Based on the individual property assessment, SNC will determine whether securement will be pursued.

Figure 7 outlines the land securement process.



Two Creeks Conservation Area, South Dundas



**Figure 7 – Land Securement Process**



#### 4.1 Areas of Natural Heritage Significance

SNC recognizes the need for some focus on certain types of natural heritage features that offer significant environmental benefits. These features are often overlapping, and include the following (list is by no means exhaustive):

- Provincially significant wetlands or Areas of Natural or Scientific Interest (ANSIs):
  - Alfred Bog
  - Mer Bleue
  - Froatburn Swamp
  - Glen Becker Swamp
  - Hoasic Creek Wetland
  - Newington Bog
  - Johnstown Creek Marsh
  - Winchester Swamp (Bog)
  - Long Swamp Bog
  - Buell's Creek Reservoir
  - South Augusta Wetland Complex
  - Edwardsburgh Wetland
  - Limoges Wetland
  - Charleville Creek Wetland
  - Limerick Creek Wetland
  - Oxford Mills Wetland
  - South Gower Wetland
  - Findlay Creek and Leitrim Wetland
  - Osgoode Wetland Complex
  - Jessup's Falls
- Areas of local significance
  - Dickenson Creek Swamp
  - Indian Creek Wetland
- Bradley's Creek
- Maxville Swamp
- Morewood Bog
- Pendleton Swamp
- Hammond Swamp
- Black Creek Wetland
- Moose Creek Wetland
- Significant interior forest, including:
  - Warwick Forest
  - Two Creeks
  - Larose Forest
  - Cumberland Forest
- Wetland and forest in the headwaters of the South Nation River and its tributaries, including:
  - Limerick Forest
  - Spencerville Wetlands
  - Wetlands around Monkland
  - Rigaud River Headwaters
- Other land identified through scientific study for conservation:
  - Charbonneau Swamp, Triple Swamp and Senecal Swamp

Other natural heritage and conservation plans were examined to create this list, as outlined in Section 2.4.

## 4.2 Methods of Land Securement

SNC will continue protect lands by holding title (fee simple) either through **donation or purchase**. Fee simple offers more certain natural heritage protection than easements and covenants, and owned property does not require ongoing engagement with a property owner to ensure fulfillment of the easement or covenant. When property owners prefer to place an easement or covenant on their land, SNC will consider if the facts support this approach and work with partner organizations that specialize in this method, such as NCC or Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). An overview of all available methods of land securement is contained in Appendix E.

It is understood that participants in land transactions will be willing buyers and willing sellers. Land value will be determined by a property appraisal or negotiated directly with the seller.

The greatest growth potential in future land securement may occur in **land donation**, given the aging demographics of rural property owners. This method of land ownership should be viewed as both an opportunity and service to property owners. SNC actively encourages donations of land, with such gifts often qualifying as charitable donations under the Federal *Income Tax Act*. SNC, as a charitable organization, can accept donations of land and issue a charitable tax receipt for the appraised value of the property. SNC has been designated by the Minister of the Environment to accept donations through the Ecogifts Program. More information on the Ecogifts Program is contained in Section 5.4.

Providing the opportunity to donate land will be aggressively promoted through existing SNC private property owner programs, such as the Woodlot Advisory Service, Private Tree Planting, Clean Water and Permitting Programs. SNC's network of resource partners, including member municipalities, will receive promotional material to share with their constituents.

In pursuing donations of land or property purchases, SNC will work with municipalities, environmental organizations and other potential funding partners to secure lands.



Alfred Bog Boardwalk

### 4.3 Property Owners

SNC offers a valuable service to property owners and an opportunity to create a legacy by preserving their property from development.

Although dated, a 2001 Environics survey<sup>14</sup> of rural property owners in Ontario found the top two reasons for owning land to be space/privacy and preserving natural beauty. At the same time these property owners perceived themselves to be struggling financially. A land securement strategy that is able to maintain the space/privacy and natural beauty around a property owner's home, whilst offering economic benefit such as reduced tax burden, tax credit or payment has a good chance of success. This is particularly true for lands which are marginal for agricultural purposes.

SNC maintains a flexible approach to property securement. This includes operating on the open real estate market, being open to approaches from property owners, and seeking out properties of interest through research and maintenance of the opportunities database, including an inventory of abutting property owners.



Woodlot Advisory Service

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<sup>14</sup> Environics. Survey of Rural Landowners in Ontario Phase 2 – Attitudes and Behaviours Regarding Land Stewardship. 2001.



#### 4.4 Property Evaluation

Property evaluation has three main components: valuation (property appraisal and/or negotiations), Natural Heritage Scan and Site Assessment (environmental, social and economic benefits and future management requirements), see Figure 9. In addition, the property will be evaluated on contributions to regional natural heritage values and property management history.

When assessing the suitability of land for securement, consideration will be given to: annual property taxes; potential improvements or site remediation requirements; long-term maintenance requirements; and social and economic benefits offered by the property. Property appraisal reports must meet the requirements for appraisals set out by Environment Canada<sup>15</sup> when dealing with donations.

Properties recommended for securement will have funding identified and will then be forwarded to the General Manager for review and recommendation for approval to the Board. Once approval is received, and funding is either confirmed and/or funding applications submitted, the responsible staff will undertake the final steps in securement, these may include; commissioning a survey, applying for a severance, securing additional funding, conducting a detailed environmental assessment, and property transfer.



Two Creeks Conservation Area, South Dundas

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<sup>15</sup> Environment Canada. 2005. Ecological Gifts Program - Guidelines for Appraisals. Available at: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/pde-egp/default.asp?lang=en&n=9154C2AB-1>.

#### 4.5 Baseline Documentation Report and Stewardship Plan

The cost of a Baseline Documentation Report and Stewardship Plan will be considered in the planning stage of the property purchase. This approach will ensure an efficient transition from private property to SNC land management.

A Baseline Documentation Report will provide the following:

- Description of natural features, for example forest resource inventory, wetland evaluation, SAR screening etc.
- Description of human-made structures
- Document current use activities
- Document property issues, both human-made and natural, such as abandoned wells, open pits, foundations and rights of way (trails, pipelines, hydro etc.)

A Stewardship Plan will provide the following:

- Identify property goals and objectives (environmental, social and economic)
- Natural heritage inventory
- Identify Best Management Practices to achieve property objectives
- Summarize management issues and threats
- Develop strategy to address issues and threats
- Outline other actions that the property owner (SNC) wishes to undertake, such as signage, trail establishment, parking lots etc.

#### 4.6 Celebrate Success

Celebrating a successful land securement is important for SNC, property sellers/donors, and the public. It is an opportunity to celebrate the creation of a natural legacy and the satisfaction of knowing that a valuable piece of natural heritage is safeguarded for future generations.

The celebration itself is a valuable opportunity to share the story with the public and other property owners and to build and enhance the land securement program.

Successful land securement will be celebrated with:

- Ribbon cuttings and ceremonial openings
- Media (e.g. press releases, SNC website etc.)
- Testimonials from property owners



Ribbon Cutting – Findlay Creek Boardwalk

## Figure 8 – Property Evaluation Criteria for Potential Securement

The following criteria will be used in the SNC land securement program:

### Desirable Property Characteristics

- Species at risk habitat
- Significant cultural heritage values
- Unique or rare tree or plant community
- Provincially Significant Wetland
- South Nation River runs through the property
- Significant wildlife habitat (e.g. spawning area)
- Main tributary of the South Nation River runs through the property
- Adds to contiguous forest cover in public ownership (SNC, OMNR, UCPR, SD&G, L&G, etc.) (Crown land adjacent and SD&G nearby)
- Adds value to existing SNC Project(s)
- Adds Value to the Community (e.g. recreation, tourism potential)
- Permanent stream runs through the property
- Locally significant wetland
- Productive forest
- South Nation River headwaters
- Adds to holdings of conservation partners or offers opportunities for partnership
- Adds to protected area of interior forest or offers potential to increase the area of interior forest
- High risk for future habitat destruction
- Other criteria identified by the board

### Property Characteristics Requiring Consideration

- Site contamination
- Non-sustainable land-use (e.g. aggregate site, peat extraction, etc.) unless funding is available for rehabilitation
- Presence of invasive plants
- Other rights to property (e.g. mining, aggregates, hydro)
- Degraded natural environment (e.g. erosion)
- Property is small and isolated
- Evidence of problem neighbours (e.g. trespass, wood theft, fencing)
- Property boundaries are poorly defined (i.e. survey required)
- Poor access (e.g. land-locked, major upgrades required - water crossings)
- Demolition or repairs to existing structures are required



## 5.0 Program Funding and Incentives

### 5.1 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, signage, access, administration, Baseline Documentation Report, Stewardship Plan and applicable taxes. These expenditures are supported by funding opportunities available through various programs and partnerships outlined below.



Ecological Gift Signage

### 5.2 Municipal Funding

The conservation of lands benefits all municipalities within the SNC jurisdiction helping ensure that basic elements of the natural heritage system continue to function effectively. While maintaining a robust natural heritage system is important from an ecological point of view, recent analyses in Ontario suggest that the ecological services provided by natural heritage systems save governments millions of dollars annually. Conservation lands also provide natural space opportunities that contribute to the enjoyment, health, and well-being of all residents. The conservation of natural heritage systems, including issues related to the quantity and quality of water, benefits the people of the entire region and will contribute positively to the quality of life for future generations.

In recent years, most Municipalities within SNC's jurisdiction have recognized these benefits and financed land securement. SNC continues to use these funds to leverage partnership support for increased purchasing power.



### 5.3 Provincial Funding and Incentives

SNC continues to pursue funding under the Ontario Heritage Trust Natural Spaces Land Acquisition and Stewardship Program. The program provides funding for fee simple and conservation easement transactions for provincially significant natural heritage systems.

The Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) and Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP) are also used to reduce the ongoing management costs of SNC land. MFTIP provides 75% tax relief on the municipal rate for property owners following a Managed Forest Plan, while CLTIP gives 100% tax relief on municipal taxes for land deemed eligible by the province.

### 5.4 Federal Funding and Incentives

The main source of federal funding for SNC is, and will continue to be, the Ecological Gifts Program administered by Environment Canada. Under this program, gifts of qualifying land can receive a tax receipt for 100% of the appraised value. Since 2006 all successful donations made through the Ecological Gifts Program are also exempt from capital gains tax.

Other funding opportunities may arise in specific parts of the watershed due to federal funds administered by Ducks Unlimited Canada and the NCC, for the securement of ecologically significant lands.

### 5.5 Partner Funding Support

SNC seeks funding opportunities from partners in conservation, industry, and interested individuals. Potential partners include the NCC, Ontario Nature, Ontario Heritage Trust, Lafleche Wetland Trust Fund, residential developers, aggregate operators, and wood product industries.



South Nation River, Crysler

## 6.0 Land Disposition Policy

SNC does not normally endorse selling off conservation lands and does not have plans to do so. Where revenues are realized through the sale of any surplus lands or land required by municipal or other government agency for infrastructure or other public projects, these monies will be applied to properties identified as suitable for securement. In the case of trade lands, these transactions are used to secure lands of greater environmental, economic or social benefit. Any land disposition follows SNC Policy and the *Conservation Authorities Act*. The SNC Purchasing Policy, Section H regarding the disposal of surplus goods, states that any sale, trade or disposal of real property must be Board approved.

Chapter 23 of the Conservation Authorities Act<sup>16</sup> stipulates the following (Note: Approval is now delegated to MNR District Manager):

### **Approval of Minister**

*(2) If the Minister has made a grant to an authority under section 39 in respect of land, the authority shall not sell, lease or otherwise dispose of the land under clause (1)*

*(c) without the approval of the Minister except if,*

*(a) the disposition is for provincial or municipal infrastructure and utility purposes;*

*(b) the province, the provincial agency, board or commission affected by the disposition or the municipal*

*government, agency, board or commission affected by the disposition has approved it; and*

*(c) the authority informs the Minister of the disposition. 2010, c. 16, Sched. 10, s. 1 (1).*

### **Terms and conditions**

*(3) The Minister may impose terms and conditions on an approval given under subsection (2), including a condition that the authority pay a specified share of the proceeds of the disposition to the Minister. 1996, c. 1, Sched. M, s. 44 (3).*



Jessup's Falls, Plantagenet

<sup>16</sup> Government of Ontario, Conservation Authorities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C23.

## Appendix A – Travel Time to SNC Properties

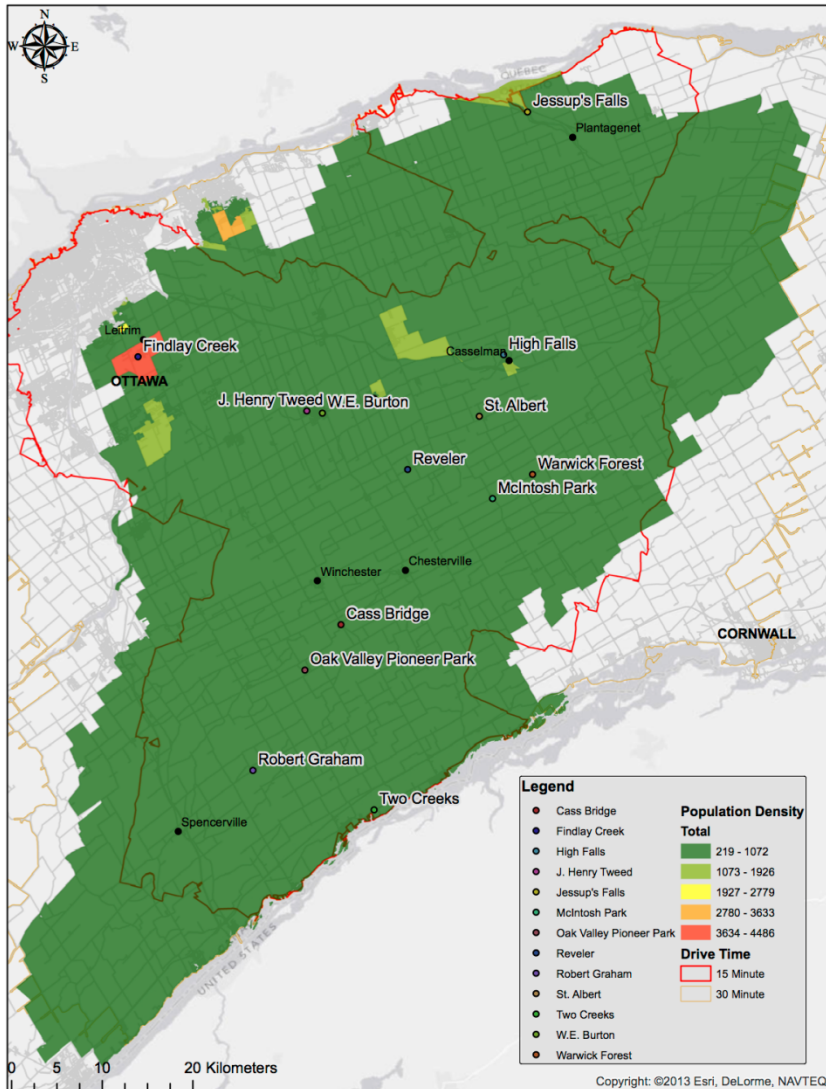


Figure 9 – SNC Property Network Analysis

## Appendix B – Forest Cover Analysis Tables

Municipality	Forest Type %			Total %
	Natural	Plantation	Hedegrow	
Alfred-Plantagenet	30.7	3.2	0.6	34.4
Augusta	45.6	1.3	0.9	47.8
Casselman	-	-	-	4.0
Clarence-Rockland	24.1	15.1	0.5	39.8
Edwardsburgh-Cardinal	48.6	1.6	0.8	51.0
Elizabethtown-Kitley	53.5	0.3	0.2	54.0
Nation	14.5	11.1	0.3	25.9
North Dundas	11.2	0.9	1.2	13.3
North Glengarry	40.9	0.7	0.9	42.5
North Grenville	42.8	1.1	1.3	45.3
North Stormont	19.5	1.6	1.0	22.1
Ottawa	23.9	2.6	0.9	27.4
Russell	11.7	1.9	1.0	14.5
South Dundas	20.3	1.9	1.0	23.3
South Stormont	38.5	2.0	1.5	41.9

**Figure 10 - Forest Cover by Municipality 2008** <sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> SNC. 2014. Forest Cover and Trends Analysis.

Subwatershed	
Bear Brook	37.6%
Castor	19.9%
Upper South Nation	28.3%
Lower South Nation	28.8%
<b>South Nation Watershed Total</b>	<b>28.1%</b>

**Figure 11 - Forest Cover by Subwatershed 2014** <sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> SNC. 2014. Forest Cover and Trends Analysis.



## Appendix C – Natural Heritage Definitions

### Natural Heritage System<sup>19</sup>

A natural heritage system is an ecologically based delineation of nature and natural function—a system of connected or to be connected green and natural areas that provide ecological functions over a longer period of time and enable movement of species. Natural heritage systems encompass or incorporate natural features, functions and linkages (also referred to as “corridors”) as component parts within them and across the landscape. They also enable the linking of different landscapes.

### Significant Natural Heritage Features<sup>20</sup>

Significant as defined by the OMNR Natural Heritage Reference Manual:

1. a) in regard to *wetlands, coastal wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest*, an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time;
2. b) in regard to the habitat of *endangered species and threatened species*, ... the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, that is necessary for the maintenance, survival, and/or the recovery of naturally occurring or reintroduced

populations of *endangered species* or *threatened species*, and where those areas of occurrence are occupied or habitually occupied by the species during all or any part(s) of its life cycle;

3. c) in regard to *woodlands*, an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or ...the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or
4. economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history;
5. d) in regard to other features and areas in policy 2.1, ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or *natural heritage system*; ...

Criteria for determining significance for the resources identified in sections (c)–([d]) are recommended by the Province, but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used.

While some significant resources may already be identified and inventoried by official sources, the significance of others can only be determined after evaluation.

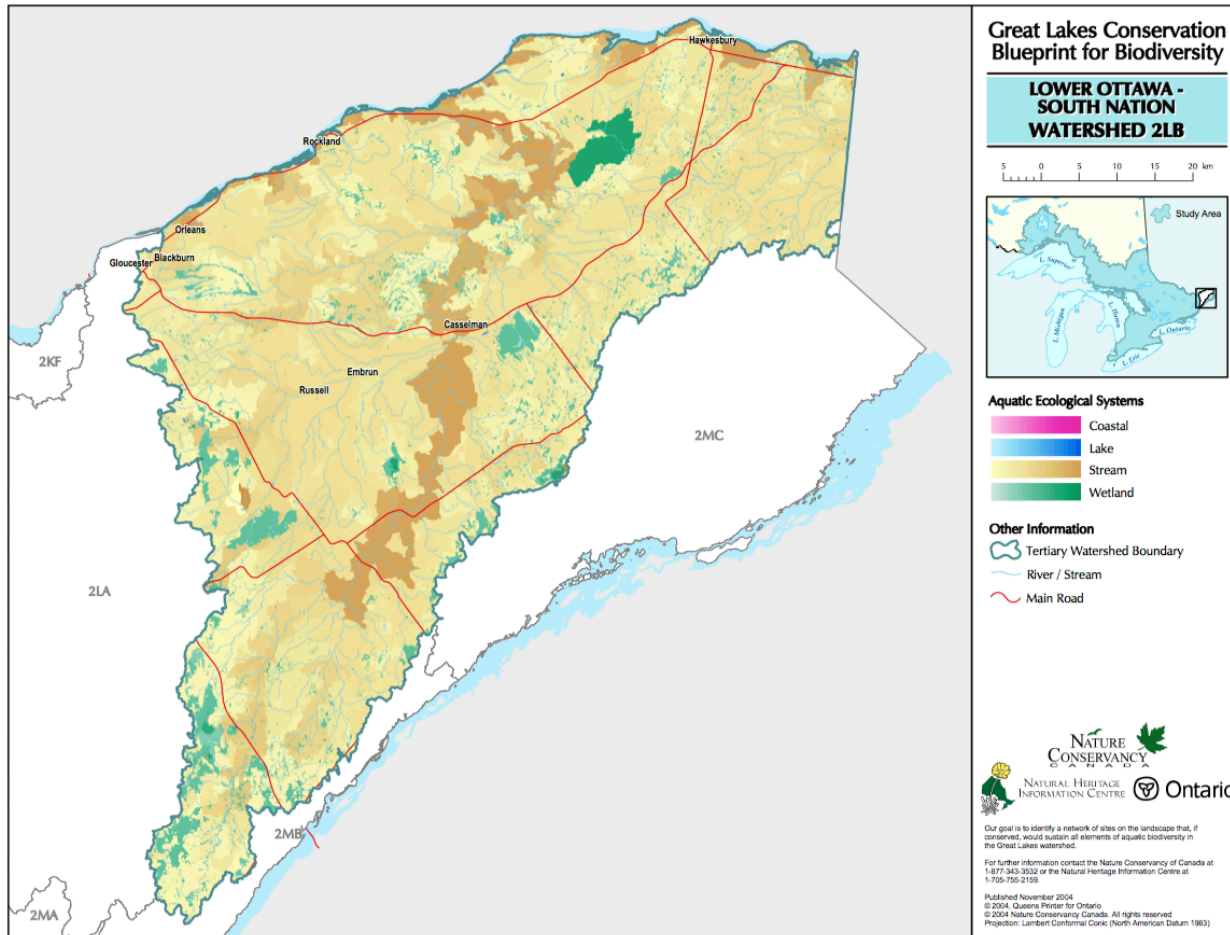
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<sup>19</sup> OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. P15.

<sup>20</sup> OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. p39-40.

## Appendix D – Natural Heritage Maps

Figure 12 - Aquatic Ecological Systems<sup>21</sup>



<sup>21</sup> Phair, C., B.L. Henson and K.E. Brodbribb. 2005. The Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Aquatic Biodiversity: Volume 2 Tertiary Watershed Summaries. Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. 431 pp.

Figure 13 - Aquatic Conservation Blueprint<sup>22</sup>

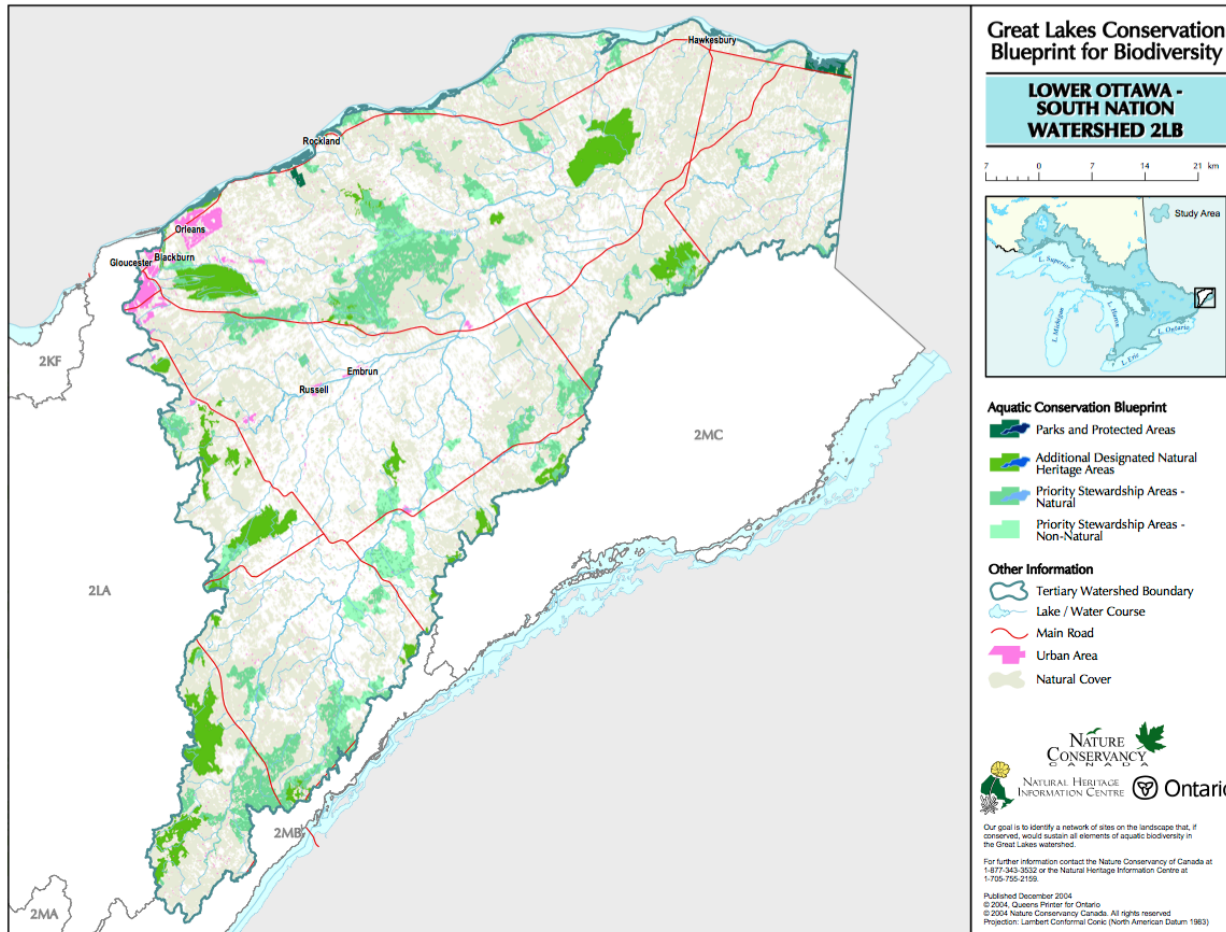
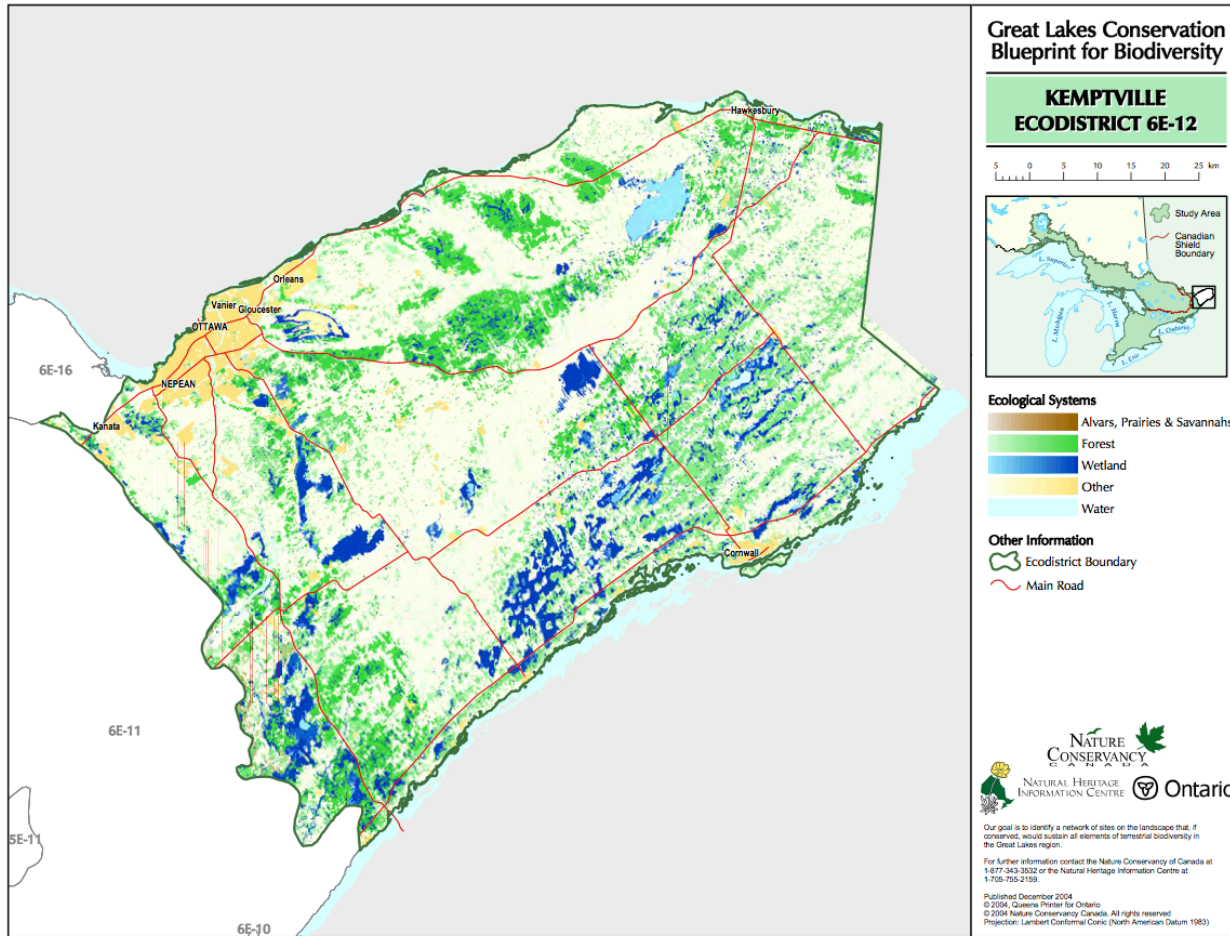


Figure 14 - Terrestrial Ecological Systems<sup>23</sup>

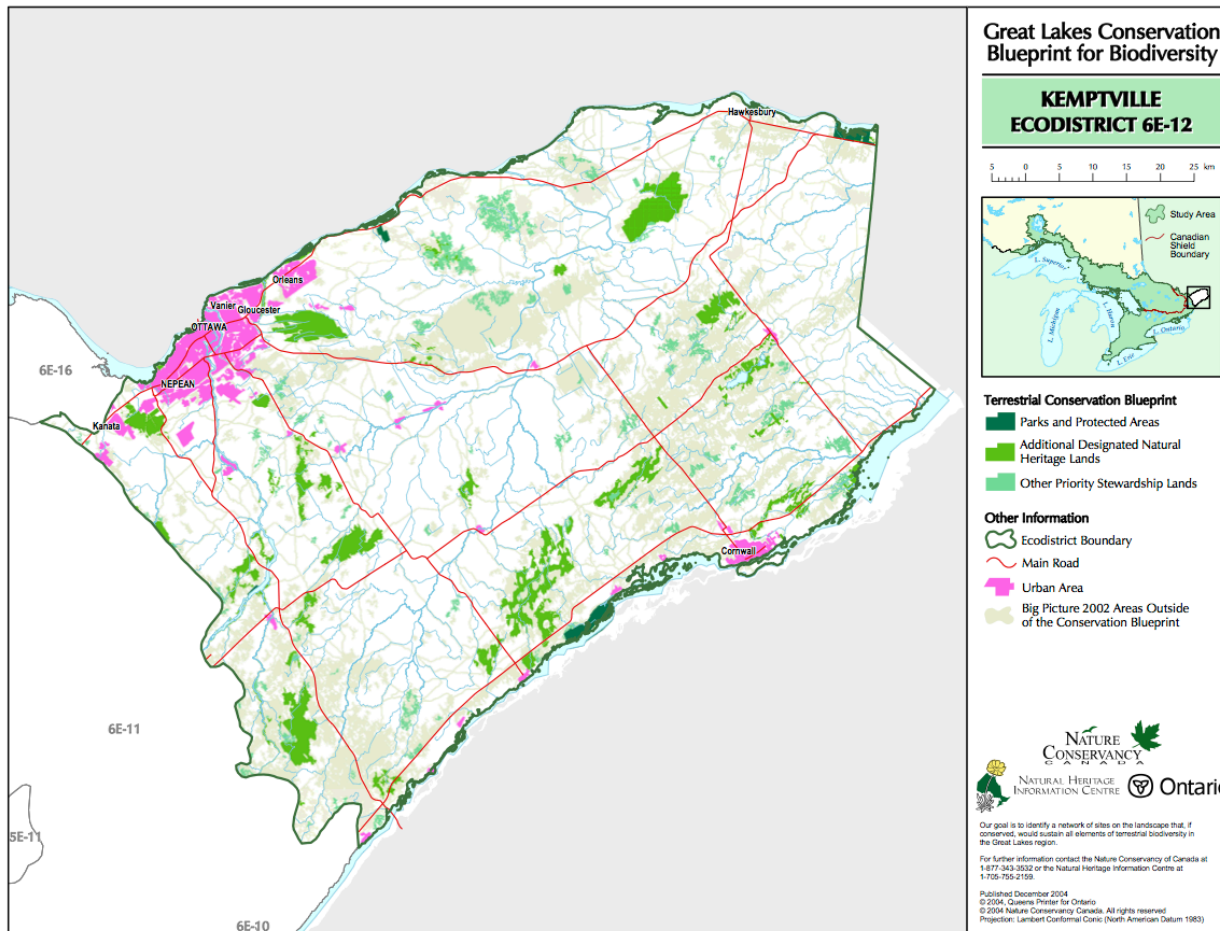
<sup>22</sup> Phair, C., B.L. Henson and K.E. Brodbribb. 2005. The Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Aquatic Biodiversity: Volume 2 Tertiary Watershed Summaries. Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.432 pp.



<sup>23</sup> Henson, B.L. and K.E. Brodribb. 2005. The Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Terrestrial Biodiversity: Volume 2 Ecodistrict Summaries. Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.p125-130.



Figure 15 - Terrestrial Conservation Blueprint<sup>24</sup>



<sup>24</sup> Henson, B.L. and K.E. Brodribb. 2005. The Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Terrestrial Biodiversity: Volume 2 Ecodistrict Summaries. Nature Conservancy of Canada and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.p125-130.

## Appendix E - Methods of Land Securement

There are many ways to secure land to protect natural features; however there are benefits and limitations with each form of land securement. SNC determines the most appropriate form of securement for each property to ensure protection of the features and functions of the land.

### **Fee Simple**

The purchase or donation of the total interest in a property with a willing buyer and willing seller. Full ownership is the most effective way to protect greenspace as the owner has full property rights over the land. This is the preferred method that SNC has used, and will continue to use in future land acquisitions.

An Option to Purchase is a contract that allows SNC to buy a property at a set price for a stipulated period of time. It is a written contract by the landowner to sell the property and not to withdraw this offer during the period of time. This mechanism is often used by conservation groups to “buy time” to acquire a specific piece of land and is the perfect time to fundraise for the purchase costs. Right to First Refusal is an agreement between a landowner and SNC, or other prospective buyer, which gives SNC an option to match any third party offer to buy a specific piece of property before it is sold. It sets out the conditions of sale and is registered on title to the property. There is a fee associated with the Right of First Refusal.

### **Donation**

SNC encourages land donation. These gifts, at appraised value, may qualify as charitable donations under the Federal Income Tax Act. SNC, as a charitable organization, can accept donations of land and issue a charitable tax receipt for the appraised value of the property. SNC also accepts donations through the Ecological Gifts Program which is administered by Environment Canada. SNC, in pursuing donations of land or property rights, will work with municipalities, environmental organizations and other potential funding partners in order to secure environmentally significant/sensitive lands.

Several changes by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) have provided more tax incentives to landowners willing to donate ecologically sensitive lands. The 1995 federal budget provided for amendments to the Income Tax Act to increase the 20% limitation in respect of charitable donations to 100% for certified donations made after February 27, 1995, to Canadian Municipalities and registered charities designated by the Minister of the Environment. In May 2006, further changes were announced by the CRA that made all donations of ecologically sensitive lands through the federal Ecological Gifts (Ecogifts) Program exempt from capital gains tax. All lands donated outside of this program are still subject to capital gains. In addition, as part of the Ecogifts Program, all

appraisals are reviewed by Environment Canada's expert panel of appraisers, therefore, landowners and SNC can be assured that the appraisal is accurate and legitimate. SNC has been designated by the Minister of the Environment to accept donations through the Ecogifts Program.

### **Partial Takings / Direct Conveyance**

This is an acquisition of part of a property in either a fee simple purchase or donation scenario. For example, if a landowner has a residence he/she may be willing to dispose of the majority of the property containing significant ecological features while retaining the residence and amenity area (i.e., landowner retains 5 acres, SNC receives 95 acres through purchase or donation).

### **Agreements**

SNC can enter into agreements/leases for the use of Authority owned lands. The Authority will determine the most appropriate agreement or lease arrangement for a specific property where applicable. This can extend to

providing a Life Interest to a vendor/donor, entering into agreements for co-managing a property, offering agricultural leases on lands prior to restoration/rehabilitation, and leases or agreements for the construction/maintenance and management of public trails.

### **Conservation Easements and Covenants**

Easements and covenants are similar and are often difficult to distinguish. For the purposes of SNC's land securement program they are entered into voluntarily and are typically used to restrict an owner from undertaking specific activities on all or a portion of their property. Typically, they would not permit the alteration or destruction of a resource, placing fill, or the building of structures. Amendments to the Conservation Lands Act in 1994 permit a landowner to grant or sell a positive covenant to 'conservation bodies' (such as the Crown, conservation authorities, municipal councils, bands or registered charities) for the protection and conservation of land.

## Addendum

In parts of SNC's jurisdiction agricultural land is at risk of development for residential and commercial uses. Maintaining farmland close urban areas is the mission of the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT). There is potential for collaboration between SNC and OFT, for example in securing properties with farmland and woodlots (the back forty), where each organization has an interest in protecting a different section of the land.



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