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Management Plans for our Heritage Lands

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is divided into six core natural areas called Heritage Lands, which reflect their natural and cultural heritage components. From 2012 to 2019, the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System partners are preparing comprehensive joint management plans for each of the six heritage land areas.

What are Heritage Lands?

The six core heritage land areas of the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System are groupings of ecopark system lands that reflect the natural and cultural components of their respective areas and are based on existing Environmentally Significant/Sensitive Areas. The province recognizes many parts of these natural lands as Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest or Provincially Significant Wetlands and has included them within a provincial natural heritage system. These natural areas contain some of the most botanically rich lands in Canada and provide habitat for many important bird, reptile, amphibian, fish and insect species as well as many species at risk.

The six Cootes to Escarpment Heritage Lands

1. **Cootes Paradise Heritage Lands**
2. **Borers-Rock Chapel Heritage Lands**
3. **Clappison-Grindstone Heritage Lands**
4. **Waterdown-Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands**
5. **Lower Grindstone Heritage Lands**
6. **Burlington Heights Heritage Lands**



What are management plans?

Management plans provide a single, coherent framework for holistic management of the partner-owned properties within each of the six heritage land areas. The plans are intended to enhance protection of important natural and cultural features and improve sustainable recreation, education and research opportunities.

The management plans address:

- Protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage resources
- Pressures and issues of concern identified by partner agencies, stakeholders and the public
- Infrastructure creation, maintenance and decommissioning
- Recreation, education and research opportunities that are compatible with preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the area
- Criteria and indicators for evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the management plan and an ongoing monitoring program to consistently collect supporting information.

The management plans include designation of Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System (NEPOSS) land classifications and zones on the partner-owned properties within the Heritage Lands areas. These land classifications and zones reflect the partners' vision for use of the lands, but do not supersede existing land use zoning, legislation and regulations, which continue to apply.



How management plans are developed

Preparation of the management plans is guided by the Niagara Escarpment Parks and Open Space System (NEPOSS) Planning Manual. Plans are based on detailed information about the area in question, from background research, field studies and input from community members, stakeholders and partner staff.

Five phases of management plans development:

PHASE 1: **Project initiation**

- Develop project charter, form project steering committee, identify stakeholders, form stakeholder advisory committee

PHASE 2: **Background research and information compilation**

- Undertake natural and cultural resource inventories and research, field work to confirm and augment existing information and fill in gaps, review of planning context, best practices review of management policies, GIS and mapping, identify management issues that need to be addressed
- Prepare inventory and issues report

PHASE 3: **Land classification and zones and management policies**

- Apply NEPOSS land classifications and zones to partner-owned properties and develop management policies

PHASE 4: **Plan development (complete)**

- Finalize land classifications and zones, and management policies; prepare draft management plan

PHASE 5: **Plan finalization and approval**

- Finalize management plan and submit for approval by participating partner agencies

Community and stakeholder involvement

Community and stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of plan development. Public meetings will be held, in different phases of management plan development, to ensure that community members are well-informed and have opportunities to provide input and feedback on the plans as they are developed. Stakeholders will be engaged throughout management plan development, including through Stakeholder Advisory Groups formed of interested individuals and representatives of organizations that will be affected by or have an interest in the Heritage Lands areas.

MANAGEMENT PLANNING SCHEDULE

2012–2014: Burlington Heights Heritage Lands (complete)

2014–2016: Clappison–Grindstone Heritage Lands
Waterdown–Sassafras Woods Heritage Lands

2016–2018: Cootes Paradise Heritage Lands
Borer's Falls–Rock Chapel Heritage Lands

2017–2019: Lower Grindstone Heritage Lands

