



Committee Report

To: Warden Janice Jackson
Members of the Planning and Development Committee

From: Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Date: May 20, 2021

Re: Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Options Interim Report

Staff Recommendation:

The Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Options Interim Report is for information.

Background:

The Plan the Bruce Discussion Papers are the next step to setting out a policy framework for the collective Vision and Guiding Principles for growth and development in Bruce County forming the backbone of the new Official Plan. The Discussion Paper projects are presented in a staggered approach and are presented in a two-step process as follows:

1. The first step is an Interim Report which provides the background information and draft recommended directions as a base for broader community engagement.
2. The second step, which follows community engagement and any further needed analysis, is the Discussion Paper which will set out the key findings and final recommended policy directions for the Official Plan.

The Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy Options Interim Report (attached) includes:

- An overview of previously completed mapping and targets discussion papers;
- Global, national, and provincial considerations for our Natural Legacy
- A profile of the current Natural Legacy in Bruce County, by various components
- Options for including these various components within a natural environment system that includes natural heritage and water resources; and
- Initial policy directions for consultation.

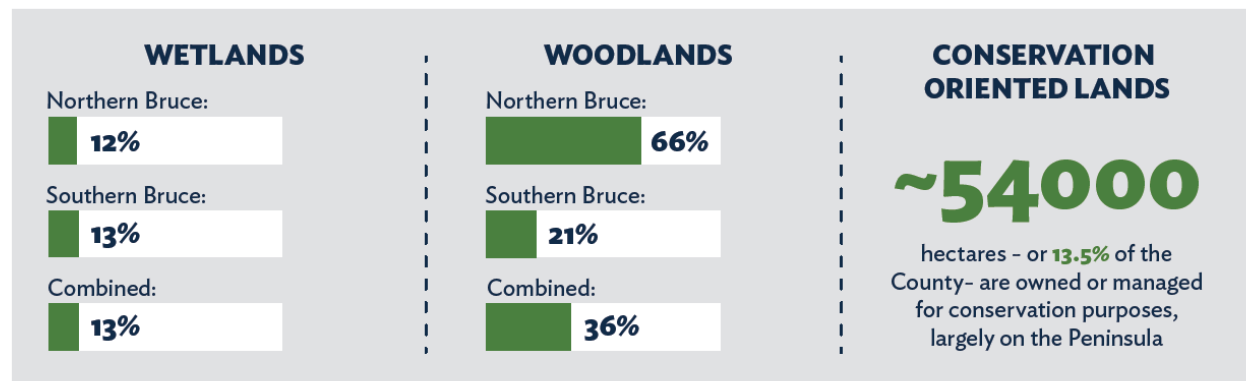
The Interim Report was prepared by North South Environmental with support from Planning and Development staff and reviewed with Technical Advisory and Planning Advisory committees.

Summary Profile of Natural Legacy in Bruce County



Natural Legacy in Bruce County

Niagara Escarpment World Biosphere Reserve – a UNESCO world biosphere



BIODIVERSITY



Home to
2000+ species

Species at Risk with occurrence records in Bruce County. Includes Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species (per COSEWIC and SARO)

65

Total

62

are listed federally

57

are listed provincially



Many species in Bruce County have **restricted geographies** (e.g., the Peninsula, Great Lakes) and may be abundant here but are rare elsewhere.

RARE AND UNCOMMON HABITATS

12 rare vegetation communities.

5 are **Alvar** community types



Alvars are a very rare habitat type and those in Bruce County are **globally recognized**

>60

Alvar sites known to occur in Bruce County, largely associated with the Peninsula



Bruce Peninsula boasts the **largest representation** of alvars in Ontario



Alvars of Bruce County support **>400 species**, many of them rare and listed Species at Risk in Ontario and Federally.

3

are cliff community types

3

are sand dune & sand barren community types

1

is a coastal wetland community type



The Huron Fringe and Cabot Head are important areas for birds and their migration.



Get Involved at PlanTheBruce.ca

Natural Legacy Options Interim Report Recommendations:

Mapping

Natural Legacy features and areas will be mapped wherever possible, to provide a clear understanding of the natural legacy in Bruce County. However, some features are not recommended to be mapped. Features and areas recommended to be mapped / not mapped are summarized in the table below:

| Features and Areas to be Mapped in the Natural Environment System | Notes |
|---|---|
| Provincially Significant Wetlands (including Significant Coastal Wetlands) | Provincial data |
| Other Wetlands | Provincial data |
| Significant Woodlands | new layer produced through this project |
| Linkages | conceptually identified through this project |
| Life Science A.N.S.I | Provincial data |
| Earth Science A.N.S.I | Provincial data |
| Permanent and Intermittent Streams | Provincial and conservation authority data |
| Fish Habitat | By “proxy” using watercourse and water body data |
| Significant wildlife habitats (deer wintering areas and alvars) (added to mapping through this project) | Provincial data |
| Conservation Oriented Lands | Includes public and NGO or “Land Trust” lands owned or managed for conservation purposes. |

| Features Not Mapped but Part of the Natural Environment System | Notes |
|---|--|
| Significant valleylands; other valleylands | Not included due to current data limitations; many are covered as ‘hazard’ land areas; may be identified in future with improved data, or through site-specific studies |
| Significant portions of threatened and endangered species habitat | can ‘vet’ or validate significance of other layers but is incomplete, sensitive, and subject to change, and development is subject to federal/provincial permitting requirements |
| Other Significant wildlife habitats | Mapping is not generally available |
| Enhancement Areas | These are described generally and are voluntary or can be addressed when land uses change through a planning application. |
| Seepage areas and springs, headwaters, Water Table, aquifers, and unsaturated zone, significant surface water contribution areas, | Can be identified through watershed, sub-watershed and hydrogeological investigations required for certain types of applications. |

Core and Feature-Based Systems

The report recommends different approaches for the natural heritage system in Northern Bruce County (the Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula and the Town of South Bruce Peninsula) and Southern Bruce County (the other Municipalities in Bruce County), while noting that the **shoreline** in Southern Bruce County also has important habitats and bird migration functions. This approach aligns with a significant observed north-south shift in the County landscape and offers advantages for policy implementation and monitoring.

For **Southern Bruce County** a **Features-based system** approach is recommended, which uses Key and Supporting features and areas, enhancement areas and linkages as the building blocks for the N.H.S. This approach is most used in areas of lower natural cover and/or where natural features are more fragmented across the landscape (e.g., southwestern Ontario).

For **Northern Bruce County** a **Core Areas-based system** approach, with connecting linkages, is recommended. Core Areas are intended to include areas where key features and areas are concentrated or to conserve representative or significant portions of natural areas in a largely intact natural landscape. Core areas are identified using several criteria, key among them being percent natural cover and size.

The Core Areas approach is best applied where there is substantial natural cover on the landscape, or where an N.H.S is being defined for a very broad geographic scale.

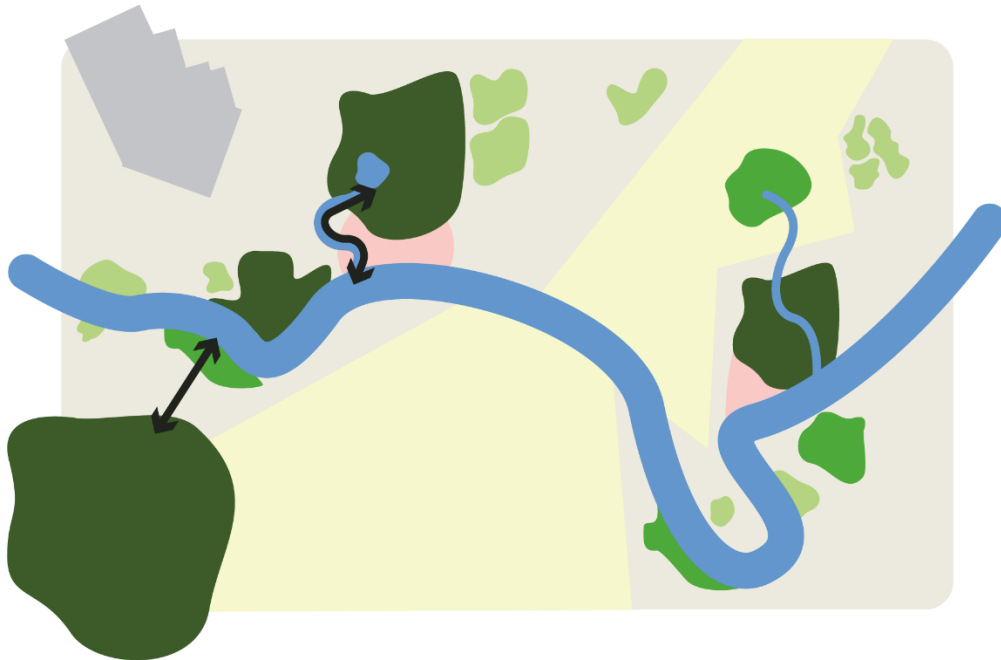


Figure 1: Conceptual Feature-Based System Approach Recommended for Southern Bruce County

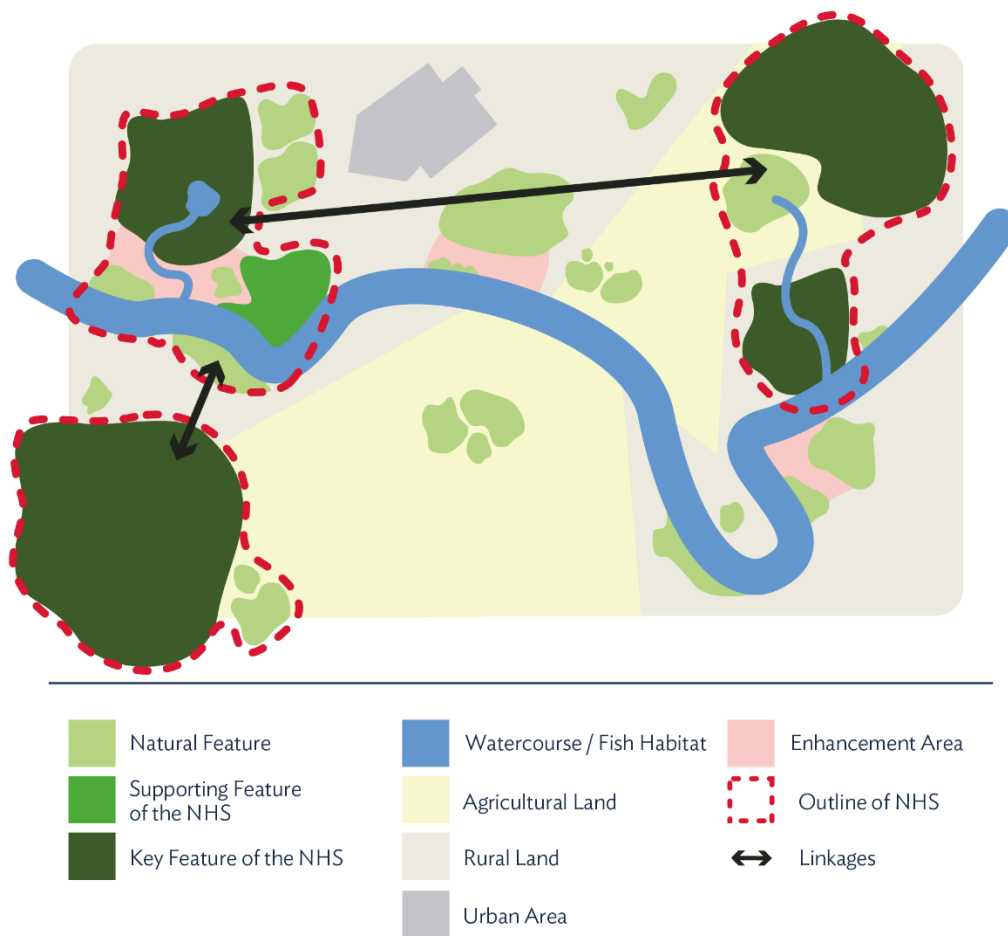


Figure 2: Conceptual Core Areas-Based System Approach Recommended for Northern Bruce County

Both system approaches allow for different policy or other implementation tools within and outside of the system, providing additional flexibility for protection of natural heritage balanced with other objectives and needs including growth and development.

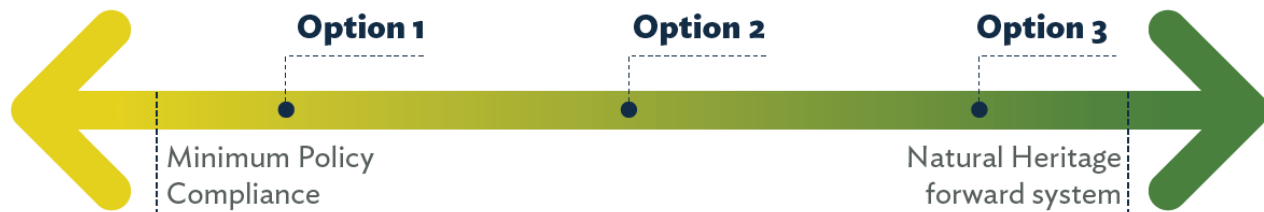
Existing land uses are not affected by inclusion within the Key Features or Core Areas-based systems with policies typically applied when there is a proposed change in land use.

Options for the Natural Environment System

The report reviews provincial policies and guidance, targets, landscape analyses, advisory group feedback, and existing precedents and jurisdictional examples and presents three options for identifying the various components of the Natural Legacy System.

- **Option 1** presents a basic system that is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and has been informed by analyses of cover in Bruce County.
- **Option 2** builds on Option 1, with additional Supporting Features and Areas and criteria for features that identifies a greater proportion of them as Key Features for the System.
- **Option 3** builds on Options 1 and 2 to illustrate a ‘natural heritage forward’ system. Criteria for this option include a greater proportion of features as Key Features and/or include additional Supporting Features and Areas.

Visual Representation of Options for the Natural Environment System



Water Resources System Approach

The Water Resource System (W.R.S) includes areas necessary to protect drinking water supplies, areas of hydrological significance and identification of vulnerable and/or sensitive groundwater and surface water features that should be protected, mitigated, or enhanced in land use planning.

The W.R.S. in Bruce County does not have major distinctions in distribution that would influence how it should be managed to meet the provincial policy directions to protect water quality and quantity.

The report recommends a common approach throughout Bruce County for the Water Resources system aspects of Bruce County's Natural Legacy.

- **Option 1** includes only Key Hydrologic Features and Key Hydrologic Areas.
- **Option 2** builds upon Option 1 by including 'other components', including water-related natural hazards as part of the Water Resource System.

As not all features or options are fully mapped; some components would be mapped, and others would be included conceptually in the system.

Initial Policy Directions

The report outlines 9 Policy Directions for consultation:

| Topic | No. | Recommended Direction |
|---|-----|---|
| Update Environmental Impact Study (EIS) Guidelines | 1 | Review and update EIS Guidelines to include guidelines for scoping, and standardization of reports to increase consistency of information. |
| Make it easier to link mapping and policy | 2 | Tying policy to mapping in a very close and relatable way, through summaries on schedules and in GIS / interactive formats. |
| Provide essential material in accessible formats | 3 | Focused writing / policies that provide the essential informational material, even in brochure formats. |
| Focus policy on overall direction and use guidelines for the details | 4 | Role of policy to set a basic standard and provide (guidelines) for minimum mitigation measures options / best practices for enhancement. |
| Consider a community planning development permit system for improved implementation | 5 | County OP consider policies for a Community Planning Permit system which can provide improved implementation tools. |
| Use different forestry tools for different areas | 6 | Forestry tools for different areas (different permit types in different areas of the system) while managing wildland fire risk. |
| Enhance progressive rehabilitation when aggregate extraction occurs within the Natural Environment System | 7 | Reduce the duration of disruption to the natural system by requiring best practices in progressive rehabilitation for aggregate extraction within the natural environment system. |
| Include conceptual natural legacy mapping in settlement areas | 8 | Identify key features and support the county-scale system while recognizing that local municipalities may develop defined and refined natural legacy mapping. |
| Encourage planning for sustainable public access to natural legacy features | 9 | Together with the 'Communities' 'Culture' and 'Business' discussion papers, support development of sustainable opportunities for people to connect to our natural legacy. |

Communication and Engagement:

Communication and engagement approaches will recognize public health considerations to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, while seeking to maximize awareness and involvement. Communication tactics planned for the next phase of the Plan the Bruce: Natural Legacy project are:

- Information and engagement tools on the project website at www.planthebruce.ca
- Social media posts to generate traffic to the project website
- Meetings with community stakeholders and delegations to Local Councils, in accordance with public health measures
- Pop up or virtual booths at community events, where possible.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

The Transportation and Environmental Services department provided information and participated in discussions regarding Forestry management in Bruce County.

Link to Strategic Goals and Elements:

Plan the Bruce was identified as a major initiative and Council priority in the 2021 Planning and Development Business Plan.

Report Author:

Jack Van Dorp
Manager of Land Use Planning

Departmental Approval:

Mark Paoli
Director of Planning and Development

Approved for Submission:

Sandra Datars Bere
Chief Administrative Officer