



Provincial Update on Forestry-Related Issues

by Bohdan Kowalyk

Provincial Policy Statement

As of March 1, the updated Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) has come into effect and planning authorities must now be consistent with it

(www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_23137_1.html).

The PPS provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The intent is to contribute to a more effective and efficient land use planning system. Section 2.1 provides for the protection of natural features and areas. For example, it directs that development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant habitat of endangered species and threatened species. It also directs that development and site alteration shall not be permitted in significant woodlands south and east of the Canadian Shield unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the natural features or their ecological functions. Significant woodlands are ecologically, functionally or economically important.

Greenbelt Protection

The new Greenbelt Plan (www.mah.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_1_16289_1.html) identifies where urbanization should not occur in order to provide permanent protection to the agricultural land base and the ecological features and functions occurring on the landscape of a horseshoe-shaped area from Niagara to Durham Region. The Plan builds upon the protections provided by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan. The Plan also provides for a diverse range of economic activities associated with rural communities, agriculture, tourism, recreation and resource uses. The Natural Heritage System, containing the highest concentration of significant natural features and functions, acts as an overlay on top of agricultural or rural designations in municipal official plans. Key natural heritage features include significant habitat of endangered, threatened and special concern species, significant woodlands and others. The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources identifies criteria relating to significance of key features.

Places to Grow, a draft growth plan for a larger area from Brant County to Peterborough County called the Greater Golden Horseshoe is available at

www.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_4_40948_1.html.

Ontario Biodiversity Strategy

The Ministry of Natural Resources is leading the development of a biodiversity strategy for Ontario. Biodiversity refers to the variety of living things at three levels - genetic, species and ecosystem. The intent of the strategy is to conserve Ontario's biodiversity and provide for the sustainable use of the province's biological resources. The working draft for public comment currently includes strategic directions to engage Ontarians, promote stewardship, work together, integrate biodiversity conservation into land use planning, reduce threats and

improve understanding. A total of 37 recommended actions are listed. The working draft is available at www.obs-sbo.ca (you may need to hit refresh to get this link to work).

Butternut Assessed as Endangered Species

Butternut has been assessed to be an endangered species by the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. This tree species has been reduced by disease, but can still be found in a number of areas. A team of government staff and experts has been formed for planning its recovery. Tasks of the team include helping to define significant habitat of butternut as well as a specific strategy and actions for recovery. Input is currently being sought from stakeholders with an interest in this species.

For further information on these or other forest-related provincial issues in the Greater Toronto Area, contact Bohdan Kowalyk, OMNR Aurora District Forester, at Bohdan.Kowalyk@mnr.gov.on.ca.