

EXCERPT FROM 2011 STEWARDSHIP FORUM SUMMARY REPORT

STEWARDSHIP INDICATORS SESSION

Introduction

Suzanne Barrett introduced the approach to the workshop, which built on discussions at last year's Stewardship Forum, as well as the deliberations of an Expert Panel workshop co-hosted by SNO and MNR's Biodiversity Policy Section in April.

The PowerPoint presentation for this June 7th workshop is included in Appendix C, and the workbook is attached as Appendix D. The workbook includes some background on the indicators used for the *State of Ontario's Biodiversity 2010* report (SOBR), a summary of the Expert Panel workshop held on April 15th 2011, and worksheets for today's discussion.

Suzanne provided an overview of the key conclusions of the Expert Panel workshop:

1. **Outcomes and targets:** The outcomes provided by the draft 2011 Ontario Biodiversity Strategy provide a broad and valuable framework at the Provincial level. It will be useful to develop specific stewardship targets at a regional or watershed level.
2. **Relationship between stewardship and direct environmental measures:** Stewardship is all about empowering *people* to care for the land, air, water and biodiversity. It is difficult to measure the direct environmental results of stewardship actions separately from the results of other actions such as government policies and regulations. It may be most useful for the stewardship community to focus on measuring the social and economic benefits of stewardship actions where the information is available to do this.

In addition, the Expert Panel suggested taking a case study approach to research that would attempt to link stewardship actions to changes in environmental quality and biodiversity. This would help to provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of stewardship activities that could then be extrapolated to other situations.

3. **Building on existing indicators:** The indicators in the 2010 SOBR resulted from a process that used existing information available from groups and agencies across Ontario. It will be worthwhile to assess these indicators to determine:
 - What are their limitations?
 - How can data reliability be improved?
 - What additional information can be collected to make the indicators more meaningful?
4. **Standardized reporting:** It would be invaluable to develop a core set of reporting requirements among organizations that fund stewardship programs. This could be designed to reduce "double-counting" and provide meaningful information about the social, environmental and economic benefits of stewardship activities.
5. **Rationale for stewardship:** It is often difficult for NGOs and agencies to allocate sufficient time for comprehensive and effective reporting on their activities. But it is important to remember that meaningful indicators, especially those that focus on economic benefits of stewardship, are essential to justify investments and help stewardship organizations to survive and thrive in a highly competitive environment.

Today's workshop was designed to address the third conclusion by exploring how we can build on existing indicators used in the 2010 SOBR. Rebecca Zeran introduced the six indicators used in the 2010 SOBR that relate most directly to stewardship. She explained how they were developed and some of their limitations.

Table Discussions

Participants were divided into four groups of 4 or 5. Each table had a facilitator from the SNO Leadership Committee (Suzanne Barrett, Joanne Rzadki, Mark Emery and Rebecca Zeran) and was assigned one or two indicators from the 2010 SOBR to discuss. Below are some general comments that were made by a number of the discussion groups, followed by specific comments about each indicator:

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Need to develop national or provincial data standards for property/project reporting
- Provide a template so that partners can collect consistent information
- There is a barrier associated with confidentiality of data and sharing of personal information
- Unless people participate in education and awareness programs or are recipients of a grant or incentive, there is no way to measure what people do on their own
- We need incentives for reporting on projects where incentives are not involved. Could this be included in the farm census to at least capture the agricultural sector?
- Time and staff resources for reporting on projects can be a barrier
- For CAs and other umbrella organizations, survey questions asking for data for the SOBR indicators could be added to the standard surveys circulated annually
- Need to use independent tools like the Southern Ontario Land Resource Information System (SOLRIS)
- Land trust information is not being included; at least we could collect data from the 'top 5' land trusts
- Smaller grassroots organizations such as Ontario Streams and Evergreen Foundation have not been included to date
- Double-reporting of projects that involve multiple partners is a major concern
- The Stewardship Tracking System (STS) has great potential to compile, centralize and manage data. It could also help to reduce double-counting, but it is not being used enough
- Collect data from funding agencies as well as implementing agencies
- All the indicators need to relate more closely to biodiversity and make direct link with management actions and results

Do you have other suggestions for indicators?

- Acres of trees planted and the % of those trees reaching maturity
- Use urban forests/neighbourhoods programs to report on urban biodiversity (Ontario Urban Forest Council could help with networking and potentially send out a survey to the Ontario Urban Forest Network)
- Incorporate analysis of natural heritage features: many CAs have a Natural Heritage layer. This could be connected to stewardship projects to analyze the value of the projects
- # of stewardship programs that specifically address biodiversity objectives

A. PROTECTED AREAS AND CONSERVATION LANDS IN ONTARIO BY ECOZONE

How could comprehension and data reliability be improved?

- Compile all information from all partners
- Identify the actual amount of the property that is being managed/secured to support biodiversity conservation

**Is the indicator effective and compelling? If not: Could the existing data be presented more effectively?
What additional information could be collected to make the indicator more meaningful?**

- Could show spatial results (e.g. maps) as well as numbers
- Need a target (by watershed or county) and to show it spatially
- Could engage the public in setting regional targets; this would increase buy-in

Are there any barriers to participation?

- Purpose of land securement may be protection but sharing information may increase use and impact the integrity of the sites
- Legal issues regarding data sharing and agreements (e.g. Ontario Parcel Agreement)

B. SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT AND CERTIFICATION

How could comprehension and data reliability be improved?

- Work with Eastern Ontario Model Forest, Canadian Standards Association, Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council to report on uptake on private lands

**Is the indicator effective and compelling? If not: Could the existing data be presented more effectively?
What additional information could be collected to make the indicator more meaningful?**

- Add private land certification (eg. EOMF)
- The measure is not compelling because MNR mandates that all Sustainable Forest Licence holders must be certified. Given the mandate was for certification by 2007, we should be at 100%. This is really a measure of compliance with a government directive.

Are there any barriers to participation?

- The cost of 3rd party certification is very high (both start-up and maintenance) - this is a huge barrier for private lands

Any other comments or advice?

- Need to add urban forest (on public and private lands)
- MNR is not leading by example: crown lands do not have to be certified by a 3rd party
- Could MFTIP lands be included under this category?

C. PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

How could comprehension and data reliability be improved?

- Already a high level of reliability in the data from EFP and OSCIA
- Transition to an e-form for the EFP process is underway and may lead to improved data collection
- Are both northern and southern Ontario represented? For OSCIA data – yes
- EFP is not the only program doing stewardship projects on agricultural land (eg CA's also have agriculture projects); but if you include other organizations, double-counting will be a problem
- Lack of follow-up after BMPs have been put in place so we don't know if they are being effectively implemented. Need to check back at intervals of less than 5 years
- Ecosystems don't necessarily correlate with property boundaries, therefore would group EFPs, for example on sub-watershed basis, be more effective?

**Is the indicator effective and compelling? If not: Could the existing data be presented more effectively?
What additional information could be collected to make the indicator more meaningful?**

- Use fact sheets or other means to aggregate responses (would help to address confidentiality issue)

How could you participate? E.g., Does your organization collect any of this information? Would you be willing to share it to contribute to the next SOBR? Are there any barriers to participation?

- CAs could easily provide information about projects on agricultural land
- Include a check box on forms to indicate whether grant applicants to stewardship programs already have EFPs
- DUC has some matching funds available for stewardship but access to private landowner information is difficult
- OMAFRA and AG Canada are investigating barriers that keep people from attending EFP workshops

Any other comments or advice?

- Should other rural lands be covered under this category or continue to focus on agriculture?

D. AREA WITH STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

How could comprehension and data reliability be improved?

- Use a common measure (e.g. Assessment Roll Number) so that we know what parcel is involved
- Apply broad landscape analysis (e.g., South Western Ontario Orthophotography Project, SWOOP) to assess cumulative progress (similar to watershed report cards)

Is the indicator effective and compelling? If not: Could the existing data be presented more effectively?

What additional information could be collected to make the indicator more meaningful?

- # of projects would not be as meaningful as some projects are very small
- N.B. Alberta is introducing a searchable conservation easement registry
- Create larger landscape vision within which landowners can demonstrate their contribution

How could you participate? E.g., Does your organization collect any of this information? Would you be willing to share it to contribute to the next SOBR? Are there any barriers to participation?

- Yes, organizations collect this info and would be willing to share it
- If CAs knew a few years ahead of time what kind of data is required, they could collect it and provide it to Conservation Ontario

Any other comments or advice?

- Combine the EFP indicator with this one
- Pick a pilot indicator (e.g., forest cover in the Carolinian Life Zone) and work out from there to produce the more challenging indicators

E. NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS VOLUNTEERING TO CONSERVE BIODIVERSITY

How could comprehension and data reliability be improved?

- Reliability of this information is sketchy at best
- Impossible to gather this type of information from all the agencies that are working to conserve biodiversity: many smaller agencies don't manage/collect this type of information accurately (if at all)...and there are no standards for collecting information across agencies
- It would also be useful (and maybe easier) to collect information about employment – numbers and types of jobs, economic value etc.

Is the indicator effective and compelling? If not: Could the existing data be presented more effectively?

What additional information could be collected to make the indicator more meaningful?

- Might be more compelling if we had a \$ value for volunteer time in relation to the value of the grants provided (to capture the leverage value of the grant in terms of volunteer time)
- Would be good to also survey the types of activities that people are engaged in
- Number of hours spent volunteering would be a better measure than numbers of individuals
- Recognition programs would help to track volunteer work
- Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence is a good current example (but not directed towards nature stewardship)
- Province should re-establish a stewardship recognition program – Peterson government had one; it included a data base of landowners, award ceremonies, and plaques for recipients

How could you participate? E.g., Does your organization collect any of this information? Would you be willing to share it to contribute to the next SOBR? Are there any barriers to participation?

- Yes, organizations collect this information and would be willing to share it. Would just need enough lead time to collect the information
- Agencies might be more willing to provide data if there was more incentive (e.g., access to lists of volunteers to contact for various events)
- CAs already provide this information through Conservation Ontario – requests coming through CO are easier to address
- Is there an agency that already tracks the number of volunteers in Canada?

F. PARTICIPATION IN PROVINCIAL TAX INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

How could comprehension and data reliability be improved?

- Reporting on participation in tax incentive programs isn't entirely 'fair' because not everyone is eligible
- Need to provide context i.e. how many hectares are actually eligible and what % has incentives
- Need to identify what types of features/landscapes are protected
- There is no monitoring to confirm compliance with objectives of the incentive program
- Not possible to measure protected hectares because the feature being protected does not cover the entire property that gets the incentive
- Would it be possible to include agricultural incentives that are protecting habitat? Discuss with Ontario Federation of Agriculture, NFU and Christian Farmers

Is the indicator effective and compelling? If not: Could the existing data be presented more effectively?

What additional information could be collected to make the indicator more meaningful?

- Apply weighting to make measure more meaningful
- Report on % eligible land (e.g., provincially significant wetlands) vs % other land (e.g., evaluated wetland but not provincially significant) vs % properties participating in program

Any other comments or advice?

- The MFTIP data would be better located under the Sustainable Forest Management indicator

CONCLUSIONS

Workshop participants provided valuable input to help in refining and improving the indicators of stewardship success. They had specific suggestions about data that could be added to improve the effectiveness of many of the indicators. For example, this might help to identify the economic value of specific stewardship activities, and the leveraging effects of grant programs. In some cases, additional partners were recommended, for example land trusts could participate in providing information about the number of volunteers participating in stewardship. It was also suggested that granting agencies could play

a larger role, both in the design of their reporting requirements for grantees, and in directly providing data. Several groups mentioned the value of collecting and presenting information at a regional level, for example by watershed or ecozone.

There was a high level of interest in participating in a collaborative effort to improve the collection and reporting of data about stewardship. Participants also recognized some of the barriers to improved reporting on stewardship. Most frequently cited barriers were concerns about the confidentiality of personal landowner information and the limited availability of resources to collect the information. The issue of double-counting was also raised frequently; it typically arises because stewardship activities are often funded and implemented through partnerships of several agencies. Another challenge is the difficulty of obtaining information about stewardship actions taken by private landowners who are not participating in a funding or education program.

One of the greatest opportunities, cited by all the discussion groups, is to develop a Province-wide template so that funding and implementing agencies can collect more consistent and comprehensive information. It appears that this may be the most fruitful next step in the process to develop an improved suite of indicators for the next *State of Ontario's Biodiversity* report.