



Muncaster
Environmental
Planning Inc.

July 11, 2013

Mr. Greg Winters, MCIP, RPP
Project Manager
Novatech Engineering Consultants Ltd.
Suite 200, 240 Michael Cowpland Drive
Kanata, Ontario
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Dear Greg:

RE: **McGee Subdivision, Huntley Geographic Township, City of Ottawa**
Homeowners Conservation Handbook - Revised

Please find attached a Homeowners Conservation Handbook for the McGee Subdivision in the west portion of the City between Highway 417 and William Mooney Road.

Thank you for the opportunity to complete this work and please call if you have any questions on the attached Conservation Handbook.

Yours Sincerely,
MUNCASTER ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING INC.

Bernie Muncaster, MSc.
Principal

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Homeowners Conservation Handbook

This Homeowners Conservation Handbook is designed to provide the homeowners in the McGee Subdivision with information on the important and sensitive natural environment features in the rural subdivision. Trees in the deciduous and coniferous hedgerows between former agricultural fields are the more sensitive ecological features of the site, with deciduous forests to the north and east of the site and some thickets with young trees in the east portion of the site. It is thus important to foster good stewardship practices for overall protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

The objective of this Homeowners Conservation Handbook is to identify the natural attributes in your neighbourhood and to provide advice on how homeowners can be good environmental stewards to ensure that these important natural features remain healthy over the years to come.

The natural features found on many of the lots in your subdivision include trees and shrubs that have been retained at the rear and sides of the lots. Manitoba maple, white cedar, white elm, sugar maple, basswood and white ash are the common tree species in the hedgerows. The largest trees are between 40 and 48cm diameter at breast height. Buckthorn, slender willow, staghorn sumac and red raspberry are well established shrubs in portions of the thickets. The thickets and hedgerows also contain many regenerating white cedar, white spruce, grey birch, white elm, trembling aspen, balsam poplar, tamarack, red ash, white birch, sugar maple and white pine stems. The trees provide wildlife habitat, screening and aesthetic values, with the regenerating stems an especially important source for future trees and stems. The trees retained along north edge of the site help in protecting and adding to the forest to the north. Tree retention has been assisted by retaining the pre-development topography on each lot as much as possible.

What Residents Can Do to Retain the Natural Habitat

The recommendations below are very important to help protect the integrity of the remnant features and functions of natural areas on the un-developed portion of each lot.

Retain the Existing Trees and Shrubs and Avoid Intrusions into these Areas

Trees have been retained where possible in the non-development portion of your lot. Landowners are greatly encouraged to minimize any further tree clearing on their lots. It is recommended that the understorey and ground vegetation not be cleared or tidied in these natural areas. Natural deadfall, as fallen trees and their branches are called, should be left to provide wildlife habitat and soil nourishment. It is important that homeowners avoid depositing yard waste outside of their gardens, as yard waste can be a major disturbance by allowing the spread of non-native invasive plants such as goutweed, ground ivy and periwinkle into less disturbed areas thereby displacing native habitat and native species. These disturbances reduce the wildlife habitat available and accelerate the spread of non-native vegetation. In addition garden waste dumping can compromise the natural chemical processes of the ecosystems as the nutrients from decomposition of garden waste are excessively concentrated in small areas. In contrast natural decomposition (from leaves and fallen branches) is more evenly distributed throughout a forest or ecosystem.

If smaller tree stems are to be removed as part of your lot amenities please give strong consideration to transplanting these smaller stems to open portions of your lot that will not be altered. Trees up to 10cm dbh can usually be readily transplanted.

See if you can find some of the plants, such as Philadelphia fleabane, New England aster, wild carrot, common yarrow, common milkweed, purple loosestrife and Canada goldenrod that are found among the hedgerow trees and hedgerows. See <http://www.ontariowildflowers.com/> for a description of these plants.

Plant Native Trees, Shrubs & Wildflowers

Homeowners are encouraged to plant native trees and shrubs in portions of their property lacking trees and shrubs. This will enhance the protection for the adjacent natural areas, reduce the potential for erosion and expand the extent of habitat associated with the naturalized buffer, including providing food, cover and space for birds and other wildlife. Consideration should be given to adding nesting boxes to the naturalized portions of your lot to help out the birds and increase opportunities for enjoyment of nature.

Homeowners are encouraged to plant a mix of native tree species such as sugar maple, red maple, tamarack, white spruce, white pine, red oak, bur oak and basswood. Examples of native shrubs to plant include nannyberry, red-osier dogwood, meadowsweet and red-berried elder. Blue-eyed grass, dutchman's-breeches, brown-eyed susan, joe-pye-weed, golden corydalis, bloodroot, meadow-rue, Solomon's-seal and false Solomon's-seal are good examples of native wildflowers available at local nurseries. The booklet found at <http://www.landscapeontario.com/grow-me-instead> has excellent suggestions of alternative native plants for gardens and discusses the impacts associated with invasive plants.

To help the planted trees become established, the root balls should be placed in big enough holes and the exposed surface soil covered with 5 – 10 cm of mulch around the base of the trees. This will keep the soil moist and at stable temperatures, limit competition from grasses and limit damage from mowers and other power equipment. Compost from leaves and grass clippings can be used to mulch trees. Rodent guards and stakes are also important. Trees should be inspected once a year for damage. They should be carefully pruned as necessary.

Homeowners are encouraged to use the following recommendations to provide additional protection for the natural habitats:

- Organic methods of pest control are important in areas like this and the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides is to be avoided wherever possible. Pesticides are often toxic chemical and their use can destroy the natural balance, and frequently, more and more pesticides are required in order to rectify a perceived problem. The organic approach uses natural, biological and non-toxic solutions, including preventative measures such as growing plants in sync with the light, moisture and sun conditions, providing adequate water, use of soap sprays and other home remedies to control bugs and fungus, removal of decaying plant material, applying composed organic material and regular weeding;

- For the protection of native wildlife, domestic pets should be kept on leashes and under control at all times. This is especially important for domestic cats which have a major impact on bird populations. Remember to scoop all pet waste, even in more remote areas;
- Do not remove wildlife, plants or soil from the natural environment areas and do not feed wild animals, ducks and geese;
- Native flowers and plants can be obtained from some local seed suppliers and nurseries. Plants taken from the wild rarely survive in household gardens and can quickly deplete the beauty and functions of our natural areas;
- No dumping of yard waste or other material is permitted outside of garden areas due to impacts on native plants, the introduction of non-native and invasive plant species to natural areas, and creation of a high concentration of nutrients from localized decomposition; and,
- Planting of non-native trees, shrubs and other plants should be avoided to reduce the potential for invasive non-native species spreading to the natural environment areas and impacting on the native plants and wildlife. See http://www.ontarionature.org/discover/resources/PDFs/id_guides/natural_invaders.pdf for a good discussion on the potential impacts of non-natives plants. The spread of non-native plants can be controlled by removing them, or pruning during or just after flowering to prevent seed production.

Protecting Water Quality

Homeowners can assist in protecting the quality of surface and groundwater by ensuring all hazardous substances, such as detergents, solvents, oil or gasoline are disposed off via the hazardous waste depot (<http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/garbage-and-recycling/hazardous-waste-and-special-items/disposal-household-hazardous-waste>) or proper recycling avenues. Another important way of helping to protect the aquatic resources is sweeping driveways and other hard surfaces to minimize the grit and other fine material that may enter the environment. Contaminants are typically picked up during the first few minutes of a rainstorm. This is known as the *First Flush* phenomenon. Remember the dust and other debris that is swept needs to be collected and placed in the green bin or residual waste and not swept into the street. To provide maximum protection for the environment, consider washing your car on a grassed area or take it to a commercial car wash so the pollution-laden runoff does not enter the stormwater system.

Consider using surface materials that allow rainwater to seep into the ground quickly on surfaces such as patios. Rain gardens are another excellent example of improving our local environment through recharging our groundwater supply and improving water quality. Rain gardens are designed with a dip at the centre to collect rain and snow melt. Shrubs are planted near the centre, surrounded by wildflowers, sedges and grasses. Avoid traditional lawn turfs to minimize maintenance and maximize the benefits to wildlife. Strategic placement next to hard surfaces such as alleys, sidewalks, driveways and under gutters makes rain gardens thrive.

Mosquitoes

The key to controlling mosquitoes is controlling the places they breed:

- Keep drains, culverts and gutters clear of debris so that water will drain properly;
- Empty standing water from potted plants, bird baths, pet dishes, wading pools and old tires;
- Repair torn screens; and,
- Keep tight lids on rain barrels.

Living with Wildlife

Coyotes and other wild animals sometimes come into conflict with humans. The following recommendations for living with wildlife come from the Ministry of Natural Resources (see http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/FW/2ColumnSubPage/STDPROD_088694.html for more information).

Do not approach or feed wildlife

- Wildlife are usually wary of humans and avoid people whenever possible. However, they are wild animals and should not be approached;
- People should NOT feed wildlife. Feeding them makes the animals less fearful of humans and habituates them to foods provided by humans;
- Aggressive behaviour towards people is unusual for wildlife, but people should always exercise caution around wildlife.

If you encounter wildlife

- Do not turn your back on, or run from a coyote or other large mammals. Back away from the animal while remaining calm; and,
- Use whistles and personal alarm devices to frighten an approaching or threatening animal.

Secure garbage and minimize attractants on your property

- Properly store and maintain garbage containers to help prevent animals from becoming a problem;
- Place trash bins inside an enclosed structure to discourage the presence of small rodents, which are an important food source for wildlife;
- Put garbage at curbside the morning of the scheduled pickup, rather than the night before;
- Use enclosed composting bins rather than exposed piles. Coyotes are attracted to dog or cat waste as well as products containing meat, milk and eggs;
- Pick ripe fruit from fruit trees and remove fallen fruit from the ground and keep bird feeders from overflowing as other wildlife are attracted to foods like seed, suet and nectar used to feed birds;

- Protect vegetable gardens with heavy-duty garden fences or place vegetable plants in a greenhouse. Check with your local nursery to see what deterrent products are available;
- Consider eliminating artificial water sources such as koi ponds; and,
- Keep pet food indoors.

Using deterrents and fences can keep coyotes and other animals away from your property

- Use motion-sensitive lighting to make your property less attractive to coyotes and other nocturnal wildlife;
- Fencing can help deter wildlife from properties or gardens;
- Clear away bushes and dense weeds near your home where wildlife may find cover and small animals to feed upon; and,
- Close off crawl spaces under porches, decks and sheds. Coyotes, racoons and skunks use such areas for denning and raising young.

Keep all pets on leashes or confined to a yard

- Cats and small dogs may be seen as prey by coyotes and other wildlife, while larger dogs may be injured in a confrontation. These situations may be avoided with installation of proper fencing;
- As coyotes are primarily nocturnal, pets should be kept inside at night;
- Keep cats indoors and do not allow pets to roam from home;
- Walk your dog on a leash at all times. If your yard does not have a fence, use a leash while on your property to keep your dog close to you; and,
- Spay or neuter your dogs. Coyotes are attracted to, and can mate with, domestic dogs that have not been spayed or neutered.

Conclusion

The McGee Subdivision contains many hedgerows and thickets with shrubs and some trees that have developed on the former agricultural lands. Trees representing a range of size classes of the more desirable species have been retained where possible on many of the lots. Minimizing the work areas and careful siting of the other alterations will allow for other tree and shrub retention. Plantings of native trees and shrubs, along with transplanting smaller stems in development areas will greatly add to the natural habitat on your lands and the enjoyment of nature.

We hope that this Homeowners Conservation Handbook helps you to understand the importance of the natural environment resources and provides you with the tools to protect these valuable and sensitive features. With good environmental stewardship we can be assured that these features can be enjoyed for many years to come.

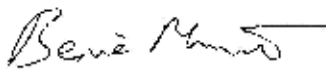
For More Information

Additional information is available on many of the topics discussed. For example:

- The City of Ottawa has lots of information on the local plants and animals at <http://ottawa.ca/en/residents/water-and-environment/plants-and-animals/plants-and-animals>. In addition the Royal Ontario Museum's site, <http://www.rom.on.ca/ontario/fieldguides.html>, can be accessed to create a 'field guide' and provide details of the animals that can be found in this area. Another useful site for wildlife information is the Canadian Wildlife Service's Hinterlands Who's Who (<http://www.hww.ca/en/species/>);
- The Native Plant Resource Guide for Ontario produced by the Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration (<http://www.serontario.org>) provides information on native species and methods to discourage invasive exotic plants, including suggestions for alternative native species that provide better wildlife habitat. Another great source of native plant information is the Evergreen Foundation's Native Plant Database at <http://nativeplants.evergreen.ca/>;
- More information on what can be done for wildlife is provided on one of Canadian Wildlife Service's web sites at <http://www.hww.ca/en/things-you-can-do/> ;
- The Landowners Resource Centre, <http://www.lrconline.com/>, from the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority has lots of helpful hints on tree, wildlife, soil and water management issues; and,
- Also check this City of Ottawa link - http://www.ottawa.ca/en/env_water/index.html for information on many environmental matters, including details on yard waste, composting, the hazardous waste disposal program, pesticides, free water well testing, the emerald ash borer and tree planting.

Prepared By:

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