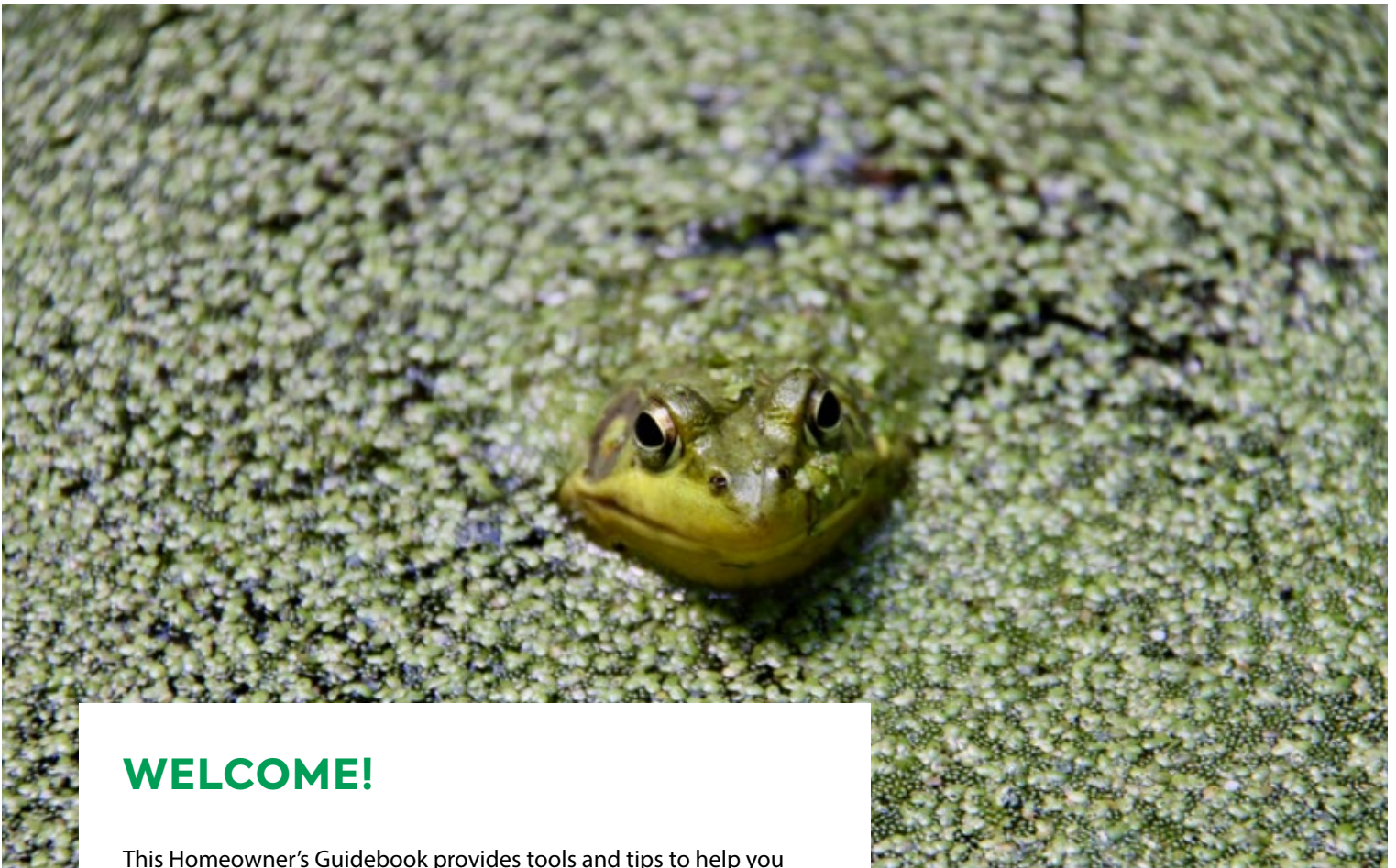


# Homeowner's Guidebook to **Environmental Sustainability**



SOUTH NATION  
**CONSERVATION**  
DE LA NATION SUD

[www.nation.on.ca](http://www.nation.on.ca)



## WELCOME!

This Homeowner’s Guidebook provides tools and tips to help you to understand and protect the natural environment and features in your community. As a homeowner, you can have a positive impact on your local environment and contribute to a vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood.

Just outside your doorstep there are many natural features that play an important role in maintaining a healthy environment. They also provide opportunities for exploration and enjoyment which can lead to a greater appreciation and respect for your local ecosystem.

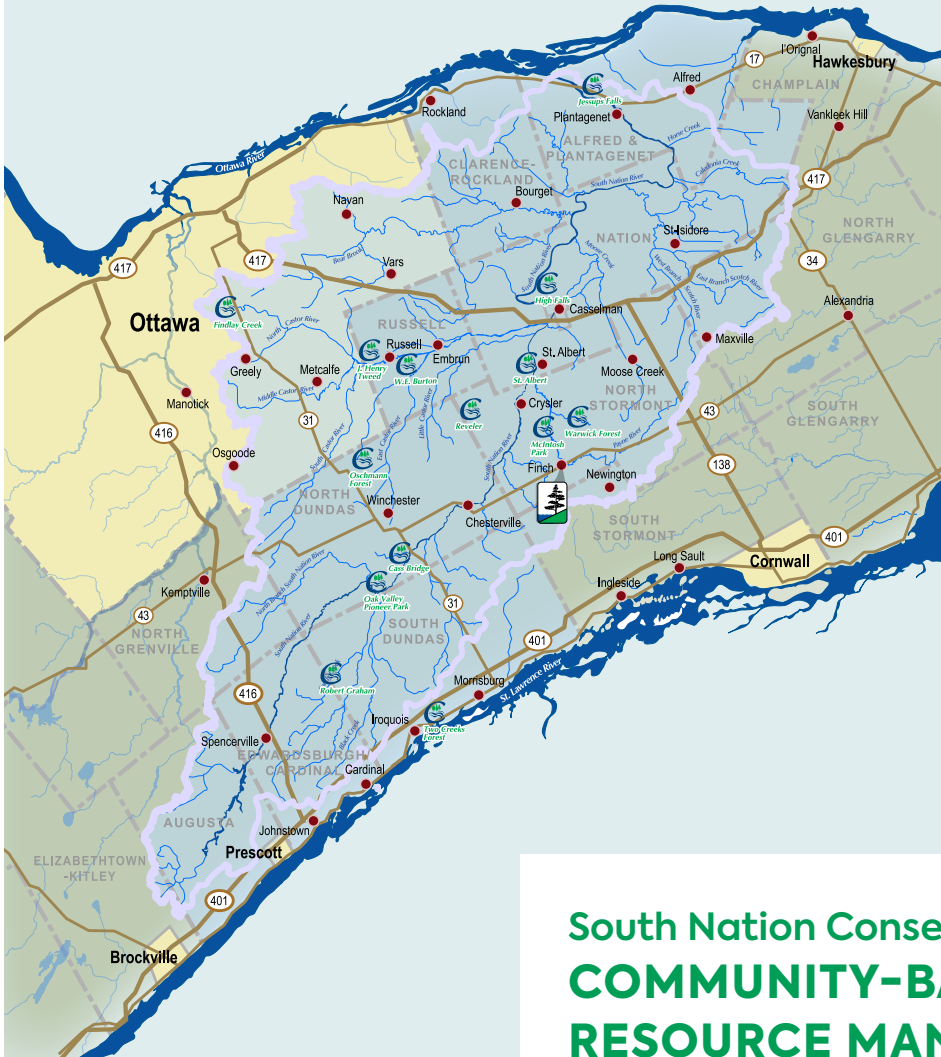
This guide will provide you with information on how you can protect the local environment as a homeowner and learn about important natural features in your area.

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## South Nation Conservation Jurisdiction



## South Nation Conservation: **COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

South Nation Conservation (SNC) is one of Ontario's 36 local Conservation Authorities.

Working on behalf of the province and its municipal partners, SNC protects and restores the local environment, protects people and property from natural hazards (such as flooding and erosion), supports sustainable development activities, and provides outdoor natural spaces.

SNC's Eastern Ontario watershed jurisdiction is 4,441 square-kilometers made up of 16 member municipalities surrounding the South Nation River, which begins north of Brockville near the St. Lawrence River and flows northeast for 175 kilometers, emptying into the Ottawa River near Plantagenet.



## PLAN YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WITH SNC

Is your home located near a river, stream, floodplain, wetland, slope or shoreline?

To protect both people and property from natural hazards and our ecologically sensitive areas, certain home improvement or construction projects within these areas may require permission from your local Conservation Authority before proceeding. This could include building a deck, garage, shed, dock, or addition to your home.

### NOT SURE IF YOU NEED A PERMIT FROM THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITY?

SNC offers free consultation.  
Please contact us at 1-877-984-2948  
or [info@nation.on.ca](mailto:info@nation.on.ca) to speak with staff.

SNC also conducts septic system inspections and issues septic permits on behalf of all regions within the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry (except for North Glengarry and South Glengarry), and the City of Cornwall.



## NATURAL AREAS IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD



Wetlands



Streams



Ponds



Forests



Grasslands



## Wetlands

Wetlands are important features on the landscape. These are areas where water saturates the ground throughout the year, creating a productive and diverse environment that is home to interesting and unique plants and wildlife. Wetlands also provide numerous beneficial services for our communities, including:

- ▶ Naturally filtering water to protect and improve water quality.
- ▶ Storing water to reduce flood risks and alleviate droughts.
- ▶ Providing habitat for various plant and wildlife populations.
- ▶ Offering recreation and educational opportunities for community residents.



## Streams

Streams collect and convey surface water and are valuable aquatic ecosystems. The area adjacent to a stream is called the riparian zone and it plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy waterways. A naturalized, vegetated riparian zone with lots of native trees and shrubs acts as a buffer by:

- ▶ Absorbing nutrients and contaminants from runoff before they enter the stream.
- ▶ Reducing soil erosion and trapping sediments.
- ▶ Providing shelter, food, and safe pathways for wildlife.



## Ponds

There are three different types of ponds:

1. **On-line:** built by dredging or damming a stream
2. **Bypass:** built by redirecting only some of the flow from the stream
3. **Offline:** not connected to a river or stream

Each type has distinct qualities, but they all provide habitat for wildlife. On-line ponds are strongly discouraged as they can have a negative ecological impact on the stream. Offline ponds are important breeding habitat for amphibians such as frogs and salamanders because they are usually fish free.

Healthy ponds are surrounded by a variety of native vegetation that provide shade to cool the water, filter runoff, and provide food and spawning areas for wildlife.



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It is essential that the pond has native aquatic vegetation as well, which can be submerged, emergent (half-in and half-out of the water), and floating. These plants provide oxygen, food, and shelter for the wildlife and insects using the pond.



## Forests

Our forests are an essential part of a healthy environment. We depend on them for our survival, from the air we breathe to the wood we use. Trees filter our air and water, prevent flooding and erosion, and provide food and habitat for wildlife.

A healthy forest has a variety of tree species of different sizes, diverse plants growing in the understory, and dead and decaying trees and plant material on the forest floor. These forests are rich in biodiversity, which means there are a lot of plants and animals that live in or use the forest. It's this biodiversity that makes the forest resilient so that we can enjoy its benefits for many generations.

Forests provide many economic, recreational, cultural, and social benefits for our communities. It turns out that spending time in a forest can have a very positive effect on your health, both physically and mentally. Research has found that spending as little as 40 minutes walking in a forest will lower your blood pressure and pulse rate, reduce stress, depression, anger, and boost your energy levels.



## Grasslands

Native grasslands are valuable ecosystems that are often overlooked. They can be home to rare species of plants, animals, and insects that are not found in any other community type. They play an important role on the landscape, with many benefits like forests and some unique benefits as well. Grasslands provide ecological services such as:

- ▶ Improving the quality of air, soil, and water.
- ▶ Reducing erosion.
- ▶ Providing nectar and warm sunny places for pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies to feed.
- ▶ Creating nesting habitat and shelter for ground nesting birds, snakes, and small mammals.
- ▶ Creating habitat linkages between forested areas for wildlife.





## Protecting the Local Environment: **HOW YOU CAN DO YOUR PART**

Everyone in the community can contribute to keeping our natural features vibrant and healthy. The following are just some of the ways that you as a homeowner can have a positive impact.



**Buffers**



**Native gardening**



**Living with wildlife**



**Nature trail etiquette**





## Buffers

If you live next to a stream, pond, river, or wetland, it's important to maintain a vegetated natural buffer between your property and the neighboring natural feature. Natural buffers can be made up of native trees, shrubs, and plants. Here are some tips for maintaining a buffer:

- ▶ Do not cut down trees or mow the vegetation right to the edge of your property. Maintaining a natural buffer will help keep excess nutrients, such as lawn fertilizer, from entering the watercourse or wetland.
- ▶ If you do need to cut a tree near a shoreline, consider leaving the stump in the ground to help maintain slope stability and reduce erosion.
- ▶ Participate in your municipality's yard waste collection or compost program, but do not maintain a compost pile near a watercourse or wetland. This could spread seeds from invasive species, and many plants can regrow from clippings and take over natural spaces.
- ▶ Leave wildflowers, native plants, and river rocks along your property or shoreline as they provide important habitat for wildlife.
- ▶ Never dump wastewater, chemicals, or oil directly down a storm drain or in waterways. Storm drains lead directly to fish habitat and may have significantly harmful effects on the environment and aquatic animals. Check your municipality's website for upcoming hazardous waste disposal days.
- ▶ To ensure the protection of the buffer, and to avoid contaminating natural areas, dogs should remain leashed and cats should remain indoors. Cats are also considered the number one direct threat to birds in urban areas.



## Native Gardening

Gardening is a popular activity, and it can also add colour and curb appeal to your home. Native flowering plants, shrubs and trees offer some extra benefits to homeowners and to wildlife:

- ▶ Native plants provide better food for pollinators and beneficial insects.
- ▶ Native plants and trees require less watering, pesticides, fertilizers, and maintenance as they are adapted to the local climate, insects, and diseases.
- ▶ Always plant native trees and shrubs to protect your local ecosystem's native biodiversity.



Consider installing a rain barrel at a downspout from your roof to collect rainwater. You can minimize your water consumption when you use water from a rain barrel to water flowers and vegetables.

Practice organic gardening by avoiding the use of pesticides that can disrupt ecosystems and impact human health.



## Living with Wildlife

Wildlife depend on the natural spaces in our communities, and it can be fun and exciting to experience the occasional encounter. Here are some simple tips on having a positive encounter with wildlife:

- ▶ Do not feed, approach, or handle wildlife as it can result in an injury to the animal or person.
- ▶ As an exception, birds and bats can be safely attracted to your yard by hanging bird feeders and bat houses. Remember to routinely clean up fallen seeds as they can attract unwanted visitors like skunks and raccoons.
- ▶ Keep your garbage stored and secure to keep wildlife away.
- ▶ Turn off unnecessary outdoor lights at night and never direct light into natural areas as it disturbs wildlife.
- ▶ Install fencing around your garden to keep rabbits from ruining your vegetables.

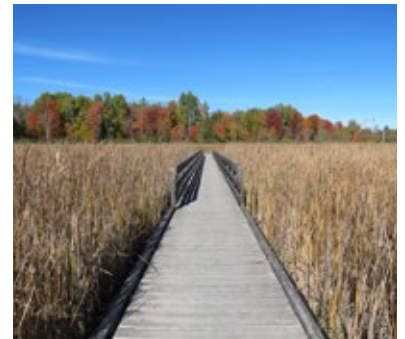


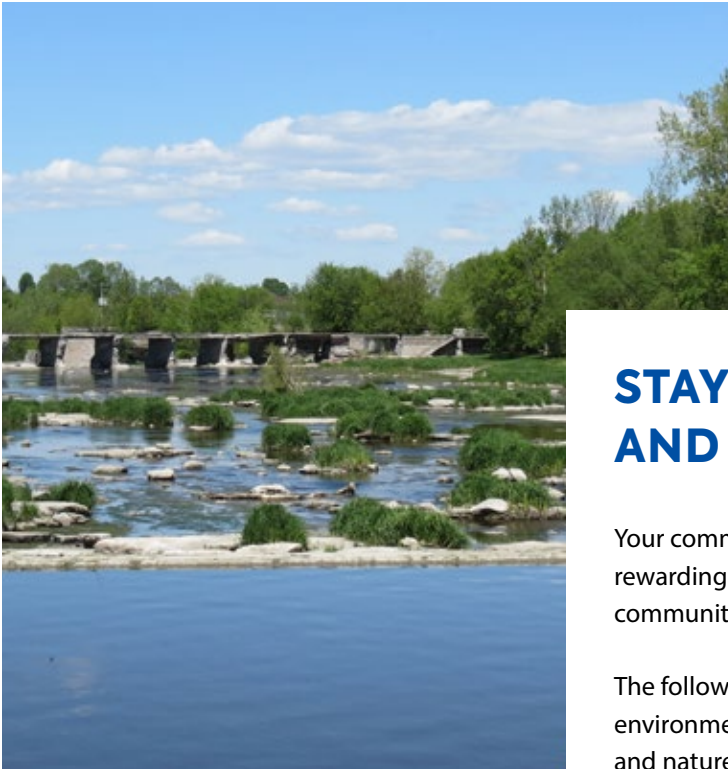
## Nature Trail Etiquette

Accessing naturalized recreational trails connects residents with their local environment and instills a commitment to responsible outdoor recreation that promotes a respect for nature and the green spaces in which we collectively enjoy. Getting outside can also be a relaxing and grounding experience and is beneficial to your physical and mental well-being.

Following a few simple guidelines can help keep the experience pleasant for everyone:

- ▶ To respect other trail users and to ensure the protection of our ecologically significant public land, people and their pets are reminded to stay on marked, maintained trails.
- ▶ Properly dispose your garbage in waste bins or take it home with you.
- ▶ Pets should always be leashed and be sure to pick up after them.
- ▶ Do not pick wildflowers; leave them for the next visitor to enjoy.
- ▶ Nature trails are often not maintained for bicycle use or motorized vehicles, unless otherwise stated.
- ▶ Avoid obstructive behaviour and keep the noise down. People often get outdoors to enjoy the solitude.





## STAY INFORMED AND GET INVOLVED

Your community has lots to offer and getting involved can be a very rewarding experience. With your help, the natural features in your community can be preserved and enjoyed well into the future.

The following resources provide more information about environmental stewardship, native gardening, wildlife interaction, and nature-related recreational and volunteer opportunities:

➔ **South Nation Conservation**

Resources on environmental stewardship and local nature recreation opportunities.

[www.nation.on.ca](http://www.nation.on.ca)

➔ **Ontario Invasive Plant Council**

A non-profit organization that provides leadership and expertise on invasive plant issues. The “Grow Me Instead” guide identifies invasive garden plants and provides suitable native alternatives.

[www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca](http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca)

➔ **CanPlant Native Plant Database**

This database is an easy-to-use resource that includes detailed information to help anyone identify ecologically appropriate native plant species for restoration, gardening, and landscape design.

[www.can-plant.ca](http://www.can-plant.ca)

➔ **Hinterland Who’s Who**

For over 50 years Hinterland Who’s Who has been connecting Canadians to wildlife through short videos that showcase a variety of wildlife species. A section of the website is dedicated to children with resources to explore, learn and get involved.

[www.hww.ca](http://www.hww.ca)

➔ **Ottawa–Carleton Wildlife Centre**

The centre provides education on wildlife through school programs and community presentations to foster an appreciation for the natural world and the important role all species play in a healthy ecosystem.

[www.wildlifeinfo.ca](http://www.wildlifeinfo.ca)

**OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT;  
WE'RE IN IT TOGETHER**



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