



SOUTH NATION
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SOUTH NATION CONSERVATION

Land Securement Strategy

April 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Land securement by public bodies is an effective way to preserve and enhance natural heritage for public benefit. South Nation Conservation (SNC) conserves approximately 13,000 acres of land throughout its jurisdiction and has a history of land securement going back more than 60 years. The forests and wetlands preserved in SNC land holdings contribute to the sustainability of the jurisdiction and are a natural legacy for the future. SNC's Land Securement Strategy (the "Strategy") guides the decisions of the Board of Directors and Staff when making land securement decisions.

Specifically, the Strategy:

- Provides a framework for recommending land for securement to the Board;
- Serves as a point of reference for external funding partners;
- Provides potential sellers and donors with an understanding of SNC's land securement process and options; and
- Ensures the wise use of public funds.

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

The Strategy seeks to satisfy five core principles when identifying land suitable for securement:

1. environmental benefit;
2. social benefit;
3. economic benefit;
4. protection of people and property from natural hazards; and
5. geographic locations that ensure a distribution of holdings throughout the jurisdiction.

SNC works with willing property owners, partner municipalities, the province, the federal government, and funding partners to acquire the best possible land for conservation. A case-by-case assessment will be undertaken, based on the framework outlined in this strategy, 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 may consider easements and covenants where they are desirable. Participants in land transactions will be willing buyers and willing sellers.

The greatest potential growth in land securement may occur in land donation. This method of land transfer should be viewed as both an opportunity and service to property owners interested in leaving a natural legacy. Such gifts often qualify as charitable donations under the *Federal Income Tax Act* as SNC is qualified to receive land donations through Canada's Ecological Gifts Program.

The Land Securement Strategy provides guidance for staff by outlining the land securement process and provides evaluation criteria, based on the five core principles, to be used by staff in evaluating potential land for securement.

Some recommendations for further actions to advance land securement within SNC jurisdiction are identified at the end of the strategy.

1 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 observation was supported by the 2014 Forest Cover and Trend Analysis, a research project undertaken by SNC and its partners, that demonstrated a reduction in forest cover since the late 1990's.

SNC's primary organizational goals include the protection of people and property and the preservation of natural heritage. The science and awareness of the importance of natural heritage protection in preserving ecosystem function and biodiversity, providing clean water, mitigating impacts associated with natural hazards and climate change, and contributing to healthier, more active communities has improved. Meanwhile the tools used to preserve these lands 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. These tools require new approaches given growing pressure to develop potentially hazardous lands or convert forest and wetland to urban development and farming.

Land securement by public bodies is an effective way to protect natural heritage features and systems for public benefit, while increasing the adaptive capacity and resiliency of communities within the SNC jurisdiction by reducing the impacts and costs associated with natural hazards and climate change. Through the foresight of past Boards and Municipalities, SNC conserves approximately 13,000 acres of land and has a history of land securement going back more than 60 years (detailed in Section 4.4).

During the Authority's 75th 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 and healthier endowment for the future.

This Strategy provides direction for future land securement and:

- Provides staff with a framework for recommending land for securement to the Board;
- Serves as a point of reference for external funding partners;
- Provides sellers and potential donors with an understanding of SNC's land securement process and options; and
- 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 should be reviewed every five years.

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* in 1947, SNC has decades of practical experience protecting our environment and engaging communities.

Today, SNC owns nearly 13,000 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 and safe watershed and natural heritage system.

This includes:

- The study of water quality and quantity, natural habitats, plants, and animals to help us identify environmental needs, set targets, and restore natural areas;
- Management of a community-based forest on an ecosystem basis;
- Sustainable community development to advise partners about land use, development proposals and construction;
- Mapping and regulation of natural hazards to protect people and property;
- Management of an Early Warning System to provide advice on the potential of flood and flood risk;
- Analysis of climate change impacts on resources across the SNC watershed; and
- Environmental education to help community members appreciate and sustainably manage their local environment.

1.1 Jurisdiction

SNC is one of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities, with a jurisdiction covering 4,480 sq. km. of communities, farmland, forest, and wetland in Eastern Ontario including international and provincial water boundaries with the United States and Quebec. Sixteen partner municipalities form SNC's membership, including portions of: United Counties of Prescott and Russell (UCPR); United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry (SDG); United Counties of Leeds and Grenville (LG) and the City of Ottawa (See Figure 1). Member municipalities appoint a 12 member, plus past chair, Board of Directors to govern SNC.

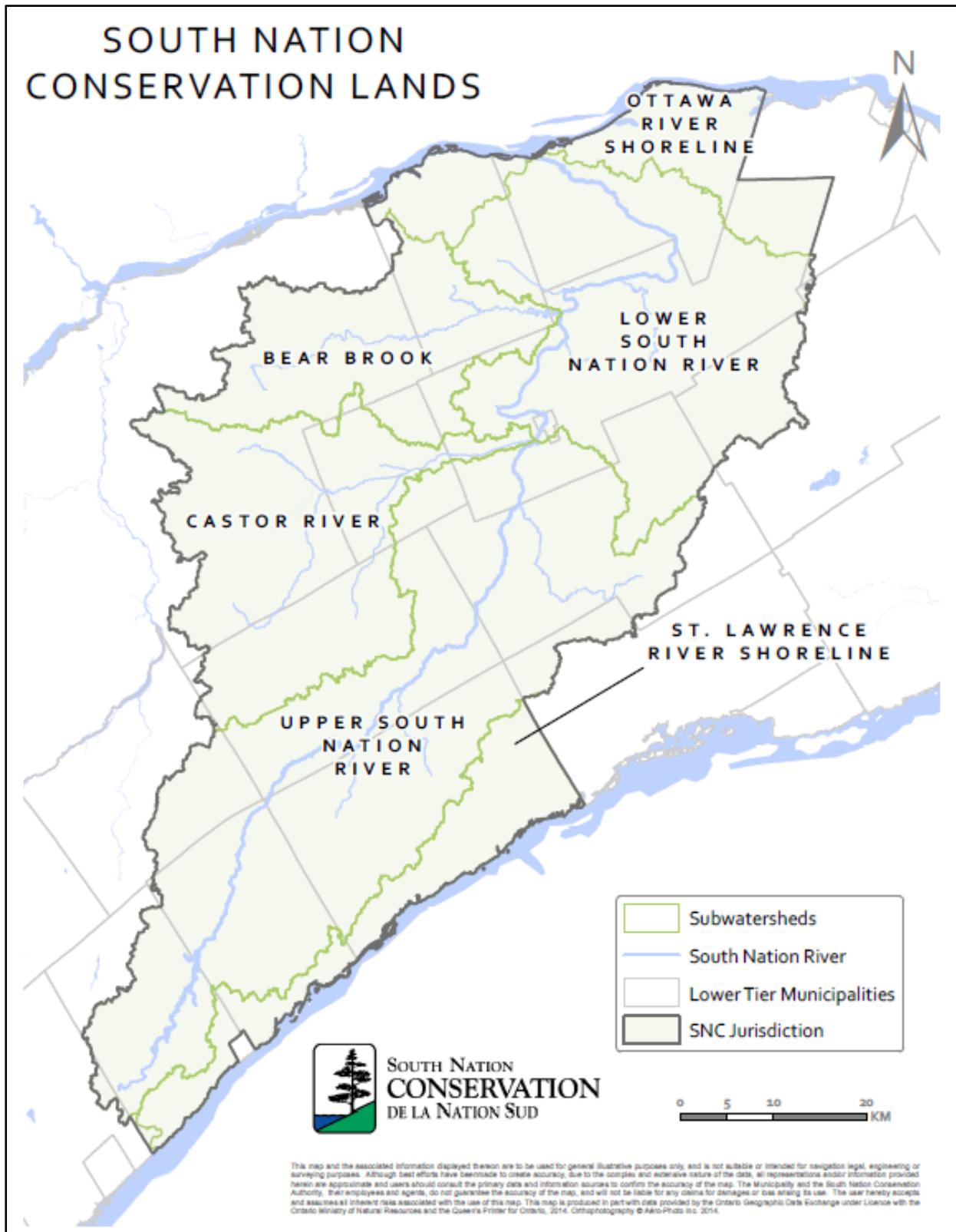


Figure 1: Map of the South Conservation Jurisdiction and Subwatersheds

1.2 The Need for Land Securement

Natural heritage lands are essential for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services, increasing the adaptive capacity and resiliency of communities by reducing impacts associated with natural hazards and climate change, and providing quality recreation opportunities for surrounding communities. The science and awareness of natural heritage protection has improved, however, the tools used to achieve these ends remain largely unchanged.

In Eastern Ontario, most land is privately owned and managed. Education, stewardship, and land use planning are the primary methods used to protect natural heritage features. Given projected population growth and growing pressure to convert land from forest, grassland, wetland, and hazard lands for development and farming, land securement continues to be important in natural heritage protection and in protecting people and property from natural hazards, especially as the climate continues to change.

1.2.1 Increasing Population and Shifting Demographics

SNC's jurisdiction will continue to experience significant demographic changes. The jurisdiction 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 2020 and 2046, population is expected to grow by over 35% in Ottawa, 25-35% in Prescott & Russell, and up to 20% in Leeds & Grenville, and Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry.¹

All census divisions will experience an increase in both total number and percentage share of seniors. The total number of children 14 and under is expected to increase by over 35% in Ottawa and by up to 20% in Prescott & Russell; Leeds & Grenville; and Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry.³

1.2.2 Decreasing Forest Cover

The 2014 SNC Forest Cover and Trends Analysis, a collaborative study undertaken along with Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), UCPR, and SDG, found that forest cover in the South Nation jurisdiction decreased by 510.9 hectares per year between 2002 and 2008.² Much of the loss can be attributed to the increasing value of agricultural land resulting in the conversion of marginal land to farmland.³ Total forest cover in the South Nation

¹ Ontario Ministry of Finance. 2021. Ontario Population Projections. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections>

² SNC. 2014. Forest Cover and Trends Analysis.

³ Statistics Canada. 2011. Value of Farm Capital --- Agriculture Economic Statistics. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/21--013--x/2011002/t002--eng.htm>

watershed was found to be 28.1%, although there are significant differences by municipality and sub-watershed (Appendix A).⁴

The 2014 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 an important threshold for environmental health as measured by factors including flood attenuation, soil conservation, air quality, water quality, diversity of wildlife habitat, ecological function and protection of species at risk.⁵

1.2.3 Planning for Present and Future Needs

Population growth and associated development increases pressures on natural heritage lands. At the same time, increases in 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 the protection and health of natural heritage lands requires a proactive and strategic approach. Securing natural heritage ensures 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.

1.2.4 Protecting People and Property

Securing natural heritage lands can aid in disaster risk reduction and increasing the resiliency of communities by reducing impacts associated with natural hazards and climate change.

South Nation Conservation (SNC) is mandated by the Province of Ontario to regulate hazard lands within the jurisdiction, including:

- floodplains resulting from a storm that has a 1% chance of being exceeded;
- areas with riverine erosion, unstable slopes, unstable soils, and unstable bedrock; and
- wetlands.

Natural hazards are defined as land which could be unsafe for development due to naturally occurring processes. Natural hazard lands include floodplain areas, areas of riverine erosion, unstable slope, unstable soils, and unstable bedrock. Sometimes these natural hazards can be mitigated to allow development or use of the property,

⁴ 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

⁵ 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

however, in other cases such as in the Lemieux Landslide area, mitigation is not possible.

Where natural hazards are significant and could pose a serious threat to people and property land securement by public bodies, such as South Nation Conservation, is an effective way to protect people and property. Land securement of natural hazard lands by public bodies also reduce disaster risk and increase resiliency, especially when considering the impacts of a changing climate.

The frequency and magnitude of extreme weather will continue to increase throughout the 21st century due to human-induced climate change (IPCC, 2021).⁶ The changing climate will impact both the built and natural environment and will exacerbate water resource issues arising from an urbanizing landscape, impacting many people and systems within SNC's jurisdiction.

Extreme weather (i.e., extreme precipitation, flooding, etc.) leads to emergency situations, and the incidence and related costs of emergencies will increase over time (UNDRR, 2020).⁷ Land securement is an effective means for building adaptive capacity, so that communities can reduce risk, reduce associated impacts, and increase their ability to cope or adapt when needed.

2 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* describes the responsibilities of Conservation Authorities for regulating natural hazards for protection of people and property, and 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 and public health and safety related to natural hazards is also provided by the *Planning Act* and the 2020 Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).⁸ The PPS states:

"The Province's natural heritage resources, water resources, including the Great Lakes, agricultural resources, 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

⁶ IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), 2021. Climate change 201: The physical science basis. Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

⁷ UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction), 2020. The human cost of disasters: an overview of the last 20 years (2000-2019). <https://www.undrr.org/publication/human-cost-disasters-overview-last-20-years-2000-2019>

⁸ Government of Ontario, 2020. Provincial Policy Statement. <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>

resources are managed in a sustainable way to conserve biodiversity, protect essential ecological processes and public health and safety, provide for the production of food and fibre, minimize environmental and social impacts, provide for recreational opportunities (e.g., fishing, hunting and hiking) and meet its long-term needs.”⁹

The PPS Section 2.1.2. 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.”¹⁰

The PPS also states:

“It is equally important to protect the overall health and safety of the population, including preparing for the impacts of a changing climate. The Provincial Policy Statement directs development away from areas of natural and human-made hazards. This preventative approach supports provincial and municipal financial well-being over the long term, protects public health and safety, and minimizes cost, risk and social disruption.”¹¹

The PPS goes on to state that:

“3.1.1 Development shall generally be directed, in accordance with guidance developed by the Province (as amended from time to time), to areas outside of: a) hazardous lands adjacent to the shorelines of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River System ... which are impacted by flooding hazards, erosion hazards and/or dynamic beach hazards; b) hazardous lands adjacent to river, stream and small inland lake systems which are impacted by flooding hazards and/or erosion hazards; and c) hazardous sites.

3.1.2 Development and site alteration shall not be permitted within: a) the dynamic beach hazard; b) defined portions of the flooding hazard along connecting channels (... and St. Lawrence Rivers); c) areas that would be rendered inaccessible to people and vehicles during times of flooding hazards, erosion hazards and/or dynamic beach hazards, unless it has been demonstrated that the site has safe access appropriate for the nature of the development and the natural hazard; and d) a floodway regardless of whether the area of inundation contains high points of land not subject to flooding.”¹²

MNRF’s Natural Heritage Reference Manual “represents the Province’s recommended approach to implementing natural heritage policies under policy 2.1 of the PPS”.¹³ The manual defines and validates various natural heritage features (see Appendix B) before outlining the process by which they are identified and established (see Table 1). The manual also mandates the level of protection which should be afforded by the municipality.

⁹ Government of Ontario, 2020. Provincial Policy Statement. <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>, page 6.

¹⁰ Government of Ontario, 2020. Provincial Policy Statement. <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>, page 24.

¹¹ Government of Ontario, 2020. Provincial Policy Statement. <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>, page 6.

¹² Government of Ontario, 2020. Provincial Policy Statement. <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>, page 32.

¹³ OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual, Second Edition, pg. 6.

Because the MNRF 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.

Table 1. Natural Heritage Features Establishment and Definitions.¹⁴

Feature	Who Establishes and How
Significant habitat of endangered species and threatened species	MNRF identifies such habitat by delineating, describing, reviewing, and approving the work of others or establishing methods such as training and standards that ensure the work of others will be acceptable
Significant wetlands and significant coastal wetlands	MNRF identifies such wetlands by delineating them or reviewing the work of others in accordance with the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES)
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 valley lands 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 process and criteria.
Areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSI)	MNRF identifies such areas in accordance with ANSI confirmation process.

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 in all municipalities and afford some protection to Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSWs) located within their jurisdiction, as mandated by the *Planning Act*

¹⁴ OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual, Second Edition, pg. 39-40.

and PPS. The extent of the delineation and protection of other natural heritage features varies between the plans.

2.2 Regional Natural Heritage Plans

Environment Canada recommends a minimum 30% forest cover at the watershed scale 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.¹⁵

Several government agencies and NGOs publish reports on the regional state of natural heritage systems in all or a portion of SNC's jurisdiction, including plans to increase the amount of land protected. Some of these reports are discussed below.

In 2021, The United Counties of Prescott and Russell (UCPR) and the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry (SDG) partnered with South Nation Conservation (SNC) to complete the province's first two-county Natural Heritage Systems Study. The report defines natural linkages based on a regional landscape analysis. The report also includes Official Plan policy amendments to streamline development where minimal environmental impact is expected and to protect large core natural areas.¹⁶ Another significant guiding document for regional conservation is the Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint for Biodiversity, published jointly by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and MNRF.

The report identifies only 2% of land in the South Nation River's watershed as being publicly held, with only 5%, or 25,729 hectares, of the total area conserved or protected in some way. GIS analysis by SNC suggests that the total proportion of SNC's jurisdiction in public ownership and in a natural state is approximately 7.3% (see table 2). The Nature Conservancy of Canada/MNRF report recommends the protection of large sections of the watershed.¹⁷

The National Capital Commission outlines areas of land it proposes bringing into public ownership and adding to the Greenbelt around Ottawa in their master plan. These parcels include several within SNC's jurisdiction including areas around Leitrim Wetland, Lester Wetland, and Mer Bleue Bog. The National Capital Commission maintains a strategy to work with partners including SNC, to secure and safeguard natural heritage areas and linkages beyond their jurisdiction.¹⁸

A plan from the Nature Conservancy of Canada, 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.

¹⁵ Environment Canada. 2013. How Much Habitat is Enough?, Third Edition.

https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/ec/CW66-164-2013-eng.pdf , pg. 61.

¹⁶ South Nation Conservation. 2021. Natural Heritage System Study Final Report.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ National Capital Commission. 2013. Canada's Capital Greenbelt Master Plan. p109-119

Table 2: Summary of Public Lands Within SNC's Jurisdiction.

Owner Organization	Area (hectares)
City of Ottawa	631.9
Ducks Unlimited Canada	31.1
Management Board of Cabinet	2,398.2
Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR)	5,041.3
Ministry of Transportation	18.8
National Capital Commission	3,991.0
Nature Conservancy of Canada	1757.8
Raisin Region Conservation	21.4
United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry	1,656.5
South Nation Conservation	4,881.4
St. Lawrence Parks Commission	886.5
Township of Russell	13.3
United Counties of Leeds and Grenville	1,783.5
United Counties of Prescott & Russell	11,327.1
TOTAL	36,157.6
% Public land area within SNC Jurisdiction publicly	8.1

The plan also outlines the ecological significance of some of the features found in our region including:

- 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 loss¹⁹

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

¹⁹ Nature Conservancy of Canada. 2013. Ottawa Valley Natural Area Conservation Plan.

3 EXISTING SNC LAND HOLDINGS

3.1 Existing SNC Land Holdings Benefits

SNC currently owns approximately 13,000 acres of land throughout its jurisdiction as shown in Figure 2. 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;
- Preservation of biodiversity and ecological function;
- Climate change mitigation;
- Passive and active recreational opportunities;
- Spiritual and cultural opportunities;
- Local economic diversification; and
- Protect people and property.

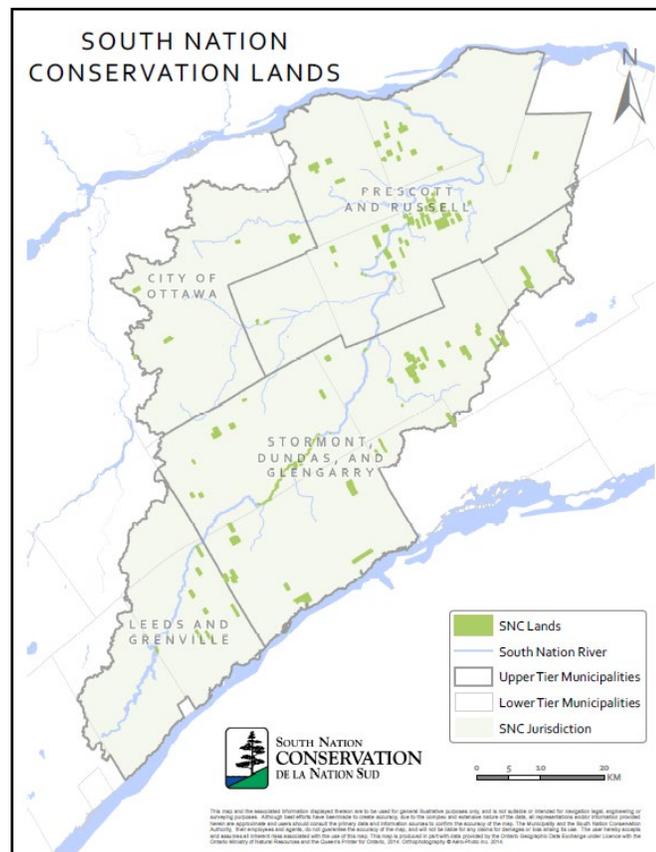


Figure 2. Map of Existing SNC Land Holdings.

3.2 SNC Land Holdings by Property Classification

Table 3 provides a breakdown of SNC property area by property classification.

Table 3. SNC Property Area by Property Classification.

Property Classification	Area	
	Acres	Hectares
Administration	2.69	1.1
Infrastructure		
Channelization Lands	601.10	243.3
Natural Hazard Lands	201.91	81.7
Water Control Infrastructure	8.78	3.6
Environmental		
Forest Management	7,796.11	3,155.0
Natural Heritage	1,926.51	779.6
Protection Forest	1,584.12	641.1
Conservation Areas	192.71	78.0
Total	12,313.93	4,983.4

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

- Cass Bridge Conservation Area, Township of North Dundas
- Findlay Creek Boardwalk, City of Ottawa
- High Falls Conservation Area, Municipality of Casselman
- J. Henry Tweed Conservation Area, Township of Russell
- Jessup's Falls Conservation Area, Township of Alfred-Plantagenet
- McIntosh Park Conservation Area, Township of North Stormont
- Oak Valley Pioneer Park, Township of North Dundas
- Oschmann Forest Conservation Area, Township of North Dundas
- Reveler Conservation Area, Township of North Stormont
- Robert Graham Conservation Area, Township of South Dundas
- St-Albert Conservation Area, The Nation Municipality
- Two Creeks Forest Conservation Area, Township of South Dundas
- W.E. Burton Conservation Area, Township of Russell
- Warwick Forest Conservation Area, Township of North Stormont
- Mill Run Conservation Area, Augusta Township

3.3 SNC Land Holdings Distribution

Table 4 provides a summary of SNC land holdings by member-municipality. SNC maintains land holdings across its jurisdiction with properties in 14 partner municipalities.

Table 4. SNC land holdings by municipality.

Municipality	Area	
	Acres	Hectares
Alfred-Plantagenet	912.87	369.4
Augusta	8.50	3.4
Casselman	6.04	2.4
Clarence-Rockland	467.09	189.0
Edwardsburgh-Cardinal	662.25	268.0
Nation	3,113.71	1,260.1
North Dundas	1,263.87	511.5
North Glengarry	615.56	249.1
North Grenville	99.22	40.1
North Stormont	2,198.48	889.7
Ottawa	543.89	220.1
Russell	76.02	30.8
South Dundas	2,053.67	831.1
South Stormont	292.76	118.5
Total	12,313.93	4,983.2

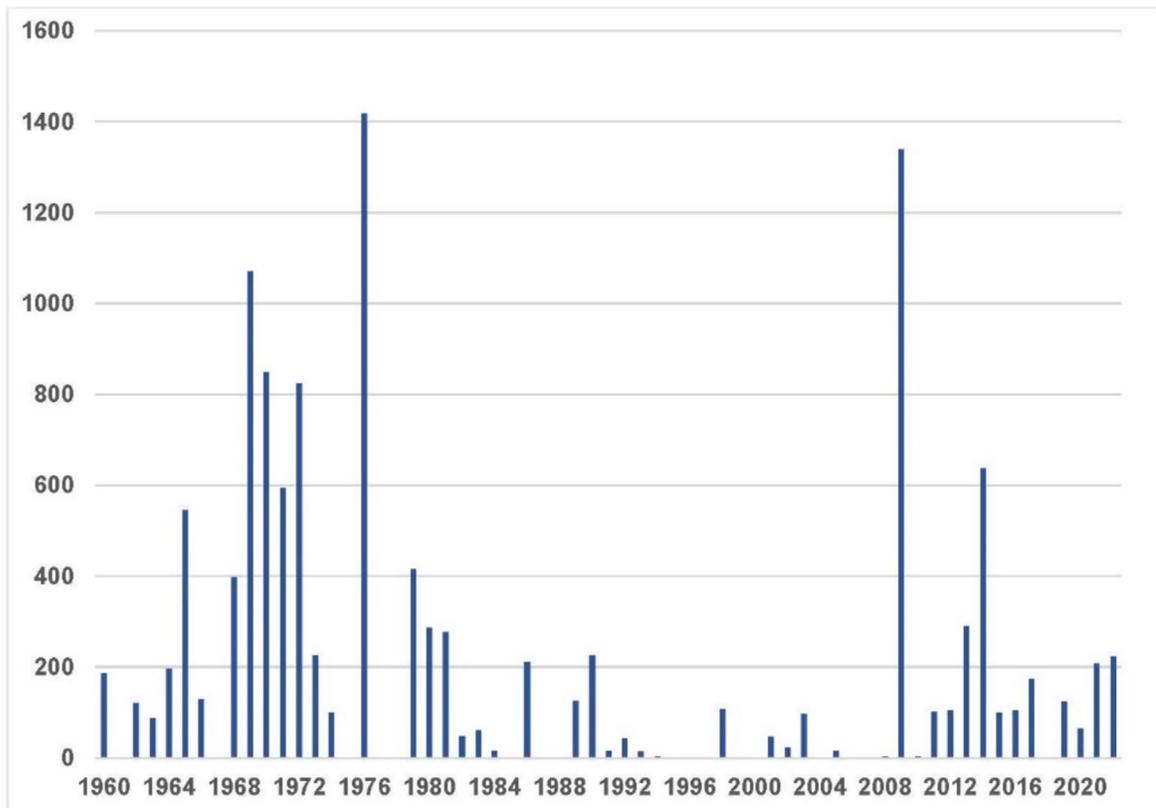
Several clusters of SNC land holdings exist in the following locations:

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

3.4 History of Land Securement

Figure 3 shows SNC land securement in acres from 1960 to 2022. SNC secured its first land in 1960 with the majority secured during the 1960's and 1970's, partially financed under the Provincial Agreement Forest Program. The program operated until the Agreement Forest Program was terminated in the 1990s. Properties secured between 1960 and 1980 included non-forested area, which were subsequently afforested. SNC land, along with County and other Conservation Authority land, contributed significantly to the magnitude and success of regional afforestation through the 20th century.

Figure 3. SNC Land Securement in Acres by Year.

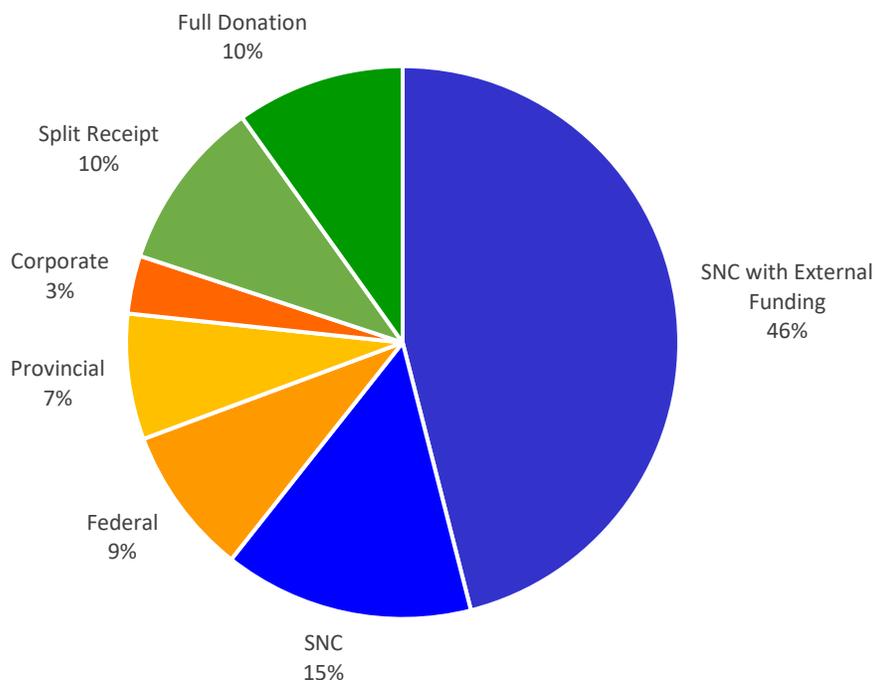


In 2009, SNC resumed an active land securement program relying on natural heritage conservation programs such as the Ecological Gifts Program (Environment Canada), Natural Spaces Land Acquisition & Stewardship Program (Ontario Heritage Trust) and the Lafleche Wetland Trust Fund.

Gifts and donations have also been an important source of new securements, with the Reveler Conservation Area being an example. Between 2009 and 2014, SNC secured approximately 500 acres (202.3 hectares) annually. From 2014 to 2021, following approval of the 2014 Land Securement Strategy SNC has secured approximately 200 acres (80 hectares) annually. Land securement since 2009 has been primarily to conserve natural heritage features including wetlands, significant forests, and SAR habitat.

Figure 4 summarizes acquisitions by funding source for the past 10-year period. The principal support for the SNC Land Securement program is through a special levy supported by its member municipalities. Only 15% of SNC land acquisitions are independent of any additional external funding. Subject to availability, SNC relies on Federal/Provincial government programs, corporate trust funds, or private donations, either partial or full, to extend its ability to secure land for conservation purposes.

Figure 4. SNC Land Securement by funding source between 2011 and 2021.



3.5 SNC Land Securement in the Broader Public Lands Context

SNC is one of many public agencies or government departments which own land within the SNC jurisdiction. Though other public agencies or departments own land for a variety of purposes the location of publicly owned lands in a natural state can provide additional information in determining the benefits of a potential property for securement.

Location of a potential parcel for securement adjacent to a property owned by another public agency or government department may offer similar ecological benefits to lands for potential securement adjacent to SNC lands.

Figure 5 shows the location of publicly owned lands in a natural state within the SNC jurisdiction.

There are several clusters of publicly owned land in a natural state across the SNC jurisdiction. These clusters are often reflective of significant natural heritage features.

SOUTH NATION CONSERVATION

Public Lands
in a Natural State

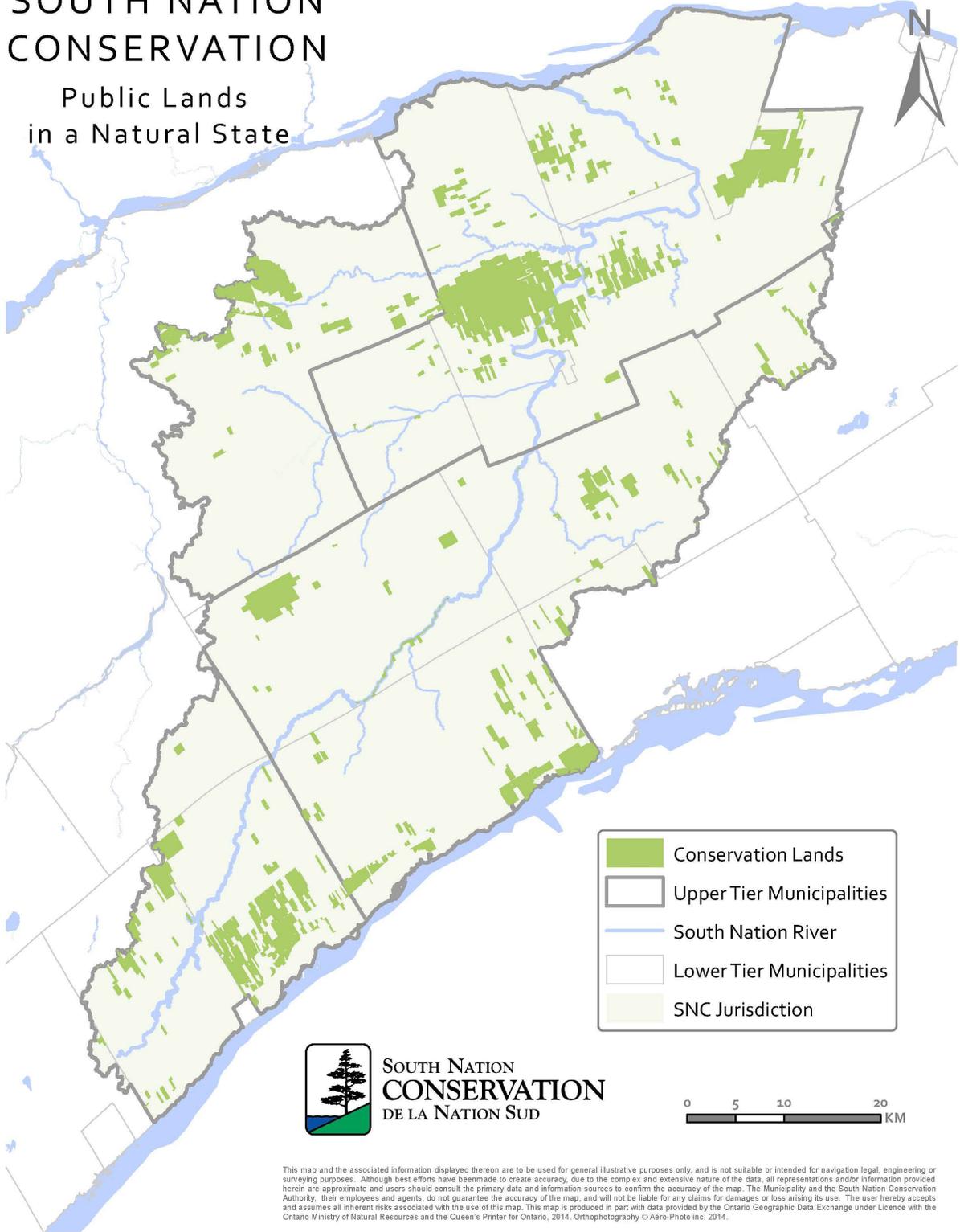


Figure 5. Map of Publicly Owned Lands within SNC's Jurisdiction.

4 LAND SECUREMENT METHODS

An overview of all available methods of land securement is provide in this section and further details are provided in Appendix D. These can be broken down into two categories holding title (fee simple, partial takings/direct conveyance, agreements on owned land, and donation) and conservation easements or covenants.

4.1 Holding Title

SNC prefers to 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.

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 can be viewed as both an opportunity for SNC and a service to property owners. SNC actively encourages land donations, with such gifts often qualifying as charitable donations under the Federal Income Tax Act. SNC, as a charitable organization, can accept land donations and issue a charitable tax receipt for the appraised value of the property. SNC has been designated by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Canada to accept donations through the Ecological Gifts Program.

Providing the opportunity to donate land will be actively 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.

SNC will work with municipalities, environmental organizations, and other potential funding partners when pursuing land donations and property purchases,

4.2 Conservation Easements and Covenants

When property owners prefer to place an easement or covenant on their land, SNC will consider if the facts support this approach.

SNC may consider use of conservation easement and covenants to secure land under special circumstance which may include:

- Only a small portion of the lands are of interest for land securement by SNC (e.g., the natural areas along a watercourse within a natural heritage system linkage area)
- A severance to allow holding title of the lands of interest would create a new lot with no road access.

- The lands of interest for securement cannot be severed from a larger parcel due to their location in certain land use designations, such as prime agricultural areas where new lot creation is extremely limited.

5 LAND SECUREMENT PROCESS

Securing the recommended minimum of 30% forest cover in the SNC jurisdiction would require an exponential increase in the present rate of land conservation by SNC and partner organizations. Thirty percent of SNC’s jurisdiction is 1,260 km², or more than 300,000 acres. At a current rate of around 200 acres per year, SNC must be strategic in prioritizing lands for securement to achieve maximum benefit with a limited budget.

The Strategy seeks to satisfy five core principles when identifying land suitable for securement:

- environmental benefit;
- social benefit;
- economic benefit;
- protection of people and property from natural hazards; and
- geographic locations that ensure a distribution of holdings throughout the jurisdiction.

Figure 5: Outline of South Nation Conservation Land Securement Process

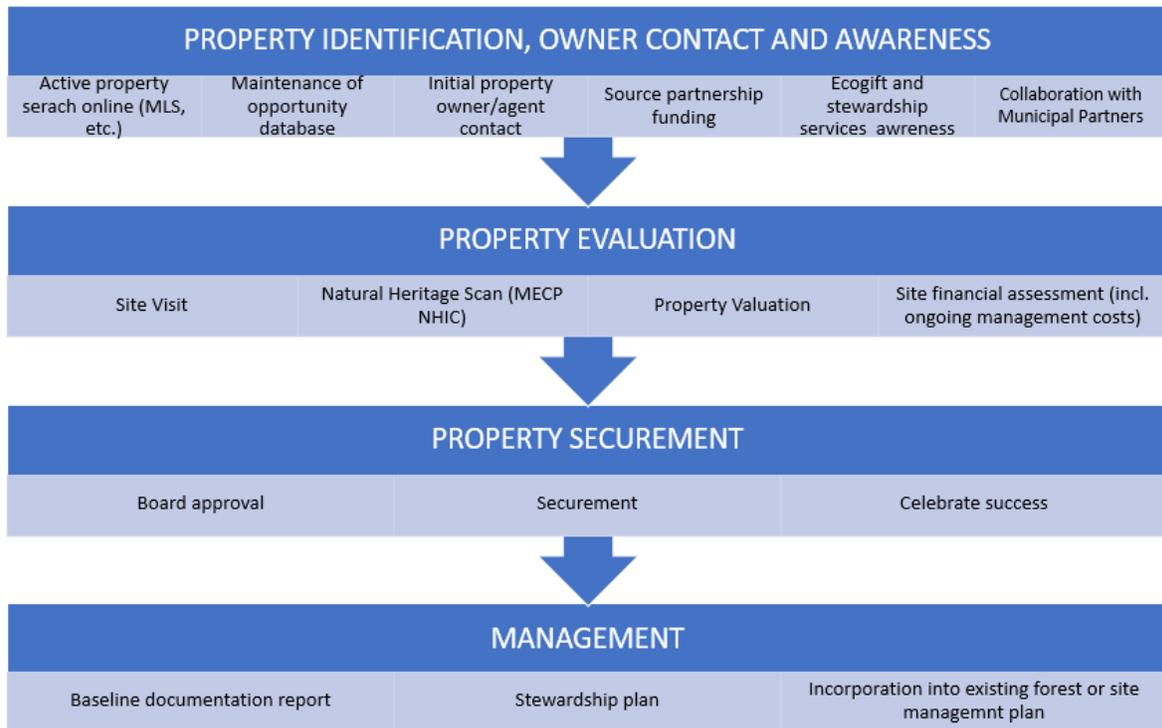


Figure 5 outlines the land securement process. SNC will work with willing property owners, municipalities, and partners to acquire the best possible land for conservation. A case-by-case assessment will be undertaken by SNC to determine the quality and significance of all properties considered for securement. Based on the individual property assessment, SNC will determine whether securement will be pursued.

5.1 Property Identification, Owner Contact and Awareness

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 an opportunities database, including an inventory of property abutting existing SNC land holdings.

The various steps of this initial phase may occur simultaneously or in a variety of different orders depending on whether the land is being purchased on the open market, purchased through a private sale after the seller approached SNC, donated, or transferred or purchased from a municipality.

5.1.1 Initial Property Owner and/or Agent Contact

In all methods of land securement, contact with the property owner and/or agent and ongoing communication is important. Initial contact usually involves communicating with the property owner or agent on their goals for the property (e.g., conservation, natural heritage legacy, sale price); what SNC can offer such as protection and conservation of the property, Eco Gifts Program, fee simple purchase; and what to expect from the process of securing land with SNC, including timelines.

5.1.2 Active Property Searches

Properties of potential interest for land securement are often not offered for sale or donation directly to SNC. SNC staff regularly search property listings. This is an important component of the land securement program as it can allow for identification of properties that meet SNC's core principles for land securement and that have interested sellers. Often potential sellers may not be aware of services and potential interest for land securement from SNC. Once a property of interest is identified initial contact with the property owner or agent would be undertaken.

5.1.3 Maintenance of an Opportunity Database

Though SNC is open to purchasing a variety of properties there are certain properties that may be of particular interest for land securement by SNC. Keeping a database of opportunities allows SNC to proactively reach out to property owners of these properties when funding is available to purchase properties.

The opportunity database can also include properties where the property owner was interested in selling the lands to SNC that were of interest for land securement, but funding was not available. This may allow for future securement of these properties if funding becomes available.

5.1.4 Source Partnership Funding

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 plans, and applicable taxes. These expenditures are supported by funding opportunities available through various programs and partnerships outlined below. Funding may be secured for the purchase of a specific property or funding may be secured prior to selecting a property for securement depending on the funding source.

5.1.4.1 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. Natural heritage lands increase the adaptive capacity and resiliency of local communities by mitigating impacts from extreme weather. Conservation lands also provide natural space opportunities that contribute to the enjoyment, health, and wellbeing 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.

5.1.4.2 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.

5.1.4.3 Federal Funding and Incentives

The main source of federal incentive for donations 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, Conservation Ontario, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, for the securement of ecologically significant lands.

5.1.4.4 Partner Funding Support

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

In parts of SNC's jurisdiction, agricultural land is at risk of development for residential and commercial uses. Maintaining farmland close to urban areas is the mission of the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT). There is a 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 land.

5.1.5 Ecological Gifts Program and Stewardship Services Awareness

Raising awareness of the programs offered by SNC that may lead to land securement is an excellent tool to effectively protect natural heritage for public benefit.

The Canadian Ecological Gifts program is a way for Canadians to protect ecologically sensitive land by donating land to recipients such as South Nation Conservation. The program offers significant tax benefits to property owners who donate land or a partial interest in land.²⁰

SNC offers a valuable service to property owners and an opportunity to create a legacy by preserving their property from development. SNC stewardship services, such as tree planting program, woodlot advisory services, and the clean water program, help create a network of property owners who foster environmental stewardship of their land. At the end of their tenure (ownership) they may be interested in offering this legacy of stewardship, through sale or donation, to SNC.

Although dated, a 2001 Environics survey 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.²¹ A land securement strategy that can 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.¹⁶

²⁰ Government of Canada. 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-funding/ecological-gifts-program/overview.html>

²¹ Environics. 2001. Survey of Rural Landowners in Ontario Phase 2 – Attitudes and Behaviour Regarding Land Stewardship.

5.1.6 Collaboration with Municipal Partners

SNC can offer a valuable service to municipalities within our jurisdiction by sharing SNC's expertise in conservation for appropriate properties that meet the core principles of the land securement strategy. This could include partnerships with municipalities to acquire appropriate lands from municipalities. SNC will maintain a flexible approach to property securement with municipalities. This includes approaches from municipalities and initiating discussions with municipalities regarding potential securement strategies for municipal lands.

Municipalities are in a unique position to secure land as the *Planning Act* allows municipalities to require conveyance of park land to the municipality as part of subdivision, consent, or site plan approval. Within this context, SNC can work with municipalities to identify lands within developments that may be of conservation interest based on the core principles of SNC land securement and the criteria set out in Figure 7.

Securement of properties from municipalities would follow a similar process for review as privately owned lands though some factors in the valuation and site assessment may be different where the municipality is offering land at no cost, or where the municipality is applying for the severance, etc.

In securing lands from municipalities, and while completing site assessment including ongoing maintenance costs, SNC will explore creative options with municipalities for sharing transfer costs such as cost sharing agreements or tax reimbursement (where not covered by CLTIP).

Conservation easements or covenants with municipalities may be of more interest than with private individual owners since there is more likely to be compliance and continuity of ownership

Municipalities secure and dispose of lands in a variety of ways including parkland conveyance, disposal of municipal property and municipal tax sales. SNC will work to collaborate with municipalities to identify opportunities for conservation within these processes. Section 8,1 Recommendations and Action Items identifies some future areas for collaboration with municipal partners to support potential land securement.

5.2 Property Evaluation

Property evaluation has four main components: site visit, valuation (property appraisal and/or negotiations), Natural Heritage Scan and Site Assessment (environmental, social, and economic benefits and future management requirements), see Figure 6. In addition, the property will be evaluated on contributions to regional natural heritage values and property management history.

5.2.1 Site Visit

The first step in the evaluation of a property is to conduct an initial site visit. This visit provides the first opportunity to see the site and the natural heritage and natural hazard features it may include. This is usually an informal visit to the site where the

owner or agent can provide a tour of the site and share background information and history of the site. The site visit will inform what additional expertise may be required for the Site Assessment.

5.2.2 Natural Heritage Scan (MECP NHIC)

A Natural Heritage Scan screens for the presence of provincially, regionally, and locally rare species, plant communities and, wildlife concentrations areas through consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks Natural Heritage Information Center database.

5.2.3 Property Valuation

Property valuation may include having the property value established by a certified appraiser if this has not already been done.

Once a property valuation has been established negotiations with the property owner regarding the price SNC could offer can be undertaken.

If the property is being donated the property valuation will be used to determine the amount for the charitable donations receipt under the *Federal Income Tax Act*. Property appraisal reports must meet the requirements for appraisals set out by Environment Canada when dealing with donations.²²

5.2.4 Site Assessment

A Site Assessment will consider the criteria for land securement, based on the five-core principle of the Land Securement Strategy, as well as the costs of the property and future management requirements.

Appendix E identifies site assessment criteria, categorized by the five core principles of the Land Securement Strategy, as well as potential sources of information. The criteria are intended to help identify the lands which best meet the totality of the criteria; not all properties will meet all criteria. The criteria are intended to guide consideration of potential land for securement; the number of criteria that are met is not intended to be used as a quantitative measure of the relative merit of one property versus another.

Screening for these criteria will be done based on a desktop assessment and observations from the site visit(s). Some criteria are based on multiple core principles and as such appear under multiple categories of the assessment checklist which follows.

Sources of information for evaluating specific criteria are not prescriptive and are provided for guidance. Additional sources of information will be used as needed where available to evaluate a property against the following criteria.

²² Environment and Climate Change Canada. 2019. Ecological Gifts Program Guidelines for Appraisals. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2019/eccc/CW66-392-2019-eng.pdf

When assessing the suitability of land for securement, consideration will also be given to the financial impacts of securing the land including the purchase price, annual property taxes, potential improvements or site remediation requirements long-term maintenance requirements, and potential revenue streams offered by the property.

5.3 Property Securement

5.3.1 Board Approval

Properties recommended for securement will have funding identified and will then be forwarded to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for review and recommendation for approval to the Board.

5.3.2 Securement

Once approval is received from the Board, 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.

5.3.3 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

5.4 Management

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.

5.4.1 Baseline Documentation Report

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.)

5.4.2 Stewardship Plan

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.

6 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 must follow SNC Policy, applicable legislative requirements and legal commitments, including requirements under the Conservation Authorities Act.

The SNC Administrative By-laws (April 15, 2021) Part II Section 8(o) requires approval by the Board of Directors for any proposed acquisition or disposition of land, subject to the requirements of the Conservation Authorities Act.

6.1 Conservation Authorities Act

The Conservation Authorities Act Part V Chapter 21 empowers the Board of Directors to acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise any land that it may require, and, to sell, lease or otherwise dispose of land so acquired. The Conservation Authorities Act further stipulates the following (Note: Approval is now delegated to MNRF District Manager):

“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) without the approval of the Minister except if, the disposition is for provincial or municipal infrastructure and utility purposes; 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 the authority informs the Minister of the disposition. 2010, c. 16, Sched. 10, s. 1 (1).

Terms and conditions

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).²³

6.2 Forestry Act

Disposition of land, except for disposition for use of the Province of Ontario, by South Nation Conservation, as a former Agreement Forest partner, is subject to the Forestry Act. The forestry Act section 2(5) to 2(6) state:

“Land in respect of which grants have been made [, by the Minister under the Forestry Act,] shall not, without the approval of the Minister, be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of during or after the term of the agreement. 1998, c. 18, Sched. I, s. 20.”²⁴ (Note: Approval is now delegated to MNR District Manager)

“The proceeds from any sale, lease or other disposition of land in respect of which grants have been made under subsection (2) or a predecessor provision shall be divided as the Minister directs between the conservation authority ... and the Province of Ontario, with the conservation authority ... receiving not less than 50 per cent of the proceeds. 2000, c. 26, Sched. L, s. 4 (2).²⁵

6.3 Ecological Gifts Program

South Nation Conservation is an eligible recipient of lands donated under the Canada Ecological Gifts Program. Under the Ecological Gifts Program environmentally sensitive lands are protected against changes in land use or through disposition. These lands are monitored by Environment & Climate Change Canada. Under the *Income Tax Act*, section 207.31 unauthorized change in use or disposition subjects the recipient (South Nation Conservation) to a tax equal to 50% of the fair market value on the land at the time of the unauthorized change in use or disposition.²⁶

7 CONCLUSION

SNC’s primary organizational goals include the protection of people and property and the preservation of natural heritage. Natural heritage is essential to preserving ecosystem function and biodiversity, providing clean water, mitigating impacts associated with natural hazards and climate change, and contributing to healthier, more active communities.

Land securement, by public bodies, is an effective way to protect natural heritage for public benefit and to protect people and property from significant natural hazards. Through the foresight of Board members, Municipalities, and property owners South Nation Conservation (SNC) has conserved approximately 12,000 acres of land. SNC

²³ Government of Ontario, Conservation Authorities Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. C23.

²⁴ Government of Ontario, Forestry Act, R.S.O. 1990, F. 26.

²⁵ Government of Ontario, Forestry Act, R.S.O. 1990, F. 26.

²⁶ Government of Canada. *Income Tax Act*. (R.S.C., 1985, c.1- (5th Supp.))

land holdings will contribute to the sustainability of the jurisdiction and provide a natural legacy for the future.

The Strategy seeks to satisfy five core principles when identifying land suitable for securement:

- environmental benefit;
- social benefit;
- economic benefit;
- protection of people and property from natural hazards; and
- geographic locations that ensure a distribution of holdings throughout the jurisdiction.

7.1 Recommendations and Action Items

To support ongoing land securement efforts some additional areas of focus may include:

- The Land Securement Strategy should be reviewed and updated on a 5-year cycle.
- Collaborating with municipalities to discuss the potential for revisions to parkland conveyance by-laws to secure lands of conservation interest, such as along watercourses, where appropriate
- Collaborating with municipalities to review and revise disposal of land policies to ensure SNC is notified and given an opportunity to secure these lands, where appropriate
- Collaborating with municipalities to revise municipal property tax lien sale policies to include notice to SNC, where appropriate
- Collaborating with municipalities to add municipally owned land in a natural state to mapping and analysis of publicly owned lands in a natural state. This would allow assessment of lands for securement to include these lands in considerations of the potential benefits of securing adjacent properties as per the criteria in Figure 7.
- Notifying property owners in the new UCPR & SDG Natural Heritage System designation, once approved, of their potentially eligibility for MFTIP and CLTIP, as appropriate, focusing on areas that best meet core principles based on desktop assessment.
- Promoting available tax incentives for maintaining natural heritage lands and exploring options for conservation easements and covenants with conservation partners for these lands where appropriate.

- As per the recommendations of the Protecting and Increasing Forest Cover in the South Nation Conservation District Report (August 2018), “there are several tax incentives available to landowners that have forested property or ecologically significant features (i.e., wetlands), these opportunities are not well-known to property owners. Programs include the Management Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) and Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP), both are offered Province-wide and are administered by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.”²⁷
- As per the recommendations of the Protecting and Increasing Forest Cover in the South Nation Conservation District Report (August 2018), “Engage with the Province to develop a process for disposing of public land which would consider first right of refusal to a municipality or local land trust (including Conservation Authorities)... Developing a process for cross-communication between holders of public lands (e.g. Province, municipalities, land trusts, and Conservation Authorities), when one is considering disposal of land, could provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive land to remain protected and available to the public for recreational activities.”²⁸
- As per the recommendations of the Protecting and Increasing Forest Cover in the South Nation Conservation District Report (August 2018), “lobbying the Provincial and Federal government for more funding to support forest conservation programs and land acquisition of sensitive forests in low forest cover regions.”²⁹

²⁷ South Nation Conservation. 2018. Protecting and Increasing Forest Cover in the South Nation Conservation District Report. Pages 9-11.

²⁸ South Nation Conservation. 2018. Protecting and Increasing Forest Cover in the South Nation Conservation District Report. Pages 9-11.

²⁹ South Nation Conservation. 2018. Protecting and Increasing Forest Cover in the South Nation Conservation District Report. Pages 9-11.

Appendix A

Forest Cover Analysis Tables

Table 5. Forest Cover by Municipality 2014.³⁰

Municipality	Percent Forest by Type			Total
	Natural	Plantation	Hedgerow	
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

Table 6. Forest Cover by Subwatershed 2014.³¹

Subwatershed	Percent Forest
Bear Brook	37.6
Castor	19.9
Upper South Nation	28.3
Lower South Nation	28.8
South Nation Watershed Total	28.1

³⁰ South Nation Conservation. 2014. Forest Cover and Trend Analysis.

³¹ South Nation Conservation. 2014. Forest Cover and Trend Analysis.

Appendix B

Natural Heritage Definitions

Natural Heritage System³²

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 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 Features³³

Significant as defined by the MNRF Natural Heritage Reference Manual:

1. In regard to *wetlands*, *coastal wetlands* and *areas of natural and scientific interest*, an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time;
2. In regard to the habitat of *endangered species* and *threatened species*, the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry 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. 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. 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 2 to 4 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.

³² OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2nd Edition. P15.

³³ OMNR. 2005. Natural Heritage Reference Manual 2nd Edition. p39-40.

Appendix C

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

Appendix D

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. It is a written contract by the property owner to sell the property and not to withdraw this offer during the period. 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 property owner 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 land donations 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 and Climate Change Canada. SNC, in pursuing land donations or property rights, will work with municipalities, environmental organizations and other potential funding partners to secure environmentally significant/sensitive lands.

Several changes by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) have provided more tax incentives to property owners 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 and Climate Change. In May 2006, further changes were announced by the CRA that made all donations of ecologically sensitive lands through the federal Ecological Gifts 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 Ecological Gifts Program, all appraisals are reviewed by Environment and Climate Change Canada’s expert panel of appraisers, therefore, property owners 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 Ecological Gifts 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 property owner has a residence, he/she may be willing to dispose of most of the property containing significant ecological features while retaining the residence and amenity area (i.e., property owner 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 property owner 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.

Appendix E
Property Evaluation Criteria for Potential Land Securement

LANDS PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT	
DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC	INFORMATION SOURCES
Species at risk and/or species at risk habitat	Natural Heritage Information Center (NHIC); Species at Risk Recovery Strategies; Environmental Impact Statements; observations; surveys
Significant ecosystem or habitat and preservation of biodiversity	Natural Heritage Information Center (NHIC); Species at Risk Recovery Strategies; Environmental Impact Studies Assessment; Ecodistrict Landscape Analysis (MNRF); Areas of Natural or Scientific Interest (ANSI)(MNRF); Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint(Aquatic and Terrestrial); observations, surveys
Significant Wetland	MNRF Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES)
Unevaluated Wetlands	SNC Mapping; Official Plans; County Mapping; and Soil Surveys
Significant Hydrological Feature	Environmental Impact Studies; Flowing Water Information System (FWIS)(MNRF); Ground Water Studies; and Floodplain Mapping
Increase or Protects Forest Cover	Forest Cover Analysis Report; SNC Forest Management Plan
High risk for future habitat destruction	Zoning by-laws; Official Plans; Development applications
Identified Significant Natural Heritage Lands	Provincial datasets; Official Plans; Conservation Blueprint
Added value to SNC Project(s)	SNC Sub-Watershed Studies; SNC Forest Management Plan
Added value to conservation partners	Consultation with partners;
Natural Heritage regional core, linkage, or corridor	Natural Heritage Strategy (UCPR & SDG); Natural Heritage System. City of Ottawa Official Plan; Natural Heritage System. Leeds and Grenville Official Plan.
Potential Restoration Projects	Consultation with partners; consultation with staff.

LANDS PROVIDING PROTECTION OF LIFE OR PROPERTY BENEFIT

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC	INFORMATION SOURCES
Significant Floodplain	Floodplain Hazard Maps
High Flood Risk	Flood Risk Assessment maps
Unstable soils	Geology Maps; LiDAR; Geotechnical Reports
Land with unstable slope or in within the Casselman to Lemieux Landslide risk area	Erosion Hazard Mapping Landslide Risk Mapping Geotechnical reports or studies
Significant Source Water Protection Threats	Source Water Protection Plan
Other natural hazard lands	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) mapping Official Plans
Wetland Mitigation Benefits	Consultation with Engineering staff
Significant hydrological feature	Environmental Impact Studies; MNRF Flowing Water Information System (FWIS); Ground Water Studies; SNC Mapping Portal; Floodplain Mapping

LANDS PROVIDING SOCIAL BENEFIT

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC	INFORMATION SOURCES
Significant cultural heritage values	Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries - contact for screening; First Nations Communities; Observations
Adds benefit to existing SNC Project(s) (e.g., property allows linking two existing SNC trails)	SNC Forest Management Plan; SNC Conservation Areas Master Plans; Municipal Recreation Plans
Increased opportunities for community recreation and/or tourism potential	Municipal Recreation Plans; Municipal Economic Development & Tourism Plans

LANDS PROVIDING ECONOMIC BENEFIT

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC	SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION
Adds value to existing SNC Project(s) and/or holdings of conservation partners or offers opportunities for partnership	Consultation with SNC staff and conservation partners.
Adds value to the community (e.g., Tourism potential)	Municipal Economic Development and Tourism Plans; Municipal Recreation Plans
Productive Forest	SNC Forest Management Plan; Forest Inventory Reports

LANDS WITH BENEFICIAL LOCATION

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTIC	SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION
Lands within SNC jurisdiction	Jurisdiction boundaries map
Adds to holdings of conservation partners or offers opportunities for partnership	SNC Geographic Information System; OnLand (land registry system)
Adjacent to existing SNC holdings	SNC Geographic Information System; OnLand (land registry system)
Contributes to a fair distribution of secured land throughout SNCs jurisdiction, including land secured by conservation partners	SNC Geographic Information System; OnLand (land registry system)
In the area/jurisdiction where funding is available or must be used	Funding Agreements
Other criteria identified by the board	Consultation with SNC Board of Directors

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS REQUIRING CONSIDERATION

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONCERN	SOURCE(S) OF INFORMATION
Site Contamination	Environmental Site Assessment; Environmental Occurrences and Spills Database (MECC); File records; Observation
Non-sustainable land-use (e.g., aggregate site, peat extraction, etc.)	Observation File records
Presence of invasive species	Observation Environmental Studies
Existing Property Rights	Title Search
Degraded natural environment	Observation
Property is small and isolated	Parcel maps
Property Encroachments	Observation
Property boundaries	Survey
Planning Applications	Plan review Consultation with the municipality and/or County
Poor access	Observation Parcel maps
Existing Property Infrastructure	Observation Building inspection report