

**INDICATORS OF STEWARDSHIP PROGRESS IN ONTARIO
WORKSHOP REPORT
BLACK CREEK PIONEER VILLAGE, TORONTO
FEBRUARY 7TH 2012**

**Prepared by Suzanne Barrett and Debrupa Pathak for Stewardship
Network of Ontario and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources**

Participants

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Suzanne Barrett, Stewardship Network of Ontario
Graham Bryan, Canadian Wildlife Service
Tara Borwick, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
Matt Burley, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
Alan Dextrase, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
Doug Forder, Ontario Streams
Kim Gavine, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation
Mike Halferty, Ontario Forestry Association
Andrea Hicks, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
Joanne Jeffery, Toronto and Region Conservation
Patricia Lowe, Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority
Jaime Overy, Conservation Halton
Debrupa Pathak, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
Lisa Turnbull, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation

1. Welcome and Introductions

Suzanne Barrett, Chairperson of the Stewardship Network of Ontario (SNO), welcomed participants and thanked them for coming. She outlined the agenda for the day (Appendix A) and the workshop objectives:

- *To begin the development of a common template for reporting on stewardship activities, focusing on area of stewardship and volunteer participation*
- *To discuss potential research opportunities to demonstrate the effectiveness of stewardship*

2. Background

Suzanne gave a short presentation that summarized the discussion paper for this workshop (Appendix B). She outlined the work that has been undertaken to date, including the panel discussion at the SNO Stewardship Forum in 2012, the expert panel workshop in April 2011 and the workshop at the SNO Forum in 2011.

3. SOBR Reflections

Alan Dextrase, Biodiversity Conservation Policy Advisor, MNR, presented an analysis of stewardship indicators from the State of Ontario's Biodiversity 2010 report (SOBR 2010). He noted that reporting on biodiversity and related actions is required every five years by the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy. Alan's presentation (Appendix C) included an overview of all the indicators in SOBR 2010, a summary of challenges with the conservation and stewardship indicators, and suggestions for improvement. Specifically for the two indicators under discussion at this February 7th, 2012 workshop, Alan made the following suggestions:

Stewardship Area Indicator:

- Update and include in the next iteration of the SOBR
- Measures should be informed by the current work of SNO and its partners to refine reporting requirements
- It would be helpful if the breadth of organizations that record and report on stewardship efforts could be expanded
- Efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of stewardship efforts should be supported and incorporated as appropriate

Volunteer Effort Indicator:

- Update and include in the next iteration of the SOBR
- Should include number of hours as well as number of people
- It would be helpful if the breadth of organizations that record and report on volunteer stewardship efforts could be expanded
- Efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of stewardship efforts should be supported and incorporated as appropriate

4. Draft Stewardship Indicators Template

Suzanne facilitated a round-table discussion that used a workbook to solicit comments on a draft template. The template is designed to collect information from stewardship organizations across Ontario so that it can be placed in a searchable database.

Overall, participants liked the template, and agreed that their organizations would be able to use it to contribute consistent information about their stewardship activities that could be rolled up to create Ontario-wide indicators for SOBR as well as other applications. The structure of the database, with consistent names/codes for projects, reporting on funding sources and indication of lead partner for each project, should make it possible to avoid double counting.

See Appendix D for detailed comments on the template, and Appendix E for a revised template based on the workshop results.

The data collected using this revised template could be used to extract the following measures of stewardship:

- Number of stewardship programs and projects undertaken in a certain timeframe
- Locations of programs and projects
- Numbers and types of partners engaged in stewardship actions
- Numbers and types of partners engaged in funding stewardship projects

- Amount of money spent on stewardship
- Value of in-kind contributions to stewardship
- Number of people employed
- Person hours of employment
- Numbers of volunteers
- Value of volunteer hours contributed
- Hectares of land under stewardship
- Numbers of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants planted
- Metres of watercourse restored
- Hectares of land/water managed to control/reduce invasive species, by habitat type and species

In addition, the template provides for the following information to be collected about the organizations engaged in stewardship:

- Types, numbers and identity of organizations
- Budgets of organizations
- Stewardship budgets of organizations
- Education and outreach initiatives

Further work is needed to provide specific definitions and instructions for each item. The *Ontario Stewardship Accomplishments Survey* will be helpful in this regard. Conservation Ontario's statistical survey of conservation authority services, programs and activities may also provide some useful information.

5. Participating Organizations

Suzanne noted that the following organizations were invited to the February 7th 2012 workshop: Canadian Wildlife Service, Carolinian Canada, Chiefs of Ontario, selected Conservation Authorities, Conservation Ontario, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Eastern Ontario Model Forest, Evergreen Foundation, Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations, MNR, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Ontario Land Trust Alliance, OMAFRA, Ontario Invasive Plants Council, Ontario Forestry Association, Ontario Nature, Ontario Stewardship, Ontario Streams, Tall Grass Ontario, Trees Ontario, Trout Unlimited, Union of Ontario Indians and Wildlife Habitat Canada.

Suzanne asked participants who was missing and whether they had suggestions for other organizations that should be invited to contribute data for stewardship indicators?

It was noted that agricultural groups were not on the list. This was intentional – the EFP is implemented by OMAFRA and they are currently working on measuring performance and improving effectiveness of the EFP program. However stewardship done on agricultural land that is NOT under the auspices of an EFP still needs to be captured if possible. It was also recognized that there may be some overlap between some projects and EFPs, and that it was important to try to avoid double counting by maintaining good communication with the EFP program and ensuring that EFP funding is acknowledged in stewardship reporting.

There are many acts of stewardship that are not recognized because they are not part of a formal program or funding program. There is little we can do about that, other than recognize that our efforts to measure stewardship can never capture everything.

Other groups that should be included are:

- Municipalities
- Source Water Protection Committees
- Small groups such as fishing clubs (Tara offered to pull numbers out of CFWIP)
- Plenty Canada

6. Role of Funding Agencies

Suzanne noted that a proposed next step is to meet with funding agencies to discuss ways that they can coordinate their reporting requirements with the proposed stewardship indicators template. Participants discussed several reasons why this would be a useful activity. For example, it would be good to get funders to comment on and buy into the indicators template approach. The resulting information will help to demonstrate the benefits of their funding and increase justification for further investment. It will be important to target communications to areas of interest for each funder. For example, for federal funds, it is more useful to talk about species at risk and migratory birds than biodiversity (which is an Ontario priority).

Participants noted that although funders may have data to contribute, this might result in double counting of projects so better not to ask them to provide information about projects they have funded.

It will be worthwhile to ask funding agencies about their priorities for information and whether our proposed template is consistent with their requirements. We recognize that each funding agency has its own reporting requirements, but there may be benefits to all concerned if there are some core common elements. It will be important to think about “what’s in it for them” and speak their language when preparing the invitation to funding agencies.

Participants recommended bringing funding agencies together and suggested the following:

- Provincial: Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, Canada Ontario Agreement, Community Fisheries and Wildlife Involvement Program (CFWIP), Invasive Species Centre, Drinking Water Stewardship Program (MOE), Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), Trillium, Ontario Community Environment Fund (OCEF; MOE)
- Federal: Habitat Stewardship Program, Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program (IASPP), Eco Action, Great Lakes Sustainability Fund, Environmental Damages Fund, Aboriginal Species at Risk Fund, Ontario Land Trust Assistance Program
- Other: Green Communities, Evergreen Foundation, Greenbelt Foundation, family foundations e.g. Metcalf, banks e.g. Royal Bank and TD Friends of the Environment, Shell, Sustain our Great Lakes, Mott Foundation, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Rouge Park?
- Partner with the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network

7. Research Opportunities to Demonstrate Effectiveness of Stewardship

Suzanne explained that SNO and MNR would like to identify opportunities for case study research that could evaluate the effectiveness of specific stewardship activities in terms of measureable results over time, such as environmental quality, biodiversity conservation and/or ecosystem services. This could be undertaken for a specific landscape unit such as a sub-watershed, lake basin or wetland). It would be useful to know which kinds of stewardship activities are the most worthwhile, and to tease out the different influences on the landscape. Suzanne asked participants if they had suggestions for topics, researchers or institutions?

The Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation project –Measuring Success – would be a great case study for this exercise. It has many indicators and a good database with spatial data. New legislation may provide opportunity for pre- and post-stewardship impact analysis. The missing piece is what is happening on the landscape in terms of development impacts. Would like to get information on transitional development permits (municipal permits that pre-date the ORM legislation). Could then assess results based on stewardship to meet targets. Need funding for this work. It would provide an opportunity to show impact of funding programs. The bottom line is that legislation alone is not enough; stewardship is also essential. It would be worthwhile to connect with the Oak Ridges Moraine Research Coalition (Dan McCarthy, University of Waterloo). A similar approach could be used to assess effectiveness of stewardship on the Niagara Escarpment and Greenbelt (also landscapes with protective legislation).

The Aurora Environmental Advisory Committee recently published *A Study of the Birds of the Oak Ridges Moraine 1985 – 2005* that compared historical and recent records and provides conclusions about the need for stewardship of specific habitat types.

Other suggested programs or links for research to demonstrate the effectiveness of stewardship included:

- Ontario Streams' work with the Ontario Stream Assessment Protocol (OSAP) for pre- and post-stewardship monitoring
- We could apply BACI (before and after control impact) assessment methods
- Scott Reid and Joe Nocera at MNR are interested in evaluating effectiveness of stewardship activities with respect to species at risk (aquatic and terrestrial)
- Mike Puddister at Credit Valley Conservation may have some examples; CVC is collaborating with DUC
- Ducks Unlimited Canada has been undertaking work on benefits of wetland restoration
- Investigate programs that fund stewardship to see if they also fund studies of effectiveness (e.g. HSP)
- Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has a great example of improved watershed report card grading following stewardship activities in Dingman Creek watershed
- Professor Merrin Macrae, Geography, University of Waterloo has done some work on effectiveness of riparian buffers downstream of Valens Reservoir
- Existing programs that might be useful include marsh monitoring program, breeding bird atlas etc.
- Opportunities to involve the Biodiversity Council Science Forum and the Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration (Chair, Sal Spitale)

- Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has undertaken some interesting work comparing current naturalization efforts with conservation targets: current efforts are barely maintaining status quo and are inadequate to achieve net increases in natural cover
- A.G. Yates, Biology, University of Western Ontario worked with Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to publish a paper on the Effectiveness of BMPs in Improving Stream Ecosystem Quality, *Hydrobiologia* (2007) 583:331-344

Finally, it was noted that we shouldn't always try to put a positive spin on results (we planted 'x' number of trees etc). For example, it's worth showing that even 'y' number of volunteer hours is not enough to stem the loss of tree cover on the landscape.

8. Next Steps

Suzanne outlined the next steps to continue this work on stewardship indicators:

1. Refine the template for stewardship indicator information, based on the workshop input
2. Host a meeting with funding agencies to discuss the draft template in relation to their priorities and reporting requirements
3. Host a meeting with researchers working on, or interested in working on, evaluating the effectiveness of stewardship

Suzanne thanked participants for their valuable insights and contributions, and the meeting adjourned at 3pm.

Appendix A. Agenda

Appendix B. Discussion Paper

Appendix C. SOBR Reflections Presentation

Appendix D. Comments on Draft Template

Appendix E. Revised Draft Template