

August 10, 2017

It may be summer, but a lot is going on. We offer the following updates to help you stay informed about some initiatives that have been gaining momentum while you were swimming.

1. Wetlands

Most of you will be aware that the Province recently finalized its new wetland strategy, available at <http://apps.mnr.gov.on.ca/public/files/er/a-wetland-conservation-strategy-for-ontario-2017-2030.pdf>. One of the future deliverables under the strategy is the development of a wetlands offsetting policy – a controversial issue fraught with serious challenges, and something the OHI suggested be delayed 10 years to see how the new strategy plays out. While the Government is setting up an advisory council on the issue, Ontario Nature has done a fabulous service for everyone by publishing **Navigating the Swamp: Lessons on wetland offsetting for Ontario**. Both a 4-page summary and the full 78-page document can be found at www.ontarionature.org/discover/resources/publications.php#reports.

2. Turtles

Several organizations have recently issued heightened concerns regarding the welfare of Ontario's turtles. One key effort has been led by [The Land Between](#) and their partners in Turtle Guardians. The Land Between is a bioregion that runs east-west across south-central Ontario, extending from the Georgian Bay Coast to the Ottawa Valley, and which is home to more than 1/3 of all of Ontario's turtles. The Land Between, along with the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (OTCC) has declared a state of emergency for all turtles in the region. Leora Berman, co-founder of The Land Between, recently counted over 70 freshly killed turtles in a 100 km stretch of road, and dropped off what turned out to be turtle #300 in early June to the OTCC. As of July 21, the OTCC has received over 650 injured turtles, almost double the number they helped from May to October last year. For more info, see www.turtleguardians.com.

3. Proposed Amendments to the Conservation Authorities Act

While the comment period ended July 31, the ER posting is still up at <http://www.ebr.gov.on.ca/ERS-WEB-External/displaynoticecontent.do?noticeId=MTMyNjAy&statusId=MjAxNDEx&language=en>

Comments about which the OHI is aware appear to be encouraging but lack enthusiasm due to an absence of specifics. The submission from Conservation Ontario, for example, cites a desire for missing details on items for which they "support movement", including efforts to:

- Strengthen Oversight and Accountability
- Increase Clarity and Consistency in Programs and Services
- Increase Clarity and Consistency In Regulatory Requirements
- Enhance Collaboration and Engagement, and,
- Modernize Funding Mechanisms

The OHI has suggested specific changes to the Bill, asked the ministry to be as clear as possible in describing future direction, and noted key policy issues in a letter to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. This letter addresses items that appear to not be being captured in either the development of the

Watershed Planning Guidance Document or the review of the CA Act: goals for the protection of natural heritage, the needed shift to Integrated Watershed Management, and consistency in high-level policies and standards.

You can see our comments on the CA Act and the letter to the Minister at <http://ontarioheadwaters.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/OHI-for-CA-Act-ER-013-0561-July-31-final.pdf>.

4. **The Province is following through on the Four Plan Review**

The government is proceeding to deliver on four key initiatives described in its extensive review of land use planning in south-central Ontario on the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH), the Greenbelt Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan. The four initiatives include:

- Developing criteria, methods, and mapping of a proposed regional **Natural Heritage System** for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, posted on the Environmental Registry as item [013-1014](#), with comments open until October 4;
- Three draft products to help support the implementation of **Ontario's Agricultural System** under the updated land use plans, posted on the Environmental Registry at [013-0968](#), with comments open until October 4;
- An effort to develop a **Watershed Planning Guidance Document**. The OHI understands that the Province hopes to open a draft document to public comment in the second half of this year; and,
- An effort to **protect significant surface water contribution areas**. While originally a standalone deliverable, the OHI understands that this effort has been folded in to the development of the watershed planning guidance document.

The OHI is participating in the province's Watershed Engagement Group to provide expert comments on the last two items above, and we will provide any insight we can as the process unfolds.

We look forward to chatting with you downstream,

Andrew McCammon

Executive Director
416 231 9484