

3.0 NVCA'S STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, POLICY AND GUIDELINES

In addition to the provincial legislation, plans, policies and guidelines outlined above to guide staff, the NVCA has its own set of directions documents. They range from broad strategic direction, to specific policies and measurable targets. In order to keep these guidelines as concise as possible, this section provides a brief summary of these documents and the links to the complete version.

3.1 Watershed Plan (1996) and Watershed Plan Strategic Review (December 2006)

To assist conservation authorities in strategic and watershed planning, the province has prepared several comprehensive guidelines including:

- Water Management on a Watershed Basis: Implementing and Ecosystems approach, June 1993
- Subwatershed Planning, June 1993
- Integrating Water Management Objectives into Municipal Planning Documents – June 1993
- Watershed Plans, Water Budgets and other technical guidelines for the Oak Ridges Moraine

These documents helped guide the development of NVCA's watershed and subwatershed plans and are available on the Ministry of Natural Resources website at the following link:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Publication/index.html>

In 1996 the NVCA completed its first Watershed Plan to provide an overview of its watersheds and address broad water related issues. It dealt with water management issues across the entire Nottawasaga, Batteaux and Pretty rivers, and Black Ash and Silver creek watersheds, a total drainage area of 3,361km².

In 2006 a strategic review of the 1996 Watershed Plan was completed to address the issues that have arisen since the plan was completed. This review examined and updated the Watershed Plan's strategic directions, issues, recommendations, and assessed the effectiveness of its implementation.

To assist with this assessment the strategic review added measurable targets for the Watershed Plan's goal and objectives. The targets are to be adjusted and new ones added as appropriate through the Authority's business planning process. The targets are quite specific. For example to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitats, 75% of all streams (not including drains) should be naturally vegetated for 30m on both sides of the stream.

The strategic review highlighted the importance of integrating the Watershed Plan with the business planning process as this was the mechanism to actually implement the Watershed Plan. As a result, the NVCA has developed an annual business and budget planning process that directs the implementation of the Plan's strategic directions and provides a mechanism to keep the Plan current by updating its targets. In this manner it can also quickly react to implement appropriate local and provincial initiatives.

The Watershed Plan Strategic Review was approved by the Authority's Board of Directors on November 24th 2006. It is considered an amendment to the 1996 Watershed Plan and represents NVCA policy.

The Watershed Plan and the Strategic Review documents are available on the Authority's website at the following link:

<http://www.nvca.on.ca/OurProgramsandServices/Planning/PlanningManagementPlans/index.htm>

3.2 Subwatershed Plans (Black Ash, Willow and Innisfil Creeks)

Subwatershed Plans have been completed for three of the Authority's subwatersheds - Black Ash Creek, Willow Creek and Innisfil Creek. These subwatersheds were chosen as a result of significant water management issues. The primary issue with Black Ask Creek was the potential for flooding within the Town of Collingwood. Willow Creek has it headwaters in the Oro Moraine (a significant landform of particular interest to its municipalities) and includes Little Lake and portions of Minesing Wetland. Innisfil Creek was studied as it is the Authority's most impacted water course, with summer low flow issues and nutrient loading problems. The subwatershed plans provided a mechanism for dealing with the specific water management issues across municipal boundaries sharing both the costs and benefits.

The subwatershed plans provide an ecosystems approach helping to coordinate all water related issues and incorporating provincial and local initiatives (e.g. the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan requirements). They provide valuable information for input into local municipal planning documents as well as a strong foundation for other technical studies that may be required to address a specific issue (e.g. Innisfil Creek's low flow conditions).

The three subwatershed plans provide additional direction for the resource management of those subwatersheds.

The subwatershed plans are located on the Authority's website listed below

<http://www.nvca.on.ca/OurProgramsandServices/Planning/PlanningManagementPlans/index.htm>

3.3 NVCA's Three Year Business Plan and Annual Budget

The Business Plan is a very important document providing staff with direction by assigning program priorities and funding through the budget process.

The Business Plan provides a forum and a tool for Board Members and staff that:

- Helps them gain an understanding of the Authority's roles and responsibilities;
- Provides direction to staff through the review and approval of appropriate programs and implementation strategies related to the achievement of NVCA targets;
- Provides the foundation for the development and implementation of the annual budget and two-year financial forecasts; and
- Informs and updates municipal councils and staff on NVCA programs.

In addition to providing this forum for Board Members, the Business Plan implements the Authority's strategic directions (goal, objectives, targets and recommendations) as outlined in the Watershed Plan, by developing specific implementation strategies for each program. The Business Plan will also annually track the successes in achieving the watershed targets.

3.4 Conservation Land Protection and Acquisition Policy - May 2002

The purpose of the Conservation Land Protection and Acquisition Policy (CLPAP) is to establish a framework to provide staff with a basis for identifying conservation lands for protection and for pursuing certain lands for acquisition through the land use planning process. In particular the purpose of this policy is to:

- Help secure significant conservation lands within the watershed in perpetuity
- Increase the public ownership of conservation lands in the watershed
- Foster relationships with conservation organizations for land securement
- Augment the conservation land base in the watershed for research and analysis
- Communicate the importance of conservation land protection and acquisition

Acquisition

Through the land use planning process, the NVCA will pursue the acquisition of conservation lands eligible for the Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program (CLTIP). These lands will not result in an increased tax burden to the NVCA and include:

- Provincially significant wetlands
- Provincially significant Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs)
- Niagara Escarpment lands (Escarpment Natural Areas designation)
- Habitat of endangered species
- Community conservation lands

Community Conservation Lands are natural areas of significance owned by non-profit charitable conservation organizations and conservation authorities and are eligible for tax relief under CLTIP.

The acquisition of these lands through the land development process will occur as a condition of development (e.g. condition of draft plan approval) and through fair and equitable negotiations.

Other conservation lands may be acquired at the discretion and approval of the Authority's Board of Directors. These lands could include significant woodlands which would be eligible for the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP) or other lands that would further the goals and objectives of the Watershed Plan.

Protection

When reviewing land use proposals, the NVCA may require the establishment of conservation easements under the *Conservation Land Act* on private property for those lands not qualifying for acquisition. The conservation easement will be in favour of the NVCA and will be policed by staff. Other land use protection controls such as zoning will be used where appropriate.

The details of the Conservation Land Protection and Acquisition Policy are provided in **Appendix 4**

3.5 Pond Policy - May 2005

There has been an increase in the number of proposals for the construction of new ponds and the modification of existing ponds. Ponds have an impact on our watershed, thus it is important to manage and monitor their effects on a cumulative basis over time.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework that will:

- Protect water resources
- Direct pond development away from environmentally significant areas
- Prevent flooding hazards through proper pond design and re-design
- Promote the proper design, operation and maintenance of ponds
- Monitor the effects of ponds in the watershed on a cumulative basis
- Promote the consistent review of applications for pond development
- Communicate and educate the general public on proper pond development
- Clarify the landowner's responsibility regarding pond maintenance and restoration in order to ensure human safety and protect properties located downstream of a pond
- Establish a policy framework for the re-establishment of on-line ponds.

The details of the Pond Policy are provided in **Appendix 5**

3.6 Engineering's Technical Development Review Guidelines (Stormwater Management)

The Authority's Engineering Services has prepared technical standards for the review of Stormwater Management Plans. These Development Review Guidelines were established to provide a fair, reasonable and uniform basis for stormwater management approvals. The guidelines require a systems approach to resource management including both upstream and downstream water quality and quantity considerations for all development, as emphasized within the Watershed Plan. They outline policies specific to the NVCA, summarize typical application information required for NVCA technical review, and outline standard parameters to be applied throughout the watershed. The guidelines present procedures, computation methods, and input parameters that are commonly accepted by NVCA staff, however it is still the designer's responsibility to recommend and justify the most appropriate methods. If the designer determines that alternative procedures, computation methods, or parameters are required to best describe the development site, an explanation of the rationale acceptable to the NVCA must be provided. The application of hydrologic / hydraulic computer simulation models to drainage design should be undertaken with sound engineering judgment.

The most up-to-date version of Engineering Services Development Review Guidelines is located on the NVCA website under Engineering and Technical Services at the following link:
<http://www.nvca.on.ca/OurProgramsandServices/EngineeringTechnicalServices/DevelopmentReviewGuidelines/index.htm>