

POLICY AUDIT TECHNICAL MEMO

Review of the Regional Official Plan
Natural Heritage System Policies + Mapping

APRIL 9, 2019
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SECTION 1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Issue

- The Regional Municipality of Halton (Halton) has retained Gladki Planning Associates, in association with North-South Environmental Inc. and Wood, to assist in Phases 2 and 3 of the Regional Official Plan (ROP) Review in accordance with the legislative five-year requirement under Section 26 of the *Planning Act*. This project addresses the Natural Heritage System Policies and Mapping theme, including Water Resource Systems. Other themes (e.g., Agricultural System) are being addressed as part of other initiatives. Phase 2 generally constitutes the technical analysis of the policies and mapping, while Phase 3 focuses on the development of policy refinements.

With the overall goal of strengthening the long-term viability of Halton's natural heritage and water resources, the *Review of the Regional Official Plan Natural Heritage System Policies + Mapping* project provides an opportunity to examine policies and mapping that may need to be updated, enhanced, and refined based on experience with the implementation of the current Regional Official Plan and changes to the Provincial policy framework since the last ROP Review, including the Provincial Policy Statement 2020, the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plans 2017.

- Phase 2 of the *Review of the Regional Official Plan Natural Heritage System Policies + Mapping* project provides detailed policy and mapping analysis of the ROP, organized into a series of four Technical Memos and a Natural Heritage System Report, to inform policy refinements in Phase 3.
- This current report is the *Policy Audit Technical Memo*, which is described in Section 2.3.3 of the Terms of Reference.

1.2 Structure

- This *Policy Audit Technical Memo* considers potential revisions to ROP policies on natural heritage and water resources, based on two analyses:
 - Consistency/Conformity Analysis – An analysis of changes to the Provincial policy framework since the last ROP Review, including the Provincial Policy Statement 2020, the Places to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017, and any changes required to ensure that the consistency/conformity requirements of these policies and plans are satisfied by the ROP.

- Implementation Analysis – An analysis based on the implementation of the current ROP and successes, gaps and barriers that have been identified by Regional and local municipal staff.
- This report is structured into 3 main sections:
 - Section 2.0 presents the consistency/conformity analysis.
 - Section 2.2 provides a summary of key points and considerations emerging from this analysis.
 - Section 2.3 provides a detailed consistency/conformity analysis based on changes to Provincial plans and policies since the last ROP review.
 - Section 3.0 presents the implementation analysis.
 - Section 3.2 provides a summary of the issues raised through the implementation analysis of successes, gaps and barriers.
 - Section 3.3 provides a detailed review of implementation analysis of successes, gaps and barriers based on comments submitted by Regional staff, Local Municipal staff and members of the consultant team with experience in the interpretation and application of ROP Natural Heritage System policies.
 - Section 4.0 provides a summary of next steps.
- As a supplement to the analysis included in the main body of the report, a number of tables are included in the Appendix:
 - Table 1 – A comparison of terms and definitions across Provincial planning documents and the ROP.
 - Table 2 – A comparison between the Places to Grow Place to Grow 2019 and the ROP in terms of: the kinds of features identified as key features; and the make-up of respective versions of an NHS in addition to key features.
 - Table 3 – Implementation Comments – Successes and Barriers.
 - Table 4 – Implementation Comments – Gaps.

SECTION 2.0 CONSISTENCY/CONFORMITY ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

The consistency/conformity analysis considers the extent to which the Halton Region Official Plan 2009 (September 28, 2015 consolidation) is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement 2020 and in conformity with the Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017.

- As the ROP was deemed to be consistent and in conformity with the previous iterations of these provincial planning documents, the analysis focuses on changes in the provincial policy documents from the previous iteration and their implications for the ROP.
- In referring to policies of the Provincial planning documents, the following abbreviations are used:
 - Halton Region Official Plan 2009 (September 28, 2015 consolidation) – ROP
 - Provincial Planning Statement 2020 – PPS
 - Place to Grow for the Greater Golden Horseshoe 2017 – GP
 - A Place to Grow 2019 – GBP
 - Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017 – NEP
- In the discussion of each document, terms that are defined within that document are italicized.
- Two tables have been created to facilitate the comparison of definitions across documents and are included in the Appendix:
 - Table 1 provides a comparison of terms and definitions across provincial planning documents and the ROP.
 - Table 2 provides a comparison between the Place to Grow 2019 and the ROP in terms of: the kinds of features identified as key features; and the make-up of respective versions of an NHS in addition to key features.

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2.2 Summary

- This sub-section provides a summary of the consistency/conformity analysis with a focus on the issues with implications for the overall structure of the ROP and supporting mapping. A finer grain analysis is included in sub-section 2.3.

2.2.1 General

- A review of pertinent provincial policy documents – PPS 2020, Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and Niagara Escarpment Plan (NEP) 2017 – was undertaken to identify consistency/conformity gaps with the ROP. These provincial planning documents have undergone significant revision since the last ROP review. Therefore, it is the changes to these documents that are the focus of the consistency/conformity analysis.
- Overall the changes to the provincial planning policy documents have led to greater alignment between them. This is especially true concerning the approach taken to natural heritage and water resources by A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017.
- The Provincial policy documents cover different geographies and, where different policies apply, the documents and legislation provide guidance on which policies should prevail:
 - The PPS covers all of Halton Region. In the case of a conflict between a Provincial plan and the PPS, the Provincial plan takes precedence. The exception is in the case of A Place to Grow 2019, where, concerning matters related to the natural environment and human health, the more protective policies prevail.
 - In the Greenbelt Protected Countryside, the policies of the Greenbelt Plan 2017 take precedence and where Place to Grow policies address the same, similar, related or overlapping matters, they do not apply within the Greenbelt Area. However, concerning the natural environment or human health, in the case of conflict between the two plans, the more protective of the Greenbelt Plan or Place to Grow policies should apply.
 - In the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside policies do not apply and the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan do. Further, within the *Greenbelt Area*, where Place to Grow policies address the same, similar, related or overlapping matters, they do not apply within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area. However, the same exception pertains regarding the natural environment or human health: where there is a conflict between the Place to Grow and the Niagara Escarpment Plan on these matters, the more protective of the Niagara Escarpment Plan or Place to Grow policies apply.
 - In areas of Halton not included in the *Greenbelt Area*, the Place to Grow policies apply.

- Generally, the Provincial policies represent minimum standards, which the Region can exceed through the policies of its official plan, unless doing so would conflict with other policies in the Provincial policy documents. The exception to this rule concerns Greenbelt Plan 2017 policy sections that apply to agricultural uses and mineral aggregate resources.

2.2.2 Current Approach taken by the ROP

- The ROP's current conception of the Natural Heritage System consists of two sub-systems each with their own policies: the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System (Greenbelt NHS) and Regional Natural Heritage System (RNHS).
- The Greenbelt NHS is an overlay within the ROP mapping and is addressed in policy as a "constraint on development". The policy approach to the Greenbelt NHS is to reference the Greenbelt Plan, and, concerning some matters, to include policies adapted from the Greenbelt Plan into the ROP itself.
- The RNHS is a land use designation within the ROP mapping and policies. Policies pertaining to the RNHS are included within the ROP.
- Both the Greenbelt NHS and the Regional NHS systems comprise of key features, as well as other features. The key features and other features are defined differently under both systems and some policies pertain only to key features, while others apply to the NHS as a whole.
- Policies in the two NHS address similar matters: permitted uses, development and site alterations, requirements for evaluations. These policies are not perfectly aligned.
- NEP policies pertaining to natural heritage and water resources apply within the NEP area and are referenced throughout the ROP.
- Mapping of both systems is included in the ROP. On Map 1, the Greenbelt NHS is shown as an overlay and the RNHS is shown as a designation. There is some overlap between them. Map 1G shows Key Features within the Greenbelt NHS and RNHS.
- . Refinements are not permitted in the Greenbelt NHS, except as a result of amendments to the Greenbelt Plan. However, within the Greenbelt NHS, refinements to the boundaries of key features may be considered.

- The areas that comprise the RNHS are partially defined by mapping, but also in policy. Therefore there may be an area not included in mapping, which meets the description in policy and is therefore part of the RNHS. Refinements to the RNHS mapping are permitted through the Municipal Comprehensive Review process. The overall idea behind this approach is that the mapping is a depiction of the RNHS based on the best available information. As environmental studies are undertaken on a site-specific basis, a more precise understanding of the RNHS is developed.
- In practice, the two NHS are layered on top of each other in some areas, rather than being mutually exclusive. There are some areas on Map 1 of the ROP that are shown with a RNHS designation and a Greenbelt NHS overlay. However, even in areas shown with a non-RNHS designation and a Greenbelt NHS overlay, they may be considered to be part of the RNHS if the area in question meets the definition of RNHS in policy.

2.2.3 Main Consistency/Conformity Issues

- There are many changes within the Provincial policy documents which require refinement to ROP policies to achieve consistency/conformity. These are detailed in the main consistency/ conformity analysis. This summary focuses on changes to the Provincial policy documents that have the potential to require major changes to the overall approach to natural heritage and water resources in the ROP.
- Concerning natural heritage, these major changes are largely the result of changes to A Place to Grow 2019. The policies addressing natural heritage in the Place to Grow 2019 have been greatly expanded and now largely align with the approach taken by the Greenbelt Plan 2017.
- Concerning water resources, changes to the PPS 2020, A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 have created a consistent approach across these plans and policies, with prominence given to watershed planning and identifying and protecting water resource systems.

2.2.3.1 Changes Relative to Natural Heritage

- Although there have been changes to the PPS 2020, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2017 policies concerning natural heritage, these on their own can largely be accommodated within the existing structure of the ROP.

- More significant changes regarding natural heritage have occurred within the Place to Grow 2019, which will require greater consideration about how the ROP might be revised to bring it into conformity.
- A Natural Heritage System for the Place to Grow has been mapped by the province outside of settlement areas. Municipalities will incorporate the *Natural Heritage System* as an overlay in official plans and apply appropriate policies. (GP 4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2)
- The Provincial mapping of the Natural Heritage System for the APlace to Grow does not apply until it has been implemented in the applicable upper- or single-tier official plan. Until that time, the policies in Places to Grow refer to the natural heritage system for the Place to Grow will apply outside settlement areas to the natural heritage system identified in office planes and in effect as of July 1, 2017. (GP 4.2.2.4)
- Upper- and single-tier municipalities may refine provincial mapping of the Natural Heritage system for the Place to Grow at the time of initial implementation in their official plans. For upper-tier municipalities, the initial implementation of provincial mapping may be done separately for each lower-tier municipality. (GP 4.2.2.5) After the Natural Heritage system has been implemented in official plans, further refinement may only occur through a municipal comprehensive review. A Place to Grow 5)
- New policies relative to the *Natural Heritage System, key natural heritage features and areas, key hydrologic features and key hydrologic areas* address permitted uses, *development and site alteration, evaluations, vegetation protection zones, settlement area boundary expansions, infrastructure, stormwater management and mineral aggregate resources*. (GP 2.2.8, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.7, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.8)

2.2.3.2 Changes Relative to Water Resources

- Policy direction on water resources has evolved significantly in the PPS 2020, Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, particularly through the promotion of watershed planning and the introduction of the water resource systems concept.
- In the A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, policies on the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource Systems are very much entwined. Policies often pertain to *key natural heritage features and areas* and *key hydrologic features* together (rather than separately as in the NEP).

- New policies in the A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 require the identification of Water Resource Systems, informed by *watershed planning or equivalent*, and the application of appropriate designations and policies to provide for the long-term protection of *key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas*, and their functions. (GP 4.2.1.2, GP 4.2.1.3, GBP 3.2.3.3)
- New policies in the A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 establish that decisions on allocation of growth and planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure shall be informed by applicable *watershed planning or equivalent*. (GP 4.2.1.3, GBP 3.2.4)
- As discussed above concerning the Natural Heritage System, the A Place to Grow 2019 includes new policies relative to Water Resource Systems, *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas* address permitted uses, *development* and *site alteration*, evaluations, *vegetation protection zones*, *settlement area* boundary expansions, infrastructure, stormwater management and *mineral aggregate resources*. (GP 2.2.8, 3.2.5, 3.2.6, 3.2.7, 4.2.1, 4.2.3, 4.2.4, 4.2.8)

2.2.3.3 Conformity Challenges

- The RNHS and the A Place to Grow NHS, and associated policies, are two similar approaches to protecting natural heritage. However, they do not perfectly align in terms of what the systems contain, what they consider to be key features or the protections that are given to them. For example, the definition of *Key Features* within the ROP is narrower than the combined definition of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* included A Place to Grow 2019.
- The RNHS is a designation not an overlay, while NHS for the Place to Grow is required to be an overlay. Within the RNHS designation are prime agricultural areas, which may have to be re-designated as such based on Provincial policy and mapping. Section 4.2.6.9 of the Places to Grow 2019 allows Upper Tier to refine Agricultural System through MCR process. The Region will need to coordinate refinements of Agricultural System and NHS.
- The PPS 2020, A Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2017 include new and updated natural heritage terms and definitions which will require a review and revision of associated ROP terms and definitions.
- In addition to the Natural Heritage Policies for watercourses and fish habitat in Section 115-118 of the ROP, policies on water resources with regards to highly

vulnerable aquifers, municipal wellheads and significant groundwater recharge areas are currently located in Environmental Quality section of the ROP. Whereas the ROP's main policies on natural heritage are located within sections on Land Use Designations and Constraints to Development. A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 address water resources and natural heritage in an integrated manner.

- A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 introduce new terms, definitions and policies, many of which concern water resources, which are currently not present in the ROP.
- A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 policies on natural heritage and water resources are almost the same. The NEP 2017 includes policies on natural heritage and water resources which differ in structure and content from those of the other Provincial plans.

2.2.4 Conformity Considerations

2.2.4.1 NHS for the Place to Grow

- The largest conformity challenge relates to a Place to Grow 2019 requirement for municipalities to incorporate the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan as an overlay in official plans and apply appropriate policies. In essence, the Places to Grow is requiring the Region to import an approach to natural heritage which somewhat duplicates its own, but not in precisely the same way.
- However, the A Place to Grow 2019 also indicates that municipalities may continue to protect other natural heritage systems or identify new systems in a manner that is consistent with the PPS. Therefore, while incorporating the Place to Grow NHS into the ROP, it is possible to maintain the current RNHS.
- Previously, the Region faced a similar challenge incorporating the natural heritage mapping and policies of the Greenbelt Plan into the ROP. The approach taken to this challenge was to bring them within the framework of the ROP by establishing two NHS systems: a Greenbelt NHS and a RNHS which together comprised the Region's Natural Heritage System. The Greenbelt Plan policies were not entirely duplicated within the ROP, but reference to these policies were included within the ROP.
- The similarities and general alignment between the policies of a Place to Grow 2019 and the Greenbelt Plan 2017 mean it is possible to conceive of one set of ROP policies covering both plan areas, rather than separate policies, as is currently the case.

- A complicating factor is A Place to Grow 2019 requirement to designate *prime agricultural areas*. The RNHS is currently a designation shown on Map 1 of the ROP. The RNHS includes *Key Features* as well as other components, for example *enhancements, buffers* and *linkages*. These other areas may also be identified as *prime agricultural areas*. The requirement to designate *prime agricultural areas* might have an impact on the designations and overlays shown on the maps within the ROP, and therefore also possibly on the structure of the policies that relate to them. Further discussions with the Province will be necessary to determine the range of flexibility in satisfying the *prime agricultural area* policies. Also worthy to note, these Place to Grow 2019 policies do not pertain to the Greenbelt Plan Area or NEP Area, areas within Halton Region where the overlap between RNHS and *prime agricultural areas* is actually more significant than in the area covered by the Place to Grow 2019 policies.
- The NEP 2017 policies, relative to those of a Place to Grow 2019, are at times more protective of natural heritage and water resources, and at times less protective. As such they would be more challenging to incorporate into a universal policy approach to natural heritage and water resources for Halton region as a whole. However, they could continue to be referenced in the ROP with policy clarifying that the more protective policies apply for lands within the NEP area (as per existing ROP 64).
- An additional issue, the merits of distinguishing between key natural heritage features and key hydrological features rather than combining the two into *Key Features* is discussed below.

2.2.4.2 Water Resource Systems

- Although the ROP has a section on water, it does not identify Water Resource Systems, map them, or apply designations that pertain to them. This is now a requirement of both the A Place to Grow 2019 and the Greenbelt Plan 2017. PPS 2020 policy also supports this requirement. (PPS 2.2.1 d))
- The ROP will have to bring the concept of water resource systems, and supporting terminology, into its policies.
- Key questions:
 - **What mapping is required for Water Resource Systems?** Within the broader definition of Water Resource System in the A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas* are terms which appear in policy and which are necessary to identify from a

mapping perspective. The definition of each term identifies sub-components, which might be individually mapped as layers in the supporting GIS, if not in the ROP maps themselves. Both plans indicate that designations are to be applied to protect *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas*, and their functions. (GP 4.2.1.2 and GBP 3.2.3.3, 5.3) How these designations will relate to other designations and overlays shown on ROP maps will require some care.

- **Should ROP policies distinguish between *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrological features*, or should they be combined into the term, *Key Features*, currently used by the ROP?** The ROP currently uses the term *Key Features*, which is defined as including key natural heritage and hydrological features. Although defined separately, the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 generally address *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* in combined policies. (GP 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and GBP 3.2.5). The main difference is that protective policies apply to *key natural heritage features* only within the Provincially-identified NHS, whereas they apply to *key hydrological features* outside of the NHS as well (within the Protected Countryside in the case of the Greenbelt Plan 2017, and outside of settlement areas in the case of the Place to Grow 2019). The NEP 2017 addresses key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features in separate sets of policies. Although it is possible to address key natural heritage areas and key hydrological features through combined policies, it will be necessary to identify them separately as terms.
- **Should policies on Water Resource Systems be presented in a similar manner as policies on the Natural Heritage System, within the Land Stewardship Policies section of the ROP, rather than within the Environmental Quality section in which policies on water are currently located? Should policies on Water Resource Systems be grouped and possibly co-mingled with the Natural Heritage System policies in the ROP, similar to the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017?** Consideration will have to given to whether the ROP will adopt the approach taken by the Greenbelt Plan 2017 to describe a Natural System comprised of a Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System.

2.3 Detailed Consistency/Conformity Analysis

- This sub-section provides a detailed topic-by-topic consistency/conformity analysis. In the discussion of each topic, key policy changes are identified by Provincial planning

document. At the end of each topic discussion, the implications of these changes on the ROP are considered.

- A list of relevant policies, referenced by document and policy number is included at the beginning of each topic discussion.

2.3.1 Precedence of Plans and Policies in Case of Conflict

PPS: Part III

GP: 1.2.3

GBP: 1.4.1, 2.2, 2.3

NEP: How to Read a Provincial Plan (p.4)

PPS 2020

- Provincial plans are to be read in conjunction with the PPS. In the case of a conflict, Part III of the PPS 2020 clarifies that other Provincial plans take precedence over the PPS except where legislation establishing Provincial plans provides otherwise.

A Place to Grow 2019

- Section 1.2.3 of the Place to Grow 2019 establishes the relationship of the Place to Grow to the PPS and other Provincial plans.
- As in the previous plan, in the case of conflict between the Place to Grow and the PPS, concerning the natural environment and human health, the more protective policies prevail. In other matters, A Place to Grow 2019 prevails where there is a conflict between it and the PPS.
- A Place to Grow 2019 indicates that, within the *Greenbelt Area*, the policies of the Place to Grow that address the same, similar, related, or overlapping matters as the Greenbelt Plan or the Niagara Escarpment Plan do not apply within that part of the *Greenbelt Area* covered by the relevant plan except where the policies of the Place to Grow, the Greenbelt Plan or the Niagara Escarpment Plan provide otherwise. However, the text outlines an exception to this general rule: as provided in the Places to Grow Act, 2005, where there is a conflict between the Greenbelt or Niagara Escarpment Plans and the Place to Grow regarding the natural environment or human health, the direction that provides more protection prevails.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The policies of the Greenbelt Plan take precedence over the policies of the PPS to the extent of any conflict, except where the relevant legislation provides otherwise. Where the policies of the Greenbelt Plan address the same, similar, related or overlapping matters as policies in the PPS, applying the more specific policies of the Greenbelt Plan satisfies the requirements of the more general policies in the PPS. (GBP 1.4.1)
- With respect to the Place to Grow specifically, the policies of the Place to Grow that address the same, similar, related or overlapping matters as the Greenbelt Plan do not apply within the Greenbelt Area, except where the policies of the Greenbelt Plan provide otherwise. (GBP 1.4.1)
- With respect to the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Protected Countryside policies do not apply, with the exception of section 3.3 (policies on municipal parkland, open space and trail strategies). (GBP 2.2)
- With respect to the Parkway Belt West Plan Area, the Protected Countryside policies do not apply, with the exception of sections 3.2 (Natural System) and 3.3 (Parkland, Open Space and Trails). (GBP 2.3)

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- The Niagara Escarpment Plan is to be read in conjunction with the PPS but shall take precedence over the policies of the PPS to the extent of any conflict.
- The Niagara Escarpment Plan must be read in conjunction with the Place to Grow, Greenbelt Plan and Parkway Belt West Plan, amongst others.

Implications for the ROP

- In case of a conflict between a Provincial plan and the PPS, the Provincial plan takes precedence. The exception is in the case of the Place to Grow, where, concerning matters related to the natural environment and human health, the more protective policies prevail.
- In the Greenbelt Protected Countryside, the policies of the Greenbelt Plan 2017 take precedence and where A Place to Grow policies address the same, similar, related or overlapping matters, they do not apply within the Greenbelt Area. However, concerning the natural environment or human health, in the case of conflict between the two plans, the more protective of the Greenbelt Plan or A Place to Grow policies should apply.

- In the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, the Greenbelt Plan Protected Countryside policies do not apply and the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan do. Further, within the *Greenbelt Area*, where Place to Grow policies address the same, similar, related or overlapping matters, they do not apply within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area. However, the same exception pertains regarding the natural environment or human health: where there is a conflict between the Place to Grow and the Niagara Escarpment Plan on these matters, the more protective policies apply.
- In areas of Halton not included in the *Greenbelt Area*, the Place to Grow policies apply.

2.3.2 Minimum Standards

PPS: Part III

GP: 1.2.3

GBP: 1.4.1, 5.3

NEP: 1.1.1, 2.1

PPS 2020

- The policies of the PPS represent minimum standards. Within the framework of the Provincial policy-led planning system, planning authorities and decision-makers may go beyond these minimum standards to address matters of importance to a specific community, unless doing so would conflict with any policy of the PPS. (PPS Part III)

A Place to Grow 2019

- The policies of the Place to Grow represent minimum standards. Within the framework of the Provincial policy-led planning system, decision-makers are encouraged to go beyond these minimum standards to address matters of importance, unless doing so would conflict with any policy of the plan. (GP 1.2.3)

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- Section 1.4.1 contains new text that indicates that the policies in the Greenbelt Plan represent minimum standards and that decision-makers are encouraged to go beyond these minimum standards to address matters of importance, unless doing so would conflict with any policy of the Greenbelt Plan. Exceptions to this direction, where municipalities cannot be more restrictive are outlined in Section 5.3.
- Section 5.3 states that, with the exception of the policies of section 4.6 (lot creation), official plans and zoning by-laws shall not contain provisions that are more restrictive

than the policies of sections 3.1 and 4.3.2 as they apply to agricultural uses and mineral aggregate resources respectively.

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- Section 1.1.1, indicates that the NEP 2017 is not intended to limit the ability of municipal official plans, secondary plans and by-laws to set standards and policies that are more stringent than the requirements of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, unless doing so would conflict with the Niagara Escarpment Plan.
- Section 2.1 indicates that development criteria are to be used as minimum standards for assessing the conformity of local official plans, secondary plans and, where applicable, zoning by-laws and for administering site-plan control approvals. If an official plan, secondary plan, zoning by-law, or other planning approval is silent on one or more development criteria, the development criteria still apply.

Implications for the ROP

- Within the context of the other policies included in the PPS 2020 and Provincial plans, there is broad scope for the ROP to provide greater protection to natural heritage and water resources than the minimum standards detailed in the Provincial policy documents.

2.3.3 Mapping

PPS: 2.2.1

GP: 4.2.1.2, 4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2, 4.2.2.5, 4.2.6.2

GBP: 3.2.2.5, 3.2.3.3, 5.3

PPS 2020

- Planning authorities are required to identify water resource systems consisting of *ground water features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas, and surface water features* including shoreline areas, which are necessary for the ecological and hydrological integrity of the *watershed*. (PPS 2.2.1) A similar policy was included in the previous PPS, but the term water resource systems is new to the PPS 2020.

A Place to Grow 2019

- *Water resource systems* will be identified, informed by *watershed planning* and other available information, and the appropriate designations and policies will be applied in official plans. (GP 4.2.1.2)

- The Province will map a *Natural Heritage System* for the GGH. Municipalities will incorporate the *Natural Heritage System* as an overlay in official plans. (GP 4.2.2.1, 4.2.2.2)
 - Upper- and single-tier municipalities may, through a municipal comprehensive review, refine provincial mapping with greater precision in a manner that is consistent with the Place to Grow. (GP 4.2.2.5)
- *Prime agricultural areas*, including *specialty crop areas*, will be designated in accordance with mapping identified by the Province. (GP 4.2.6.2). Section 4.2.6.9 of the Places to Grow 2019 allows Upper Tier to refine Agricultural System through MCR process. The Region will need to coordinate refinements of Agricultural System and NHS.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- When official plans are brought into conformity with the Greenbelt Plan, the boundaries of the Natural Heritage System may be refined, with greater precision, in a manner that is consistent with the Plan and the system shown on Schedule 4. (GBP 3.2.2.5) However, this is intended to be a one-time refinement with no further refinements permitted. (GBP 5.4.2)
- Implementation direction has been strengthened from the previous plan. Municipalities shall (rather than should) provide a map showing known *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* and any associated minimum *vegetation protection zones*. (GBP 5.3)
- Water Resource Systems will be identified, informed by *watershed planning* and other available information, and the appropriate designations and policies will be applied in official plans. (GBP 3.2.3.3)

Implications for the ROP

- New Provincial mapping of the Place to Grow NHS and *prime agricultural areas*, as well as direction on overlays and designations, will require a change in the approach taken by the ROP toward the mapping of the Region's NHS.
- There is significant overlap between the Place to Grow NHS and the RNHS, although neither system entirely comprises the other.

- Water resource systems are to be identified and appropriate designations to be applied to provide for the long-term protection of key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas and their functions. Provincial policies require the designation of prime agricultural areas. As land use designations are mutually exclusive and there may be parts of water resource systems within prime agricultural areas, these policies may be a contradictory and present a challenge to conformity.

2.3.4 Overall Approach to Natural Heritage System

PPS: Part IV, 1.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.1.9

GP: 4.2.2

GBP: 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 3.2.1, 5.3

NEP: 2.7

PPS 2020

- The overall approach to the Natural Heritage System remains the same in the PPS 2020. The main change in policy is the addition of policy 2.1.3, which indicates that *natural heritage systems* shall be identified in particular ecoregions.
- A further change is the addition of “conserve biodiversity” to the list of items the Province must ensure in the management of its resources (Part IV). Promoting development and land use patterns that conserve biodiversity has also been added to the list of actions that sustain healthy, liveable and safe communities (PPS 1.1.1).
- The definition of *natural heritage system* has been refined and now includes a statement that: “The Province has a recommended approach for identifying natural heritage systems, but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used.”
- PPS 2.1.9 establishes that the policies in section 2.1 related to natural heritage are not intended to limit the continuation of agricultural uses. It has been refined to change “...existing agricultural uses...” to “...agricultural uses...”.

A Place to Grow 2019

- Overall the approach taken by the A Place to Grow has changed dramatically, from loose direction encouraging municipalities to identify natural heritage features and areas, to a prescriptive set of policies and provincial mapping with clear direction to municipalities to:
 - Support a comprehensive, integrated, and long-term approach to planning for the protection of the region’s natural heritage and biodiversity. (GP 4.2.2.1)

- Maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity and connectivity of the system and the long-term ecological or hydrologic functions of the features and areas. (GP 4.2.2.2)
- Key policies outline how this new approach will be developed:
 - The Province has mapped Natural *Heritage System for the Growth Plan*. This mapping will exclude lands within *settlement areas*. (GP 4.2.2.1)
 - Municipalities will incorporate the *Natural Heritage System* as an overlay in official plans and apply appropriate policies. (GP 4.2.2.2)
 - The Provincial mapping of the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan does not apply until it has been implemented in the applicable upper- or single-tier official plan. Until that time, the policies in A Place to Grow refer to the natural heritage system for the Place to Grow will apply outside settlement areas to the natural heritage system identified in office plans and in effect as of July 1, 2017. (GP 4.2.2.4)
 - Upper- and single-tier municipalities may refine provincial mapping of the Natural Heritage system for the Place to Grow at the time of initial implementation in their official plans. For upper-tier municipalities, the initial implementation of provincial mapping may be done separately for each lower-tier municipality. (GP 4.2.2.5) After the Natural Heritage system has been implemented in official plans, further refinement may only occur through a municipal comprehensive review.
 - Beyond the *Natural Heritage System*, including within *settlement areas*, the municipality:
 - a) will continue to protect any other natural heritage features in a manner that is consistent with the PPS; and
 - b) may continue to protect any other natural heritage system or identify new systems in a manner that is consistent with the PPS. (GP 4.2.2.6)
- The Province has issued a Technical Report (OMNRF 2018) that provides detailed information on the NHS for the Place to Grow for the GTA, which, although not a policy document, does assist municipalities in the implementation and refinement of the Province's NHS.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The Greenbelt Plan's overall approach to natural heritage has not undergone significant change from the 2005 version. The primary goal concerning natural heritage included in the plan's vision remains the same: "giving permanent protection to the natural heritage and water resource systems that sustain ecological and human

health...". (GBP 1.2.1) Likewise the Protected Countryside Goals related to Environmental Protection were largely already in place, addressing both natural heritage and water resources. (GBP 1.2.2)

- The previous Greenbelt Plan had a robust framework for protecting the Natural System, which was inclusive of the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System. Concepts of biodiversity and ecological integrity were already present in the policies. However, new text emphasizes that natural heritage, hydrologic and/or landform features provide essential ecosystem services, including water storage and filtration, cleaner air, habitat, support for pollinators, carbon storage and resilience to climate change. (GBP 3.2.1)
- New text emphasizes that the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System will connect to the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan and, together, these systems will comprise and function as a connected regional natural heritage system (the region being the Greater Golden Horseshoe). (GBP 3.2.1)
- The implementation section of the Greenbelt Plan 2017 has been strengthened. Municipalities now shall (rather than should) provide a map showing known *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* and any associated minimum *vegetation protection zones* identified in this Plan. New text indicates that *key hydrologic areas* shall be identified and the appropriate designations and policies will be applied in official plans to provide for their long-term protection. (GBP 5.3)

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- Although many of the policies of the NEP 2017 have undergone significant change, the overall structure of the plan, which establishes land use designations and details development criteria, has remained the same.
- The purpose and objectives stated in the introduction relative to natural heritage are unchanged. The purpose of the NEP is to "provide for the maintenance of the *Niagara Escarpment* and land in its vicinity substantially as a continuous *natural environment*, and to ensure only such development occurs as is *compatible* with that *natural environment*." The objective related to natural heritage is also unchanged: to protect unique natural areas.
- New text in the introduction explains the landscape approach taken by the NEP and the relevance of natural heritage: "The land use designations of this Plan focus on the continuous landform of the *Escarpment* and provide a series of connected and

protected areas. These land use designations ensure a broader landscape approach to protecting the natural environment and should be implemented in a way that recognizes the natural heritage system of the Niagara Escarpment and associated natural heritage features.” Under this section, similar to the other provincial plans, the text of the NEP conceptualizes natural systems as made up of natural heritage features and hydrologic features that often coincide.

- Natural heritage continues to be among the criteria for designation for certain land use designations, particularly Escarpment Natural Area and Escarpment Protection Area. The objectives, criteria for designation and permitted uses for these land use designations have been refined. Although the NEP does not define a natural heritage system per se, the combination of Escarpment Protection and Escarpment Natural Area designations are a *de facto* NHS and are illustrated as such in the Place to Grow Technical report.
- The NEP 2017 includes updated provincial mapping to reflect changes to the lands within the Niagara Escarpment designations. Specifically, the Escarpment Natural Area has increased in size, whereas the Escarpment Rural Area has decreased.
- The greatest area of substantive change regarding natural heritage is within the development criteria. There is a new section which establishes an expanded set of policies regarding development affecting natural heritage (NEP 2.7). The objective listed for the designation criteria is “to protect and where possible enhance natural heritage features and functions, in order to maintain the diversity and connectivity of the continuous natural environment.”

Implications for the ROP

- The ROP already identifies a Natural Heritage System, thus satisfying the policy direction established in 2.1.3 of the PPS 2014.
- The ROP already references preserving and enhancing biological diversity as the goal of the Natural Heritage System (ROP 114). In a number of policies, the ROP uses the term biological diversity instead of biodiversity. Biodiversity and biological diversity are synonyms, although there may be merit in changing to the use of biodiversity in the ROP to align with language used in the PPS 2020.
- The ROP already has a well-elaborated set of policies on the Natural Heritage System that satisfies the main goals of new Place to Grow policies concerning the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, connectivity and long-term ecological function.

- However, although the Place to Grow and ROP align in their intent to protect natural heritage the approach taken by the Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019 presents some implementation challenges in bringing the ROP into conformity.
 - In the ROP, the RNHS is a designation (not an overlay) and the Greenbelt NHS is an overlay. The Natural Heritage System as a whole is addressed in Part III Land Stewardship Policies of the ROP. The RNHS is addressed as a designation and the Greenbelt NHS as a “Constraint on Development”. The Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019 indicates that the mapping of the Provincial *Natural Heritage System* is to be incorporated as an overlay.
 - The RNHS is currently mapped. In Halton, the majority of the Place to Grow NHS is contained within the Region’s NHS, thus it adds only a small area to the features, enhancements, buffers and linkages already included in the Region’s NHS (as discussed in more detail in the Mapping Audit Technical Memo). However, the Place to Grow NHS mapping does not cover the full extent of the RNHS. As discussed below, the Place to Grow definitions of the natural heritage system and the features within it do not perfectly align with the approach taken to the RNHS in the ROP, nor the policies that pertain to them. Therefore, the Place to Grow NHS is not a perfect substitute for the RNHS in terms of the areas it covers and the policies that pertain to them, although it is close in intent.

- In essence, the RNHS and the Place to Grow NHS are different frameworks for achieving similar general objectives. The approach taken to the RNHS in the ROP will likely have to be altered to consider how it can accommodate the Place to Grow NHS. The RNHS can be used to create a higher standard of protection, as well as continue to protect natural heritage features or systems outside of the Place to Grow NHS as per GP 4.2.2.6.

- In terms of new policy on implementation in the Greenbelt Plan 2017, the ROP appears to satisfy the requirement to map *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* and any associated *vegetation protection zones* identified in the Greenbelt Plan. This mapping was already approved by the Province during the ROPA 38 process. However, it would be worth double-checking if the *Key Features* mapped and the Greenbelt Plan definitions of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* perfectly align, and the general approach that was taken to identifying *vegetation protection zones*.

- Consideration should be given to the broader approach to conformity with the NEP 2017. While generally aligned with the Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019, there are differences in policy (discussed in sections below). These policy differences could be reflected in the ROP, or the ROP might simply indicate that its own policies are subject to the NEP 2017 as per ROP 62.
- Changes to the NEP 2017 may also be reflected in objectives for the Natural Heritage System detailed in ROP 114.1:
 - The NEP 2017 has added an objective of the Escarpment Natural Area: “To recognize, protect and where possible enhance the natural heritage and hydrological systems associated with the Niagara Escarpment Plan area”, which could be considered for inclusion under the objectives for the Natural Heritage System listed in ROP 114.1.
 - The NEP 2017 has revised the objective that ROP 114.1 (1) was drawn from to two objectives: “To protect the most natural Escarpment features, valleylands, wetlands and related significant natural areas”; and “To conserve cultural heritage resources, including features and areas of interest to First Nations and Métis communities.” ROP 114.1(1) might be revised accordingly.
 - The NEP 2017 has revised the objectives that ROP 114.1(2) was drawn from to: “To maintain and enhance the scenic resources and open landscape character of the Escarpment.” ROP 114.1(2) might be revised accordingly.
- More broadly, the objectives for the ROP Natural Heritage System should be reviewed in light of the policy changes in Provincial policy documents and corresponding change in the policies of the ROP.

2.3.5 Defining the Natural Heritage System

PPS: 6.0

GP: Definitions

GBP: 3.2.1, 3.2.5, 7

NEP: Appendix 2

PPS 2020

- The PPS definition of *natural heritage system* has been refined. It has clarified that “linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes” are part of the system as well as *natural heritage features and areas*. In addition, within this definition, it has added to the list of areas which can be included in natural heritage systems: *natural heritage features and areas*, federal and

provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue.

- The PPS definition of *natural heritage features and areas* has been refined to: add “other *coastal wetlands* in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E”; clarify the geography of “*significant woodlands* and *significant valleylands* in Ecoregions 6E and 7E (excluding islands in Lake Huron and the St. Marys River)”; and change terminology to the “*habitat of endangered species and threatened species.*”
- Worthy to note, unlike A Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2017, the PPS does not include definitions for *key natural heritage features* or *key hydrologic features*.

A Place to Grow 2019

- Although the Growth Plan 2006 included some policies on natural systems, it did not define these systems. As discussed above, the Place to Grow 2019 has added greatly elaborated policies on the *Natural Heritage System*, closely aligned with policies on *water resource systems* (more on *water resource systems* below). The policies are supported by a number of new definitions, including for terms: *Natural Heritage System*, *natural heritage features and areas*, *key natural heritage features*, *key hydrologic areas*, as well as a number of supporting definitions. For the most part, these definitions are drawn from the PPS 2014 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, creating alignment between the policies and plans. Further, A Place to Grow 2019 has included a definition for Natural Heritage Mapping for the Growth Plan.
- The implications of these definitions are significant. The *Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan* has been mapped by the Province and municipalities must incorporate it into their official plans as an overlay, with some scope for refinement. Some Place to Grow 2019 policies apply to the entire *Natural Heritage System*, while some apply only to *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- Although there have been refinements to some supporting definitions, the overall approach taken by the Greenbelt Plan 2017 and the main definitions describing the Natural Heritage System remain largely unchanged.

- One refinement to the description of the Natural Heritage System included in the text is to indicate that both core areas and linkage areas are included. (GBP 3.2.1)
- Additional refinements have been made to the definition of *key natural heritage features* to change the wording to “*habitat of endangered species and threatened species*” (which is now a defined term) and adding “(including special concern species)” to “*significant wildlife habitat*”. (GBP 3.2.5)

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- The terminology used in reference to natural heritage features and functions has been updated to reflect that used in the PPS 2014 and other updated Provincial plans.
- Although “natural heritage system” is not a defined term within the NEP 2017, within the text, the term “key natural heritage features” is introduced and defined largely as per the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, with the following exceptions:
 - It omits sand barrens, savannahs, tall grass prairies and alvars;
 - It includes Earth Science *Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest*; and
 - It only refers to habitat of special concern species within certain land use designations: Escarpment Natural and Escarpment Protection areas.

Implications for the ROP

ROP RNHS and Greenbelt NHS

- ROP 115.3(1) should be refined to reflect the updated definition of *key natural heritage features* in the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 related to *significant wildlife habitat* and *habitat of endangered and threatened species*.
- ROP 139.3 should remove “*significant habitat of special concern species*” as a revised term will now be covered by a revised ROP 115.3(1). This change and the one above would bring the description of the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System included in ROP 139.3.3 into alignment with the Greenbelt Plan 2017.

ROP RNHS – Key Features

- The more significant challenge in bringing the ROP into conformity with the PPS 2020 and Provincial plans relates to the RNHS.
- The Place to Grow 2019 imports the definitions of *Natural Heritage System* and *natural heritage features and areas* from the PPS 2014 (with some modification) and

the definitions of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* from the Greenbelt Plan 2017.

- The RNHS *Key Features* identified in ROP 115.3(1) do not perfectly align with the Place to Grow 2019 definitions of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*. A comparison is shown in Table 2. The RNHS does not include the following features:
 - sand barrens, savannahs and tallgrass prairies
 - alvars
 - permanent streams
 - intermittent streams
 - inland lakes and their littoral zones
 - seepage areas and springs

It should be noted that, through ROP 139.3.3, these features are included in the *Key Features* for the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. It is also important to note that sand barrens are not present within Halton Region. However, there is potential for alvars in northwest Halton and prairie and/or savannah remnants may have historically existed along the north shore of Lake Ontario in Burlington and Oakville.

- The ROP list of items under the term *Key Features* reflects the PPS definition *natural heritage features and areas*. They represent a narrower set of features than captured under the Place to Grow 2019 definition of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*. There may be advantages to maintaining a term for *Key Features* that is drawn from the PPS (for example protecting natural heritage features outside of the Place to Grow NHS) but the value of such an approach would require further analysis. The main point here is that, in assessing ROP conformity with the Place to Grow 2019, ROP *Key Features* cover a narrower set of terms. This difference in scope was previously addressed concerning the Greenbelt Plan through the addition of extra features in ROP 139.3.3 concerning the Greenbelt NHS.
- In addition to the terminology related to habitat discussed above, the RNHS uses slightly different terms relative to the Place to Grow 2019:
 - *significant wetlands* and *significant coastal wetlands* instead of *wetlands*
 - *significant areas of natural and scientific interest* instead of *life science area of natural and scientific interest*
- Worthy to note, the list of items included under *Key Features* of the RNHS closely align with the definition of *natural heritage features and areas* included in the PPS 2005. The distinction between the use of the term *natural heritage features and areas*

in the PPS 2014/2020 and Place to Grow 2019 and the use of the term *key natural heritage features* in the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 is discussed later in this section.

ROP RNHS – Included in NHS beyond Key Features

- *Key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* can be a part of the Place to Grow 2019 *Natural Heritage System* (see GP definition of *Natural Heritage System*). *Key Features* are a part of the ROP RNHS. However, in both instances these conceptions of the natural heritage system include other items not captured under the term key feature. A comparison of these items is shown in Table 2, included in the Appendix. Many of these items, which are differently defined, may in practice overlap. Further analysis would be required to assess the practical implications of the different definitions, in terms of the areas covered. The implications of these differences are: a required revision to the ROP to ensure that the items included in the Place to Grow 2019 are given due protection; and consideration of whether the areas within the RNHS that are not included in the Place to Grow NHS merit continued protection under the ROP.

Greenbelt NHS – Included in NHS beyond Key Features

- The Greenbelt Plan 2017 includes only a very general description of the Natural Heritage System, indicating that it “includes core areas and linkage areas of the Protected Countryside with the highest concentration of the most sensitive and/or *significant* natural features and functions.” Unlike the Place to Grow 2019, which lists what the NHS does and can comprise, the Greenbelt Plan 2017 does not include a description of what the Natural Heritage System comprises in addition, presumably, to *key natural heritage features*, *key hydrologic features* and linkages. It is therefore not possible to assess the differences between the RNHS and the Greenbelt Plan 2017 in terms of the full scope of the areas it protects. This has been avoided by the ROP to date by having two NHS: one Greenbelt NHS and one RNHS.

Other

- A Place to Grow 2019 includes a definition of *natural heritage features and areas* drawn from the PPS 2014 and a definition of *key natural heritage features* drawn from the Greenbelt Plan 2017. Although similar, *natural heritage features and areas* is slightly less broad in scope. The PPS uses this term in its policies, while the Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019 relies more heavily on *Natural Heritage System*, *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*, but uses the term *natural heritage features and areas* in select policies related to designated greenfield areas and

settlement area expansions (2.2.7.3, 4.2.2.7). The Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2019 do not have a definition of *natural heritage features and areas*.

- The significance of NEP 2017 omissions and additions within the definition of key natural heritage features should be considered by the ROP review. The ROP could harmonize the Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019 and NEP 2017 definitions to the most protective level to offer consistency across the areas covered by the provincial plans.

2.3.6 Overall Approach to Water Resource Systems

PPS: 2.1.2

GP: 4.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.9

GBP: 3.2.1, 3.2.3, 3.2.4, 5.3

NEP: 1.3.1, 2.6

PPS 2020

- Although policy directions addressing water were already established in the PPS 2005, the PPS 2014 and 2020 has significantly evolved its approach to water.
- Some the key policy directions that have remained the same include:
 - The recognition of the linkages between and among *natural heritage features and areas*, *surface water features* and *ground water features* as critical to the long term *ecological function* and biodiversity of *natural heritage systems* (PPS 2.1.2)
 - The overall goal to protect, improve or restore the *quality and quantity of water* (PPS 2.2.1)
 - The *watershed* as the ecologically meaningful scale for planning for water (PPS 2.2.1.a)
 - Restrictions on *development* and *site alteration* related to water (PPS 2.2.1.f, 2.2.2)
- Policy directions that have evolved in the PPS 2020 include:
 - Emphasis on “integrated and long-term” planning at the watershed level as the “foundation for considering cumulative impacts of development” (PPS 2.2.1.a)
 - Introduction of the water resource systems concept, bringing together components including *ground water features*, *hydrologic functions*, *natural heritage features and areas*, and *surface water features* including shoreline

areas. The requirement to identify these components was established in PPS 2005, but PPS 2020 brings them together into one system. (PPS 2.2.1.d)

- The emphasis on maintaining linkages and related functions among the components of the water resource system remains and shoreline areas are added to these components (PPS 2.2.1.e)
- Strengthening the direction given to Planning Authorities to plan for rather than promote the sustainable use of water resources (PPS 2.2.1.g)
- The addition of the consideration of environmental lake capacity (PPS 2.2.1.h)

A Place to Grow 2019

- In the previous Place to Grow, policies which included reference to watershed planning, and the goal of ensuring that water quality is maintained and preserved, were limited to policy sections pertaining to infrastructure to support growth (water and wastewater systems).
- The new Place to Grow 2019 introduces a much broader, comprehensive approach for planning for water, centred on *watershed planning*. The goals of the policies are:
 - the protection, enhancement, or restoration of the *quality and quantity of water* within a watershed. (GP 4.2.1.1)
 - the long-term protection of *key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas*, and their functions. (GP 4.2.1.2)
- The new section (GP 4.2.1) on *Water Resource Systems* also identifies means to achieve these goals:
 - *Watershed planning*, in partnership with conservation authorities as appropriate. (GP 4.2.1.1)
 - The identification of *Water Resource Systems*, to provide for the long-term protection of *key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas*, and their functions. (GP 4.2.1.2)
- Further, section 4.2.1 states that:
 - *Watershed planning* or equivalent will inform the identification of water resource systems, decisions on allocation of growth and planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. (GP 4.2.1.3)
 - Planning for designated greenfield areas will be informed by a subwatershed plan or equivalent. (GP 4.2.1.4)
 - As part of *watershed planning* and coastal or waterfront planning initiatives, municipalities will consider the Great Lakes Strategy, the targets and goals of

the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015, and any applicable Great Lakes agreements. (GP 4.2.1.4)

- New text in section GP 4.1 indicates that the above approach will provide a similar level of protection as provided in the Greenbelt, creating a consistent framework for water protection across the GGH, and building on existing plans and policies, including source protection plans developed under the Clean Water Act, 2006.
- A new section was added, GP 4.2.9 A Culture of Conservation, which requires municipalities to develop official plan policies that support water conservation, including water demand management and water recycling.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The overall conception of the Water Resource System within the Greenbelt Plan remains largely unchanged. The Water Resource System and the Natural Heritage System (which often coincide given ecological linkages between terrestrial and water-based functions) together form the Natural System. (GBP 3.2.1)
- Basic direction to planning authorities remains the same: to provide for a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach for the protection, improvement or restoration of the quality and quantity of water. (GBP 3.2.3.1)
- The major changes in the policy direction established by the Greenbelt Plan 2017 relate to the purpose and role of *watershed planning* and the requirement to identify Water Resource Systems:
 - The previous plan indicated that watersheds are the most meaningful scale for hydrological planning. However, in the Greenbelt Plan 2017, there has been a shift in language concerning watershed planning from “ensure that watershed plans are completed and used to guide planning and development decisions within the Protected Countryside” to “ensure that watershed planning is undertaken to support a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach to the protection, enhancement or restoration of the quality and quantity of water within a watershed.” This shift in language represents broadening the scale from thinking about the water issue in the context of planning and development in the Protected Countryside to thinking about larger goals at the watershed scale. (GBP 3.2.3.2)
 - A new policy establishes the requirement to identify Water Resource Systems, informed by watershed planning and other available information, and to apply

appropriate designations and policies to provide for the long-term protection of *key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas* and their functions. (GBP 3.2.3.3, 5.3)

- A new policy establishes that decisions on allocation of growth and planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure shall be informed by applicable *watershed planning* in accordance with the Place to Grow. (GBP 3.2.4)

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- A focus on Water Resources was present in the previous version of the NEP. The NEP's objective related to water resources, included in the introduction, is unchanged: to maintain and enhance the quality and character of natural streams and water supplies.
- Among the new objectives for the Escarpment Natural Area is "to recognize, protect and where possible enhance the natural heritage and hydrological systems associated with the Niagara Escarpment Plan area." (NEP 1.3.1)
- Although many policies have changed, the previous NEP included a substantial section addressing New Development Affecting Water Resources, which has been changed to section 2.6, Development Affecting Water Resources in the NEP 2017. The objective of this section has been revised: "to ensure that hydrologic features and functions including the quality, quantity and character of groundwater and surface water, at the local and watershed level, are protected and where possible enhanced."

Implications for the ROP

- The ROP should consider strengthening their approach to incorporating *watershed planning* into planning within the Region.
- The primary section of the ROP addressing water is currently within Part IV Healthy Community Policies. Although some policies supporting Provincial policy direction on water are included, currently the ROP does not identify water resource systems, map them, or apply designations that pertain to them. (ROP 144 and 145) This is now a requirement of both the Place to Grow 2019 and the Greenbelt Plan 2017.
- The ROP has a policy in place directing the Region to undertake the preparation of *watershed plans*, in partnership with Conservation Authorities and in consultation with the Local Municipalities in Halton and other municipalities in the respective watersheds. (ROP 145(6))

- The Place to Grow 2019 and the Greenbelt Plan 2017 present policies on *Water Resource Systems* and the *Natural Heritage System* in an integrated way. Careful consideration will have to be given to whether these two systems should be addressed in a separate or integrated manner and where the new policies on Water Resource Systems are best located within the ROP.
- Land use designations in the ROP are mutually exclusive. Some components of Water Resource Systems are likely to make more sense as an overlay, for example *significant groundwater recharge areas*. Policy language in the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 regarding the application of appropriate designations and policies to provide for the long-term protection of *key hydrologic features, key hydrologic areas*, and their functions will have to be interpreted in a way that makes sense for the ROP.

2.3.7 Defining Water Resource Systems

PPS: 6.0

GP: 7

GBP: Definitions

NEP: Appendix 2

PPS 2020

- As discussed above, the PPS already included definitions of *ground water features, hydrologic functions, and natural heritage features and areas*, and *surface water features* and the requirement to identify them. The major change is to group these items under the term water resource systems (not a definition, but described in policy). With the exception of the refinement of the definition of *natural heritage features and areas*, the definitions of these components have not changed since the previous PPS.

A Place to Grow 2019

- As discussed above, the approach taken by the Place to Grow 2019 to water has changed significantly. Similar to the approach taken to natural heritage, the Place to Grow 2019 has imported concepts and definitions from both the PPS 2014 and Greenbelt Plan 2017.
 - From the PPS 2014, it has drawn definitions for *ground water feature, hydrologic function, quantity and quality of water, surface water feature*.
 - From the Greenbelt Plan 2017, it has drawn definitions for *key hydrologic features, seepage areas and springs*.

- As well, there are a series of definitions that are aligned but new to both the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017: *highly vulnerable aquifer, key hydrologic areas, significant groundwater recharge area, significant surface water contribution area, and sub-watershed plan.*
- Although based on the PPS 2014, the definition of Water Resource System included in the Place to Grow 2019 differs from the conception described by the PPS 2014:
 - The Place to Grow 2019 definition indicates that a Water Resource System consists of *ground water features and areas and surface water features* (including shoreline areas), and *hydrologic functions*. It does not include *natural heritage features and areas* as the PPS 2014 does.
 - It adds the phrase “which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption” (drawn from the Greenbelt Plan) rather than the wording used in the PPS 2014, “which are necessary for the ecological and hydrological integrity of the watershed.”
 - It adds “The water resource system will comprise *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas*”, which are defined in the Place to Grow but do not appear in the PPS 2014 (nor are these two terms defined in the PPS).
- As with the *Natural Heritage System*, *Water Resource Systems* has a broad definition, but a narrower set of features is identified for a different level of protection through policy (*key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas*).

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The Protected Countryside Goals related to Environmental Protection were largely in place, addressing both natural heritage and water resources. The main change was to add “*watershed/ subwatershed and stormwater management planning, water and wastewater servicing*” to the list of matters the Plan is to provide guidance on in the context of the management of natural heritage and water resources. (GBP 1.2.2)
- The high-level description of Water Resource System remains largely the same in the Greenbelt Plan 2017: “made up of both ground and surface water features and areas and their associated functions, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption” (“and areas” has been added).
- The use of the defined terms *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas* replaces the use of longer lists of other terms in GBP 3.2.3.1.

- The definition of *key hydrologic features* remains the same. *Key hydrologic features* include:
 - *Permanent and intermittent streams;*
 - *Lakes* (and their littoral zones);
 - *Seepage areas and springs;* and
 - *Wetlands.*
- *Key hydrologic areas* is a new term (and is also the focus of a new section, GBP 3.2.4). *Key hydrologic areas* include:
 - *Significant groundwater recharge areas;*
 - *Highly vulnerable aquifers;* and
 - *Significant surface water contribution areas.*
- Both definitions have also been included in the Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019.
- Other terms newly defined in the Greenbelt Plan 2017 include: *highly vulnerable aquifer, significant groundwater recharge area, significant surface water contribution areas, subwatershed plan.*
- The Greenbelt Plan 2017 now defines *watershed planning* rather than *watershed plan*. The definition for *watershed plan* in the Greenbelt Plan 2005 provides specific components that *watershed plans* must include, such as a water budget and conservation plan. *Watershed plan* requirements are currently captured in ROP 145(6), and while the Greenbelt Plan 2005 watershed plan component requirements are generally satisfied, not all components are explicitly met. The definition of *watershed planning* in the Greenbelt Plan 2017 takes a broader approach, prescribing requirements that the overall planning framework should address and emphasizing the importance of planning for cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts. The definition incorporates recent developments in the field, such as climate change and scenario modelling to evaluate the impacts of forecasted growth and servicing options. The inclusion of performance measures and criteria for evaluating the protection of quality and quantity of water is also specified, expanding on the evaluation criteria definition of the Greenbelt Plan 2005.

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- As with natural heritage, the terminology used in reference to hydrologic features and functions has been updated to reflect that used in the PPS 2014 and other updated Provincial plans.

- Although “water resource system(s)” is not a defined term within the NEP 2017, the term “key hydrologic features” is introduced within the text and newly defined as per the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017.

Implications for the ROP

- The ROP does not currently have a definition or description of *water resource systems*, nor defined terms to support a definition, such as those included in the PPS 2020, Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017: *ground water feature, highly vulnerable aquifer, hydrological function, intermittent streams, key hydrological areas, key hydrological features, lakes, permanent streams, quality and quantity of water, seepage areas and springs, significant groundwater recharge area, significant surface water contribution areas, subwatershed plan and surface water feature*. These are likely to be required to achieve consistency and conformity with Provincial planning policy. A definition of *water resource system* will have to be included in the ROP that balances those varying definitions included in the PPS 2020, Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt 2017.
- The ROP has a definition of *watershed plan* drawn from the Greenbelt Plan 2005. The term and definition should be changed to align with the Place to Grow Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 definition of *watershed planning*.
- Additional watershed planning policy is required. ROP 145(6) requires watershed plans to define water quality and various other objectives, however does not require the establishment of performance measures or evaluation criteria. A subsection should be added to ROP 145(6) that requires watershed plans to include evaluation criteria and performance measures.
- Given the increased significance of *watershed planning* in the Provincial plans and policies, consideration should be given to how the concept can be integrated throughout the ROP, particularly to reference watershed planning objectives, such as the protection of water resources, the assessment of cumulative impacts and cross-jurisdictional impacts. This requires a new policy be added to ROP Section 145; however, *watershed planning* may also be incorporated into additional sections of the ROP, such as Part II, Part III, Part V, and Part VI, related to overall planning objectives, development, land use, natural heritage systems and coordination with neighbouring municipalities.

2.3.8 Supporting Definitions

- The PPS 2020, Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2017 have revised and added terms and definitions related to natural heritage and water resources. They are grouped by category below and the implications for the ROP discussed.

Terms present in the ROP that are drawn from a Provincial policy document in which the definition has changed

- Terms under this category include:
 - *Development*
 - *Planned Corridors*
 - *Vegetation Protection Zone*
- Definitions for these terms should be updated to match the new definitions in Provincial policy documents, with care paid to the impact of the change on the significance of policies which use the terms.
- The appropriateness of replacing the use of the ROP term *buffer* with *vegetation protection zone* is discussed elsewhere in this memo.

New terms and definitions that are included in the PPS 2020, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017, but not currently in the ROP

- Terms under this category include:
 - *Green Infrastructure*
 - *Habitat of Endangered Species and Threatened Species*
 - *Hydrologic Function*
 - *Valleylands*
- *Green infrastructure* is a concept which has been added to the four Provincial planning documents. As discussed elsewhere in this memo, it should be added as a defined term and appropriate policies promoting *green infrastructure* should be added to the ROP.
- The term *habitat of endangered species and threatened species* replaces the term *significant habitat of endangered species, threatened species and special concern species* in the Greenbelt Plan and now appears in the other Provincial planning documents as well, where it is included in the definition of *key natural heritage feature* (GP, GBP, NEP) and *natural heritage features and areas* (PPS, GP). It should be included as a new defined term in the ROP, and included in the definition of *Key Features*.

- *Hydrologic function* is important to conceptions of *water resource systems* and should be added to the ROP as a defined term.
- A definition of *valleylands* or *significant valleylands* should be added to the ROP to support the definition of *Key Features*.

Definitions which are now included in both the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, but not currently included in the ROP

- Terms under this category include:
 - *Alvars*
 - *Ecological Integrity*
 - *Ecological Value*
 - *Highly Vulnerable Aquifer*
 - *Life Sciences Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest*
 - *Low Impact Development*
 - *Key Hydrologic Areas*
 - *Key Hydrologic Features*
 - *Sand Barrens*
 - *Savannahs*
 - *Seepage Areas and Springs*
 - *Significant Groundwater Recharge Area*
 - *Significant Surface Water Contribution Areas*
 - *Subwatershed Plan*
 - *Tallgrass Prairies*
- The terms *sand barrens*, *savannahs*, *tallgrass prairies* and *alvars* are included within A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 definitions of *key natural heritage features*. *Sand barrens* are not present in Halton Region and therefore do not merit inclusion in the ROP. However, *savannah*, *tallgrass prairie* and *alvar* are pertinent to the Region's NHS, either due to their historic presence and therefore potential for restoration, or the potential presence of unknown remnants. They should be included in the defined terms in the ROP unless reference to definitions in the A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 is deemed adequate (as is currently the case regarding ROP 139.3.3).
- There may be some value in including *ecological integrity* and *ecological value* as defined terms if the terms are used elsewhere in the ROP, but this change may not be necessary.

- *Highly vulnerable aquifer, significant groundwater recharge area, and significant surface water contribution areas* are included within the definition of *key hydrologic areas*. *Key hydrologic areas* are required to be identified. As such, these terms and their associated definitions should be added to the ROP.
- The value of defining *key hydrologic features* within the ROP will depend on the approach taken to *Key Features* (i.e. whether the term *Key Features* is retained and incorporates the terms *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*, or whether these terms are incorporated into the ROP to distinguish between types of *Key Features*. Further discussion on this point is included in sections below).
- The term *life sciences area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI)* is included as a *key natural heritage feature* by the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017. The term *area of natural and scientific interest* currently appears in the ROP but is not defined.
- *Seepage areas and springs* are included in the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 definitions of *key hydrologic features* and should be incorporated into the ROP.

Definitions which are now included in the PPS 2020 and A Place to Grow 2019 which are currently not included in the ROP

- Terms under this category include:
 - *Ground Water Feature*
 - *Surface Water Features*
- The terms *ground water feature* and *surface water features* appear in the Place to Grow 2019 definition of *water resource system*. If this term is incorporated into the ROP, then these supporting definitions should as well.

New definitions in the PPS 2020 and NEP 2014 which are currently not included in the ROP

- The term under this category is:
 - *Comprehensive Rehabilitation*
- The usefulness of the term *comprehensive rehabilitation* relative to mineral aggregate operations should be evaluated in the Halton context.

Special consideration

- Terms under this category include:
 - *Key Natural Heritage Features*
 - *Natural Heritage Areas and Features*

- *Natural Heritage System*
 - *Negative Impacts*
 - *Significant*
 - *Significant Woodland*
-
- The value of incorporating definitions for *key natural heritage features, natural heritage areas and features, natural heritage system* will depend on the overall approach taken to ROP consistency/conformity with Provincial planning policy on natural heritage.
 - The ROP definition of *negative impacts* was adapted from the PPS 2005, which has been refined in the PPS 2014/2020.
 - From a natural heritage perspective, there is virtually no practical difference. Part a) of the new definition is new, but relates to the provision of private servicing and partial servicing, not natural heritage per se. There are changes related to impacts to *fish habitat* that reflect revisions that were made to the federal Fisheries Act which have to be respected regardless. The definition of *negative impact* with respect to other natural features was unchanged.
 - From a water resources perspective, a new subsection (a) was added, which requires that negative impacts related to the degradation of the quality and quantity of water should be assessed through environmental studies. The ROP definition of *negative impacts* should be updated accordingly. The refined definition in the PPS 2020 aligns with the ROP's approach in Section 118(3) requiring an EIA to demonstrate a *development or site alternation* will result in no negative impacts.
 - The ROP definition of *significant* is partially drawn from the PPS definition, which has changed.
 - From a natural heritage perspective, the main difference between the 2005 and 2014/2020 is the removal of the section relevant to the habitat of endangered species and threatened species. This is because the PPS 2014/2020 added a new policy, 2.1.7, which made it clear that the protection of endangered and threatened species would be through the established provincial and federal protocols. As with *fish habitat*, these protocols have to be followed regardless. Thus, other than making the ROP policy language consistent with the new PPS, there are no major implications.
 - The ROP definition of *significant woodland* is different than those included in the Provincial planning documents.

- The 2020 PPS also adds that the Province will provide criteria for identifying *significant woodlands*, but these were never produced and thus the Region's current criteria do not need to be refined. However, the current definition of Significant Woodlands was approved at the OMB through ROPA 38. Further discussion with the Province need to occur to determine the best approach to address conformity.

2.3.9 Key Natural Heritage System and Water Resource Systems(s) Policies

PPS: 2.1

GP: 4.1.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.4

GBP: 3.2, 3.2.4, 3.2.5, 4.5.4, 4.5.5

NEP: 2.6, 2.7

PPS 2020

- Section 2.1 addresses natural heritage and, among other things, areas in which *development* and *site alteration* will not be permitted subject to varying conditions. The main substantive changes to the policies include:
 - A change in the way the *habitat of endangered species and threatened species* is addressed, including to clarify that no development and site alteration shall be permitted "except in accordance with provincial and federal requirements." (PPS 2.1.7)
 - Clarification of applicable geographies for *significant woodlands* and *significant valleylands*. (PPS 2.1.5)
 - Addition of *coastal wetlands* in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E not already captured under *significant coastal wetlands*. (PPS 2.1.5)

A Place to Grow 2019

- Within the "Protecting What is Valuable" section of A Place to Grow 2019 (section 4), the approach to natural systems has been completely overhauled. A new set of policies addressing the *Natural Heritage System* and *Water Resource Systems* has been added which largely aligns to the approach taken by the Greenbelt Plan 2017. The general approach of these changes and their significance for the ROP is discussed above. Specific policy directions, particularly related to *development* and *site alteration*, are discussed below.
- Policy 4.2.2.3 a) establishes requirements on new *development* or *site alteration* within the *Natural Heritage System*. New buildings or structures for *agricultural uses*,

agriculture-related uses, or on-farm diversified uses are not subject to this policy.
(4.2.2.3 b))

- Section 4.2.3 outlines the permitted scope of *development* and *site alteration* in *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*. Further, it establishes policies that must be met in permitting large scale development outside of *settlement areas* within a *key hydrologic area*.
- Section 4.2.4 provides guidance on lands adjacent to *key natural heritage features* within the *Natural Heritage System* and *key hydrologic areas*, particularly related to *vegetation protection zones*, any additional restrictions to be applied, and the evaluations required to establish them. Exemptions are provided for uses related to agriculture.
- GBP 4.2.4.5 pertains to developed shoreline areas of inland lakes, outside of settlement areas, that are designated or zoned for concentrations of development as of July 1, 2017.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The structure of the section pertaining to Natural System is largely that of the previous Greenbelt Plan. It indicates that the Natural System is made up of a Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System. Policy sub-sections show how the two systems are intertwined, for example, by addressing *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* together. Throughout this section changes have been made to reflect updates in the wording of defined terms. As well, some additions and refinements have been made regarding *development* and *site alteration*. (GBP 3.2)
- Policy 3.2.2.3 regarding new *development* and *site alteration* in the Natural Heritage System has undergone minor refinements and reordering.
- A new section (GBP 3.2.4) has been added addressing *key hydrologic areas*. In addition to describing their function and defining what *key hydrologic areas* comprise, the section includes policies on *major development*, including:
 - The conditions related to *hydrologic function* under which *major development* will be permitted within *key hydrologic areas* in the Protected Countryside, i.e. where it has been demonstrated that the *hydrologic functions*, including *groundwater and surface water quality and quantity*, of these areas are protected and, where possible, improved or restored. (GBP 3.2.4.1 a))

- An exemption from the above policy for new or expanded buildings or structures related to agriculture. (GBP 3.2.4.1 b))
- Section 3.2.5, which addresses *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*, remains largely unchanged with the following exceptions:
 - A new policy which exempts a proposal for *new development* or *site alteration* within the Natural Heritage System, where the only *key natural heritage feature* is the *habitat of endangered species and threatened species*, from the policy requiring a natural heritage evaluation or hydrological evaluation to identify a *vegetative protection zone*. (3.2.5.6). The habitat of endangered species and threatened species would be addressed through the Endangered Species Act.
 - Policy 3.2.5.7, regarding new buildings or structures related to agriculture, has changed from requiring a 30-metre *vegetation protection zone* from a *key natural heritage feature* or *key hydrologic feature*, to not requiring a natural heritage evaluation or hydrological evaluation if a 30-metre *vegetation protection zone* is provided. Wording has also changed from “may be exempted” to “are exempt” from the requirement of establishing a condition of *natural self-sustaining vegetation* if the land is and will continue to be used for agricultural purposes.
- Policies on existing uses in Section 4.5 have also undergone some refinement:
 - Adding *vegetation protection zones* to the areas to be addressed by policies 4.5.4 and 4.5.5, concerning expansions and alterations to particular existing uses within *key natural heritage features*, *key hydrologic features* and their associated *vegetation protection zones*.
 - Change in policy 4.5.5 clarifies that this policy applies to expansions of existing residential dwellings, not new residential dwellings.

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- Although the previous NEP had policies pertaining to development criteria for water resources and particular natural heritage features, in the NEP 2017 these have been completely reworked. In contrast to the Greenbelt Plan 2017 and Place to Grow 2019, key hydrologic features and key natural heritage features are treated separately and, while similar, there are some differences between the policies that pertain to them. As well, although the general approach taken by these policies is similar to that of the Place to Grow 2019, the policies included in the NEP 2017 are in some ways distinct,

in some instances more permissive and in others more restrictive (see section below, Similarities and Differences in Provincial Policy Direction)

- Major new policies concerning development affecting water resources include:
 - 2.6.2 identifies the kinds of development permitted in key hydrologic areas.
 - 2.6.3 to 2.6.6 identify a requirement for a hydrologic evaluation to support any proposal within 120 metres of a key hydrologic feature and establish policies on *vegetation protection zones*.
 - 2.6.9 to 2.6.12 are further policies on water quality and quantity.

- Major new policies concerning development affecting natural heritage include:
 - 2.7.2 identifies kinds of development permitted in key natural heritage areas.
 - 2.7.3 directs the diversity and connectivity between key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features to be maintained.
 - 2.7.4 establishes that development in other natural features not identified as key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features should be avoided.
 - 2.7.5 establishes that where policies or standards of other public bodies or levels of government exceed the policies related to key natural heritage features or key hydrologic features in the NEP, the most restrictive provision or standard applies.
 - 2.7.6, 2.7.7 and 2.7.9 identify a requirement for a natural heritage evaluation to support a proposal within 120 metres of a key natural heritage feature and establish policies on *vegetation protection zones*.
 - 2.7.8 establishes requirements for development within *habitat of endangered species and threatened species*.
 - 2.7.9 to 2.7.12 are policies related to forest management.

Similarities and Differences in Provincial Policy Direction

A Place to Grow 2019 and PPS 2020

- The PPS 2020 includes the following policies that would be deemed more protective than the policies of the Place to Grow 2019:
 - PPS 2.1.4 – *Development and site alteration* shall not be permitted in *significant wetlands* and *significant coastal wetlands*. A Place to Grow 2019 includes *wetlands* within the definition of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic areas*, but does not provide a higher level of protection to *significant wetlands* in the policies of Section 4.2 (except within the definition of *natural heritage features and areas* and GP 4.2.2.7). Therefore, GP 4.2.3.1 outlines the permitted scope of *development* and *site alteration* within *key natural heritage features*.

- PPS 2.1.5 – *Development and site alteration* shall not be permitted in *significant woodlands, significant valleylands, significant wildlife habitat, significant areas of natural and scientific interest* unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no *negative impacts* on the natural features or their *ecological functions*. These features are included within the Place to Grow 2019 definition of *key natural heritage features* but GP 4.2.3.1 describes the scope of permitted *development and site alteration* in *key natural heritage features* without the PPS qualifier “that there will be no *negative impacts* on the natural features or their *ecological functions*”.
- PPS 2.1.6 and 2.1.7 – *Development and site alteration* shall not be permitted in *fish habitat* or the *habitat of endangered species and threatened species* except in accordance with *provincial and federal requirements*. These two features fall within the definitions of *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrological features*, but GP 4.2.3.1 describes the scope of permitted *development and site alteration* in *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrological features* without the PPS 2020 qualifier “in accordance with *provincial and federal requirements*.” However, *fish habitat* and the *habitat of endangered species and threatened species* would also subject to provincial and federal requirements established by the *Fisheries Act* and *Endangered Species Act*.

A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The key policies on natural heritage and water resources in A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 are largely aligned.
- GP 4.2.2.3 and GBP 3.2.2.3, concerning requirements for new *development and site alteration* within the Natural Heritage System, are largely the same. In both plans, the full range of existing and new *agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses, on-farm diversified uses* and *normal farm practices* are permitted. New buildings or structures related to these uses are exempt from the policies concerning new *development and site alteration* within the Natural Heritage System, but are subject to other policies related to *key natural heritage areas, key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas*. (GP 4.2.2.3 b) and GBP 3.2.2.1 and 3.2.2.2).
- There is a difference between the plans in the protections offered outside of the provincially identified Natural Heritage System:
 - GP 4.2.2.7 indicates that beyond the Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan, including within *settlement areas*, municipalities will continue to protect

any other natural heritage features and may continue to protect other natural heritage systems in a manner that is consistent with the PPS.

- The scope of the policies included in the Greenbelt Plan 2019 are narrower and pertain only to *key hydrologic features* and *key natural heritage features*, instead of the NHS as a whole. GBP 3.2.5.2 and 3.2.5.3 establish that beyond the Natural Heritage System within the Protected Countryside, *key hydrologic features* are defined by and subject to the policies of section 3.2.5, while *key natural heritage features* are not, but are to be defined pursuant to, and subject to the policies of, the PPS.
- A Place to Grow 2019 and the Greenbelt Plan 2017 define the scope of *development* and *site alteration* within *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* similarly (GP 4.2.3.1 and GBP 3.2.5.1, 4.1.2.4, 4.3.2.3, 4.5.4, 4.5.5). The main difference is that the Place to Grow 2019 clarifies that these policies apply only “outside of *settlement areas*”. In both plans, the protections apply to “*key natural heritage features* within the *Natural Heritage System*”, but *key hydrologic features* more broadly.
- Policies on large-scale or *major development* within *key hydrologic areas* are similar (GP 4.2.3.2 and GBP 3.2.4)
- Policies on lands adjacent to *key natural heritage features* within the *Natural Heritage System* and *key hydrologic features*, including those on *vegetation protection zones*, are aligned between the two plans, with the same exceptions as above, that the Place to Grow 2019 clarifies that these policies apply only “outside of *settlement areas*”. (GB 4.2.4 and GBP 3.2.5)
- It is worthy to note that the Greenbelt Plan also has a more general policy on proposals for non-agricultural uses in the Protected Countryside that establishes that: there are no *negative impacts* on *key natural heritage features* and/or *key hydrologic features* or their functions; and there are no *negative impacts* on the biodiversity or connectivity of the Natural Heritage System. (GBP 4.1.1.2) This policy has not changed from the previous version of the Greenbelt Plan.

A Place to Grow 2019 and Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- Although the natural heritage and water resource policies of A Place to Grow 2019 and NEP 2017 are generally aligned, there are noteworthy differences in policy detail.
- Concerning permitted development, the Place to Grow 2019 policies address *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic areas* in a combined fashion (GP Section

4). The NEP 2017 addresses them separately and, in some instances, provides different levels of protection. For example, NEP 2.6.2 a) allows “*accessory facilities* to a *single dwelling*” in a key hydrologic feature, whereas NEP 2.7.2 a) allows “the development of a *single dwelling* and *accessory facilities...*” in a key natural heritage feature.

- A Place to Grow policies concern *development* and *site alteration*, whereas the NEP 2017 addresses “development”. (GP Section 4, NEP 2.6, 2.7) “Development” is not a defined term in the NEP 2017, although one is included in the *Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act* that differs from the definition in the Place to Grow 2019.
- The definitions of *key natural heritage features* do not perfectly align.
- In the NEP 2017, the kinds of development permitted in *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic areas* are narrower than that permitted in the Place to Grow.
- In the NEP 2017, although hydrologic evaluations or natural heritage evaluations are required to determine the minimum *vegetation protection zone* in a manner aligned with GP 4.2.4.1, NEP 2.6.3 and 2.7.6 identify requirements for these evaluations beyond considerations of the *vegetation protection zone*, including identifying “planning design and construction practices that will...where possible, enhance or restore the health, diversity and size” of the feature.
- The NEP 2017 does not include a minimum 30-metre *vegetation protection zone* for some features as per GP 4.2.4.1 c).
- The NEP 2017 sections 2.6 Development Affecting Water Resources and 2.7 Development Affecting Natural Heritage include policies not included in the Place to Grow 2019 (NEP 2.6.2.7 to 2.6.2.11, 2.7.2.5, 2.7.2.8 and 2.7.2.10 to 2.7.2.12).

Implications for the ROP

General

- The similarities and general alignment between the policies of the Place to Grow 2019 and the Greenbelt Plan 2017 mean it is possible to conceive one set of ROP policies covering both plan areas with respect to natural heritage and water resources, rather than separate policies, as is currently the case.

- The NEP 2017 policies relative to those of A Place to Grow 2019 are at times more protective of natural heritage and water resources, and at times less protective. As such they would be more challenging to incorporate into a universal policy approach to natural heritage and water resources for Halton Region as a whole. However, they could be referenced in the ROP with policy clarifying that the more protective policies apply for lands within the NEP area (as per existing ROP 64).
- Consideration should be given to whether the ROP will continue to use the term *Key Features*, or whether it differentiate between 2 categories of key features – *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* – as per the approach taken in A Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2017. There are instances in these plans where a policy applies to *key hydrologic features* and not *key natural heritage features*, so being able to distinguish between the two would be useful. Examples include: GP 4.2.4.1 c) concerning minimum *vegetation protection zones*; and the NEP 2017 approach which addresses *key hydrologic features* and *key natural heritage features* in different sections. Differentiating between these features would also be helpful in the identification and mapping of the Water Resource System.
- There are several major policy shifts in A Place to Grow 2019 (in alignment with policies in the Greenbelt Plan 2017) that need to be reflected in the ROP:
 - Requirements for new *development* or *site alteration* within the *Natural Heritage System*. (GP 4.2.2.3 a))
 - The permitted scope of *development* and *site alteration* in *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*. (GP 4.2.3.1)
 - Conditions established for large scale *development* in *key hydrologic areas*. (GP 4.2.3.2)
 - Requirements on lands adjacent to *key natural heritage features* within the *Natural Heritage System* and *key hydrologic areas*. (GP 4.2.4)
- Conformity with the Greenbelt Plan 2017 is largely achieved through ROP 63.1, 64 and 139.3.5. The Region might consider whether adding “site alteration” to these policies, in addition to *development*, is appropriate to better match the policy language in section 3.2 of the Greenbelt Plan 2017.

Development and Site Alteration

- Concerning requirements for *development* and *site alteration* within the *Natural Heritage System* (GP 4.2.2.3 a)), these will need to be added to, or referenced in, the ROP.

- Concerning the permitted scope of *development* and *site alteration* in *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* (GP 4.2.3.1), A Place to Grow 2019 policies will need to be added to, or referenced in, the ROP. In addition, based on these Place to Grow 2019 and PPS 2020 policies, a number of existing ROP policies require review:
 - ROP 117.1 addresses permitted uses within the RNHS. ROP 117.1(1) indicates that *agricultural operations* are not permitted within the *Key Features* of the RNHS, except where the only feature is a *significant* earth science area of natural and scientific interest. However, GP 4.2.3.1 f) allows expansions or alterations to existing buildings and structures related to agriculture within *key natural heritage features* or *key hydrologic features*. If ROP 117.1(1) is retained, it should reference this exception or establish that the ROP takes a more protective stance, exceeding the minimum standard set by the Provincial plan.
 - ROP 118(2) a) prohibits “*development* and *site alteration* within *significant wetlands*, *significant* coastal wetlands, *significant* habitat of endangered and threatened species and *fish habitat* except in accordance with Provincial and Federal legislation or regulations.” This policy language is likely to have been drawn from the PPS 2005 and should be amended to reflect updates to PPS 2020 policies 2.1.4 to 2.1.7, particularly the change in terminology (e.g. *habitat of endangered and threatened species*). This policy offers a higher level of protection than that of the Place to Grow 2019, in line with PPS 2020.
 - ROP 118(2) b) does not permit “the alteration of any components of the Regional Natural Heritage System unless it has been demonstrated that there will be no *negative impacts* on the *natural features and areas* or their *ecological functions*.” This language has, in part, been drawn from the PPS, but is applied against the entire RNHS rather than the more limited range of features referenced in PPS 2020 policy 2.1.5. As such it could be deemed a more protective policy than established in Provincial policy.
- Concerning conditions established for large scale *development* in *key hydrologic areas* (GP 4.2.3 b)), current ROP policies do not define *key hydrologic areas* or include policies that address them. The ROP should include new definitions and policies, or a reference to Provincial policies that reflect these changes.

Vegetation Protection Zones

- Both A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 include policies to require a natural heritage evaluation or hydrologic evaluation to identify a *vegetation protection zone* to protect *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* from

development and *site alteration* on adjacent lands. (GP 4.2.4 and GBP 3.2.5) These evaluations are generally required for *development* and *site alteration* within 120 metres of a feature. For certain features, the *minimum vegetation protection zone* is 30 metres: for the Place to Grow 2019, *key hydrologic features, fish habitat, and significant woodlands*; and, for the Greenbelt Plan 2017, *wetlands, seepage areas and springs, fish habitat, permanent and intermittent streams, lakes, and significant woodlands*. (GP 4.2.4.1 c) and GBP 3.2.5.4)

- Although the PPS 2020 does not include a definition of buffer or vegetation protection zone, it does establish a no negative impact test on *development* or *site alteration* adjacent to *natural heritage features and areas*. (PPS 2.1.8) The Natural Heritage Reference Manual (2010) notes that an appropriate buffer could be greater than 120 metres in some instances. Therefore, the PPS 2020 sets a more protective standard than the Greenbelt Plan 2017 and A Place to Grow 2019. The ROP approach is closer to the PPS, in that it does not restrict the EIA requirement to 120 metres. The Provincial plans “encourage” decision makers to go beyond the minimum standards of the plans as long as it does not conflict with any policy of the plans. Therefore, there is scope for the ROP to take a more protective approach to *buffers* and *vegetation protection zones*.
- The ROP does not have a policy for *buffers* with respect to the RNHS and defers to the *vegetation protection zone* (which are essentially the same as buffers) policies in areas subject to the Greenbelt Plan.
- Conformity with the Greenbelt Plan 2017 is largely achieved through ROP 63.1, 64 and 139.3.5. However, ROP policies and definitions should be reviewed to ensure alignment with changes to the Greenbelt Plan 2017:
 - The definition of *vegetation protection zone* has been simplified in the Greenbelt Plan 2017 and a similar revision should be considered for the ROP (the ROP includes a definition of *vegetation protection zone* taken from the previous Greenbelt Plan).
 - ROP 139.3.7(4.1) should be revised to better capture the nuance in GBP 3.2.5.7 concerning exempting agricultural-related uses from evaluations.
 - A new ROP policy may be considered to reflect GBP 3.2.5.6, exempting *development* and *site alteration* from the evaluation and *vegetation protection zone* requirements where the only key feature is the *habitat of endangered species and threatened species*, in which case applications must address the relevant Provincial and Federal legislation.

- Revise ROP 139.3.7(6) to reflect changed terminology, the addition of *vegetation protection zone* and the clarification that this policy applies to expansions of existing residential dwellings, not new residential dwellings, as per GBP 4.5.5.
- Regarding the RNHS, the ROP's current approach to *buffers* is as follows:
 - *Buffer* is a defined term within the ROP, but other than ROP 115.3(4) indicating that *buffers* are part of the RNHS, the defined term does not appear in other ROP policies.
 - The definition of buffer indicates that "The extent of the *buffer* and activities that may be permitted within it shall be based on the sensitivity and significance of the *Key Features* and watercourses and their contribution to the long term ecological functions of the Regional Natural Heritage System as determined through a Sub-watershed Study, an Environmental Impact Assessment or similar studies that examine a sufficiently large area."
 - The ROP does not address appropriate uses within *buffers*, and generally applies the same standard as the rest of the RNHS, notwithstanding the clarity of the definition which sets *buffers* apart from the RNHS with respect to their specific function. Appropriate uses, especially with respect to stormwater infrastructure, but including trails, is often a source of contention. The ROP could provide more specific policy guidance on this issue.
- A Place to Grow 2019 policies on evaluations to identify *vegetation protection zones* (GP 4.2.4) need to be incorporated into the ROP relative to the definitions of *key natural heritage feature* and *key hydrologic feature*. Consideration should be given as to whether adopting the Provincial policy approach and terminology regarding *vegetation protections zones* can entirely replace the ROP approach to *buffers*.

Natural Heritage Evaluations and Hydrologic Evaluations in the RNHS

(related to *development* and *site alteration* only – evaluations pertaining to infrastructure and mineral aggregate operations are discussed in sections below)

- In A Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt 2017, the purpose of natural heritage evaluations and hydrologic evaluations, in the context of *development* and *site alteration*, is largely to determine appropriate *vegetation protection zones* that will protect *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features*. The Place to Grow 2019 adds a requirement to "identify any additional restrictions to be applied before, during and after development to protect the *hydrologic functions* and *ecological functions* of the feature." (GP 4.2.4.2) In the NEP 2017, the scope of these evaluations is more detailed, but is also at the discretion of the implementing authority (NEP

2.6.3, 2.7.6); however, the trigger is the same: proposals within 120 metres of a key feature.

- The ROP establishes the requirement for an Environmental Assessment Impact (EIA) in ROP 118(3), 118(3.1) and 145(23).
- The criteria for the requirement is set in ROP 118(3.1):
 - Agricultural buildings (<1,000 sq.m) and *single detached dwellings* on existing *lots* and their *incidental uses* located inside or within 30m of any *Key Feature* within the RNHS, with some exceptions.
 - Agricultural buildings (>1,000 sq.m) located wholly or partially inside or within 30m of the RNHS.
 - All other *developments* or *site alterations*, including public works, located wholly or partially inside or within 120m of the RNHS.
- These criteria represent both a lower standard and a higher standard for requiring an evaluation than established in the provincial plans. Lower, due to their special treatment of *single detached dwellings on existing lots*; and higher, as they pertain to the RNHS rather than only key features. Also the purpose of the EIA in the ROP is broader: “to demonstrate that the proposed *development* or *site alteration* will result in no *negative impacts* to the RNHS or unmapped *Key Features* affected by the *development* or *site alteration* by identifying components of the Regional Natural Heritage System as listed in ROP 115.3 and their associated *ecological functions* and assessing the potential for environmental impacts, requirement to impact avoidance and mitigation measures, and opportunities for enhancement.” (ROP 118(3)) Although this description goes beyond the description of evaluations in the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, the general objective aligns well with those represented in Provincial policy. Consideration will have to be given as to whether the exemption for small agricultural buildings and *single detached dwellings on existing lots* should remain.
- ROP 145(23) establishes the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment in or near *sensitive surface* and *ground water features*. This policy is broader and less specific than that included in GP 4.2.4.1 and GBP 3.2.2.5, which establish a requirement for a hydrologic evaluation within 120 m of a *key hydrologic feature*. The ROP use of “*sensitive surface* and *ground water features*” is broader than the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017 use of “*key hydrologic feature*”. The ROP policy does not specify a specific distance within which an EIA is required.

- The purpose of an EIA included in ROP 118(3) should be reviewed in light of the approach taken on water resource systems in the ROP to potentially include reference to *negative impacts* on the quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their related hydrologic functions. The requirements established in ROP 145(23) may likewise be revisited in the context of an overall approach to water resource systems in the ROP, and the potential for integration of NHS and water resource systems policies.

2.3.10 Urban River Valleys and External Connections

GBP: 1.2.3, 2.5, 3.2.6, 5.6.1.3 and 6

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- In January 2013, the Province amended the Greenbelt Plan by adding a new "Urban River Valley" designation. This new designation allowed municipalities to bring publicly owned lands within their jurisdiction that were outside the Greenbelt into the Greenbelt regulated area under the Urban River Valley designation, provided these lands were located within the main corridors of river valleys that connect the Greenbelt Area to the Great Lakes and inland lakes. In the Greenbelt Plan 2017, further policies related to the Urban River Valley designation have been added.
- Land designated Urban River Valley are shown on Schedule 1 of the Greenbelt Plan 2017.
- GBP 1.2.3 establishes goals for the Urban River Valley designation. Goals related to natural heritage and water resources include the protection of natural heritage and hydrologic features and functions and the protection of ecological connections between the rest of the Greenbelt Area and the Great Lakes.
- Lands within the Urban River Valley designation are subject to the policies of section 6 and the Protected Countryside policies do not apply except as set out in that section. (GBP 2.5)
- Reference to the Urban River Valley designation has been added to GBP 3.2.6 on External Connections. GBP 3.2.6.2 addresses urban river valleys (not the designation); these policies have undergone small refinement from the 2005 version.

- GBP 5.6.1.3 indicates that, concerning Urban River Valley areas, the addition of these major watercourses and coastal wetlands has reinforced the important linkages between the Greenbelt and Lake Ontario, as well as their connections to southern Ontario's broader regional natural heritage systems.
- Section 6 sets out policies that apply to publicly-owned urban river valley lands designated as Urban River Valleys. They indicate that the Protected Countryside policies do not apply except for: the external connections policies of GBP 3.2.6; and the parkland, open space and trails policies of GBP 3.3.
- In addition to Urban River Valleys, an additional policy change related to external connections is the addition of *key hydrologic areas* to 3.2.6 (3) related to the Lake Iroquois shoreline, stating, "where possible, enhance the size, diversity, connectivity and functions of *key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas* of those portions of the Lake Iroquois shoreline within their approved urban boundaries."

Implications for the ROP

- The Urban River Valley designation should be reflected in ROP mapping and policies.
- The "urban river valleys" described in Section 3.2.6.2 of the Greenbelt Plan 2017 include areas designated "Urban River Valley", but are not exclusive to these. It is the interpretation of Regional staff that Section 3.2.6.2 of the Greenbelt Plan applies to river valley lands that have not been depicted as "external connections" or designated "Urban River Valley", providing they meet the description of "urban river valleys" contained in the policy itself. Section 3.2.6.2 describes "urban river valleys" as river valleys that a) run through existing or approved urban areas and b) connect the Greenbelt to inland lakes and the Great Lakes. Regional staff have indicated that some confusion has stemmed from the fact the "external connections" and designated "Urban River Valleys" are mapped, but areas otherwise meeting the description of "urban river valleys" are not. To avoid confusion, Regional staff indicate the ROP Review should consider mapping all urban river valleys and developing policies to reflect the intent of Section 3.2.6.2 of the Greenbelt Plan. This would help provide additional direction for how to consider land use changes along all urban river valleys in a manner consistent with the way the Greenbelt Plan intended (despite this mapping peculiarity).
- The approach considered by Regional staff should be evaluated in light of the following issues:

- The legal issue of whether Greenbelt Plan policies apply to lands outside the regulated area of the Greenbelt Act and associated regulations, although GBP 5.6.1.4 establishes criteria to grow the Greenbelt within the Urban River Valley designation based on a municipal request.
- The policies of GBP 3.2.6 consistently use “should” rather than “shall”, indicating that they are discretionary, and therefore do not present a conformity challenge to the existing ROP.
- An evaluation of other approaches to protecting the ecological and hydrologic function of urban rivers valleys.

2.3.11 Great Lakes

GP: 3.1, 3.2.6.3, 4.2.1.4

GBP: 3.2.3.6, 3.2.6.2

A Place to Grow 2019

- New text in A Place to Grow 2019 emphasizes the importance of the Great Lakes: “The importance of the Great Lakes is reflected in many Provincial initiatives, including the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015 and Ontario’s Great Lakes Strategy. This Plan supports these initiatives by providing direction on watershed-based, integrated water, wastewater, and stormwater master planning and by restricting future extensions of water and wastewater servicing from the Great Lakes.” (GP 3.1)
- New policy GP 3.2.6.2 e) requires the consideration of water or wastewater master plans or equivalents, in the context of applicable inter-provincial, national, bi-national, or state-provincial Great Lakes Basin agreements or provincial legislation or strategies.
- New policy GP 3.2.6.3 outlines conditions for the extension of water and wastewater services from a Great Lakes source for settlement areas that are serviced by rivers, inland lakes or groundwater.
- New policy GP 4.2.1.4 establishes that “municipalities will consider the Great Lakes Strategy, the targets and goals of the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015, and any applicable Great Lakes agreements as part of *watershed planning* and coastal or waterfront planning initiatives.”

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- New policy GBP 3.2.3.6 is identical to GP 4.2.1.4.

- Consideration of the Great Lakes has been added to GBP 3.2.6.2 c): “Integrate *watershed planning* and management approaches for lands both within and beyond the Greenbelt, taking into consideration the goals and objectives of protecting, improving and restoring the Great Lakes.”

Implications for the ROP

- Policies related to the Great Lakes have been added to the PPS 2014, Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt 2017 regarding: watershed planning and water and wastewater services.
- ROP policies should conform with initiatives undertaken as part of the Great Lakes Protection Act, 2015, and may consider the relevance of the Great Lakes Strategy and targets when forming policy.

2.3.12 Settlement Area Boundary Expansion

GP: 2.2.8.3, 3.2.6, 3.2.7, 4.2.2.7

GBP: 3.2.2.6

A Place to Grow 2019

- New policy GP 2.2.8.3 establishes that where the need for a *settlement area* boundary expansion has been justified, the most appropriate location for the proposed expansion will be identified based a number of considerations, including:
 - *the proposed expansion would be information by applicable water and wastewater mater plan or equivalent and stormwater master plans or equivalent, as appropriate; (GP 2.2.8.3 c), 3.2.6)*
 - *the proposed expansion, including the associated water, wastewater and stormwater servicing would be planned and demonstrated to avoid or if avoidance is not possible minimize and mitigate any potential negative impacts on watershed conditions and the water resource system, include the quality and quantity of water; (GP 2.2.8.3 d)*
 - *direction to avoid key hydrologic areas and the Natural Heritage System where possible; (GP 2.2.8.3 e)*
 - *meeting any applicable requirements of the Greenbelt Plan, Niagara Escarpment Plan, and any applicable source protection plan; (GP 2.2.8.3(j))*
 - *a prohibition on the expansion of the settlement area into the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. (GP 2.2.8.3 m)(vi)*

- New policy GP 4.2.2.7 indicate that if a *settlement area* is expanded into the *Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan*, that these areas are no longer subject to the requirements pertaining to *development* and *site alteration* established in GP 4.2.2.3 but will continue to be protected in a manner that ensures that the connectivity between, and diversity and functions of, the *natural heritage features and areas* will be maintained, restored, or enhanced.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- GBP 3.2.2.6 establishes that Towns/Villages are not permitted to expand into the Natural Heritage System.

Implications for the ROP

- The changes to GP 2.2.8.3 are deemed to be incorporated into the ROP through ROP 77(7)(f).
- It is the opinion of Regional staff that a *settlement expansion* is a *development*. Despite GP 4.2.2.7(b), which states that GP 4.2.2.3 will no longer apply to lands in portions of the *Natural Heritage System* within expanded *settlement areas*, the *development* must be consistent with new policies in sections GP 4.2.3 and GP 4.2.4. Policies that appropriately reflect the requirements of these policies (including those related to *vegetation protection zones*) will need to be incorporated into urban area development criteria for any expanded *settlement areas*.
- The policies of GP 4.2.3 and GP 4.2.4 apply only outside of *settlement areas*. If it is determined by Regional staff that the best approach to natural heritage within *settlement area* expansions, as supported by policy GP 4.2.2.7 c), is to provide a similar level of protection as provided in GP 4.2.3 and GP 4.2.4, then ROP policies should be developed to implement this approach.

2.3.13 Infrastructure

PPS: 1.6.2, 1.6.6.7

Place to Grow : 3.2, 3.2.5, 3.2.6.2, 3.2.6.3, 4.2.1.3

Greenbelt Plan: 1.2.2.2, 3.2.3.4, 4.2.1.2, 4.2.2.1

Niagara Escarpment Plan: 1.7.5, 1.8.5, 2.12, 2.12.2, 2.12.3, 2.12.5, 2.12.7

PPS 2020

- Beyond general direction regarding the ability of water resources to sustain sewage and water services and for these services to be provided in a manner which ensures the protection of the natural environment, the infrastructure section of the PPS 2005

did not provide extensive direction related to natural heritage and water resources.
(PPS 2005 1.6)

- With regards to natural heritage and water resources, changes to the PPS's policies on infrastructure are not significant, with two exceptions:
 - New policy PPS 1.6.2 which indicates that planning authorities should promote *green infrastructure* to complement *infrastructure*.
 - New policy PPS 1.6.6.7 regarding stormwater discussed in a stand-alone section below.

A Place to Grow 2019

- The introduction to the infrastructure section of the Place to Grow 2019 (GP 3.1) has been revised to highlight the importance of *watershed planning* in water infrastructure planning and ensuring that the *quality and quantity of water* is maintained.
- It also emphasizes that the plan supports Great Lakes initiatives by providing direction on watershed-based, integrated water, wastewater, and stormwater master planning and by restricting future extensions of water and wastewater servicing from the Great Lakes. (GP 3.1)
- It identifies that comprehensive stormwater management planning, including the use of appropriate *low impact development* and *green infrastructure*, can increase resiliency to climate change. (GP 3.1)
- New section GP 3.2.5 establishes a requirement for an environmental assessment in the planning for the development, optimization, or expansion of existing and *planned corridors* and related facilities that demonstrates that "any impacts on *key natural heritage features* in the *Natural Heritage System*, *key hydrologic features* and *key hydrologic areas* have been avoided or, if avoidance is not possible, minimized and to the extent feasible mitigated."
- Revised policy GP 3.2.6.2 indicates that a comprehensive water or wastewater master plan or equivalent, informed by *watershed planning*, will be required for the planning, design, construction or expansion of municipal water and wastewater systems and private communal water and wastewater systems. In comparison, Growth Plan 2006 policy 3.2.5.7 only encouraged municipalities, in conjunction with conservation authorities, to prepare watershed plans to guide development decisions and water and wastewater servicing decisions.

- GP 3.2.6.3 has been strengthened to indicate the exceptions to the general direction that municipalities will not be permitted to extend water or wastewater services from a Great Lakes source for *settlement areas* that are serviced by rivers, inland lakes, or groundwater.
- New policy GP 4.2.1.3 establishes that decisions on allocation of growth and planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure will be informed by applicable *watershed planning or equivalent*. Planning for designated greenfield areas will be informed by a subwatershed plan or equivalent.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- The Environmental Protection goals for the Protected Countryside have added “watershed/ subwatershed and stormwater management planning, water and wastewater servicing” to the list of matters on which the Plan will provide long term guidance for the management of natural heritage and water resources. (GBP 1.2.2.2)
- A new Water Resources System policy establishes that “decisions on allocation of growth and planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater *infrastructure* shall be informed by applicable *watershed planning* in accordance with the Place to Grow.” (GBP 3.2.3.4)
- Concerning the location and construction of infrastructure and expansions, extensions, operations and maintenance of infrastructure in the Protected Countryside:
 - Water Resource Systems has been added to Natural Heritage System in GBP 4.2.1.2 a): “Planning, design and construction practices shall minimize, wherever possible, the amount of the Greenbelt, and particularly the Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System, traversed and/or occupied by such infrastructure”.
 - *Key hydrologic areas* have been added to policies regarding areas which new or expanding infrastructure shall avoid unless it has been demonstrated and established that there is no reasonable alternative (GBP 4.2.1.2 d));
 - *Key hydrologic areas* have been added to policy (GBP 4.2.1.2 e): “Where *infrastructure* does cross the Natural Heritage System or intrude into or result in the loss of a *key natural heritage feature, key hydrologic feature or key hydrologic areas*, including related landform features, planning, design and construction practices shall minimize *negative impacts* on and disturbance of

the features or their related functions and, where reasonable, maintain or improve *connectivity*."

- New policy GBP 4.2.1.2 h) prohibits new waste disposal sites and facilities, and organic soil conditioning sites in *key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features* and their associated *vegetation protection zones*.
- New policy GBP 4.2.2.1 defers to the policies in subsection 3.2.6 of the Place to Grow for the planning, design and construction of sewage and water infrastructure.
- *Green infrastructure* is included as a defined term. In supporting text, it is referenced as an approach to improve resiliency to climate change, but is not included in any policies.

NEP 2017

- The previous NEP made limited reference to infrastructure. The NEP 2017 has a section on infrastructure (2.12) under Development Criteria and includes *infrastructure* as a defined term.
- NEP 2.12.2 establishes that "*Infrastructure* shall be sited to minimize the *negative impact* on the Escarpment environment." Examples of such siting and design considerations are included.
- NEP 2.12.5 indicates that infrastructure shall avoid the Escarpment Natural Area, unless it is deemed necessary to the public interest after all other alternatives have been considered.
- NEP 2.12.3 indicates that *green infrastructure* and *low impact development* should be considered to complement infrastructure. There are also new references to "maximizing opportunities for the use of *green infrastructure* and appropriate *low impact development*" to increase resilience to climate change in the development objectives of the Urban Area (NEP 1.7.5) and Escarpment Recreation Area (NEP 1.8.5) designations.
- NEP 2.12.7 provides conditions for the location or extension of municipal water and wastewater systems and private communal water and wastewater systems into particular land use designations, including Escarpment Natural Area and Escarpment Protection Area.

Implications for the ROP

- ROP 70.1 indicates that, for lands falling within the Protected Countryside of the Greenbelt Plan, the location and construction of infrastructure and expansions, extensions, operations, and maintenance of infrastructure are subject to the relevant policies of the Greenbelt Plan. This policy, therefore, covers most changes to GBP 4.2.1.2. Further policy direction in the ROP may be required to reference GBP 4.2.1.2 h), regarding new waste disposal sites and facilities, and organic soil conditioning sites.
- With the exception of ROP 70.1, the ROP does not address infrastructure from a natural heritage or water resources perspective.
- The NEP 2017 includes new policies on avoiding or minimizing the impact of infrastructure on the Escarpment Natural Area, with similarities in overall direction to the approach taken by the Greenbelt Plan concerning the Protected Countryside. ROP 70.1 could be expanded to bring this new policy direction into the plan. Worthy to note, a similar policy direction is not included in the Place to Grow 2019.
- The Place to Grow 2019 includes a new policy to establish a requirement for environmental assessment in the planning of existing and *planned corridors*. (GP 3.2.5) Consideration should be given to incorporating or referencing this policy direction in the ROP.
- Changes to A Place to Grow 2019, and associated changes to the Greenbelt Plan 2017, bring *watershed planning* into the heart of planning water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. GP 4.2.1.3 establishes the requirement for *watershed planning* to inform allocation of growth and planning for water, wastewater, and stormwater *infrastructure*. The Greenbelt Plan 2017 echoes this approach in reference to A Place to Grow 2019 in policy GBP 3.2.3.4. GP 3.2.6.2 establishes the requirement for *watershed planning* to inform the completion of a comprehensive water or wastewater master plan or equivalent related to municipal and private water and wastewater systems. The Greenbelt Plan 2017 defers to GP 3.2.6.2 (GBP 4.2.2.1). These policy directions should be incorporated into the ROP, potentially through revision of ROP 145(5), regarding the development of *Watershed Plans*, and elsewhere, as appropriate.
- GP 4.2.1.3 requires that planning for designated greenfield areas will be informed by a subwatershed plan or equivalent. ROP 145(8) and 145(9) outline the requirement for

Sub-watershed Studies and should be revised to reflect the broader requirement established by the Place to Grow 2019.

- The ROP might incorporate the exceptions established in GP 3.2.6.3 to the general direction that municipalities will not be permitted to extend water or wastewater services from a Great Lakes source for settlement areas that are serviced by rivers, inland lakes, or groundwater.
- Policies and definitions of *low impact development* and *green infrastructure* have been added to all the Provincial policy documents examined above. The ROP should consider adding these as defined terms and adding policies which align with Provincial policy direction.

2.3.14 Stormwater Management

PPS: 1.6.6.7

Place to Grow : 3.2.5, 3.2.7

Greenbelt Plan: 3.2.5, 4.2.3

PPS 2020

- A new policy, 1.6.6.7 has been added regarding stormwater management which is relevant to the water resource goals of the PPS. It indicates that "Planning for stormwater management shall:
 - a) be integrated with planning for sewage and water services and ensure that systems are optimized, feasible and financially viable over the long term;
 - b) minimize, or, where possible, prevent increases in contaminant loads;
 - c) minimize erosion and changes in water balance, and prepare for the impacts of a changing climate through the effective management of stormwater, including the use of green infrastructure;
 - d) mitigate risks to human health, safety, property and the environment;
 - e) maximize the extent and function of vegetative and pervious surfaces; and
 - f) promote stormwater management best practices, including stormwater attenuation and re-use, water conservation and efficiency, and low impact development."

A Place to Grow 2019

- The Growth Plan 2006 included limited policies on stormwater management related to encouraging municipalities "to implement and support innovative stormwater management solutions as part of redevelopment and intensification". (Growth Plan 2006 3.2.5.8)

- The Place to Grow 2019 includes an entire new section dedicated to stormwater management (GP 3.2.7). Municipalities are to develop stormwater master plans for serviced settlement areas. *Watershed planning or equivalent*, protecting the *quality and quantity of water*, the examination of cumulative impacts and the incorporation of *low impact development* and *green infrastructure* are emphasized as requirements. (GP 3.2.7.1) Stormwater management plans or equivalent, informed by sub-watershed plans or their equivalent, will be required to support proposals for large-scale development (which require planning approvals). (GP 3.2.7.2)

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- Although the previous Greenbelt Plan addressed stormwater management infrastructure, policies have been significantly revised. The text now clarifies that the policies of section GBP 4.2.3 pertain to the Protected Countryside.
- The planning, design and construction of stormwater management infrastructure are to be carried out in accordance with the policies in section 3.2.7 of the Place to Grow 2019.
- Terminology in GBP 4.2.3.3 has been changed from stormwater management ponds to stormwater management systems. They are prohibited in *key natural heritage features*, *key hydrologic features* and their associated *vegetation protection zones*. New text has been added that *vegetation protection zones* shall be defined in accordance with sections GBP 3.2.5.4 and 3.2.5.5. In the same policy, the exception pertaining to naturalized stormwater management systems within the *vegetation protection zone* of *significant valleylands* related to major river valleys in the Protected Countryside has been revised.
- GBP 4.2.3.4, which establishes the requirement for a stormwater management plan for applications for *development* and *site alteration* in the Protected Countryside, has been revised to emphasize mimicking natural hydrology and *low impact development*. Applicable objectives, targets, and any other requirements within a stormwater master plan will be met in accordance with the policies in subsection 3.2.7 of the Place to Grow .
- The objectives of a stormwater management plan, as established in GBP 4.2.3.5, remain the same.

NEP 2017

- There was no reference to stormwater management in the previous NEP.

- In the NEP 2017, there are only minor references to stormwater management, although the topic could be considered to be covered under the term *infrastructure*, as discussed above.

Implications for the ROP

- Policies on stormwater management have been greatly expanded in the Place to Grow 2019. Municipalities are now required to develop stormwater master plans for serviced *settlement areas*. (GP 3.2.7.1) Stormwater management plans, informed by sub-watershed plans or their equivalent, will be required to support proposals for large-scale *development* (which require planning approvals). (GP 3.2.7.2). The Greenbelt Plan 2017 defers to the Place to Grow 2019 policies in section GP 3.2.7 for the planning, design and construction of stormwater management infrastructure.
- The ROP does not include a section on stormwater management. These new requirements should be reflected in the ROP and the PPS goals for stormwater management could be referenced. As noted previously, this could include explicit guidance on stormwater facilities proposed within *buffers*.
- The Greenbelt Plan 2017 also includes additional revised policies on stormwater management: prohibiting stormwater management systems within *key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features* and their associated *vegetation protection zones*; and requiring a stormwater management plan for applications for *development* and *site alteration* in the Protected Countryside. The predecessor policies were not referenced in the ROP, but the revised policies could be incorporated into the ROP.

2.3.15 Mineral Aggregate Resources

PPS: 2.5.3

Place to Grow : 4.2.3, 4.2.8

Greenbelt Plan: 4.3.2

Niagara Escarpment Plan: 1.9.1, 2.9

PPS 2020

- Section PPS 2.5.3, concerning the rehabilitation of mineral aggregate operation sites, was amended to add that progressive and final rehabilitation shall be required “to mitigate *negative impacts* to the extent possible” (PPS 2.5.3.1) and to encourage *comprehensive rehabilitation* planning where there is a concentration of mineral aggregate operations. (PPS 2.5.3.2) A new definition of *comprehensive rehabilitation*

was added which describes coordinating the rehabilitation of sites in areas where there is a high concentration of mineral aggregate operations.

A Place to Grow 2019

- Policies on *mineral aggregate resources* have been greatly expanded to align with the Greenbelt Plan 2017 concerning new *mineral aggregate operations* in the *Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan* and the rehabilitation of new *mineral aggregate operation* sites. (Note: the Greenbelt Plan 2017 also includes policies relevant to existing mineral aggregate operations, which are not reflected in the Place to Grow 2019). (GP 4.2.8)
- GP 4.2.3.1 indicates that *mineral aggregate operations* and wayside pits and quarries are permitted in *key natural heritage features* that are part of the *Natural Heritage System for the Growth Plan* and in *key hydrologic features*.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- A number of changes have been made to the policies related to *mineral aggregate operations*:
 - Refinements to the *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* in which *mineral aggregate operations* and wayside pits and quarries are not permitted. (GBP 4.3.2.3 a))
 - Refinements to what applications for new *mineral aggregate operations* and new approvals to expand must demonstrate relevant to *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* and associated *vegetation protection zones*. (GBP 4.3.2.3(b))
 - Refinements to policies on rehabilitation with a distinction made between what policies apply to new and existing *mineral aggregate operations*. (GBP 4.3.2.5, 4.3.2.6, 4.3.2.7)
- Refinements have been made to GBP 4.3.2.6 concerning rehabilitation which have removed key references to improvements and net gain of ecological health:
 - GBP 4.3.2.6(a) has been changed from "The disturbed area of a site will be rehabilitated to a state of equal or greater ecological value, and, for the entire site, long-term *ecological integrity will be maintained or restored, and to the extent possible, improved*" to "The disturbed area of a site will be rehabilitated to a state of equal or greater ecological value, and, for the entire site, long-term *ecological integrity shall be maintained or enhanced*."
 - GBP 4.3.2.6(b)(i) has been changed from "The health, diversity and size of these *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* will be

maintained or restored and, to the extent possible, improved to promote a net gain of ecological health” to “The health, diversity and size of these *key natural heritage features* and *key hydrologic features* shall be maintained or enhanced.”

- Text in section GBP 5.3 remains the same. It indicates that official plans and zoning by-laws shall not contain provisions that are more restrictive than the policies of section GBP 4.3.2 as they apply to mineral aggregate resources.

Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017

- The section on Mineral Aggregate Resources (NEP 2.9) has changed significantly. The changes are largely in line with the Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt Plan 2017, with some exceptions.
- Similar to the other Provincial plans, *mineral aggregate operations* and wayside pits and quarries are permitted within key natural heritage features and associated *vegetation protection zones*. However, the exceptions are slightly different:
 - *wetlands* rather than significant wetlands (NEP 2.9.1)
 - *habitat of endangered species and threatened species* is included but only when it is not considered under any other category of key natural heritage feature and in compliance with the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (NEP 2.9.2)
- Proposals for new *mineral aggregate operations* are to demonstrate how key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features and connectivity will be maintained and where possible enhanced during and after extraction. (NEP 2.9.3)
- *Progressive rehabilitation* is encouraged and requirements for rehabilitation are established. (NEP 1.9.1, 2.9.11)

Implications for the ROP

- *Mineral Resource Extraction Areas* is a land use designation in the ROP. ROP 109 lists permitted uses within this designation, “subject to other policies of this Plan, applicable policies of the Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan, applicable Local Official Plan policies and Zoning By-laws, and site plan and conditions of the licence under the *Aggregate Resources Act*”. As the Place to Grow 2019 includes extensive policies on *mineral aggregate operations*, it should be added to the list of policies to which permitted uses within this designation are subject.

- ROP 110(7.1) should be revised to align with 4.2.8.2 of the Place to Grow 2019, concerning areas in which applications for *mineral aggregate operations* will not be considered.
- ROP 110(7.2) addresses the assessment of impact of a new or expanded *mineral aggregate operation* on the Region's Natural Heritage System, including rehabilitation. Changes to GBP 4.3.2.6 have removed the requirement to improve, where possible. Therefore the ROP policy could be interpreted as a more restrictive provision, something that it is not permitted by section 5.3 of the Greenbelt Plan 2017. Further evaluation of this issue is required.

2.3.16 Climate Change

PPS: 3.1.3

GP: 4.1, 4.2.10

GBP: 1.2.2.6

NEP: 1.4

PPS 2020

- References to climate change have been added throughout the PPS 2020. These policies do not address natural heritage and water resources directly, with the exception of a new PPS policy 3.1.3 that establishes that planning authorities shall prepare for the potential impacts of a changing climate that may increase the risk associated with natural hazards.

A Place to Grow 2019

- References to climate change have been added throughout the Place to Grow 2019.
- A new section on climate change has been added. (GP 4.2.10) This section requires municipalities to develop policies in their official plans to identify actions that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change adaptation goals. Actions related to natural heritage and water resources include:
 - undertaking stormwater management planning in a manner that assesses the impacts of extreme weather events and incorporates appropriate *green infrastructure* and *low impact development* (GP 4.2.10 d))
 - recognizing the importance of *watershed planning* for the protection of the *quality and quantity of water* and the identification and protection of hydrologic features and areas (GP 4.2.10 e))
 - protecting the *Natural Heritage System* for the Growth Plan and *water resource systems* (GP 4.2.10 f))

- Section 4.1 recognizes the connection between natural heritage systems, water resource systems and agricultural systems in addressing climate change.
- Consideration of climate change impacts and severe weather events has been incorporated into the definition of *watershed planning*.

Greenbelt Plan 2017

- New goals for the Protected Countryside address climate change. GBP 1.2.2.6 a) establishes the goal of "integrating climate change considerations into planning and managing the Agricultural System, Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System to improve resilience and protect carbon sequestration potential, recognizing that the Natural Heritage System is also a component of *green infrastructure*."
- Consideration of climate change impacts and severe weather events has been incorporated into the definition of *watershed planning*.

NEP 2017

- Reference to climate change has been added to the NEP 2017, but, with the exception of reference to the importance of Escarpment Protection Areas increasing resilience to climate change through the provision of essential ecosystem services (NEP 1.4), these references do not pertain to natural heritage or water resources.

Implications for the ROP

- The ROP's approach to climate change should be reviewed in light of changes to Provincial policy documents. Climate change policies relevant to natural heritage and water resources should be incorporated within this larger approach. This does not necessarily require specific climate change policies with respect to the natural heritage system, but perhaps refinement of existing policy to acknowledge the role that the Region's NHS contributes to weathering future climate change.

2.3.17 Other

Hazardous Forest Types for Wildland Fire

- The PPS 2020 has added a definition for *hazardous forest types for wildland fire* to reflect the new policy 3.1.8 that indicates they will be determined using the risk assessment tools by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. A new definition has been added for *wildland fire assessment and mitigation standards*. There is need for a ROP policy to address the new PPS policy 3.1.8 regarding wildland fires.

Implementation

- Wording in the PPS 2020 has been added to policy 4.7: "To determine the significance of some natural heritage features and other resources, evaluation may be required."
- The policy requirement in section 5.3 of the Place to Grow 2006 to contribute to further pieces of analysis to support implementation, including sub-area assessments at a regional scale that identify natural heritage systems, has been deleted from the Place to Grow 2019.

SECTION 3.0 IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESSES, GAPS AND BARRIERS

3.1 Introduction

- In addition to identifying changes required to the ROP due to changes in the Provincial planning framework, the ROP Review also provides the opportunity to reconsider and refine the ROP policies based experience with them to date.
- As part of the ROP Review, staff from the Region and Local Municipalities prepared comments based on their experience in implementing the ROP, focussed on successes, barriers and gaps. These were supplemented with comments from members of the consultant team with direct experience in applying and interpreting the ROP policies on natural heritage.
- Some of the issues raised and the solutions proposed may be impacted by approaches taken by the ROP Review to broader changes in policies related to natural heritage and water resources as a result of the consistency/conformity analysis.

3.2 Summary

- This sub-section provides a summary of the main issues raised through the implementation analysis of successes, gaps and barriers. A finer grain analysis is included in sub-section 3.3.

Successes

- The current ROP approach to natural heritage is viewed as a success. The protection of natural heritage is strongly enshrined in Halton's planning vision, clarifying the intent of the ROP policies and supporting their defensibility. The composition of the RNHS and the policies that pertain to it have provided appropriate levels of protection for natural heritage. The goal of the NHS "to increase the certainty that the biological diversity and *ecological functions* within *Halton* will be preserved and enhanced for future generations" has helped Regional staff defend the application of the precautionary principle in relation to their analysis of proposed NHS impact avoidance and mitigation measures.

Potential Refinements based on Barriers and Gaps

- **Precautionary Principle** – As referenced in the point above, the use of the language "...increase the certainty..." in the goal of the NHS has supported the application of the precautionary principle in assessing potential impacts on the NHS. For example, in the absence of certainty on the required width of buffer to preserve a natural heritage feature, decision-makers should err on the side of caution to ensure that no negative impact on that feature occurs. The notion of having a high degree of confidence in considering the impacts on the NHS could be more explicitly articulated in the policies. The term "precautionary principle" could be added into policy, perhaps in the Vision.
- **Centres for Biodiversity** – The term *Centres for Biodiversity* appears in the ROP in reference to enhancements as a component of the RNHS and as a defined term. The concept of *Centres for Biodiversity* arose from a recognition of the impact of fragmentation of natural communities and the benefit of maintaining a few very large (>200 ha) habitat patches that represent the main natural heritage landscapes in Halton Region. The concept was introduced into the ROP as part of ROPA 38 in 2009, however policies and complete mapping were not developed at that time. The Region should evaluate how the concept of *Centres for Biodiversity* can be implemented through policy and mapping.
- **Relationship between the Greenbelt NHS and RNHS** – There is some confusion about the relationship between the Greenbelt NHS and the RNHS in the ROP. In policy, they can be interpreted to be overlapping frameworks, but north of the Escarpment they appear on Map 1 of the ROP to be mutually exclusive. Mapping and policy refinements could be undertaken to clarify this relationship.

- **Refinements to RNHS Mapping** – Refinements to the RNHS mapping are currently only undertaken during a Municipal Comprehensive Review and are discussed in the Mapping Audit Technical Paper. The result is that the RNHS mapping does not reflect refinements that have occurred through environmental assessments and site-specific studies in the interim. Alternative approaches to updating the RNHS should be considered.
- **Buffers** – It is assumed by the ROP that a principal mitigation approach for achieving no negative impact will be the provision of a buffer around components of the RNHS. Although buffers are defined in the ROP, and included among the components of the RNHS, there is no further guidance on buffers in the ROP. The Region has developed an informal guideline that outlines a process for determining buffers called the “Framework of Regional Natural Heritage System Buffer Width Refinements for Area-Specific Planning”. Consideration should be given to incorporating this buffer framework into the EIA Guidelines, thus formalizing the status of its guidance, or otherwise formalizing its status in policy or through Council direction to use it as a guidance document but would require public consultation prior to adoption.

3.3 Detailed Implementation Analysis

- This sub-section provides a detailed topic-by-topic analysis of comments submitted by Regional staff, Local Municipal staff and members of the consultant team with experience in the interpretation and application of ROP NHS policies.
- A list of relevant ROP policies, referenced by policy number, is included at the beginning of each topic discussion.
- Two tables, included in the Appendix, have been prepared that organize the original comments: Table 3 organizes comments on implementation successes and barriers by ROP policy number; Table 4 organizes comments on policy gaps. The discussion of issues below references comments from Tables 3 and 4, indicating the comment number (a number references Table 3 (e.g. 1), a number preceded by “G” references Table 4 (e.g. G.1)). For each reference to a comment, the commenter’s identity is also indicated in the following manner:
 - CoB: City of Burlington
 - HRS: Halton Regional Staff
 - NSE: North-South Environmental Inc.

- ToHH: Town of Halton Hills
- ToM: Town of Milton
- ToO: Town of Oakville

3.3.1 Successes

3.3.1.1 **Conception of NHS in Halton's Planning Vision**

ROP: 26, 27, 29, 30

- The planning Vision is a unique and valuable part of the ROP. Sections 26, 27, 29 and 30 provide the foundation and assist with the high level interpretation of the "operational" policies. It clarifies the intent of policies and puts them into a broad long-term perspective. This assists with their defensibility and helps understand the Region's strong position when it comes to the environment. [NSE 1]

3.3.1.2 Goal of the Natural Heritage System

ROP: 114

- The goal of the NHS is "to increase the certainty that the biological diversity and *ecological functions* within *Halton* will be preserved and enhanced for future generations." The phrasing of this policy, particularly the inclusion of "to increase the certainty that", has helped Regional staff defend the application of the precautionary principle in relation to their analysis of proposed NHS impact avoidance and mitigation measures. It is important to keep this language in the plan. [HRS 5, NSE 6] Discussion about how the use of the precautionary principle might be further strengthened in the ROP is included in Section 3.3.2.1.

3.3.1.3 Components of the RNHS

ROP: 115.2, 115.3, 115.4

- The components, features and areas included in ROP 115.2-115.4 are comprehensive and have allowed municipalities to protect what needs to be protected. [CoB 10]

3.3.1.4 Refinement of RNHS

ROP: 116.1

- Refinement of the RNHS by study has worked well. [CoB 24]

3.3.2 Issues and Potential Refinements

3.3.2.1 Further Enshrining the Precautionary Principle in the ROP

ROP: 114

- In the Successes section above, ROP 114 was identified as critical in supporting a precautionary principle approach to protecting the NHS. This policy has been interpreted that there has to be a high degree of confidence that proposed protection and mitigation measures will work. It draws on the concept of “Landscape Permanence” in the Vision as justification for erring on the conservative side when it comes to mitigation like buffer widths and appropriate uses in the buffers.
- The application of the precautionary principle in this instance means that in the absence of knowing how a proposed mitigation will work, or in the absence of fully knowing the consequences of any other aspect of a proposed development or land use change (and especially uses proposed within a buffer like LIDS or even trails), then caution needs to be taken in the form of erring on the conservative side of things.
- To understand this, it is important to grasp that there is no “hard science” to defend specific mitigation measures (like buffer widths) and that it relies on professional judgement. There is general agreement that the more protection you provide, the higher the confidence that a feature will be protected. So there is little disagreement that there is greater confidence that a 50 m buffer against a woodland would protect it better than a 10 m buffer. The argument then becomes how much is sufficient and how much more confidence does the wider buffer provide. Regional staff use the Vision and “... increase the certainty ...” wording in the goal (ROP 114) to argue that a high confidence is required.
- The notion of having a high degree of confidence could be more explicitly articulated in the policies. The term “precautionary principle” could be added into policy, perhaps in the Vision. This concept already appears in the Region’s Buffer Framework (page 5,

Table B-1). It would serve to put Regional staff on a more solid footing with respect to their interpretation and application of the policies. In one sense, it would be more clearly codifying what is already current practice. Including it also adds to a transparent process by making it clear how staff will interpret policies. [NSE 6]

3.3.2.2 Consider Defining Biodiversity

ROP: 114, 114.1

- Consideration should be given to whether “biodiversity” or “biological diversity” should be a defined term to strengthen the interpretation of NHS goal in ROP 114 and to more strongly tie the goal to objectives like ROP 114.1(5) and (12). [NSE 6]

3.3.2.3 Simplifying the Policies Identifying the RNHS

ROP: 115.2, 115.3, 115.4

- The ROP has three policies that establish the elements that comprise the RNHS (ROP 115.2-115.4). Consideration should be given to including all elements of the NHS from 115.2-115.4 into one list. [CoB 10]

3.3.2.4 Requirements for Hydrogeological Studies for residential lot creation

ROP: 67, 101(1.4), 105, 106(2)b), 145(23)

- Requirements for Hydrogeological Studies are established in ROP 67, 105, 106(2)b) and 145(23). In the case of ROP 105 and 106(2)b), Regional staff have indicated that the ROP gives the impression that hydrogeological work is only required for developments that are for 3 lots or more, when the reality is that hydrogeological work is generally required for the creation of every residential lot on private services. The policies might be amended to clarify. [HRS 3]
- Given requirements for hydrologic studies relative to key hydrologic features and key hydrologic areas established in Provincial planning documents, existing ROP policies requiring hydrogeological studies might be revisited to consider how they fit into an expanded conception of watershed planning and associated policies on Water Resource Systems.

3.3.2.5 Centres for Biodiversity

ROP: 115.3(2)

- The term *Centres for Biodiversity* appears in reference to enhancements as a component of the RNHS and as a defined term. Comments from the City of Burlington seek clarity on how *Centres for Biodiversity* are to be identified and incorporated into the RNHS. [CoB 15]
- The *Centres for Biodiversity* concept has not been implemented through policy. The Region should consider if the concept should be developed further or eliminated from the ROP.

3.3.2.6 Defining the RNHS – Policy and Mapping

ROP 115.2, 115.3, 115.4, 116.1, 118 (1.1), 139.12

- ROP 115.2 to 115.4 establish the elements that comprise the RNHS. These policies reference mapping, as well as list the elements. ROP 116.1 establishes how the RNHS may be refined and indicates that the Region will maintain mapping showing such refinements and incorporate them as part of the Region's statutory review of the ROP.
- The mapping of the RNHS is an incomplete representation based only on available data, which in some instances is flawed [NSE 13]:
 - There are some errors in the mapping of the RNHS on Maps 1 and 1G. The RNHS as depicted on the two maps in the ROP are slightly different from each other. [Environment 83]
 - The components of the RNHS are not all mapped. For example, currently no significant wildlife habitat mapping is included in the ROP. [HRS G.3]
- Although it is implied in ROP 115, it may be useful to clarify that the RNHS is defined by policy; the mapping is a representation of policy based on the best available information, which is updated as further studies and assessments are completed. It could go further and indicate, as in 115.2(3), which parts of the RNHS have not been mapped (although they may be captured by the mapping of other elements). [CoB 12, NSE 13, CoB 36]
- ROP 118 (1.1) and 139.12 currently require Local Municipalities to protect Key Features that are not mapped on Map 1G. In their comments, the City of Burlington

posed the question, relative to ROP 118 (1.1), as to whether Local Municipalities should not also protect other components of the RNHS which are unmapped, e.g. linkages, buffers, enhancement areas, watercourses, wetlands. [CoB 36] Similarly, ROP 118 (3) indicates that the purpose of an EIA is to demonstrate that no negative impacts will result to a portion of the RNHS or an unmapped Key Feature (not other unmapped components of the RNHS). The Region might clarify if only unmapped Key Features are intended to be protected or if protections should be extended to other unmapped components of the RNHS. In response to this issue, Regional staff indicate that ROP 118(2) spells out the systems approach, which should work in tandem with the refinement policies of 116.1. In both these policies, there is nothing that would preclude the addition of new unmapped NHS components. As well, the systems approach implies that all components of the NHS need to be protected, not just areas that are identified as Key Features. This point could be more clearly established in policy.

- The City Burlington asked if the Greenbelt Key Features listed in ROP 139.3.3 were mapped on Map 1G. Should the policies on the Greenbelt NHS also indicate the need to identify and incorporate unmapped key features? [CoB 66]
- Regional staff indicated that unmapped wetlands might not be adequately protected by these policies and could be lost depending on Conservation Authority regulation policy. [HRS 17] ROP policy changes in response to changes in Provincial planning documents may address this point, e.g. Place to Grow 2019 and Greenbelt 2017 identify *wetlands as key natural heritage features*.
- Policy 276.5(4), which provides a definition of significant wetland, casts further doubt on whether unmapped components of the RNHS are protected. Since both significant wetlands and wetlands not considered significant are components of the RNHS, how can there be lands outside the RNHS that are wetlands, let alone Provincially Significant Wetlands? [HRS 79]

3.3.2.7 Mapping Significant Wildlife Habitat

- Currently no significant wildlife habitat mapping is included in the ROP. However, according to Regional staff, it would simplify development application studies and review to have as much mapped as possible. Mapping would also give landowners and the Region a better indication of the real extent of the RNHS. Credit Valley Conservation is currently undertaking a significant wildlife mapping project for their

jurisdiction, so mapping for approximately 1/3 of the Region could be available. Their methodology could be extended across the Region as part of the ROPR. [HRS G.3]

3.3.2.8 Confusion about the relationship between the GBNHS and RNHS

ROP: Map 1 and 1G, 139.3.7(3) to 139.3.7(6)

- Currently, there is no RNHS mapped north of the Niagara Escarpment; this has led to some confusion, particularly when ROPAs occur above this limit and involve delineation/refinement of natural feature boundaries (e.g. Acton Quarry Extension). There is nothing in policy that would suggest the ROP should not be amended under such circumstances to incorporate new RNHS lands north of the Escarpment in the event an application to change land use is received in this area. [Environment 86]
- Although ROP 139.3.7(3) to 139.3.7(6) relate only to Key Features within the Greenbelt NHS, the policies are written in a manner which could lead to their being misinterpreted as applying to all Key Features. These policies could be made clearer by explicitly stating that they apply to Key Feature within the Greenbelt NHS as shown on Map 1.

3.3.2.9 Refining the Boundaries of the RNHS

ROP: 116.1, 118-2d

Region-led Refinements through an MCR

- Local municipalities have expressed concern that it is the Region only that is charged with maintaining the mapping. [RC 22] There is the perception by local municipalities that these refinements are made only during an MCR. [ToM 23] Therefore, waiting until the MCR to incorporate refinements has two key consequences: 1) It puts lower tier municipalities in the position of having to propose mapping that is known to be inaccurate as part of their Official Plan Reviews in order to conform to the mapping in the ROP, 2) development planning staff and the public are working off inaccurate maps for an extended period of time. [CoB 26]
- Possible solutions recommended by City of Burlington:
 - 1) Policies that allow lower tier municipalities to incorporate revised mapping into their Official Plans that has been approved by the Region but not yet incorporated into the ROP and that it be deemed to still conform to the ROP.

- 2) Formalize a process to manage updates to the RNHS mapping as a result of approved site specific studies. Updated mapping could be incorporated into the ROP through regular consolidations and updated mapping layers could then be shared with municipalities for day to day use. [CoB 26]
- Is there an alternative approach that would see this mapping maintained by local planning approval authorities and curated by the Region? [HRS 22]

Refinements Approved without a ROPA

- Refinements to the NHS should also be approved without requirement for ROPA in other scenarios (i.e. not just Planning Applications). The list should include approved Niagara Escarpment Development Act applications and approved federal and provincial environmental assessments. The final paragraph of 116.1 could be amended to read (new text underlined):
 - “Once approved through an approval process under the Planning Act, the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, or federal and provincial Environmental Assessment requirements, these refinements are in effect on the date of such approval. The Region will maintain mapping showing such refinements and incorporate them in the digital database and in any subsequent ROP office consolidation or through the Region’s statutory review of the ROP.” [RC 21]

Further Guidance on Refinements

- The Town of Halton Hills indicated that ROP 116.1 and 118(2)d), on the process for refining boundaries, lack clarity and direction and are open to many interpretations. The Region should consider revising this section to clarify the process for introducing refinements at an early stage of the development application process. [ToHH 20]
- There has been some confusing interpretations about ROP 118 (2)d), especially as it relates to Area-Specific Planning when certain elements of the NHS (i.e. buffers) cannot be refined until the necessary site specific details and the particulars about a development application (i.e. the final preferred land use, impacts and mitigation measures) are known. Regional staff have argued that the policy does not require all refinements at the largest possible scale but encourages them where possible. [HRS 43]
- Concerning ROP 118(2)d), introducing refinements at an early stage of the development or site alteration process is often difficult as development proceeds from the general to the specific; it can be unrealistic to determine specific mitigation

or boundary adjustments at conceptual stages of development. The Region's position has been (at least in some instances) to reserve the widest buffer possible and set development limits until you can demonstrate that narrower buffers are appropriate. However, planners need to know the envelope they have to work in, the "developable area", in order to design. Overall, the process needs to be more carefully thought through and the policy requirements be clear and implementable. The intent of the policy is to have the RNHS identified and acknowledged at an early stage in the development process, but it was not intended to finalize the boundaries at an early stage of development. Thus in early stages, the boundaries of the RNHS need to be conservative to allow for refinement (e.g. wider or narrower buffers) as more detailed information is collected through the development process. In the Evergreen decision, the Board agreed this was a reasonable approach. The steps for refinement of the RNHS, from broad to refined, should be determined and reflected in policy or other guidance to the degree necessary and helpful. [NSE 37]

Deletions

- ROP 116.1 provides for the refinement of the NHS, including "deletions". It is debated as to whether "deleted" means the deletion of an entire feature, or is limited to deletion of part of a feature, in which case how is it different to "boundary adjustments". ROP 116.1 starts by saying "The boundaries of the RNHS may be refined ...", suggesting that complete deletions are not intended. This needs to be clarified. [NSE 25]

3.3.2.10 Permitted Uses

ROP: 117.1, 118(2), 139.3.7, 290

Refinements for Clarity

- ROP 117.1 could be made clearer by refining it to read: "... the following uses may be permitted in the Regional Natural Heritage System...". [NSE 27]
- ROP 139.3.7(3) could be made clearer by qualifying the term Key Feature with "within the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System". [RC 67] This qualification could apply to any reference to Key Feature in the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System section for clarity's sake.

Scope of Permitted Uses

- The City of Burlington has indicated that the permitted uses for the RNHS are too broad in many circumstances. Using an NHS-related designation and an overlay would permit a more narrow range of less intensive uses within the designation that are more consistent with the objectives of protecting, restoring and enhancing the NHS. [CoB 29]

Specific Permitted Uses

- Accessory apartments/secondary suites – The ROP should be updated to permit accessory apartments/secondary units within singles, towns, and semis in the agricultural area (subject to meeting servicing requirements and other performance requirements) as per Bill 140 and the Planning Act. Garden suites should also be permitted. Policies are currently too restrictive and a barrier to providing a wider range of affordable housing options. Regional staff expressed support for allowing secondary units in single detached houses, but not in any accessory buildings. [ToM 28, CoB 30]
- Uses listed in 117.1(16) – The Town of Milton indicates that these policies are too restrictive and go beyond the role of the ROP. It should be left up to local OP to identify detailed criteria for permitting these types of uses, etc., which would then be implemented by the local ZBL. The list of agriculture-related uses will support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide services to farm operations as a primary activity. They should be permitted without the commercial farm/active farming operation requirements identified. [ToM 28]
- Stormwater management – It is unclear whether stormwater management is a permitted use in the RNHS, and in what parts. For example, LID in buffer, linkages, and enhancement areas, stormwater management conveyance infrastructure (required to enter into valley features on occasion to discharge water to creeks). [HRS 32]
- Restoration projects – Although restoration projects are a permitted use under 117.1(7), because 117.1 includes “subject to other policies of this Plan” all of the permitted uses are subject to the prohibition and restriction policies of 118(2). This is problematic for many restoration projects that require approval under the Planning Act (i.e. NEC DPs). For example, online pond removal within a significant woodland or improving a culvert for fish passage can involve impacts to significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat, significant wetlands that do not meet the 118(2) tests despite having an overall benefit to the integrity of the NHS. A sub-policy could be

considered under 118(2) for activities that are deemed to have an overall benefit to the NHS:

- “Notwithstanding the above, development and site alteration within, and/or the alteration of, any component of the Regional Natural Heritage System associated with forest, fisheries and wildlife management is permitted provided that an overall benefit to the integrity of the NHS is demonstrated.” [HRS 33]

3.3.2.11 Development and Site Alteration

ROP: 118(2), 226, and 278.1

Exemptions for Infrastructure

- ROP 118(2)a prohibits development and site alteration in select key features. ROP 226 defines development and provides exemptions for infrastructure approved through an EA thereby allowing infrastructure development in those select key features. However, the definition of site alteration in ROP 278.1 does not include a similar exemption. Therefore, while the creation of a new lot, change in land use, or the construction of buildings or structures associated with infrastructure approved through an EA is permitted in those select key features, the grading, excavation, and placement of fill typically required for that development is not permitted. [HRS 41]
- ROP 118(2)b prohibits alteration to any component of the RNHS unless no negative impacts has been demonstrated. For infrastructure projects this is often not possible. This policy does not apply strictly to Development and Site Alteration, it applies to “Any Alteration”. [HRS 41]
- A clear exemption for infrastructure could be provided by:
 - Combining the definition for development and site alteration into one definition, or adding the exemptions that are currently in the development definition to the site alteration definition.
 - Changing “the alteration of any components of the RNHS” in 118(2)b) to “development and site alteration” in order to capture the exemption in relation to the no negative impact test. [HRS 41]
- Regional staff may explore the requirement to demonstrate “No Overall Negative Impact”, for “essential public works” only, providing all options are first considered through an appropriately comprehensive EA (i.e. more than a Schedule A or A+ EA) or

similar environmental study process and all feasible avoidance and mitigation are identified for implementation. Non-essential infrastructure should be subject to the “No Negative Impact” test, just like private development. [HRS G2]

- The ROP definitions of development and site alteration have sources in Provincial planning documents. These provincial definitions have changed. Incorporating these changes should be done with care and with consideration of the best way to provide exemptions to infrastructure as appropriate.

As-of-right Single Detached Dwellings

- There are many lots of record that do not require planning approvals in order to develop a single detached dwelling (i.e. only a building permit is required) despite being significantly and in many cases, entirely encompassed by Key Features of the NHS. As they do not require planning approvals, the only mechanism the Region has to protect the NHS is through the Regional Tree-bylaw approval. However, that by-law does not prevent development within woodlands and is limited in working towards limiting the scale of the development.
 - Consider including a ROP policy that would direct the local municipalities to include all areas within the mapped key features on Map 1G as areas of site plan control to ensure that planning approvals are required (and hence the NHS policies come into play). Single detached dwellings are a permitted use within the NHS as per 117.1(4); however, they are still subject to the other policies of the ROP including the prohibition and restriction policies included in 118(2). This is a much better mechanism for the protection of the NHS than the tree-bylaw. [HRS G.4]

Exemptions Based on Provincial and Federal Regulations

- Regional staff have indicated that ROP 118(2) a) creates too large an exemption related to provincial and federal requirements and is not consistent with the PPS 2014. The policy appears to inadvertently allow any provincial/federal legislation or regulations to be inappropriately invoked (e.g. endangered and threatened species habitat happens to occur in a Provincially Significant Wetland and Endangered Species Act approval used to allow development within the Provincially Significant Wetland). It is assumed that the “provincial and federal requirements” portion of the existing policy was only meant to refer to development in fish habitat. ROP 118(2)a) could be replaced with the following:
 - “Prohibiting development and site alteration within significant wetlands and significant coastal wetlands;

- Prohibiting development and site alteration within habitat of endangered and threatened species and fish habitat except in accordance with Provincial and Federal requirements provided that any required compensatory works contribute to Halton's NHS." [HRS 40]

3.3.2.12 Restrictions in RNHS

ROP: 118 (2)

- ROP 118 (2) could specify that the demonstration of no negative impact should be through an EIA that is approved by the Region. [NSE 37] However, this would establish a higher standard for requiring an EIA than established in 118(3.1).
- ROP 118(2)b) could include some flexibility to promote long-term environmental benefits to the NHS. For instance, in the case of invasive non-native species or other situations that may cause negative effects on the native ecosystems/NHS, the "no negative impact test" may not be the right tool to for assessment. Looking at net ecological benefits to the system in the long term may be a better way to preserve the NHS. [ToHH 42]

3.3.2.13 EIA

ROP: 118 (3), 118(3.1), 118(3.3), 141(3), 192

Clearer Articulation of EIA Requirement

- ROP 118(3)d) contains a statement of the purpose of an EIA that does not work well with 118(2) and seems to go beyond it. A separate policy regarding EIAs should be considered to pull this all together. It could articulate the purpose, identify when one is needed, describe the process (i.e., submission of a TOR for approval before undertaking the study), content, etc. [NSE 49]
- Consider strengthening reference to the Region' EIA Guidelines, potentially cross-referencing ROP 118(3), 141(3) and 192. ROP 192 could be strengthened in this regard as well, including text that "alternative approaches" should be approved by the Region through pre-consultation. [NSE 72]

Determining Exemptions or Reduced Scope

- The phrasing "minor in scale and/or nature" in ROP 118(3)a) is open to interpretation. The Region should consider adding guidance on interpreting this policy, either in the

ROP itself or in the EIA Guidelines with reference to this guidance included in the ROP. [ToHH 47, HRS 48]

- The City of Burlington has received feedback on the need to scope EIAs or provide exemptions based on a range of circumstances. They believe the update of the EIA guidelines is the most appropriate time to provide further detailed guidance on what type of scoping and waiving may be accepted by the Region and other agencies. Consider adding a policy that refers to the waiving/scoping established in the guidelines to provide comfort/transparency to those that are concerned. [CoB 44]
- The Town of Oakville indicated that portions of these criteria included in ROP 118(3) are unclear and could be clarified to exempt additional classes of development. It suggests that Minor Variances, for example, should be explicitly exempt from the requirement to carry out an EIA. [ToO 46]
- Due to concerns from the agricultural community, the City of Burlington's OP recognizes that an EIA is only required for Planning Act applications to provide clarity that they are not required to support normal agricultural uses that would require Building Permit application only. Consider adding to ROP 118(3): "Other circumstances in accordance with the EIA guidelines and to the satisfaction of the Region" or similar language. The ROP could also include language highlighting that an EIA is not required as part of a Building Permit application (as was done in Burlington's new OP). [CoB 44]

Mapping

- Related to mapping issues discussed above, in addition to Key Features, should EIA also identify other components of the NHS that are not mapped on Map 1G (e.g. unmapped linkages, buffers, enhancement areas, hazard areas)? [CoB 45] At present, ROP 118(3) indicates that an EIA should identify unmapped *Key Features*, but makes no reference to these other features.

Urban Areas

- The Town of Oakville indicates, regarding 118 (3.1)c), that in the urban area under existing development, a buffer of 120m takes in an enormous amount of area. [ToO 52]

Agriculture

- The City of Burlington notes that the agricultural community perceives ROP 118(3.1) as unfairly singling them out, however they are being singled out because they are

being given exemptions from the standard requirements for an EIA within 120m. The policies might be reworded pertaining to agricultural uses to specifically note them as exceptions. E.g. "All development within 120 m needs to do an EIA, except the following exemptions are provided for agricultural uses..." [CoB 50]

- ROP 118(3.1) should be reconsidered in light of the study waiving requirements of the Place to Grow 2019, Greenbelt Plan 2017 and NEP 2017, all of which are more permissive as it pertains to agriculture. The City of Burlington notes that it is no longer permitted to be more restrictive as it pertains to agriculture in the Greenbelt Plan. [This is open to interpretation. The policies that prevent more restrictive policies regarding agriculture also existed in the previous plan. GBP 5.3 references the Agricultural System section (GBP 3.1), not the Natural Heritage System (GBP 3.2) within which the requirements for natural heritage evaluation or hydrological evaluation are established.] The City of Burlington indicates that, if a more restrictive approach is taken to agriculture by the ROP, detailed background work should be prepared to support the different standard. For example: Justifying requiring studies within 120 metres of the system, vs. the features as is required by Provincial policy. [CoB 50]
- City of Burlington also questioned whether, for agricultural uses, the size of the building is the best test to gauge potential impacts, and therefore waiving criteria, rather than the nature of the agricultural use. [CoB 50]

In-kind Service and Financial Aid

- Regarding ROP 118(3.3), clarification is needed on the degree to which, and under what circumstances, the Region provides in-kind service and financial aid to assist in carrying out an EIA for agricultural buildings. [HI 53] Concerning financial support, it should be a qualified to ensure the Region is not always held responsible to aid a proponent financially, especially in circumstances where they are not following staff's reasonable recommendations for avoiding impacts. Consider adding "...where appropriate" at the end of ROP 118(3.3). [HRS 53]
- City of Burlington indicated that it has relied on ROP 118(3.3) when concerns are raised by the agricultural community. [CoB 54]
- The Region should provide information in the ROP on the process for assisting the proponents in carrying out an EIA by providing financial aid and/or in-kind service. If the intent is to provide this information in the updated EIA Guidelines, the ROP should direct the reader to this document. [ToHH 55]

3.3.2.14 Buffers

ROP: 115.3 (4), 220.1.1

- Consideration should be given to prescribing minimum buffer widths in policy and/or new policy should be added to enable use of the Region's Buffer refinement framework or some similar buffer width refinement framework. [HRS G.9, HRS G.2]
- It is assumed by the ROP that a principal mitigation approach for achieving no negative impact as per ROP 118(2) will be the provision of a buffer around components listed in ROP 115.3. Oddly, buffers are defined in ROP 220.1.1, but there is no other mention of them in the ROP (other than ROP 115.3(4)). Consideration should be given to clarifying expectations regarding buffers in policy. [NSE 37]
- The Region has developed an informal guideline that outlines a process for determining buffers called the "Framework of Regional Natural Heritage System Buffer Width Refinements for Area-Specific Planning". Consideration should be given to incorporating this buffer framework into the EIA Guidelines, thus formalizing the status of its guidance, or otherwise formalizing its status in policy or through Council direction to use it as a guidance document. [NSE G.16]
- The City of Burlington commented that the framework would benefit from the inclusion of recent scientific research and rationale for the buffer widths identified. This will allow local municipalities to better defend the framework when presented with countering data/studies provided by applicants through the Area-Specific Planning process. [CoB 16] Regional staff suggest one way to address this concern is to apply minimum vegetation protection zones of 30m to certain key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features, thus negating the need for the framework in some instances. [RC G.9]

3.3.2.15 Definition of Development

ROP: 226

- The current definition of development (ROP 226) is consistent with the PPS, 2014. However, it precludes development requiring approval under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. This is a barrier as Regional staff comment on Niagara Escarpment Commission Development Permit Applications and have been

doing so for a number of years. If ever the Region were challenged on the policy basis for their comments it would be difficult to justify the comments given this barrier.

[HRS 76]

- A and A+ Class EAs are considered 'pre-approved' and do not require any supporting work to be completed (other than posting a sign at the project site for A+ projects). As such, these projects are exempted by 226(1) without any natural heritage investigations or studies and associated agency review. It appears that the intent of 226(1) is to not duplicate the studies, consideration of alternatives (which includes consideration of impacts to the natural environment) and agency review from the EA process during planning approvals. However, it is not clear if A and A+ projects were intended to be included in the exemption given that they do not include any of those items. [HRS 77]

3.3.2.16 NHS and Agricultural System

ROP: 115.4 (3), 118 (4.1)

- The balance struck by the ROP between the NHS and Agricultural System is important. However, this might be more clearly stated, perhaps as an objective. [NSE 19, CoB 56]

3.3.2.17 Water

ROP: 145 (23)

- ROP 145 (23) addresses development and site alteration near sensitive surface and ground water features and establishes the requirement for an EIA. The policy is ambiguous as it refers to unmapped and undefined features. New policies on Water Resource Systems in alignment with the PPS 2014 and the relevant Provincial plans should replace this policy. [HRS 71]

3.3.2.18 Hazards/Shoreline

ROP: 115.2 (2), 115.4 (2), 118 (11), 118 (12)

- The City of Burlington suggested that a definition of "shoreline" in the context of ROP 115.2 (2) would be useful. [CoB 11]

- Regional staff indicated that rules around the inclusion of natural hazard areas within the NHS should be included in policy, whereby those hazardous lands identified through an approved environmental study submitted in support of a proposed development and site alteration are ultimately included into the NHS. [HRS G.7]
- Similarly, the City of Burlington recommended the inclusion of all Conservation Authority regulated hazardous lands and hazardous sites in ROP 115.4 (2), thus including them in the RNHS. In this manner, the NHS could address hazards such as erosion hazards and shoreline hazards. Burlington's OP has recommended this approach but noted certain circumstances where a designation aside from the NHS is appropriate (Burlington OP Section 4.4.2(3)a)).[CoB 18]
- In regard to ROP 118 (2), the City of Burlington recommended prohibiting development and site alteration within hazardous lands and hazardous sites and other areas regulated by Conservation Halton unless permission has been received from Conservation Halton. [CoB 38]
- Regional staff have indicated that ROP 118 (11) has led to some confusion. It has been suggested that the policy should allow some development in hazard lands if authorized by a Conservation Authority (addition underlined):
 - “Require that Local Zoning By-laws prohibit new construction and the expansion or replacement of existing non-conforming uses within hazard lands, except where specifically exempted by the applicable Conservation Authority in accordance with their policies or identified as a Special Policy Area in the Local Official Plan. Special Policy Areas, including any policy or boundary changes thereto, must be approved by the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing prior to municipal adoption.” [HRS 60]
- Regional staff note that ROP 118(11) and 118(12) only reference requirements for Local Zoning By-laws to include provisions to prohibit new construction, expansion and replacement of existing non-conforming uses as it relates to Natural Hazards. Consideration should be given to extending this prohibition to site specific applications (i.e. Site Plan, consent, variances). [HRS 62]

3.3.2.19 Lot Line Adjustments/Lot Creation

ROP: 66(2.1), 118(20)

- Regional staff indicated that it would be helpful to add a third clause to ROP 66(2.1) to prevent lot line adjustments that lead to increased fragmentation of NHS key features (text additions underlined):
 - "...new lots may be created: ... for adjusting lot lines provided that:
 - a) the adjustment is minor and for legal or technical reasons such as easements, corrections of deeds and quit claims; ~~and~~
 - b) the proposal does not result in additional building lots; and
 - c) the proposal does not further any fragmentation of land ownership in key features of the natural heritage system.[HRS 2]
- Concerning ROP 118 (20), Regional staff indicated that the creation of lots in the NHS should be prohibited everywhere, except to permit the severance of a residence surplus to a farm operation (additions underlined):
 - "Prohibit the creation of new lots for residential purposes, except ~~in Hamlets or Rural Clusters, or~~ to permit the severance of a residence surplus to a farm operation, subject to the other policies of this Plan." [HRS 64]

3.3.2.20 Definition of Woodland/Significant Woodland

ROP: 277

- Regional staff raised a number of issues regarding the protection of significant woodlands:
 - Consideration should be given to quality of the woodland (e.g. presence of invasive species). This point was echoed by the Town of Halton Hills, which noted the negative impact on the overall NHS potentially caused by invasive species. [ToHH 81] Regional staff indicated that the "quality" of a woodland should, first and foremost, be expressed through criteria such as ecological function, regardless of species type.
 - Regional staff spend time/energy protecting woodlands of low ecological value. Should qualitative criteria be included to support the evaluation of the significance of woodlands? Consider including qualitative criteria to this policy in addition to the existing criteria.
 - The PPS 2014 definition of Significant Woodland was revised to include reference to "criteria established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural

Resources”. The Region’s Significant Woodland criteria may require update to reflect MNR criteria.

- Further detail is included in the comments table. [HRS 277]
- Invasive species and extreme weather events are influencing the character of woodlands in Halton Region and many are experiencing severe disturbance as a result of these stressors. Dead trees have often been precluded from tree density counts involved in identifying “woodlands”—based on an interpretation that the current definition only requires consideration of live trees. Therefore it is possible that an area that would have qualified as a woodland no longer qualifies due to the amount of dead/removed trees (and therefore it is possible that a former significant woodland is no longer significant).
 - Consider adding wording to the existing definition of “woodland” (ROP 295) similar to the Greenbelt Plan technical paper that addresses this issue: “Woodlands experiencing changes such as harvesting, blowdown or other tree mortality are still considered woodlands. Such changes are considered temporary whereby the forest still retains its long-term ecological value”. [HRS 82]

3.3.2.21 Housekeeping

ROP: 110(7.2),118(1.1), 141(4), 194(3)

ROP 110(7.2)

- The policy references the wrong section. It should reference 118(2) instead of 118(3)d). [HRS 4]

ROP 118(1.1)

- The scope of ROP 118(1.1) must be expanded to apply to both the preparation and review of Areas-Specific Plans, Zoning By-law amendments and studies related to development and/or site alteration applications. As written, this policy is not operationable in relation to zoning by-law amendment and development and site alteration applications as municipalities never prepare such applications. [HRS 35]

ROP 141

- This section could be updated as the EIA Guidelines have now been prepared. Policies could also cross reference to other sections of the plan pertaining to EIA, such as ROP 192, which is the policy which gives clarification on their use, and/or policies in ROP 118 which establish the requirement for an EIA. [HRS 69]

ROP 141(4) and 194(3)

- EEAC has been combined with the former Forestry Advisory Committee to create NHAC. ROP 141(4) and 194(3) will have to be reconsidered and revised accordingly. [HRS 70, HRS 73]

3.3.2.22 Other

- **Cultural Heritage Landscapes** – Regarding ROP 114.1, the ROP should consider the relationship between cultural heritage landscape objectives and policies and the NHS, as well as objectives (and related policies) on cultural heritage landscapes where they overlap with the NHS, on the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark system, and on ecosystem services. [CoB 7]
- **Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System** – The City of Burlington recommends that the ROP incorporate objectives and policies to support/recognize the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System, as well as objectives/policies to recognize the ecosystem services provided by the NHS and the relationship to climate change mitigation. [CoB 7]
- **NHS Objectives** – The objective on preserving the aesthetic character of natural features (114.1(17)) should clarify that ecologic function is the priority over aesthetics. This could be achieved by adding to the end of this objective: "...in a manner that supports the ecological and hydrologic function of the features." [CoB 8]
- **Stewardship Funding Program** – Regional staff have indicated that the allocation of Regional funding to environmental stewardship initiatives on private and public lands requires Regional Council to adopt a Stewardship Funding Program. Stewardship projects completed in Halton are fewer than in surrounding municipalities. A strategic policy should be included that encourages the Region to develop and adopt a Stewardship Funding Program to work in cooperation with other public agencies (such as Conservation Authorities) to promote private and public land stewardship in the NHS. [HRS 74, HRS G.12]
- **Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System** – Include a strategic policy that encourages the Region to continue to support and participate in the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System initiative. [HRS G.11]

- **Wildlife Crossings** – Wildlife crossings are not explicitly addressed in policy therefore related mitigative measures associated with proposed development are not ensured through policy. Potential policy solutions are detailed by Regional staff in the comments table. [HRS G.1]
- **Ecological Offsetting** – Rules around ecological offsetting to address impacts associated with development of essential public works in the NHS should be outlined in policy. Flexibility is needed for such development as there is sometimes no alternative to locating some forms of infrastructure (linear infrastructure primarily) in the NHS. Removal of key features and/or other components of the NHS is often proposed as part of essential public works, despite there being no policy basis to permit this. Distinction between essential and non-essential public works needs to be made clear. Potential policy solutions are detailed by Regional staff in the comments table. [HRS G.6]
- **State of the NHS Report and Supportive Monitoring** – Regional staff have indicated the value of having a policy that requires the delivery of a State of the NHS Report to Regional Council (similar to 110(12) regarding the State of Aggregate Resources). [RC G.10] A strategic policy could also be added that encourages the Region to develop and implement a tool for monitoring the effectiveness of NHS policy implementation. This tool could use information from natural heritage monitoring conducted in support of development applications, input into a database to support NHS policy effectiveness monitoring. [HRS G.13]
- **Aquatic Species at Risk** – The Region should consider DFO Recommended Guidance for Aquatic Species at Risk Protection in Official Plans, March 29, 2018. [HRS G.15]
- **NHS Definition & Implementation, Sustainable Halton Report** – Staff consistently suggest that development applicants use this report to guide them in the refinement of the RNHS when undertaking site-specific studies (Sub-watershed studies, EIAs, etc.). As with the Buffer Framework it tends to be applied as a “soft” standard. Although it was not written with this intent in mind, it does contain some useful guidance. The issue is that there is no policy that provides any direction on its use. It is referenced in the EIA Guidelines, which provides some quotes from it, so is indirectly referred to in a formal guideline, but it is not very clear on how or if it should be used in the refinement of the RNHS. The development application process would benefit from some clear guidance on how the NHS should be refined. Rather than referring back to the NHS Definition & Implementation Report, the relevant

guidance should be drawn from it, refined, and incorporated into revised EIA Guidelines. [NSE G.17]

SECTION 7.0 NEXT STEPS

- The overall goal of the *Review of the Regional Official Plan Natural Heritage System Policies + Mapping* project is to strengthen the long-term viability of Halton's natural heritage and water resources. ROP policies and mapping will be updated, enhanced, and refined based on experience with the implementation of the current ROP and changes to the Provincial policy framework since the last ROP Review, including the Provincial Policy Statement 2014, A Place to Grow 2019 the applicable 2017 Provincial Plans, Greenbelt Plan and Niagara Escarpment Plan) and the recently released Provincial Natural Heritage System mapping.
- Phase 2 of the *Review of the Regional Official Plan Natural Heritage System Policies + Mapping* project provides detailed policy and mapping analysis of the ROP, organized into a series of four Technical Memos.
- This report is the *Policy Audit Technical Memo*. The other Technical Memos prepared for Phase 2 are:
 - Background Review Technical Memo
 - Best Practices Review Technical Memo; and
 - Mapping Audit Technical Memo.
- The Technical Memos will provide background for a Natural Heritage System Report, which will summarize the key findings of the supporting Technical Memos, identify the principal issues the ROP Review will address, and outline potential options for addressing these issues through revised policies and mapping in the ROP.
- The Technical Memos and Natural Heritage System Report will be the subject of stakeholder and public consultation with outputs of this process taken forward into Phase 3 to inform policy and mapping refinements to the ROP.

APPENDIX

Table 1 – Comparison of Terms and Definitions across Provincial Planning Documents and the ROP

Table 2 – Comparison of Place to Grow NHS and the Regional NHS – Key Features and Other Components

Table 3 – Implementation Comments – Successes and Barriers

Table 4 – Implementation Comments – Gaps

Policy Audit Technical Memo

Table 1 – Comparison of NHS and Water Definitions

New text relative to previous iterations is highlighted in yellow. Deleted text is crossed through.

TERM	PPS 2014	Growth Plan 2017	Greenbelt Plan 2017	Niagara Escarpment Plan 2017	Halton ROP
ADJACENT LANDS	ADJACENT LANDS: means b) for the purposes of policy 2.1.8, those lands contiguous to a specific <i>natural heritage feature or area</i> where it is likely that <i>development or site alteration</i> would have a <i>negative impact</i> on the feature or area. The extent of the <i>adjacent lands</i> may be recommended by the Province or based on municipal approaches which achieve the same objectives;	No definition	No definition	No definition	No definition as it relates to natural heritage
AGRICULTURAL USES	AGRICULTURAL USES: means the growing of crops, including nursery, biomass, and horticultural crops; raising livestock; raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including but not limited to livestock facilities, manure storages, value-retaining facilities, and accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment.	New - Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014 AGRICULTURAL USE— the land, building or structure used for the purpose of animal husbandry, horticulture, beekeeping, dairying, fallow, field crops, fruit farming, fur farming, market gardening, maple syrup production, pasturage, poultry keeping, mushroom farming or any other farming use and may include growing, raising, small-scale packing and storing of produce on the premises and other similar uses customarily carried out in the field of general agriculture.	AGRICULTURE or AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY or AGRICULTURAL OPERATION or AGRICULTURAL USE or FARMING means the growth of crops, including nursery and horticultural crops (but not <i>horticultural trade use</i>); raising of livestock; raising of other animals for food, fur or fibre, including poultry and fish; aquaculture; apiaries; agro-forestry; maple syrup production; and associated on-farm buildings and structures, including accommodation for full-time farm labour when the size and nature of the operation requires additional employment.
AGRICULTURE-RELATED USES	AGRICULTURE-RELATED USES: means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are small in scale and directly related to the farm operations in the area, and support agriculture, and are required benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations and provide direct products and/or services to farm operations as a primary activity.	New - Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	AGRICULTURE-RELATED USES means those farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses that are small scale and directly related to the farm operation and are required in close proximity to the farm operation.

ALVARS	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	<p>ALVARS Means naturally open areas of thin or no soil over essentially flat limestone, dolostone, or marble rock, supporting a sparse vegetation cover of mostly shrubs and herbs.</p>	No definition	No definition
AREAS OF NATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ANSI)	<p>AREAS OF NATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ANSI): means areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features that have been identified as having life science or earth science values related to protection, scientific study or education.</p>	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	<p>LIFE SCIENCE AREAS OF NATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ANSI) Means an area that has been identified as having life science values related to protection, scientific study, or education; and further identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry using evaluation procedures established by that Ministry, as amended from time to time.</p>	<p>Now the same as PPS 2014 AREAS OF NATURAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (ANSI): Areas of land and water containing natural landscapes or features which have been identified as having values related to natural heritage protection, scientific study, or education. Depending upon the features of particular areas, they may be referred to as Life Science or Earth Science sites, depending on whether they are ecological or geological features. These areas vary in their level of significance and their vulnerability to environmental impacts. They are identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and are classified as being either of "provincial", "regional" or "local" significance (see also definition of "Regionally Significant Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest").</p>	No definition
BUFFER / VEGETATION PROTECTION ZONES	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	<p>VEGETATION PROTECTION ZONE Means a vegetated buffer area surrounding a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature.</p> <p>A vegetated buffer area surrounding a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature within which only those land uses permitted within the feature itself are permitted. The width of the vegetation protection zone is to be determined when new development or site alteration occurs within 120</p>	<p>VEGETATION PROTECTION ZONE: A vegetated buffer area surrounding a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature within which only those land uses permitted within the feature itself are permitted.</p>	<p>BUFFER means an area of land located adjacent to <i>Key Features</i> or <i>watercourses</i> and usually bordering lands that are subject to <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i>. The purpose of the <i>buffer</i> is to protect the features and <i>ecological functions</i> of the Regional Natural Heritage System by mitigating impacts of the proposed <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i>. The extent of the <i>buffer</i> and activities that may be permitted within it shall be based on the sensitivity and significance of the <i>Key Features</i> and <i>watercourses</i> and their contribution to the long term</p>

			metres of a key natural heritage feature or key hydrologic feature, and is to be of sufficient size to protect the feature and its functions from the impacts of the proposed change and associated activities that will occur before, during, and after, construction, and where possible, restore or enhance the feature and/or its function.		<i>ecological functions</i> of the Regional Natural Heritage System as determined through a Sub-watershed Study, an Environmental Impact Assessment or similar studies that examine a sufficiently large area. VEGETATION PROTECTION ZONE means, as it applies within the Greenbelt Plan Area, a vegetated buffer area surrounding a <i>Key Feature</i> within which only those land uses permitted within the feature itself are permitted. The width of the <i>vegetation protection zone</i> is to be determined when new <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> occurs within 120 metres of a <i>Key Feature</i> , and is to be of sufficient size to protect the feature and its functions from the impacts of the proposed change and associated activities that will occur before, during, and after construction, and where possible, restore or enhance the feature and/or its function.
COASTAL WETLAND	COASTAL WETLAND: means a) any <i>wetland</i> that is located on one of the Great Lakes or their connecting channels (Lake St. Clair, St. Marys, Detroit, Niagara and St. Lawrence Rivers; or b) any other <i>wetland</i> that is on a tributary to any of the above-specified water bodies and lies, either wholly or in part, downstream of a line located 2 kilometers upstream of the 1:100 year floodline (plus wave run-up) of the large waterbody to which the tributary is connected.	No definition	No definition	No definition	No definition
COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION	COMPREHENSIVE REHABILITATION: means the rehabilitation of land from which <i>mineral aggregate resources</i> have been extracted that is coordinated and complimentary, to the extent possible, with the rehabilitation of other sites in an	No definition	No definition	Same as PPS 2014 REHABILITATION – after extraction, to treat land so that the use or condition of the land is restored to its former use or condition, or is	No definition

	area where there is a high concentration of <i>mineral aggregate operations</i> .			changed to another use or condition which is compatible with adjacent uses and the objectives and policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan (e.g. restoration of land from which aggregate has been extracted).	
CONNECTIVITY	Not a defined term, but a conceptualization of meaning of “linkage” from the definition of <i>Natural Heritage System</i> . linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes natural corridors which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems	No definition, but same conceptualization of linkage embedded into Natural Heritage System as PPS 2014	CONNECTIVITY Means the degree to which <i>key natural heritage features</i> or <i>key hydrologic features</i> are connected to one another by links such as plant and animal movement corridors, hydrologic and nutrient cycling, genetic transfer and energy flow through food webs.	No definition	LINKAGE means an area intended to provide connectivity supporting a range of community and ecosystem processes enabling plants and animals to move between <i>Key Features</i> over multiple generations. <i>Linkages</i> are preferably associated with the presence of existing natural areas and functions and they are to be established where they will provide an important contribution to the long term sustainability of the Regional Natural Heritage System. They are not meant to interfere with <i>normal farm practice</i> . The extent and location of the <i>linkages</i> can be assessed in the context of both the scale of the proposed <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> , and the <i>ecological functions</i> they contribute to the Regional Natural Heritage System.
CONSERVATION	No definition	No definition	No definition	CONSERVE OR CONSERVATION: a) In an ecological context, means the wise management of the environment in a way that will maintain, restore, enhance and protect its quality and quantity for sustained benefit to humans and the environment.	No definition
DESIGNATED VULNERABLE AREA:	DESIGNATED VULNERABLE AREA: means areas defined as vulnerable, in accordance with provincial standards, by virtue of their importance as a drinking water source that may be impacted by activities or events. [See definition of vulnerable below]	No definition	No definition	No definition	No definition

<p>DEVELOPMENT:</p>	<p>DEVELOPMENT: means the creation of a new lot, a change in land use, or the construction of buildings and structures; requiring approval under the Planning Act, but does not include: a) activities that create or maintain infrastructure authorized under an environmental assessment process; b) works subject to the Drainage Act; or c) for the purposes of policy 2.1.3(b)4(a), underground or surface mining of minerals or advanced exploration on mining lands in significant areas of mineral potential in Ecoregion 5E, where advanced exploration has the same meaning as under the Mining Act. Instead, those matters shall be subject to policy 2.1.45(a). [small changes to policies referenced]</p>	<p>DEVELOPMENT The creation of a new lot, a change in land use, or the construction of buildings and structures requiring approval under the Planning Act, but does not include: a) activities that create or maintain infrastructure authorized under an environmental assessment process; or b) works subject to the Drainage Act. (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)</p>	<p>DEVELOPMENT Means the creation of a new lot, a change in land use, or the construction of buildings and structures any of which require requiring approval under the <i>Planning Act</i> or that are subject to the <i>Environmental Assessment Act</i>, but does not include: a) activities that create or maintain <i>infrastructure</i> authorized under an environmental assessment process; or b) works subject to the <i>Drainage Act</i> (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan). a) The construction of facilities for transportation, infrastructure and utilities used by a public body; b) Activities or works under the <i>Drainage Act</i>; or c) The carrying out of agricultural practices on land that was being used for agricultural purposes on the date the Plan came into effect (PPS, 2005). MAJOR DEVELOPMENT Means development consisting of: a. the creation of four or more lots; b. the construction of a building or buildings with a ground floor area of 500 m² or more; or c. the establishment of a major recreational use.</p>	<p>No definition The <i>Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, R.S.O. 1990</i>, defines development as: “includes a change in the use of any land, building or structure”</p>	<p>DEVELOPMENT means the creation of a new <i>lot</i>, a change in land use, or the construction of buildings and structures, any of which requires approval under the Planning Act, or that are subject to the Environmental Assessment Act, but does not include: (1) activities that create or maintain <i>infrastructure</i> authorized under an environmental assessment process, (2) works subject to the Drainage Act, or (3) within the Greenbelt Plan Area, the carrying out of agricultural practices on land that was being used for <i>agricultural uses</i> on the date the Greenbelt Plan 2005 came into effect.</p>
<p>ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION</p>	<p>ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION: means the natural processes, products or services that living and non-living environments provide or perform within or between species, ecosystems and landscapes. These may include biological, physical and socio- economic interactions.</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION Means the natural processes, products or services that living and non-living environments provide or perform within or between species, ecosystems and landscapes, including <i>hydrologic functions</i> and biological, physical, chemical and socio-economic interactions.</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION means the natural processes, products or services that living and non-living environments provide or perform within or between species, ecosystems and landscapes. These may include biological, physical and socio-economic interactions.</p>
<p>ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY</p>		<p>New - Same as Greenbelt 2017</p>	<p>ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY Which includes hydrological</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>

			<p>integrity, means the condition of ecosystems in which:</p> <p>a) the structure, composition and function of the ecosystems are unimpaired by the stresses from human activity;</p> <p>b) natural ecological processes are intact and self-sustaining, and</p> <p>c) the ecosystems evolve naturally.</p>		
<p>ECOLOGICAL VALUE</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>New - Same as Greenbelt 2017</p>	<p>ECOLOGICAL VALUE Means the value of vegetation in maintaining the health of the <i>key natural heritage feature</i> or <i>key hydrologic feature</i> and the related ecological features and <i>ecological functions</i>, as measured by factors such as the diversity of species, the diversity of habitats, and the suitability and amount of habitats that are available for rare, threatened and endangered species.</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>
<p>ENDANGERED SPECIES</p>	<p>ENDANGERED SPECIES: means a species that is listed or categorized as an “Endangered Species” on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ official sSpecies at Risk list, as updated and amended from time to time.</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>ENDANGERED SPECIES Means a species that is listed or categorized classified as an “endangered species in Ontario Regulation 230/08 (Species at Risk in Ontario List) made under the <i>Endangered Species</i> on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ official species-at-risk list <i>Act, 2007</i>, as updated and it may be amended from time to time.</p>	<p>ENDANGERED SPECIES: A species that is classified as an endangered species in Ontario Regulation 230/08 (Species at Risk in Ontario List) made under the Endangered Species Act, 2007.</p> <p>ENDANGERED SPECIES (REGULATED)—any indigenous species of fauna or flora that, on the basis of best available scientific evidence, is indicated to be facing imminent extinction or extirpation throughout all or a significant portion of its Ontario range. These Endangered species are identified in regulations under the Endangered Species Act.</p> <p>ENDANGERED SPECIES (NOT REGULATED)—any indigenous species of fauna or flora that, on the basis of best available scientific evidence, is indicated to be facing imminent extinction or extirpation in Ontario and which is a candidate</p>	<p>No definition</p>

				for regulation under Ontario's Endangered Species Act as determined by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.	
EROSION HAZARD	EROSION HAZARD: means the loss of land, due to human or natural processes, that poses a threat to life and property. The <i>erosion hazard</i> limit is determined using considerations that include the 100 year erosion rate (the average annual rate of recession extended over a one hundred year time span), an allowance for slope stability, and an erosion/erosion access allowance.	No definition	No definition	New - Same as PPS 2014	See definition for <i>Hazard Lands</i> below
FISH HABITAT	FISH HABITAT: as defined in the Fisheries Act, c. F-14, means spawning grounds and any other areas, including nursery, rearing, food supply, and migration areas on which <i>fish</i> depend directly or indirectly in order to carry out their life processes.	New - Same as PPS 2014	Revised - Same as PPS 2014	FISH HABITAT: The spawning grounds and nursery, rearing, food supply, and migration areas on which fish depend, directly or indirectly, in order to carry out their life processes (<i>Fisheries Act</i> , R.S.C., 1985, c. F-14).	FISH HABITAT means spawning grounds and nursery, rearing, food supply, and migration areas on which fish depend directly or indirectly in order to carry out their life processes.
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT	No definition	No definition	No definition	FISHERIES MANAGEMENT: The management of fish habitat and fish populations for the purpose of sustaining and improving the quality and quantity of fish.	No definition
FOREST MANAGEMENT	No definition	No definition	No definition	FOREST MANAGEMENT: The sustainable management of forests to produce wood and wood products, provide outdoor recreation, protect, restore or enhance environmental conditions for wildlife, and protect water supplies.	No definition

<p>GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:</p>	<p>GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE: means natural and human- made elements that provide ecological and hydrological functions and processes. <i>Green infrastructure</i> can include components such as natural heritage features and systems, parklands, stormwater management systems, street trees, urban forests, natural channels, permeable surfaces, and green roofs.</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p> <p>Related:</p> <p>LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p> <p>Related:</p> <p>LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT Means an approach to stormwater management that seeks to manage rain and other precipitation as close as possible to where it falls to mitigate the impacts of increased runoff and stormwater pollution. It includes a set of site design strategies and distributed, small-scale structural practices to mimic the natural hydrology to the greatest extent possible through infiltration, evapotranspiration, harvesting, filtration and detention of stormwater. <i>Low impact development</i> can include: bio-swales, permeable pavement, rain gardens, green roofs and exfiltration systems. <i>Low impact development</i> often employs vegetation and soil in its design, however, that does not always have to be the case.</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p> <p>Related:</p> <p>LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017</p>	<p>No definition</p>
<p>GROUND WATER FEATURE</p>	<p>GROUND WATER FEATURE refers to means water-related features in the earth's subsurface, including recharge/discharge areas, water tables, aquifers and unsaturated zones that can be defined by surface and subsurface hydrogeologic investigations.</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>
<p>HABITAT OF ENDANGERED SPECIES AND THREATENED SPECIES</p>	<p>HABITAT OF ENDANGERED SPECIES AND THREATENED SPECIES: means a) with respect to a species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species for which a regulation made under clause 55(1)(a) of the <i>Endangered Species Act, 2007</i> is in force, the area prescribed by that regulation as the habitat of the species; or</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>No definition</p>

	b) with respect to any other species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species, an area on which the species depends, directly or indirectly, to carry on its life processes, including life processes such as reproduction, rearing, hibernation, migration or feeding, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; and places in the areas described in clause (a) or (b), whichever is applicable, that are used by members of the species as dens, nests, hibernacula or other residences.				
HAZARDOUS FOREST TYPES FOR WILDLAND FIRE	HAZARDOUS FOREST TYPES FOR WILDLAND FIRE: means forest types assessed as being associated with the risk of high to extreme wildland fire using risk assessment tools established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, as amended from time to time.	No definition	No definition	No definition	No definition
HAZARDOUS LANDS	HAZARDOUS LANDS: means property or lands that could be unsafe for development due to naturally occurring processes. Along the shorelines of the <i>Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River System</i> , this means the land, including that covered by water, between the international boundary, where applicable, and the furthest landward limit of the <i>flooding hazard, erosion hazard or dynamic beach hazard</i> limits. Along the shorelines of <i>large inland lakes</i> , this means the land, including that covered by water, between a defined offshore distance or depth and the furthest landward limit of the <i>flooding hazard, erosion hazard or dynamic beach hazard</i> limits. Along <i>river, stream and small inland lake systems</i> , this means the land, including that covered by water, to the furthest landward	New - Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	No definition	HAZARD LANDS means properties or lands that could be unsafe for <i>development</i> due to naturally occurring processes. Along the shorelines of Lake Ontario and Burlington Bay, this means the land, including that covered by water, between a defined offshore distance or depth, and the furthest landward limit of the flooding, erosion or dynamic beach (areas of unstable accumulations of shoreline sediments) hazard limits. Along <i>river, stream and small inland lake systems</i> , this means the land, including that covered by water, to the furthest landward limit of the flooding or erosion hazard limits.

	limit of the <i>flooding hazard</i> or <i>erosion hazard</i> limits.				
HIGHLY VULNERABLE AQUIFER	No definition	New - Same as the Greenbelt Plan	HIGHLY VULNERABLE AQUIFER Means aquifers, including lands above the aquifers, on which external sources have or are likely to have a significant adverse effect.	No definition	No definition
HYDROLOGIC FUNCTION	HYDROLOGIC FUNCTION means the functions of the hydrological cycle that include the occurrence, circulation, distribution and chemical and physical properties of water on the surface of the land, in the soil and underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere, and water's interaction with the environment including its relation to living things.	New - Same as PPS 2014	Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	No definition
KEY HYDROLOGIC AREAS	No definition	KEY HYDROLOGIC AREAS <i>Significant groundwater recharge areas, highly vulnerable aquifers, and significant surface water contribution areas</i> that are necessary for the ecological and hydrologic integrity of a <i>watershed</i> .	KEY HYDROLOGIC AREAS Means a <i>key hydrologic area</i> as described in section 3.2.4. S 3.2.4: <i>Key hydrologic areas</i> include: <i>Significant groundwater recharge areas,</i> <i>Highly vulnerable aquifers,</i> and <i>Significant surface water contribution areas</i>	No definition	No definition
KEY HYDROLOGIC FEATURES	No definition	KEY HYDROLOGIC FEATURES Permanent streams, <i>intermittent streams</i> , inland lakes and their littoral zones, <i>seepage areas</i> and <i>springs</i> , and <i>wetlands</i> .	KEY HYDROLOGIC FEATURES Means a <i>key hydrologic feature</i> as described in section 3.2.5. S 3.2.5: <i>Key hydrologic features</i> include: <i>Permanent and intermittent streams,</i> <i>Lakes</i> (and their littoral zones); <i>Seepage areas and springs,</i> and <i>Wetlands.</i>	Defined within text of policy 2.6.1 Key hydrologic features within the meaning of this Plan: <i>permanent and intermittent streams</i> <i>lakes</i> (and their littoral zones) <i>seepage areas and springs</i> <i>wetlands</i>	No definition for Key Hydrologic Features. <i>See Key features</i> below.
KEY NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES	No definition	KEY NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES <i>Habitat of endangered species and threatened species, fish habitat, wetlands, life science areas of</i>	KEY NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES Means a <i>key natural heritage feature</i> as described in section 3.2.5.	Defined within text of policy 2.7.1 Key natural heritage features within the meaning of this Plan: <i>Wetlands</i>	KEY FEATURES means key natural heritage and hydrological features described in Sections 115.3(1) and 139.3.3. of this Plan.

		<i>natural and scientific interest (ANSIs), significant valleylands, significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat (including habitat of special concern species); sand barrens, savannahs, and tallgrass prairies, and alvars.</i>	S 3.2.5: Key natural heritage features include: Significant habitat <i>Habitat of endangered species and threatened species and special concern species;</i> <i>Fish habitat;</i> <i>Wetlands;</i> <i>Life science areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs);</i> <i>Significant valleylands;</i> <i>Significant woodlands;</i> <i>Significant wildlife habitat (including habitat of special concern species);</i> <i>Sand barrens, savannahs and tallgrass prairies, and Alvars.</i>	<i>Habitat of endangered species and threatened species</i> <i>Fish habitat</i> <i>Life Science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest</i> <i>Earth Science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest</i> <i>Significant valleylands</i> <i>Significant woodlands</i> <i>Significant wildlife habitat</i> <i>Habitat of special concern species in Escarpment Natural and Escarpment Protection areas</i>	115.3(1): The Regional Natural Heritage System Key Features include: a) <i>significant</i> habitat of endangered and threatened species, b) <i>significant wetlands,</i> c) <i>significant</i> coastal wetlands, d) <i>significant woodlands,</i> e) <i>significant</i> valleylands, f) <i>significant</i> wildlife habitat, g) <i>significant</i> areas of natural and scientific interest, h) <i>fish habitat</i> 139.3.3: Key Features within the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System are those included in 115.3.1 and: a) sand barrens, savannahs and tall grass prairies, b) permanent and impermanent streams, c) lakes, d) seepage areas and springs, e) alvars and, f) <i>significant</i> habitat of special concern species.
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	No definition	No definition	No definition	NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: The air, land and water or any combination or part thereof.	No definition
NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES AND AREAS	NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES AND AREAS: means features and areas, including <i>significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, other coastal wetlands in Ecoregions 5E, 6E and 7E, fish habitat, significant woodlands south and east of the Canadian shield and significant valleylands in Ecoregions 6E and 7E (excluding islands in Lake Huron and the St. Marys River), south and east of the Canadian Shield, significant habitat of habitat of endangered species and and threatened species, significant wildlife habitat, and significant areas of natural and scientific interest, which are</i>	New - Same as PPS 2014	No definition	No definition	NATURAL FEATURES or NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES or NATURAL HERITAGE FEATURES AND AREAS means features and/or areas which are important for their environmental and social values as a legacy of the natural landscapes of an area.

	important for their environmental and social values as a legacy of the natural landscapes of an area.				
NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEM	NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEM: means a system made up of <i>natural heritage features and areas</i> , linked by and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes natural corridors which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems. These systems can include <i>natural heritage features and areas</i> , federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other natural heritage features, lands that have been restored or have and areas with the potential to be restored to a natural state, areas that support hydrologic functions, and working landscapes that enable ecological functions to continue. The Province has a recommended approach for identifying <i>natural heritage systems</i> , but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used.	NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEM The system mapped and issued by the Province in accordance with this Plan, comprised of <i>natural heritage features and areas</i> , and linkages intended to provide connectivity (at the regional or site level) and support natural processes which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of indigenous species, and ecosystems. The system can include <i>key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features</i> , federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves, other <i>natural heritage features and areas</i> , lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state, associated areas that support <i>hydrologic functions</i> , and working landscapes that enable <i>ecological functions</i> to continue. (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)	Definition within text (3.2.1) The Natural Heritage System includes core areas and linkage areas of the Protected Countryside with the highest concentration of the most sensitive and/or significant natural features and functions. Policies in section 3.2.2 reference: <i>key natural heritage features</i> and <i>key hydrologic features</i>	No definition	Definitions are included within the text: Section 115 for the Regional Natural Heritage System Section 139.3.3 for Greenbelt Natural Heritage System
NATURAL SELF-SUSTAINING VEGETATION	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	NATURAL SELF-SUSTAINING VEGETATION Means vegetation dominated by native plant species that can grow and persist without direct human management, protection, or tending.	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	No definition

<p>NEGATIVE IMPACTS</p>	<p>NEGATIVE IMPACTS: means a) in regard to policy 1.6.6.4 and 1.6.6.5, degradation to the <i>quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features</i> and <i>sensitive ground water features</i>, and their related <i>hydrologic functions</i>, due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i>. <i>Negative impacts</i> should be assessed through environmental studies including hydrogeological or water quality impact assessments, in accordance with provincial standards; b) in regard to policy 2.2, degradation to the <i>quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features</i> and <i>sensitive ground water features</i>, and their related <i>hydrologic functions</i>, due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities; c) in regard to <i>fish habitat</i>, the harmful any permanent alteration to, disruption or destruction of <i>fish habitat</i>, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the <i>Fisheries Act</i>, using the guiding principle of no net loss of productive capacity; and d) in regard to other <i>natural heritage features and areas</i>, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or <i>ecological functions</i> for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities.</p>	<p>NEGATIVE IMPACT a) In regard to water, degradation to the quality or quantity of surface or groundwater, <i>key hydrologic features</i> or vulnerable areas and their related <i>hydrologic functions</i> due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities; b) In regard to <i>fish habitat</i>, any permanent alteration to or destruction of <i>fish habitat</i>, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the <i>Fisheries Act</i>; and c) In regard to other <i>natural heritage features and areas</i>, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or <i>ecological functions</i> for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities. (Based on the PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)</p>	<p>NEGATIVE IMPACT(S) Means: a) in regard to water, degradation to the quality or quantity of surface or ground water groundwater, <i>key hydrologic features</i> or vulnerable areas and their related <i>hydrologic functions</i>, due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities; b) in regard to <i>fish habitat</i>, the harmful any permanent alteration disruption to, or destruction of <i>fish habitat</i>, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the <i>Fisheries Act</i>, using the guiding principle of no net loss of productive capacity; and c) in regard to other <i>natural heritage features and areas</i>, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the natural features or <i>ecological functions</i> for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities.-(PPS-2005)</p>	<p>Same as the Growth Plan, plus: d) in regard to scenic resources, a degradation to the natural scenery and scenic quality due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i>; and e) in regard to cultural heritage resources, degradation or destruction of built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes, archaeological resources, including a visual impact, when heritage attributes include the visual setting of a cultural heritage resource and other features of significant cultural heritage value or interest, including heritage and archaeological sites of critical importance to Aboriginal peoples.</p>	<p>NEGATIVE IMPACTS means: (1) in regard to water, degradation to the quality and quantity of water, sensitive surface water features and sensitive ground water features, and their related hydrologic functions, due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities; (2) in regard to <i>fish habitat</i>, any permanent alteration to, or destruction of <i>fish habitat</i>, except where, in conjunction with the appropriate authorities, it has been authorized under the <i>Fisheries Act</i>; and (3) in regard to other components of the Regional Natural Heritage System, degradation that threatens the health and integrity of the <i>natural features</i> or <i>ecological functions</i> for which an area is identified due to single, multiple or successive <i>development</i> or <i>site alteration</i> activities.</p>
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<p>ON-FARM DIVERSIFIED USES</p>	<p>ON-FARM DIVERSIFIED USES: means uses that are secondary to the principal agricultural use of the property, and are limited in area. <i>On-farm diversified uses</i> include, but are not limited to, home occupations, home industries, <i>agri-tourism uses</i>, and uses that produce value-added agricultural products.</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>No definition</p>
<p>PLANNED CORRIDORS</p>	<p>PLANNED CORRIDORS: means corridors or future corridors which are required to meet projected needs, and are identified through <i>provincial plans</i>, preferred alignment(s) determined through the <i>Environmental Assessment Act</i> process, or identified through planning studies where the Ontario Ministry of Transportation is actively pursuing the identification of a corridor. Approaches for the protection of <i>planned corridors</i> may be recommended in guidelines developed by the Province. identified through <i>provincial plans</i> or preferred alignment(s) determined through the <i>Environmental Assessment Act</i> process which are required to meet project needs.</p>	<p>PLANNED CORRIDORS Corridors or future corridors which are required to meet projected needs, and are identified through this Plan, preferred alignment(s) determined through the <i>Environmental Assessment Act</i> process, or identified through planning studies where the Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Energy, Metrolinx, or Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) or any successor to those Ministries or entities, is actively pursuing the identification of a corridor. Approaches for the protection of planned corridors may be recommended in guidelines developed by the Province. (Based on PPS 2014 and modified for this Plan)</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>PLANNED CORRIDORS means corridors identified through Provincial Plans, this Plan, or preferred alignment(s) determined through the <i>Environmental Assessment Act</i> process which are required to meet projected needs.</p>
<p>PROGRESSIVE REHABILITATION</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>PROGRESSIVE REHABILITATION: Rehabilitation done sequentially in accordance with the <i>Aggregate Resources Act</i>, its regulations, the site plans and the conditions of the license or permit during the period that aggregate is being excavated.</p>	<p>No definition</p>
<p>PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS</p>	<p>PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS: means a) in regard to policy 1.8.3 1.6.11.2, legislation, and regulations, policies and standards administered by the federal or provincial governments for the purpose of protecting the environment from potential impacts associated with energy facilities</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>

	<p>systems and ensuring that the necessary approvals are obtained; and b) in regard to policy 2.1.56, legislation and policies administered by the federal or provincial governments for the purpose of the fisheries protection (including fish and fish habitat), and related, scientifically established standards such as water quality criteria for protecting lake trout populations; and c) in regard to policy 2.1.7, legislation and policies administered by the provincial government or federal government, where applicable, for the purpose of protecting species at risk and their habitat.</p>				
<p>QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF WATER</p>	<p>QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF WATER is measured by indicators associated with hydrologic function such as minimum base flow, depth to water table, aquifer pressure, oxygen levels, suspended solids, temperature, bacteria, nutrients and hazardous contaminants, and hydrologic regime.</p>	<p>New - Same as PPS 2014</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>
<p>RIVER, STREAM AND SMALL INLAND LAKE SYSTEMS</p>	<p>RIVER, STREAM AND SMALL INLAND LAKE SYSTEMS: means all watercourses, rivers, streams, and small inland lakes or waterbodies that have a measurable or predictable response to a single runoff event.</p>	<p>INTERMITTENT STREAMS New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017</p>	<p>INTERMITTENT STREAMS Means stream-related watercourses that contain water or are dry at times of the year that are more or less predictable, generally flowing during wet seasons of the year but not the entire year, and where the water table is above the stream bottom during parts of the year.</p> <p>LAKE Means any inland body of standing water, usually fresh water, larger than a pool or pond or a body of water filling a depression in the earth's surface.</p> <p>PERMANENT STREAM Means a stream that continually flows in an average year.</p>	<p>INTERMITTENT STREAM: A stream-related watercourse that contains water or is dry at times of the year that are more or less predictable, generally flowing during wet seasons of the year but not the entire year, and where the water table is above the stream bottom during parts of the year.</p> <p>LAKE: Any inland body of standing water, usually fresh water, larger than a pool or pond, or a body of water filling a depression in the earth's surface.</p> <p>PERMANENT STREAM: A stream that continually flows in an average year.</p> <p>STREAM OR WATERCOURSE is a</p>	<p>RIVER, STREAM AND SMALL INLAND LAKE SYSTEMS means all watercourses, rivers, streams, and small inland lakes or waterbodies that have a measurable or predictable response to a single runoff event.</p> <p>WATERCOURSE or WATER COURSE means an identifiable depression in the ground in which a flow of water regularly or continuously occurs.</p>

				feature having defined bed and banks, through which water flows at least part of the year.	
RURAL AREAS	RURAL AREAS: means a system of lands within municipalities that may include rural <i>settlement areas</i> , <i>rural lands</i> , <i>prime agricultural areas</i> , natural heritage features and areas, and resource areas. lands in the rural area which are located outside <i>settlement areas</i> and which are outside <i>prime agricultural areas</i>.	No definition	No definition	No definition	RURAL CLUSTER means an area so designated in an approved Local Official Plan, in accordance with Section 104 of this Plan.
RURAL LANDS	RURAL LANDS: means lands which are located outside <i>settlement areas</i> and which are outside <i>prime agricultural areas</i> .	Same as PPS 2014	RURAL LANDS Means lands in the rural area which are located outside <i>settlement areas</i> and which are outside <i>prime agricultural areas</i> (Based on PPS 2014)	No definition	No definition
SAND BARRENS	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	SAND BARRENS Means land (not including land that is being used for agricultural purposes or no longer exhibits sand barrens characteristics) that: a. has sparse or patchy vegetation that is dominated by plants that are: i. adapted to severe drought and low nutrient levels; and ii. maintained by severe environmental limitations such as drought, low nutrient levels and periodic disturbances such as fire; b. has less than 25 per cent tree cover; c. has sandy soils (other than shorelines) exposed by natural erosion, depositional process or both; and d. has been further identified, by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry or by any other person, according to evaluation procedures established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, as amended from time to time.	No definition	No definition
SAVANNAH	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	SAVANNAH	No definition	No definition

			Means land (not including land that is being used for agricultural purposes or no longer exhibits savannah characteristics) that: a. has vegetation with a significant component of non-woody plants, including tallgrass prairie species that are maintained by seasonal drought, periodic disturbances such as fire, or both; b. has from 25 per cent to 60 per cent tree cover; c. has mineral soils; and d. has been further identified, by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry or by any other person, according to evaluation procedures established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, as amended from time to time.		
SEEPAGE AREAS AND SPRINGS	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	SEEPAGE AREAS AND SPRINGS Means sites of emergence of groundwater where the water table is present at the ground surface.	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	No definition
SENSITIVE	SENSITIVE in regard to <i>surface water features and ground water features</i> , means areas that are particularly susceptible to impacts from activities or events including, but not limited to, water withdrawals, and additions of pollutants.	No definition	No definition	No definition	No definition
SIGNIFICANT	SIGNIFICANT : means a) in regard to <i>wetlands, coastal wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest</i> , an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time; b) in regard to the habitat of endangered species and threatened species, means that the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, that in	No definition [see significant features definitions below]	SIGNIFICANT Means: a) in regard to <i>wetlands and life science areas of natural and scientific interest</i> , an area identified as provincially significant by the Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry , as amended from time to time; a) In regard to the habitat of endangered species, threatened species and special concern	SIGNIFICANT : a) in regard to <i>wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest</i> , an area identified as provincially significant by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time; b) in regard to <i>woodlands</i> , an area that is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader	SIGNIFICANT means: (1) in regard to <i>wetlands</i> , an area as defined under Section 276.5 of this Plan; (2) in regard to coastal wetlands and areas of natural and scientific interest, an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time; (3) in regard to the habitat of endangered species and threatened

	<p>necessary for the maintenance, survival, and/or the recovery of naturally occurring or reintroduced populations of <i>endangered species</i> and <i>threatened species</i>, and where those areas of occurrence are occupied or habitually occupied by the species during all or any part(s) of its life cycle;</p> <p>c) in regard to <i>woodlands</i>, an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources;</p> <p>d) in regard to other features and areas in policy 2.1, ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or <i>natural heritage system</i>;</p> <p>e) in regard to <i>mineral</i> potential, means an area identified as provincially significant through comprehensive studies prepared using evaluation procedures established developed by the Province, as amended from time to time, such as the Provincially Significant Mineral Potential Index; and</p> <p>e) in regard to potential for <i>petroleum resources</i>, means an area identified as provincially significant through comprehensive studies prepared using evaluation procedures established developed</p>		<p><i>species, means the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, that is necessary for the maintenance, survival, and/or the recovery of naturally occurring or reintroduced populations of endangered species or threatened species, and where those areas of occurrence are occupied or habitually occupied by the species during all or any part(s) of its life cycle;</i></p> <p>b) in regard to <i>woodlands</i>, an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. The Province (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry) identifies criteria relating to the forgoing; and</p> <p>c) in regard to other features and areas in section 3.2.4-5 of this Plan, ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of the Natural Heritage System. The Province (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry) identifies criteria relating to the forgoing; and</p> <p>a) In regard to cultural heritage and archaeology, resources that have been determined to have <i>cultural heritage value or interest</i> for the important contribution they make to our understanding of the history of a place, an event, or a people. While some significant resources may already be identified and inventoried by official sources, the</p>	<p>landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry;</p> <p>c) in regard to other features and areas, ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or natural heritage system. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry; and</p> <p>d) in regard to cultural heritage and archaeology, resources that have been determined to have <i>cultural heritage value or interest</i> for the important contribution they make to our understanding of the history of a place, an event, or a people. Criteria for determining significance for the resources identified in section d) are recommended by the Province, but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used. While some significant resources may already be identified and inventoried by official sources, the significance of others can only be determined after evaluation.</p>	<p>species, the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, that is necessary for the maintenance, survival, and/or the recovery of naturally occurring or reintroduced populations of endangered species or threatened species, and where those areas of occurrence are occupied or habitually occupied by the species during all or any part(s) of its life cycle;</p> <p>(4) in regard to <i>woodlands</i>, an area as defined by Section 277 of this Plan; and,</p> <p>(5) in regard to other components of the Regional Natural Heritage System, ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or natural heritage system.</p>
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	<p>by the Province, as amended from time to time; and e) in regard to cultural heritage and archaeology, resources that are valued have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest for the important contribution they make to our understanding of the history of a place, an event, or a people. Criteria for determining significance for the resources identified in sections (c)-(e) (e)-(g) are recommended by the Province, but municipal approaches that achieve or exceed the same objective may also be used. While some significant resources may already be identified and inventoried by official sources, the significance of others can only be determined after evaluation.</p>		<p>significance of others can only be determined after evaluation.</p>		
<p>SIGNIFICANT GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREA</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017</p>	<p>SIGNIFICANT GROUNDWATER RECHARGE AREA Means a <i>significant groundwater recharge area</i> identified: a) as a <i>significant groundwater recharge area</i> by any public body for the purposes of implementing the PPS; b) as a <i>significant groundwater recharge area</i> in the assessment report required under the <i>Clean Water Act, 2006</i>; or c) as an ecologically <i>significant groundwater recharge area</i> delineated in a <i>subwatershed plan</i> or equivalent in accordance with provincial guidelines. Ecologically significant groundwater recharge areas are areas of land that are responsible for replenishing groundwater systems that directly support sensitive areas like coldwater streams and wetlands.</p>	<p>No definition</p>	<p>No definition</p>

SIGNIFICANT SURFACE WATER CONTRIBUTION AREAS	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	SIGNIFICANT SURFACE WATER CONTRIBUTION AREAS Means areas, generally associated with headwater catchments, that contribute to baseflow volumes which are significant to the overall surface water flow volumes within a watershed.	No definition	No definition
SIGNIFICANT WETLAND	From definition of SIGNIFICANT above: a) in regard to <i>wetlands, coastal wetlands</i> and <i>areas of natural and scientific interest</i> , an area identified as provincially significant by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources using evaluation procedures established by the Province, as amended from time to time;	SIGNIFICANT WETLAND A wetland that has been identified as provincially significant by the Province. (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)	Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	SIGNIFICANT WETLANDS means: (1) for lands within the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area, <i>Provincially Significant Wetlands</i> and wetlands as described in the Niagara Escarpment Plan, that make an important ecological contribution to the Regional Natural Heritage System; (2) for land within the Greenbelt Plan Area, but outside the Niagara Escarpment Area, <i>Provincially Significant Wetlands</i> and wetlands as defined in the Greenbelt Plan; (3) for lands within the Regional Natural System but outside the Greenbelt Plan Area, <i>Provincially Significant Wetlands</i> and wetlands that make an important ecological contribution to the Regional Natural Heritage System; and, (4) outside the Regional Natural Heritage System, <i>Provincially Significant Wetlands</i> . PROVINCIALY SIGNIFICANT WETLANDS means <i>wetlands</i> so classified by the Ministry of Natural Resources based on the Ontario <i>Wetland</i> Evaluation System 2013 Southern Manual, as amended from time to time.
SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE HABITAT	No definition	SIGNIFICANT WILDLIFE HABITAT A <i>wildlife habitat</i> that is ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or	No definition	No definition	No definition

		<i>natural heritage system</i> . These are to be identified using criteria established by the Province. (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)			
SIGNIFICANT WOODLAND	From definition of SIGNIFICANT above: c) in regard to <i>woodlands</i> , an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources;	SIGNIFICANT WOODLAND A <i>woodland</i> which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Province. (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)	From definition of SIGNIFICANT above: b) in regard to <i>woodlands</i> , an area which is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. The Province (Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry) identifies criteria relating to the forgoing; and	From definition of SIGNIFICANT above: b) in regard to <i>woodlands</i> , an area that is ecologically important in terms of features such as species composition, age of trees and stand history; functionally important due to its contribution to the broader landscape because of its location, size or due to the amount of forest cover in the planning area; or economically important due to site quality, species composition, or past management history. These are to be identified using criteria established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry:	SIGNIFICANT WOODLAND means a <i>Woodland</i> 0.5ha or larger determined through a <i>Watershed Plan</i> , a Sub-watershed Study or a site-specific Environmental Impact Assessment to meet one or more of the four following criteria: (1) the <i>Woodland</i> contains forest patches over 99 years old, (2) the patch size of the <i>Woodland</i> is 2ha or larger if it is located in the Urban Area, or 4ha or larger if it is located outside the the Urban Area but below the <i>Escarpment Brow</i> , or 10 ha or larger if it is located outside the Urban Area but above the <i>Escarpment Brow</i> (3) the <i>Woodland</i> has an interior core area of 4ha or larger, measured 100m from the edge, or (4) the <i>Woodland</i> is wholly or partially within 50 m of a <i>major creek</i> or <i>certain headwater creek</i> or within 150m of the <i>Escarpment Brow</i>
SIGNIFICANT VALLEYLANDS	No definition	SIGNIFICANT VALLEYLAND A <i>valleyland</i> which is ecologically important in terms of features, functions, representation or amount, and contributing to the quality and diversity of an identifiable geographic area or <i>natural heritage system</i> . These are to be identified using criteria established by the Province. (Based on PPS, 2014 and modified for this Plan)	No definition	No definition	No definition
SITE ALTERATION	SITE ALTERATION means activities, such as grading, excavation and the placement of fill that would change the landform and natural vegetative characteristics of a site.	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	SITE ALTERATION Means activities, such as filling, grading, and excavation and the placement of fill that would change the landform and natural vegetative	No definition	SITE ALTERATION means activities, such as grading, excavation and the placement of fill that would change the landform and natural vegetative characteristics of a site but does not include <i>normal farm practices</i>

	For the purposes of policy 2.1.4(a), site alteration does not include underground or surface mining of <i>minerals</i> or advanced exploration on mining lands in significant <i>areas of mineral potential</i> in Ecoregion 5E, where advanced exploration has the same meaning as in the <i>Mining Act</i> . Instead, those matters shall be subject to policy 2.1.5(a).		characteristics of land but does not include a site (PPS, 2014). a) The construction of facilities for transportation, infrastructure and utilities uses by a public body; b) Activities or works under the <i>Drainage Act</i>; or c) The carrying out of agricultural uses on the date the Plan came into effect.		unless such practices involve the removal of fill off the property or the introduction of fill from off-site locations.
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN	No definition	STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN A plan that provides direction to avoid or minimize and mitigate stormwater volume, contaminant loads, and impacts on receiving water courses to: maintain groundwater quality and flow and stream baseflow; protect water quality; minimize the disruption of pre-existing (natural) drainage patterns wherever possible; prevent increases in stream channel erosion; prevent any increase in flood risk; and protect aquatic species and their habitat.	No definition	No definition	No definition
STORMWATER MASTER PLAN	No definition	STORMWATER MASTER PLAN A long-range plan that assesses existing and planned stormwater facilities and systems and outlines stormwater infrastructure requirements for new and existing development within a settlement area. Stormwater master plans are informed by watershed planning and are completed in accordance with the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment.	No definition	No definition	No definition
SUBWATERSHED PLAN	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	SUBWATERSHED PLAN Means a plan that reflects and refines the goals, objectives, targets and assessments of <i>watershed planning</i> for smaller drainage areas, is tailored to subwatershed needs and addresses local issues.	No definition	No definition

			<p><i>A subwatershed plan should: consider existing development and evaluate impacts of any potential or proposed land uses and development; identify hydrologic features, areas, linkages and functions; identify natural features, areas and related hydrologic functions; and provide for protecting, improving or restoring the quality and quantity of water within a subwatershed.</i></p> <p><i>A subwatershed plan is based on pre-development monitoring and evaluation; is integrated with natural heritage protection; and identifies specific criteria, objectives, actions, thresholds, targets and best management practices for development, for water and wastewater servicing, for stormwater management, for managing and minimizing impacts related to severe weather events, and to support ecological needs.</i></p>		
SURFACE WATER FEATURES	<p>SURFACE WATER FEATURES refers to means water-related features on the earth's surface, including headwaters, rivers, stream channels, inland lakes, seepage areas, recharge/discharge areas, springs, wetlands, and associated riparian lands that can be defined by their soil moisture, soil type, vegetation or topographic characteristics.</p>	New - Same as PPS 2014	No definition	No definition	No definition
TALLGRASS PRAIRIES	No definition	New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	<p>TALLGRASS PRAIRIES Means land (not including land that is being used for agricultural purposes or no longer exhibits <i>tallgrass prairie</i> characteristics) that:</p> <p>a. has vegetation dominated by non-woody plants, including tallgrass prairie species that are maintained by seasonal drought,</p>	No definition	No definition

			<p>periodic disturbances such as fire, or both;</p> <p>b. has less than 25 per cent tree cover;</p> <p>c. has mineral soils; and</p> <p>d. has been further identified, by the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry or by any other person, according to evaluation procedures established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, as amended from time to time.</p>		
THREATENED SPECIES	<p>THREATENED SPECIES: means a species that is listed or categorized as a “Threatened Species” on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ official Species at Risk list, as updated and amended from time to time.</p>	No definition	<p>THREATENED SPECIES Means a species that is listed or categorized classified as a “Threatened Species” on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ official threatened species in Ontario Regulation 230/08 (Species at Risk list in Ontario List) made under the Endangered Species Act, 2007, as updated and it may be amended from time to time.</p>	<p>Revised - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017</p> <p>THREATENED SPECIES – any indigenous species of fauna or flora that on the basis of the best available scientific evidence, is indicated to be experiencing a definite non-cyclical decline throughout all or a major portion of its Ontario range, and that is likely to become an endangered species if the factors responsible for the decline continue unabated, as identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.</p>	No definition
VALLEYLANDS:	<p>VALLEYLANDS: means a natural area that occurs in a valley or other landform depression that has water flowing through or standing for some period of the year.</p>	New - Same as PPS 2014	Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014	
VULNERABLE	<p>VULNERABLE means surface and/or groundwater ground water that can be easily changed or impacted, by activities or events, either by virtue of their vicinity to such activities or events or by permissive pathways between such activities and the surface and/or groundwater.</p>	No definition	Revised - Same as PPS 2014	No definition	No definition
WATERSHED	<p>WATERSHED means an area that is drained by a river and its tributaries.</p>	<p>WATERSHED An area that is drained by a lake or river and its tributaries.</p>	No definition	No definition	No definition

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT	No definition	No definition	No definition	WATERSHED MANAGEMENT The analysis, protection, development, operation and maintenance of the land, vegetation and water resources of a drainage basin.	WATERSHED MANAGEMENT means the analysis, protection, development, operation and maintenance of water, water-related features, terrestrial resources and fisheries of a drainage basin.
WATER RESOURCE SYSTEM	Definition within text (2.2.1) ...Water resource systems consisting of <i>ground water features, hydrologic functions, natural heritage features and areas, and surface water features including shoreline areas</i> , which are necessary for the ecological and hydrological integrity of the <i>watershed</i> .	WATER RESOURCE SYSTEM A system consisting of <i>ground water features</i> and areas and <i>surface water features</i> (including shoreline areas), and <i>hydrologic functions</i> , which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption. The <i>water resource system</i> will comprise <i>key hydrologic features</i> and <i>key hydrologic areas</i> . (based on PPS 2014)	Definition within text (3.2.1) The Water Resource System is made up of both ground and surface water features and areas and their associated functions, which provide the water resources necessary to sustain healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and human water consumption.	No definition	No definition
WATERSHED PLANNING	No definition	Revised - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017	WATERSHED PLANNING WATERSHED PLAN A watershed plan is a plan used for managing human activities and natural resources in an area defined by watershed boundaries. Watershed plans shall include, but are not limited to, the following components: Means planning that provides a framework for establishing goals, objectives and direction for the protection of water resources, the management of human activities, land, water, aquatic life and resources within a watershed and for the assessment of cumulative, cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts. <i>Watershed planning</i> typically includes: watershed characterization, a water budget and conservation plan; nutrient loading assessments; consideration of climate change impacts and	No definition	WATERSHED PLAN means a plan used for managing human activities and natural resources in an area defined by watershed boundaries. <i>Watershed Plans</i> shall include, but are not limited to, the following components: (1) A water budget and conservation plan; (2) Land and water use and management strategies; (3) A framework for implementation (4) An environmental monitoring plan; (5) Requirements for the use of environmental management practice and programs; (6) Criteria for evaluating the protection of water quality and quantity, and key hydrologic features; and (7) Targets on a watershed or sub-watershed basis for the protection and restoration of riparian areas and the establishment of natural self-sustaining vegetation.

			<p>severe weather events; land and water use and management objectives and strategies; a framework for implementation; scenario modelling to evaluate the impacts of forecasted growth and servicing options, and mitigation measures; an environmental monitoring plan; requirements for the use of environmental best management practices and, programs, and performance measures; criteria for evaluating the protection of water quality and quantity, and key of water; the identification and protection of hydrologic features, areas and functions and the inter-relationships between or sub-watershed basis among them; and targets for the protection and restoration of riparian areas and the establishment of self-sustaining vegetation.</p> <p>Watershed planning is undertaken at many scales, and considers cross-jurisdictional and cross-watershed impacts. The level of analysis and specificity generally increases for smaller geographic areas such as subwatersheds and tributaries.</p>		
<p>WETLANDS</p>	<p>WETLANDS: means lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface. In either case the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic plants or water tolerant plants. The four major types of wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs and fens. Periodically soaked or wet lands being used for agricultural purposes which no longer exhibit wetland characteristics are not</p>	<p>New - Same as Greenbelt Plan 2017</p>	<p>WETLANDS Means land such as a swamp, marsh, bog or fen (not including land lands that is being used for agricultural purposes and no longer exhibits wetland characteristics) that is are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water or has, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface. Has in either case the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and vegetation dominated by has favoured the dominance of either</p>	<p>WETLAND Revised - Same as PPS 2014</p> <p>WETLANDS—lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface. In either case the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic or water tolerant plants. The four major types of Wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs, and fens.</p>	<p>WETLANDS means lands that are seasonally or permanently covered by shallow water, as well as lands where the water table is close to or at the surface. In either case, the presence of abundant water has caused the formation of hydric soils and has favoured the dominance of either hydrophytic or water tolerant plants. The four major types of wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs and fens. Periodically soaked or wet lands being used for agricultural purposes which no longer exhibit wetland characteristics are not considered</p>

	considered to be wetlands for the purposes of this definition.		hydrophytic plants or water-tolerant plants. The four major types of wetlands are swamps, marshes, bogs and fens. Has been Periodically soaked or wet lands being used for agricultural purposes which no longer exhibit wetland characteristics are not considered to be wetlands for the purposes of this definition. Wetlands are further identified, by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry or by any other person, according to evaluation procedures established by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, as amended from time to time.	Lands being used for agricultural purposes, that are periodically "soaked" or "wet", are not considered to be wetlands in this definition. Such lands, whether or not they were wetlands at one time are considered to have been converted to alternate uses.	to be wetlands for the purposes of this definition. Within the Greenbelt Plan Area, wetlands include only those that have been identified by the Ministry of Natural Resources or by any other person, according to evaluation procedures established by the Ministry of Natural Resources, as amended from time to time.
WILDLIFE HABITAT	WILDLIFE HABITAT: means areas where plants, animals and other organisms live, and find adequate amounts of food, water, shelter and space needed to sustain their populations. Specific wildlife habitats of concern may include areas where species concentrate at a vulnerable point in their annual or life cycle; and areas which are important to migratory or non-migratory species.	New - Same as PPS 2014	Small Revision - Same as PPS 2014	New - Same as PPS 2014 WILDLIFE HABITAT— areas of the natural environment where plants, animals, and other organisms, excluding fish, survive in self-sustaining populations, and from which they derive services such as cover, protection, or food.	
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT	No definition	No definition	No definition	WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: The management of wildlife habitats for the purposes of sustaining the quantity and quality of wildlife.	No definition
WOODLANDS	WOODLANDS: means treed areas that provide environmental and economic benefits to both the private landowner and the general public, such as erosion prevention, hydrological and nutrient cycling, provision of clean air and the long-term storage of carbon, provision of wildlife habitat, outdoor recreational opportunities, and the sustainable harvest of a wide range of woodland products. <i>Woodlands</i>	New - Same as PPS 2014	WOODLANDS: means treed areas that provide environmental and economic benefits to both the private landowner and the general public, such as erosion prevention, hydrological and nutrient cycling, provision of clean air and the long-term storage of carbon, provision of wildlife habitat, outdoor recreational opportunities, and the sustainable harvest of a wide range of woodland products. <i>Woodlands</i>	New - Same as PPS 2014	WOODLAND means land with at least: 1000 trees of any size per ha, or 750 trees over 5 cm in diameter per ha, or 500 trees over 12 cm in diameter per ha, or 250 trees over 20 cm in diameter per ha but does not include an active cultivated fruit or nut orchard, a Christmas tree plantation, a plantation certified by the Region, a tree nursery, or a narrow linear strip of trees that defines a laneway or a boundary

	include treed areas, woodlots or forested areas and vary in their level of significance at the local, regional and provincial levels. <i>Woodlands</i> may be delineated according to the Forestry Act definition or the Province's Ecological Land Classification system definition for "forest."		include treed areas, woodlots or forested areas and vary in their level of significance at the local, regional and provincial levels. <i>Woodlands</i> may be delineated according to the Forestry Act definition or the Province's Ecological Land Classification		between fields. For the purpose of this definition, all measurements of the <i>trees</i> are to be taken at 1.37 m from the ground and <i>trees</i> in regenerating fields must have achieved that height to be counted.
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Additional ROP NHS-related definitions:

- Provincially Significant Wetland
- Trees

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Table 2 - Comparison of Growth Plan 2017 and Regional NHS – Key Features and Other Components

Growth Plan 2017 NHS	ROP RNHS
<p><i>Key Natural Heritage Features</i> includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>habitat of endangered species and threatened species;</i> • <i>fish habitat;</i> • <i>wetlands;</i> • <i>life science areas of natural and scientific interest (ANSIs);</i> • <i>significant valleylands;</i> • <i>significant woodlands;</i> • <i>significant wildlife habitat</i> (including habitat of special concern species) • <i>sand barrens</i> • <i>savannahs</i> • <i>tallgrass prairies</i> • <i>alvars</i> 	<p><i>Key Features</i> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>significant</i> habitat of endangered and threatened species • <i>significant wetlands</i> • <i>significant</i> coastal wetlands • significant woodlands • <i>significant</i> valleylands • <i>significant</i> wildlife habitat • <i>significant</i> areas of natural and scientific interest • fish habitat
<p><i>Key Hydrologic Features</i> includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • permanent streams • <i>intermittent streams</i> • inland lakes and their littoral zones • <i>seepage areas and springs</i> • <i>wetlands</i> 	<p>Items included in the RNHS (as per s.115) in addition to <i>Key Features</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas so designated on Map 1 • the shoreline along Lake Ontario and Burlington Bay • <i>significant</i> habitats of endangered species and threatened species not included in the designation on Map 1. • <i>enhancements to the Key Features</i> including <i>Centres for Biodiversity</i> • <i>linkages</i> • <i>buffers</i> • <i>watercourses</i> that are within a <i>Conservation Authority</i> Regulation Limit or that provide a <i>linkage</i> to a <i>wetland</i> or a <i>significant woodland</i> • <i>wetlands</i> other than those considered significant under Section 115.3(1)b) • Escarpment Natural Area and Escarpment Protection Area as identified in the Niagara Escarpment Plan • regulated <i>Flood Plains</i> as determined, mapped and refined from time to time by the appropriate <i>Conservation Authority</i>.
<p>Items included in the definition of the <i>Natural Heritage System</i> but not covered under <i>Key Natural Heritage Features</i> or <i>Key Hydrologic Features</i></p> <p>NHS comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>natural heritage features and areas</i> - definition aligns closely with that of <i>key natural heritage features</i>, with some exceptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ refers to <i>significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands</i> and other <i>coastal wetlands</i>, rather than simply <i>wetlands</i> ○ different wording around <i>ANSIs</i> ○ no reference to <i>sand barrens, savannahs, tallgrass prairies</i> or <i>alvars</i> • linkages <p>Can include (in addition to <i>key natural heritage features</i> and <i>key hydrologic features</i>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • federal and provincial parks and conservation reserves • other <i>natural heritage features and areas</i> • lands that have been restored or have the potential to be restored to a natural state • associated areas that support <i>hydrologic functions</i> • working landscapes that enable <i>ecological functions</i> to continue 	

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Table 3 – Implementation Comments – Successes and Barriers

Legend

Item	Description
Red	Proposed Policy Text Revision – Addition
Yellow Highlight	Proposed Policy Text Revision – Deletion
	Halton Planning Services (Environmental)
	Halton Planning Services
	Town of Oakville
	Town of Milton
	City of Burlington
	Town of Halton Hills
	North-South Environmental (NSE)

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1.	26, 27, 29, 30	NSE	Success	<p>These sections, which constitute “Halton’s Planning Vision”, provide the foundation for the ROP policies and assist with the high level interpretation for the “operational” policies. It clarifies the intent of policies and puts them into a broad, long-term perspective. This assists with their defensibility and helps understand the Region’s strong position when it comes to environment.</p> <p>The planning Vision articulated as it is, is a unique and valuable part of the OP</p>		Noted in summary of successes.
2.	66(2.1)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	It would be helpful to add a third clause here to prevent lot line adjustments that lead to increased fragmentation of natural heritage system key features.	<p>(2.1) for adjusting <i>lot</i> lines provided that:</p> <p>a) the adjustment is minor and for legal or technical reasons such as <i>easements</i>, corrections of deeds and quit claims; and</p> <p>b) the proposal does not result in additional building lots; and</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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					c) the proposal does not further any fragmentation of land ownership in key features of the natural heritage system.	
3.	67, 105, 106(2)b)	Halton Planning Services (Shelly Partridge)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Section 2.2 of our Guidelines and the way these Guidelines have been implemented have triggered the need for some hydrogeological work for the creation of every lot on private servicing in Hamlets and Rural Clusters - the Guidelines are set up so that there are two Stages...quite often, the creation of one lot only triggers the need for a Stage 1 study	The policies in the ROP should not give the impression that hydrogeological work is only required for developments that are for 3 lots or more, when the reality is that hydrogeological work is generally required for the creation of every residential lot on private services - also, there may be times where a holding tank instead of a septic bed may have beneficial considerations - we should assess if this idea has any merits and if so under what criteria should it be considered	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
4.	110(7.2)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The policy references the wrong Section. It should reference 118(2) instead (RC).	In accordance with Section 118(2) (3-d), apply the following systems based approach in the assessment of the impact of a new or expanded <i>mineral aggregate operation</i> on the Region's Natural Heritage System: (RC)	Noted under housekeeping items.
5.	114	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Success	The policy is a success because the words <u>increase the certainty</u> are used to help defend the application of the precautionary principle in relation to our analysis of proposed NHS impact avoidance and mitigation measures. (RC)	Please keep this goal and the "increase the certainty" language. (RC)	Noted in summary of successes.
6.	114	NSE	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	This section is the NHS Goal. Much emphasis has been placed on "...increase the certainty..." when undertaking review of development applications. This has been interpreted that there has to be a high degree of confidence that proposed protection and mitigation measures will work. It draws on the concept of "Landscape Permanence" in the Vision as justification for erring on the conservative side when it comes to mitigation such as buffer widths and appropriate uses in the buffers. Although it does not appear in policy, our observation is that staff are at least mindful of, and perhaps fully apply, the Precautionary Principle when interpreting the Goal. Essentially, this means that in the absence of knowing how a proposed mitigation recommendation will work, or in the absence of fully knowing the consequences of any other aspect of a proposed development or land use change (and especially uses proposed within a buffer like LIDS or even trails), then caution needs to be taken and it is	We suggest that the notion of having a high degree of confidence should be more explicitly articulated in the policies. a) Consideration should be given to explicitly adding "Precautionary Principle" into policy, perhaps in the Vision, as it is not an operational policy. This should be presented as general direction. It is already in the Region's Buffer Framework (page 5, Table B-1)The more important purpose it would serve is to put Regional staff on a more solid footing with respect to their interpretation and application of the policies; right now their interpretation is not explicitly supported by policy. In once sense it would be codifying what is already current practice - but that should be confirmed with staff. Including it also adds to a transparent process by making it clear how staff will	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				<p>preferable to err by being conservative by being over-protective than risking unacceptable impacts.</p> <p>To understand this, it is important to grasp that there is no “hard science” to defend many specific mitigation measures (like buffer widths) and that it relies on professional judgement. There is general agreement that the more protection you provide the high the confidence that a feature will be protected. So there is little disagreement that there is greater confidence that a 50 m buffer against a woodland would protect it better than a 10 m buffer, although many would argue the increased protection provided by the wider buffer is minimal. The argument then becomes how much is sufficient and how much more confidence does the wider buffer provide. Staff use the Vision and “... increase the certainty ...” wording in the goal (s 114) to argue that a high confidence is required.</p>	<p>interpret policies, by it being through a comprehensive review process. Possible wording could be: “The natural environment, is a key asset in the Region and is protected for the values it provides including support for protecting biological diversity and ecological functions and its role in fulfilling the Region’s Planning Vision. Because of the importance of the natural environment as one of the Region’s permanent landscapes”, a Precautionary Approach will be used to guide decisions pertaining to protection of natural heritage.”</p> <p>We think that “biological diversity” (which is synonymous with “biodiversity” should be defined and could be used more prominently in the policy wording. It is a solid ecological concept. For example modify 114.1(5) and (12) to include it and draw a more solid link back to the goal.</p>	
7.	114.1	City of Burlington	Success	<p>Objectives are largely successful as is. Consider if there are differing objectives for different NHS contexts - Urban/Greenfield/Rural.</p> <p>Recommend that the ROP review consider the relationship between cultural heritage landscape objectives and policies and the NHS.</p> <p>Recommend that the ROP incorporate objectives and policies to support/recognize the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark System. Also consider objectives/policies to recognize the ecosystem services provided by the NHS and the relationship to climate change mitigation (i.e. it’s not just a constraint).</p>	<p>A general objective that speaks to various levels of management for the NHS depending on context may be helpful.</p> <p>Consider objectives (and related policies) on cultural heritage landscapes where they overlap with the NHS, on the Cootes to Escarpment Ecopark system, and on ecosystem services.</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
8.	114.1 (17)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	I recognize the need to acknowledge the aesthetic character of the NHS but the objective should clarify that ecologic function is the priority over aesthetics.	This should be further qualified along the lines of “...in a manner that supports the ecological and hydrologic function of the features.”	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
9.	115.2	Town of Milton	Barrier	<p>GAP: Provincial requirement to make NHS an overlay. How will this be addressed?</p> <p>Potential BARRIER – the Town is undertaking an analysis of the provincial NHS system versus the RNHS designation in ROPA 38 to identify discrepancies and</p>		Issue addressed in the conformity/consistency analysis.

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				gaps. Additional comments from this mapping analysis will be provided by the Town of Milton.		
10.	115.2	City of Burlington	Success Comment/ Discussion/ Question	The components, features and areas included in policies 115.2-115.4 are comprehensive and based on my experience have allowed us to protect what needs to be protected. Why are policies 115.3 and 115.4 in separate categories? What about water resource system components? Will these be subject to a different mapping overlay and set of policies? If so, each policy section should identify the relationship between the two.	Could this be simplified by including all elements of the NHS from 115.2-115.4 in one list? Either 1) include water resource components, or 2) highlight the relationship between these systems.	Issue of simplifying list of elements comprising the RNHS has been added to “Potential Changes” section. Issue of identifying water resource systems and describing its relationship with the NHS is addressed in the conformity/consistency analysis.
11.	115.2 (2)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	How is the limit of the shoreline defined? Hazards and/or natural features associated with the shoreline?	Clarify what is meant by shoreline.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
12.	115.2 (3)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question		For clarity, this section should also refer to other unmapped key features and Natural Heritage System components that are not shown on Map 1.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
13.	115.2 and 115.3	NSE	Barrier	We question if 115.2(1) is not problematical because the map is an incomplete representation of the features based only on the available data, which is often flawed. We suggest the NHS should be defined in policy as in 115.3(1) to (6). In one sense, the OP is inconsistent in that it defines the NHS using mapped “areas” (115.2), but then lists the components that it is structured on (115.3). These components are not all mapped. Also, we note that there are some errors in the mapping of the NHS on Maps 1 and 1G, and some differences in the mapped RNHS between them. The Maps (probably all Maps), need to have a disclaimer indicating that they are representations of policy based on the best available information, but that the available information is incomplete and changes over time, and that the RNHS as defined by the policies prevails. 115.3 (2), (3) and (4) are not distinguished on Map 1G, which leads to issues of transparency in that it is not possible to determine how 1G is put together.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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14.	115.3 (1)	City of Burlington	Barrier		Update to reflect PPS 2014 - not just significant.	Issue addressed in the conformity/consistency analysis.
15.	115.3 (2)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Based on the definition these need to be identified and incorporated into the plan through a ROPA. Will the Region be identifying these (Centres for Biodiversity) in this MCR? If not, consider adding more detail on how these are to be identified, e.g. through Area Specific Plans? There could be potential for this designation in North Aldershot.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
16.	115.3 (4)	City of Burlington	Success	The city supports the continued inclusion of buffers in the NHS. We recommend updates to the buffer framework being used to implement buffers in greenfield/ASP's as a result of implementation issues that have been identified (e.g. Evergreen). The framework would benefit from the inclusion of recent scientific research and rationale for the buffer widths identified. This will allow us to better defend the framework when presented with countering data/studies provided by applicants through the ASP process.	No change to policy needed.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
17.	115.3(6), 118(3)d, and 139.12	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Consideration for more clarity on how to treat unmapped wetlands other than those considered significant - currently 115.3(6) indicates those types of wetlands were included in the NHS but 118(3)d and 139.12 only indicate that unmapped key features are to be included in the NHS once identified. Therefore these wetlands could be lost depending on CA regulation policy - do we want those wetlands to be considered in our plan? If so, could consider the ability to move those wetlands to be adjacent to the NHS rather than protecting isolated small wetlands. (JE)	n/a - for discussion (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
18.	115.4 (2)	City of Burlington	Barrier	The NHS does not address all hazards such as erosion hazards and shoreline hazards.	Include all CH regulated hazardous lands and hazardous sites in this policy. NOTE: Burlington's plan has recommended this approach but noted certain circumstances where a designation aside from the NHS is appropriate. See Burlington OP Section 4.4.2(3) a).	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
19.	115.4 (3)	NSE	Barrier	This is an important policy as it is intended to say the NHS and Ag System are complimentary. This could be		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				stated more explicitly, perhaps as an objective, which would likely please the agricultural stakeholders.		
20.	116.1 and 118-2d	Town of Halton Hills	Barrier	Policies 116.1 and 118 (2d) on the process for refining boundaries lack clarity and direction and are open to many interpretations. The Region should consider revising this section to clarify the process for introducing refinements at an early stage of the development application process.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
21.	116.1	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	Refinements to the NHS should also be approved without requirement for ROPA in other scenarios (i.e. not just Planning Applications). The list should include approved Niagara Escarpment Development Act applications and approved federal and provincial environmental assessments. (RC)	<p>The boundaries of the Regional Natural Heritage System may be refined, with additions, deletions and/or boundary adjustments, through:</p> <p>a) a Sub-watershed Study accepted by the <i>Region</i> and undertaken in the context of an <i>Area-Specific Plan</i>;</p> <p>b) an individual Environmental Impact Assessment accepted by the <i>Region</i>, as required by this Plan; or</p> <p>c) similar studies based on terms of reference accepted by the <i>Region</i>.</p> <p>Once approved through an approval process under the Planning Act, the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, or federal and provincial Environmental Assessment requirements, these refinements are in effect on the date of such approval. The <i>Region</i> will maintain mapping showing such refinements and incorporate them as part of the <i>Region's</i> statutory review of its Official Plan. (RC)</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
22.	116.1	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<p>Local municipalities have expressed concern with the fact that it is the Region only that is charged with maintaining the mapping.</p> <p>Is there an alternative approach that would see this mapping maintained by local planning approval authorities and curated by the Region? (RC)</p>		Issue to be addressed in Mapping Audit
23.	116.1	Town of Milton	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Mapping for the RNHS should be updated periodically – and not just as part of the Region's statutory review of the OP.		Issue to be addressed in Mapping Audit
24.	116.1	City of Burlington	Success	Refinement by study has worked well, keep this approach.		

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25.	116.1	NSE	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<p>This is a very important policy as it provides for the refinement of the NHS, including “deletions”. It is debated as to whether “deleted” means the deletion of an entire feature, or is limited to deletion of part of a feature, in which case how is it different to “boundary adjustments”. 116.1 starts by saying “The boundaries of the RNHS may be refined ...”, suggesting that complete deletions are not intended. This could be clarified.</p> <p>b) is also important as it notes the requirement for an EIA to justify refinements. It should be clear that an EIS is required for any application that may result in impacts to the NHS</p>		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
26.	116.1 c)	City of Burlington	Barrier	Waiting until the MCR to incorporate refinements is a long time frame. This has two key consequences: 1) It puts lower tier municipalities in the position of having to propose mapping that is known to be inaccurate as part of their Official Plan Reviews in order to conform to the mapping in the ROP, 2) development planning staff and the public are working off inaccurate maps for an extended period of time.	<p>Consider:</p> <p>1) Policies that allow lower tier municipalities to incorporate revised mapping into their Official Plans that has been approved by the Region but not yet incorporated into the Regional OP and that it be deemed to still conform to the ROP.</p> <p>2) Formalize a process to manage updates to the NHS mapping as a result of approved site specific studies. Updated mapping could be incorporated into the ROP through regular consolidations and updated mapping layers could then be shared with municipalities for day to day use.</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
27.	117.1	NSE	Barrier	There may be some ambiguity as to what this policy refers to.	We suggest it would be clearer if it was refined by an addition so it reads: “ ... <i>the following uses may be permitted in the Regional Natural Heritage System</i> ” This should be confirmed with the Region to determine if 117.1 is to apply to the Region’s Natural Heritage System (per s.113).	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
28.	117.1	Town of Milton	Barrier	<p>GAP: objectives should be updated to use provincially defined terms: “Agriculture-related use”, “on-farm diversified uses”, “agri-tourism”, “agri-food network”, etc.</p> <p>BARRIER: ROP should also be updated to permit accessory apartments/secondary units within singles, towns, and semis in the agricultural area (subject to meeting servicing requirements and other performance requirements) as per Bill 140 and the Planning Act. Garden suites should also be permitted. Policies are</p>		<p>Issue of agricultural terms is addressed in consistency/conformity review.</p> <p>Other issues included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.</p>

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				<p>currently too restrictive and a barrier to providing a wider range of affordable housing options.</p> <p>Related to 117.1(16) BARRIER: polices are too restrictive and go beyond the role of the ROP. It should be left up to local OP to identify detailed criteria for permitting these types of uses, etc., which would then be implemented by the local ZBL.</p> <p>Size restrictions (i.e., max floor area) are appropriate for local ZBL regulations, but not within the scope of an upper-tier Official Plan policy document.</p> <p>The list of agriculture-related uses in Section 100(21) will support agriculture, benefit from being in close proximity to farm operations, and provide services to farm operations as a primary activity. They should be permitted in the Agricultural Area <u>without the commercial farm/active farming operation requirements identified.</u></p>		
29.	117.1	City of Burlington	Barrier	The permitted uses for the NHS are too broad in many circumstances.	<p>Using a NHS land use designation paired with an overlay would tighten up the lands that are designated NHS, and the permitted uses list could then reflect a more narrow range of less intensive uses that are more consistent with the objectives of protecting, restoring and enhancing the NHS.</p> <p>[NOTE: There is more detailed comment on this in the covering email.]</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
30.	117.1 (4)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	If a single detached home is permitted, a secondary dwelling unit within that home should also be permitted.	Add secondary dwelling units within a single detached dwelling.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
31.	117.1 (16)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Through Burlington's OP adoption process, <u>Council</u> objected to the language: "outside the Escarpment Natural Area or the Key Features of the Regional Natural Heritage System other than those areas where the only Key Feature is a significant earth science <i>area of natural and scientific interest</i> "	Staff did not recommend these changes but wanted to convey Council's position as requested.	Unsure from the comment the nature of the objection.
32.	117.1(9) & 290	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Is SWM a permitted use in the NHS, or in some of the NHS, or not at all? What about LID in the Buffers, Linkages and Enhancement Areas? What about a SWM		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				conveyance infrastructure (required to enter into valley features on occasion to discharge water to creeks)? (RC)		
33.	117.1 and 118(2)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	Although restoration projects are a permitted use under 117.1(7), because 117.1 includes “subject to other policies of this Plan” all of the permitted uses are subject to the prohibition and restriction policies of 118(2). This is problematic for many restoration projects that require approval under the Planning Act (i.e. NEC DPs). For example, online pond removal within a significant woodland or improving a culvert for fish passage can involve impacts to significant woodlands, significant wildlife habitat, significant wetlands that do not meet the 118(2) tests despite having an overall benefit to the integrity of the NHS. (JE)	Consider a subpolicy under 118(2) for activities that are deemed to have an overall benefit to the NHS: “Notwithstanding the above, development and site alteration within, and/or the alteration of, any component of the Regional Natural Heritage System associated with <i>forest, fisheries and wildlife management</i> is permitted provided that an overall benefit to the integrity of the NHS is demonstrated” (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
34.	118 (1)	City of Burlington	Barrier	See comment in Section 116.1 above.		
35.	118(1.1)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The scope of this policy must be expanded to apply to both the <u>preparation and review</u> of areas specific plans, zoning by-law amendments and studies related to development and/or site alteration applications. As written, this policy is not operationable in relation to zoning by-law amendment and development and site alteration applications as municipalities never <u>prepare</u> such applications. (RC)	Require Local Municipalities, when undertaking the preparation and review of <i>Area-Specific Plans</i> , Zoning By-law amendments and studies related to <i>development</i> and/or <i>site alteration</i> applications, to protect, through their Official Plans and Zoning By-laws, the <i>Key Features</i> listed in Section 115.3(1) but not mapped on Map 1G in accordance with <i>policies</i> of this Plan. (RC)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
36.	118 (1.1)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Do we want to protect other components of the NHS that are not mapped on Map 1G? E.g. unmapped linkages, buffers, enhancement areas, hazard areas?		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
37.	118 (2)	NSE	Barrier	We suggest that b) should explicitly say that the demonstration of no negative impact should be through an EIA that is approved by the Region. It is noted in 118(3) but does not reference back to 118(2). It is assumed by the OP that a principal mitigation approach for achieving no negative impact will be the provision of a buffer around components listed in 115.3. Buffers are defined in the OP (s220.1.1), but there is no other mention of them in the Plan (as a mitigation tool). Clarity over buffer expectations is a big issue that should be addressed in the ROPR. To assist in clarifying expectations, the Region (with input from NSE and other		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				<p>agencies), did write up a Buffer Framework, but its status and extent to which it can be enforced is unclear.</p> <p>d) is oft cited, particularly the reference to “an early stage in the development process”. Practically, this is often difficult as development proceeds from the general to the specific, so it can be unrealistic to determine specific mitigation or boundary adjustments at conceptual stages of development. The Region’s position has been (at least in some instances) to reserve the widest buffer possible and set development limits until you can demonstrate that narrower buffers are appropriate. However, planners need to know the envelope they have to work in, the “developable area”, in order to design. Overall, the process needs to be more carefully thought through and the policy requirements be clear and implementable. We suggest the intent of the policy is to have the RNHS identified and acknowledged at an early stage in the development process, but it was NOT intended to finalize the boundaries at an early stage of development. We note the Board Decision (Evergreen) where the Board agreed this was a reasonable approach. Policy wording could be refined to make this clearer.</p>		
38.	118 (2)	City of Burlington	Success Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Keep the general format of prohibiting development in key areas, and subjecting other areas to the no negative impacts test.	Also include in this section: prohibiting development and site alteration within hazardous lands and hazardous sites and other areas regulated by Conservation Halton unless permission has been received from Conservation Halton.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
39.	118 (2)a)	City of Burlington	Barrier		Update to reflect PPS 2014 - not just significant habitat of endangered and threatened species.	Issue is addressed in the consistency/conformity analysis.
40.	118(2)a)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not consistent with 2014 PPS; not clear if significant habitat = ESA regulated habitat; appears to inadvertently allow any Provincial/Federal legislation or regulations to be inappropriately invoked (e.g. END/THR species habitat happens to occur in a PSW and Endangered Species Act approval used to allow development within the PSW). It is assumed that the ‘provincial and federal requirements’ portion of the existing policy was 	<p>Prohibiting development and site alteration within significant wetlands, significant coastal wetlands, significant habitat of endangered and threatened species and fish habitat except in accordance with Provincial and Federal legislation or regulations;</p> <p>a) Prohibiting development and site alteration within significant wetlands and significant coastal wetlands; (JE)</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				<p>only meant to refer to development in END/THR species habitat and fish habitat. (JE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deference to provincial/federal requirements can lead to complete removal of habitat in Halton's NHS with overall benefit project outside of the Region (this happened in Milton Phase 2 where overall benefit project occurred on Walpole Island) (JE) 	<p>b) Prohibiting development and site alteration within habitat of endangered and threatened species and fish habitat except in accordance with Provincial and Federal requirements provided that any required compensatory works contribute to Halton's NHS. (JE)</p>	
41.	118(2)a), 226, and 278.1	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<p>1) 118(2)a) prohibits <i>development</i> and <i>site alteration</i> in select key features. 226 defines <i>development</i> and provides exemptions for infrastructure approved through an EA thereby allowing infrastructure development in those select key features. However, the definition of <i>site alteration</i> in 278.1 does not include a similar exemption. Therefore, while the creation of a new lot, change in land use, or the construction of buildings or structures associated with infrastructure approved through an EA is permitted in those select key features, the grading, excavation, and placement of fill typically required for that development is not permitted. (JE)</p> <p>2) 118(2)b) prohibits alteration to any component of the RNHS unless no negative impacts has been demonstrated. For infrastructure projects this is often not possible. This policy does not apply strictly to Development and Site Alteration, it applies to "Any Alteration". (JE)</p>	<p>In order to provide a clear exemption for infrastructure:</p> <p>1) Consider combining the definition for <i>development</i> and for <i>site alteration</i> into one definition, or adding the exemptions that are currently in the <i>development</i> definition to the <i>site alteration</i> definition. (JE)</p> <p>2) Consider changing "the alteration of any components of the RNHS" in 118(2)b) to "<i>development and site alteration</i>" in order to capture the exemption in relation to the no negative impact test (JE)</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
42.	118(2)b)	Town of Halton Hills	Barrier Comment/ Discussion/ Question	The Region should include some flexibility to promote long-term environmental benefits to the NHS. For instance, in the case of invasive non-native species or other situations that may cause negative effects on the native ecosystems/NHS, the 'No Negative Impact Test' may not be the right tool to for assessment. Looking at net ecological benefits to the System in the long term may be a better way to preserve the NHS.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
43.	118 (2)d)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	There has been some confusing interpretations about this clause, especially as it relates to Area Specific Planning when certain elements of the NHS (i.e. Buffers) cannot be refined until the necessary site		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				<p>specific details and the particulars about a development application are (i.e. the impacts and mitigation measures) are known.</p> <p>We have argued that the policy does not require all refinements at the largest possible scale but encourages them where possible. (RC)</p>		
44.	118 (3)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<p>We have received much feedback about the need to scope EIA's or exempt them based on a range of circumstances. While the OP should continue to provide some of the broad criteria related to agricultural uses (see 118(3.1) below), the update to the EIA guidelines is the most appropriate time to provide further detailed guidance on what type of scoping and waiving may be accepted by the Region and other agencies. Consider adding a policy that refers to the waiving/scoping established in the guidelines to provide comfort/transparency to those that are concerned.</p> <p>Due to concerns from the agricultural community our OP now also recognizes that an EIA is only required for Planning Act applications to provide clarity that they are not required to support normal agricultural uses that would require Building Permit application only.</p>	<p>Consider adding: "Other circumstances in accordance with the EIA guidelines and to the satisfaction of the Region" or similar language.</p> <p>Consider language highlighting that an EIA is not required as part of a Building Permit application. (NOTE: this was added to Burlington's new OP)</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
45.	118 (3)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Do we want the EIA to identify other components of the NHS that are not mapped on Map 1G? E.g. unmapped linkages, buffers, enhancement areas, hazard areas?		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
46.	118 (3)	Town of Oakville	Barrier	Portions of these criteria are unclear and could be clarified to exempt additional classes of development.	<p>Oakville suggests that Minor Variances, for example, should be explicitly exempt from the requirement to carry out an EIA.</p> <p>"e) It is a Minor Variance to the Local Zoning By-law."</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
47.	118 (3)	Town of Halton Hills	Barrier	The Region should consider providing more direction in the OP as to what type of development will be considered "minor in scale and/or nature".		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
48.	118 (3)a)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The issue is with the wording 'minor in scale and/or nature'. This is difficult to define overall. It is recommended that either a) this be further flushed out in policy or b) a reference to the Region's guidelines be included here and the guidelines be revised to further flush this out. (HI)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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49.	Paragraph following 118 (3) d)	NSE	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	This contains a statement of the purpose of an EIA that does not work well with 118(2) and seems to go beyond it. We suggest a separate policy regarding EIAs should be considered to pull the EIA wording together in one place. It could articulate the purpose, identify when one is needed, describe the process (i.e., submission of a TOR for approval before undertaking the study), content, etc. We also think it should cross reference with 192 (see below). We note that there are only two references to the EIA Guidelines in the ROP, 141(1) and 192, neither of which explicitly encourage an applicant for development to use them.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
50.	118 (3.1)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<p>1. The agricultural community perceives these policies as unfairly singling them out, however I have often noted that they are being singled out because they are being given exemptions from the standard requirements for an EIA within 120m.</p> <p>2. This section should also be updated to reflect the study waiving requirements of the new NEP, Greenbelt and P2G Plans, all of which are more permissive as it pertains to agriculture. I note we are no longer permitted to be more restrictive as it pertains to agriculture in the Greenbelt Plan. If we wish to be more restrictive as it pertains to agriculture in the other plan areas, we should have some detailed background work to support the different standard. For example: Justifying requiring studies within 120 metres of the <u>system</u>, vs. the features as is required by provincial policy. Also, for agricultural uses, is the size of the building the best test to gauge potential impacts, and therefore waiving criteria? Should it be more focused on the nature of the agricultural use?</p> <p>In general, I think this section requires some further background research and discussion as a group.</p>	<p>1. Consider rewording the policies pertaining to agricultural uses to specifically note them as exceptions. E.g. All development within 120 m needs to do an EIA, except the following exemptions are provided for agricultural uses....</p> <p>2. Update policies to reflect provincial plans and/or directions identified through background work to support alternate requirements.</p>	<p>Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.</p> <p>Issue 2 is open to interpretation. The policies that prevent more restrictive policies regarding agriculture also existed in the previous plan. GBP 5.3 references the Agricultural System section (GBP 3.1), not the Natural Heritage System (GBP 3.2) within which the requirements for natural heritage evaluation or hydrological evaluation are established.</p>
51.	118 (3.1) c)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Success	By including public works as part of the criteria helps capture infrastructure projects that are adjacent to the RNHS. (HI)		

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52.	118 (3.1) c)	Town of Oakville	Barrier	In the urban area under existing development, a buffer of 120m takes in an enormous amount of area (see further Oakville comments below).		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
53.	118 (3.3)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question Barrier	Clarification is needed on in-kind service and financial aid. Meaning to what degree do we provide these service, and under what specific circumstances? (HI) It should be a qualified financial support to ensure we are not always held responsible to aid a proponent financial, especially in circumstances where they are not following staff's reasonable recommendations for avoiding impacts. (RC)	Assist the proponent in carrying out the EIA required for an agricultural building under Section (3.1) through scoped EIA and/or by providing financial aid and/or in-kind service where appropriate.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
54.	118 (3.3)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question Success	I have relied on this policy when concerns are raised by the agricultural community – we should keep it to address any new/revised policies for EIA's related to agri uses. I would be curious to know how often the Region has needed to provide this assistance. Consider sharing this information as part of the ROPR.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
55.	118 (3.3)	Town of Halton Hills	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	The Region should provide information in the OP on the process for assisting the proponents in carrying out an EIA by providing financial aid and/or in-kind service. If the intent is to provide this information in the updated EIA Guidelines, the OP should direct the reader to this document.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
56.	118 (4.1)	City of Burlington	Success	Continue to recognize this unless all of these areas are removed from the NHS and designated Prime Agriculture (with NHS as an overlay).		Identified as a success in the Policy Audit Technical Memo.
57.	118 (6)	City of Burlington	Success Barrier	Support this policy. Giving people limited and controlled access to the NHS improves public appreciation for natural areas and limits ad hoc trails from forming. The Regional requirement for additional buffer lands to support a trail can be a barrier to achieving trails at times. Consider policies that allow trails without requiring additional buffer lands, but instead address concerns about impacts by requiring trail design to adhere to certain criteria.	Consider adding more criteria to support the development of trails in the NHS and buffers if there are concerns about impacts. Example: (a) not be located within hazardous lands; (b) use native species to naturalize trail edges; (c) be the minimum width required; (d) be designed with suitable surfacing material compatible with their surroundings; (e) be designed and located to help to manage access to the NHS by minimizing impacts to key features.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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58.	139.3.7(3), 139.3.7(4) and 139.3.7(5)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	When applied together these policies appear to contradict each other (i.e. how could a VPZ be provided for permitted uses that occur within key features?). (JE)		These policies do not seem to contradict each other. One pertains to what is permitted within the Key Feature; the other, the requirement to undertake an EIA to establish a VPZ if you are near a Key Feature or within the GBNHS but not in a Key Feature.
59.	118(2)a), 226, and 278.1	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	<p>3) 118(2)a) prohibits <i>development</i> and <i>site alteration</i> in select key features. 226 defines <i>development</i> and provides exemptions for infrastructure approved through an EA thereby allowing infrastructure development in those select key features. However, the definition of <i>site alteration</i> in 278.1 does not include a similar exemption. Therefore, while the creation of a new lot, change in land use, or the construction of buildings or structures associated with infrastructure approved through an EA is permitted in those select key features, the grading, excavation, and placement of fill typically required for that development is not permitted. (JE)</p> <p>4) 118(2)b) prohibits alteration to any component of the RNHS unless no negative impacts has been demonstrated. For infrastructure projects this is often not possible. This policy does not apply strictly to Development and Site Alteration, it applies to "Any Alteration". (JE)</p>	<p>In order to provide a clear exemption for infrastructure:</p> <p>3) Consider combining the definition for <i>development</i> and for <i>site alteration</i> into one definition, or adding the exemptions that are currently in the <i>development</i> definition to the <i>site alteration</i> definition. (JE)</p> <p>4) Consider changing "the alteration of any components of the RNHS" in 118(2)b) to "<i>development and site alteration</i>" in order to capture the exemption in relation to the no negative impact test (JE)</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
60.	118 (11)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	This policy has led to some confusion and it has been suggested that the policy should allow some development in hazard lands if authorized by a CA. Additional qualification should be added to capture this suggested intent of this policy (HI)	Require that Local Zoning By-laws prohibit new construction and the expansion or replacement of existing non-conforming uses within <i>hazard lands</i> , except where specifically exempted by the applicable CA in accordance with their policies or identified as a Special Policy Area in the Local Official Plan. Special Policy Areas, including any policy or boundary changes thereto, must be approved by the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing prior to municipal adoption. (HI)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
61.	118 (11)	City of Burlington	Success	It is important to keep the words "existing non-conforming uses" in this policy to allow existing dwellings to remain, for example.	Also identify that uses are prohibited "except where specifically permitted by Conservation Halton."	
62.	118 (11) & 118 (12)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Policies only reference requirements for Local Zoning By-laws to include provisions to prohibit new construction, expansion and replacement of existing non-conforming uses as it relates to Natural Hazards.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				What about site specific applications (i.e. Site Plan, consent, variances). Should there be a policy set for these instances. (HI)		
63.	118 (16)	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Did this management plan happen?		
64.	118 (20)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The creation of lots in the NHS should be prohibited everywhere, except to permit the severance of a residence surplus to a farm operation... (RC)	Prohibit the creation of new <i>lots</i> for residential purposes, except in Hamlets or Rural Clusters, or to permit the severance of a <i>residence surplus to a farm operation</i> , subject to the other policies of this Plan. (RC)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
65.	139.3.1	City of Burlington	Barrier	This section needs an overhaul to conform to the new Greenbelt Plan and Growth Plan – I do not have detailed suggestions for this exercise at this stage but have offered some high level comments below. For ease of use, it would be beneficial to move towards having one unified overlay that incorporates the Regional NHS, Greenbelt NHS and Growth Plan NHS. Policies can still speak to the different standards or requirements that may be required by the different provincial plans.		Issue is addressed in consistency/conformity analysis.
66.	139.3.3	City of Burlington	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Are these Greenbelt specific key features really mapped on Map 1G? I have not been able to locate source data that shows these, and typically habitat of special concern species is not mapped.	Does the policy also need to refer to incorporating unmapped key features, similar to the Regional NHS? Is that permitted in the GB Plan?	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
67.	139.3.7(3)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The geography to which this policy applies should be clarified better. (RC)	Notwithstanding Sections 139.3.7(1) and 139.3.7(2), permit the following uses within <i>Key Features, of the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System</i> subject to the applicable <i>policies</i> of this Plan:	
68.	139.3.7(6)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier Comment/ Discussion/ Question	This policy may require revision to conform to newly rewritten policy 4.5.5. The effect of the revision is to restrict the relief this policy provides from the general prohibition in 3.2.5.1 to expansions to existing buildings and structures only. (RC) 2005 Greenbelt Plan 4.5.5 – Expansions to existing buildings and structures, residential dwellings, and accessory uses to both, may be considered within key natural heritage features and key hydrologic features if it is demonstrated that: ...		Issue is addressed in consistency/conformity analysis.

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				2017 Greenbelt Plan 4.5.4 – Expansions or alterations to existing buildings and structures for agricultural uses, agriculture-related uses or on-farm diversified uses and expansions to existing residential dwellings may be considered within key natural heritage features, key hydrologic features and their associated vegetation protection zones if it is demonstrated that:		
69.	141(3)	NSE	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	This section indicates the intention of the Region to provide EIA Guidelines and should be cross-referenced with 192(5), which is the policy which gives guidance on their use, and/or 118(3) to ties it to the intent of an EIA.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
70.	141(4)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	EEAC has been combined with the former Forestry Advisory Committee to create NHAC and it no longer reviews EIAs or makes recommendations as part of the development review process (JE)	[It is the policy of the Region to:] Seek input from EEAC in the review of EIAs provided under this Plan and make recommendations to the appropriate approval body as part of the development review process. (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
71.	145 (23)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The policy is ambiguous. The term near should be replaced by an actual distance. (we suggest 120m). Also the policy refers to unmapped and undefined features. This policy should be updated to address these shortcomings and address conformity with new water resource system policies in the PPS and the relevant Provincial Plans. (RC)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
72.	192	NSE	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	We think the intent of this section is to provide direction for an applicant to follow the Region's EIA Guidelines, however it does not explicitly say that. Either in this policy, or preferably a revised 118(3), there should be explicit direction, e.g., "Development or Site alteration proposed on adjacent lands to the RNHS should follow the Region's Natural Heritage Guidelines". This would also require refining the definition of "adjacent lands" (s.212.3). From the perspective of staff implementing the Region's policies and receiving complete EIA documents, it would be helpful if this policy could be stronger (i.e., ideally <u>require</u> the use of the Guidelines), However, we are unsure if the ROP can actually require the Guidelines be followed, as that effectively gives the Guidelines the status of a policy, but they have not been subject to the same process that is required for		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				<p>creating municipal policy. Moreover, the Guidelines can be changed/refined in the future without being subject to an OPA, which would affectively be changing policy “through a back-door”.</p> <p>None-the-less, we suggest the intent could be made stronger by refining 192 so that the “alternate approaches” referred to have to be approved by the Region though pre-consultation. Section 192 could be cross-referenced back to 118(3), (as well as 141(3) as it currently does) to tie it to the intent of an EIA.</p>		
73.	194(3)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	EEAC has been combined with the former Forestry Advisory Committee to create NHAC. It is not clear that they are essential for implementing ROP policy; however, they may provide assistance in implementing strategic plan initiatives (JE)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
74.	204	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The allocation of Regional Funding to environmental stewardship initiatives on private and public lands is seriously hampered by the lack of a Regional Council adopted Stewardship Funding Program. Stewardship projects completed in Halton are lower than in surrounding municipalities as a result of this. A strategic policy should be included that encourages the Region to develop and adopt a Stewardship Funding Program to work in cooperation with other public agencies (such as Conservation Authorities) to promote private and public land stewardship in the NHS. (RC)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
75.	212.3	NSE	Barrier	Adjacent Lands should be refined to reflect the PPS definition (PPS s. 6) for application of natural heritage policies	Adjacent Lands definition should be refined to match PPS definition (PPS s. 6).	Issue is addressed in consistency/conformity analysis.
76.	226	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	The current definition is consistent with the PPS, 2014. However, it precludes development requiring approval under the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. This is a barrier as we comment on Niagara Escarpment Commission Development Permit Applications and have been doing so for a number of years. If ever we were challenged on the policy basis for some of our comments it would be difficult for us to justify our comments given this barrier (unless we resort to the definition of Site Alteration (which we have been doing as a stop gap until this matter can be addressed).		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				The definition of Development in the 2006 OP was more general (i.e. inclusive of other kinds of development) (RC)		
77.	226(1)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	A and A+ Class EAs are considered 'pre-approved' and do not require any supporting work to be completed (other than posting a sign at the project site for A+ projects). As such, these projects are exempted by 226(1) without any natural heritage investigations or studies and associated agency review. It appears that the intent of 226(1) is to not duplicate the studies, consideration of alternatives (which includes consideration of impacts to the natural environment) and agency review from the EA process during planning approvals. However, it is not clear if A and A+ projects were intended to be included in the exemption given that they don't include any of those items. (JE)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
78.	276.4 (3)	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	Not consistent with 2014 PPS; not clear if significant habitat = ESA regulated habitat (JE)	<p>[SIGNIFICANT means:] in regard to the habitat of endangered species and threatened species, the habitat, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, that is necessary for the maintenance, survival, and/or the recovery of naturally occurring or reintroduced populations of endangered species or threatened species, and where those areas of occurrence are occupied or habitually occupied by the species during all or any part(s) of its life cycle;</p> <p>Habitat of endangered species and threatened species: means a) with respect to a species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species for which a regulation made under clause 55(1)(a) of the Endangered Species Act, 2007 is in force, the area prescribed by that regulation as the habitat of the species; or b) with respect to any other species listed on the Species at Risk in Ontario List as an endangered or threatened species, an area on which the species depends, directly or indirectly, to carry on its life processes, including life processes such as</p>	Issue is addressed in consistency/conformity analysis.

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					reproduction, rearing, hibernation, migration or feeding, as approved by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources; and places in the areas described in clause (a) or (b), whichever is applicable, that are used by members of the species as dens, nests, hibernacula or other residences. (JE)	
79.	276.5	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	When considering unmapped wetlands during the identification of unmapped key features as per 118(3) and 139.12, 276.5(4) only allows PSWs to be included if not in the NEPA or GBPA. This can prevent wetlands that make an important contribution to the RNHS from being identified as a key feature. An example of this is the Premier Gateway wetland/HDF that is present on the UPS lands. (JE)	276.5(3) for lands outside the Niagara Escarpment Plan Area and the Greenbelt Plan Area, Provincially Significant Wetlands and wetlands that make an important ecological contribution to the Regional Natural Heritage System. (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
80.	277	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration for the quality of the woodland to be considered (e.g. dominated by invasive species like Black Locust Woodland in Southwest Georgetown or Black Locust edge on Legendary Motorcar site); GB Technical Paper excerpt on their approach (note only two species included): (JE) <p>Additional exclusions may be considered for communities which are dominated by the invasive non-native tree species Buckthorn (<i>Rhamnus</i> species) or Norway Maple (<i>Acer platanoides</i>) that threaten good forestry practices and environmental management. Such exceptions may be considered where native tree species cover less than 10% of the ground and are represented by less than 100 stems of any size per hectare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that it is regional practice to not include buckthorn as a tree under the definition of woodland in 295. This is not due to its invasive nature or the quality of the woodland; rather, it is due to the interpretation of buckthorn as a shrub species not a tree species. Consult Ron Reinhold for further clarification if needed. (JE) Although this Policy can be construed as a success I feel it is too restricting i.e. we spend too much time/energy protecting woodlands of ecological low value. We should consider including qualitative criteria to this Policy in addition to the existing criteria. (RR) 	n/a – for discussion (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualitative criteria may consider excluding softwood plantations below a minimum age and composed of few or one overstory species, exclude woodlands primarily consisting of non-native invasive species (overstory), implementing minimum Floristic Quality Index value or considering the Coefficient of Conservatism , or Native Species Richness (Shannon Diversity Index) also (see Gartner Lee <i>Rational and Methodology for Determining Significant Woodlands in Halton Region, 2002.</i> (RR) The PPS definition of Significant Woodland was revised in 2014 edition to include reference to “criteria established by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources”. The Region’s Significant Woodland criteria may require update to reflect MNR criteria. Although the OMNR does not technically exist (OMNRF vs.OMNR) and the OMNRF has not established criteria that is linked explicitly to the PPS 2014, they frequently identify criteria developed for the purpose of Natural Heritage Assessment for Green Energy Act Projects as a suitable proxy Guideline. They will likely request us to consider these as part of our review in relation to our Significant Woodlands definition. See Link: https://dr6j45jk9xcmk.cloudfront.net/documents/2716/stdprod-101413.pdf (RC) 		
81.	277	Town of Halton Hills	Barrier	The definition of woodland does not include a distinction between native and non-native invasive species. This distinction should be identified since invasive species can have a negative impact on the overall NHS.		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
82.	295	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	Invasive species and extreme weather events are influencing the character of woodlands in Halton Region and many are experience severe disturbance as a result of these stressors. Dead trees have often been precluded from tree density counts involved in identifying “woodlands”—based on an interpretation that	Consider adding wording to the existing policy similar to the Greenbelt Plan technical paper that addresses this issue: “Woodlands experiencing changes such as harvesting, blowdown or other tree mortality are still considered woodlands. Such changes are considered temporary whereby the	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

#	SECTION #	COMMENT FROM	SUCCESS/BARRIER	COMMENT/ SPECIFIC ISSUE(S) WITH THIS POLICY AND WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR YOUR SUGGESTED REVISION?	SUGGESTED REVISION	RESPONSE
				<p>the current definition only requires consideration of live trees.</p> <p>Ash tree mortality due to the invasive Emerald Ash borer can result in significant tree mortality in a woodland, especially in the southern portions of the Region where ash often comprises a significant portion of the woodland canopy. Dead trees would not be counted when assessing tree density as per the definition. Additionally, a large number of dead trees are removed by the local municipalities because they are considered hazards to adjacent homes, trails, infrastructure, etc.. Therefore it is possible that an area that would have qualified as a woodland no longer qualifies due to the amount of dead/removed trees (and therefore it is possible that a former significant woodland is no longer a significant woodland). This happened along Taplow Ck in Oakville; however, the Town agreed to treat the subject area as a significant woodland in an Erosion EA despite the vast majority of trees having been recently removed. (JE)</p>	<p>forest still retains its long-term ecological value". (JE)</p>	
83.	Map 1	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For our EIA guidelines update, consider including how we delineate Sig Woods (i.e. all the practices that Ron implements). Something like the GB technical paper. 2. For the mapping updates as part of the ROPR: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Large discrepancy in NHS mapping between Map 1 and Map 1G in the north – Map 1 only includes GBNHS overlay and omits the mapped key feature areas from Map 1G. You can really see the difference in and around Acton but there are other areas too. b. ANSI near Derry Road not in our NHS? Chris Eden says all Mineral Resource Extraction Areas were cut out. Richard says they still should be on Map 1G. 		Issue 2 to be addressed in Mapping Audit
84.	Map 1 and 1G	Town of Oakville	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Map scale and resolution	Oakville suggests that scale and resolution of the maps are improved in future versions of the Office Consolidation.	Issue to be addressed in Mapping Audit

#	SECTION #	COMMENT FROM	SUCCESS/ BARRIER	COMMENT/ SPECIFIC ISSUE(S) WITH THIS POLICY AND WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR YOUR SUGGESTED REVISION?	SUGGESTED REVISION	RESPONSE
					It is difficult to interpret the location of the RNHS at the local level under the current scale and resolution.	
85.	Map 1 and 1G	Town of Oakville	Comment/ Discussion/ Question	Advancement of the RNHS through development under the North Oakville Secondary East and West Plans	<p>Oakville suggests that the RNHS component of the OP maps be updated regularly to reflect changes from the planned RNHS to the actual RNHS as development in North Oakville progresses.</p> <p>A more accurate depiction of the actual location of the RNHS will assist in the ongoing review of current development applications.</p> <p>Similarly, changes to the limits of the RNHS south of Dundas (Livable Oakville) as well as the identification of new Key Features should be updated regularly.</p>	Issue to be addressed in Mapping Audit
86.	Map	Halton Planning Services (Environment)	Barrier	Currently, there is no RNHS mapped north of the Niagara Escarpment; this has led to some confusion, particularly when ROPAs occur above this limit and involve delineation/refinement of natural feature boundaries (eg. Acton Quarry Extension). There is nothing in policy that would suggest the ROP should not be amended under such circumstances to incorporate new RNHS lands north of the Escarpment in the event an application to change land use is received in this area.	It would be ideal if the RNHS lands could extend north of the Niagara Escarpment.	The ROPR will clarify the relationship

Policy Audit Technical Memo
Table 4 – Implementation Comments – Gaps

COMMENT #	GAP DESCRIPTION: Describe the nature of the observed gap in existing policy that you feel is needed to strengthen NHS protection and enhancement in Halton	COMMENTS/CONSIDERATIONS: Additional context, comments, considerations	RESPONSE
G.1	Wildlife crossings are not explicitly addressed in policy therefore related mitigative measures associated with proposed development are not ensured through policy. Currently, only the application of the no negative impact test under 118(2)b) could be invoked to require wildlife crossings to be implemented; however, as crossings are generally not in the NHS (i.e. within roads) the need for them is not well studied as part of a typical EIA or EA as a function of the NHS that cannot be impacted. Explicit policy would strengthen the ability to investigate this function and ensure it is addressed. Further, as wildlife has already been impacted by existing road infrastructure, explicit policy could ensure needed improvements to this NHS function.	Consider City of Guelph OPA 42 (Section 6A.4, Schedule 10 and elsewhere) for an example of how this can be incorporated into the ROP. Suggested policy options: (JE) 1) Policy that appropriate wildlife crossing measures must be implemented – include mapping of the appropriate locations in ROP (JE) 2) Policy that appropriate wildlife crossing measures must be implemented – no associated regional mapping so policy must indicate that appropriate study associated with the application will determine the need and location (JE) 3) Policy that appropriate wildlife crossing measures must be implemented – no associated regional mapping so policy must indicate that appropriate study associated with the application will determine the need and location until such a time that the Region develops mapping (this could be coupled with a commitment to create such mapping similar to the creation of the various Guidelines) (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.2	Adjacent lands/buffers to Natural Heritage Features needs to be discussed/clarified in the policy	Discussion on buffer widths (i.e. 30 metres) for Natural Heritage Features in accordance with the Natural Heritage Reference Manual. (HI)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.3	Currently no significant wildlife habitat mapping is included in the ROP. While no key features are explicitly mapped in the ROP, the mapping for most of them (or their surrogates) was used to create the composite key feature mapping in Map 1G. As SWH was not included in that composite mapping, it must always be identified as an unmapped key feature. While this would always have to take place, it would simplify development applications studies and review to have as much mapped as possible. Mapping would also give landowners and the Region a better indication of the real extent of the NHS.	City of Vaughn undertook mapping of select types of SWH as part of their Natural Heritage Network Study (based on field work performed by NSE) with an aim to add additional Core Features to their mapping (i.e. update their 2010 OP mapping through Council and OMB approval). (JE) CVC is currently undertaking a SWH mapping project for their jurisdiction so mapping for approximately 1/3 of the Region could be available. Their methodology could be extended across the Region as part of the ROPR. (JE)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.4	There are many lots of record that don't require planning approvals in order to develop a single detached dwelling (i.e. only a building permit is required) despite being significantly and in many cases, entirely encompassed by key features of the NHS. Because they don't require planning approvals, the only mechanism the Region has to protect the NHS is through	Consider including a ROP policy that would direct the local municipalities to include all areas within the mapped key features on Map 1G as areas of site plan control to ensure that planning approvals are required (and hence our NHS policies come into play). Single detached dwellings are a permitted use within the NHS as per 117.1(4); however, they are still subject to the other policies of the ROP	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

	the Regional Tree-by-law approval. However, that by-law does not prevent development within woodlands and is limited in working towards limiting the scale of the development.	including the prohibition and restriction policies included in 118(2). This is a much better mechanism for the protection of the NHS than the tree-by-law. (JE)	
G.5	There are currently no guidelines for assisting municipalities in the preparation of Terms of Reference for Subwatershed Studies prepared in support of Area Specific Plans. Developing Terms of Reference for Subwatershed Studies is time consuming. The current EIA Guideline is specific to Site Specific Planning only. The Buffer Refinement Framework could be inserted into these Guidelines. (RC)		
G.6	Rules around ecological offsetting (compensation) to address impacts associated with development of public works in the NHS should be outlined in policy. Flexibility is needed for such development as there is sometimes no alternative to locating some forms of infrastructure (linear infrastructure primarily) in the NHS. Removal of key features and/or other components of the NHS is often proposed as part of essential public works, despite there being no policy basis to permit this—since 118(2) b) restricts all alteration of any component of the NHS unless it has been demonstrated that there will be NNI. (RC)	Options for addressing this gap could include either: a) Narrow the application of 118(2) b) NNI standard from “alteration of any component of the NHS” to “development and site alteration”; thus ensuring public works approved through an EA would not be subject to these standards (as these works would not meet the definition of development). or b) Develop a policy for public works specifically that states essential public works may permitted in the NHS if it demonstrate <u>no overall</u> negative impact; thus opening the door to ecological offsetting (or compensation). (RC)	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.7	Rules around the inclusion of Natural Hazard areas within the NHS should be included in policy, whereby those hazardous lands identified through an approved environmental study submitted in support of a proposed development and site alteration are ultimately included into the NHS. (RC)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.8	Water Resources System policies will need to be incorporated into our official plan (RC)		Issue addressed in consistency/conformity analysis.
G.9	Buffer widths – minimum buffer widths should be prescribed in policy and/or new policy should be added to enable use of the Region’s Buffer refinement framework or some similar buffer width refinement framework. (RC)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.10	It would be good to have a policy that requires the delivery of a state of the NHS report to Regional Council (similar to 110(12)). (RC)	Suggested policy Provide to Regional Council no less frequently than every two years a State of Natural Heritage System in <i>Halton</i> report that contains, among other things: a) the area of the natural heritage system and statistics of natural land cover by type; b) the ecological integrity of the NHS, c) the number of applications triggering environmental studies and the instances where such studies have been required or waived (per 118(3)a), d) refinements to the NHS supported through approved environmental studies, e) progress of all enhancement linkage, buffer restoration works, including the total area of restoration works,	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

		<p>f) the number of stewardship projects completed across the Region and the biodiversity benefits provided</p> <p>g) etc. (RC)</p>	
G.11	Include a strategic policy that encourages the Region to continue to support and participate in the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System initiative. (RC)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.12	Include a strategic policy that encourages the Region to develop and adopt a Stewardship Funding Program to work in cooperation with other public agencies (such as Conservation Authorities) to promote private and public land stewardship in the NHS. (RC)		Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.13	Include a strategic policy that encourages the Region to develop and implement a tool for monitoring the effectiveness of NHS policy implementation. This tool could use information from natural heritage monitoring conducted in support of development applications, input into a database to support NHS policy effectiveness monitoring. (JE – from draft State of the NHS Report).	<p>Extensive development has recently taken place, is underway, or is planned across the Region. Through the development approval process, the NHS is subject to study and ultimately protected through various mitigation measures including the preservation of buffers which is a component of the NHS to ensure development is setback from key features and watercourses. In post-development, monitoring of the NHS by the developers' consultants is often required for a number of years. The development approval process presents an opportunity to create a program to assess the effectiveness of policy implementation in protecting the NHS.</p> <p>A program could be designed to answer include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is 50% of the Region being maintained in NHS as per the Strategic Action Plan? • Are the Environmental Impact Assessment policy triggers adequate? • Are the buffers and other mitigation measures implemented functioning as intended to effectively mitigate impacts? • Are ecological communities and/or species abundance or richness changing over time? <p>The program would need to develop specific monitoring activities/protocols/metrics and standardized data formats and ensure that the monitoring activities/protocols/standards are included in the approved post-development monitoring plans. Staff would need to work with the developers' consultants undertaking the post-development monitoring to obtain the data/results for assessment. Future iterations of this report could benefit from effectiveness assessments.</p>	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.
G.14	Include a strategic policy that encourages the Region to develop and implement a natural heritage system inventory and monitoring program. (JE – from draft State of the NHS Report).	A Natural Heritage System Inventory and Monitoring Program could ensure that natural heritage inventories/studies are undertaken, updated, and maintained. The last study of this kind was the Halton Natural Areas Inventory prepared in 2006. This study was a	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.

		<p>collaboration among Halton Region, Conservation Halton, and three naturalist clubs, provided comprehensive information on the biodiversity of natural areas in the Region. At 12 years old, the study requires updating. Further, areas not previously included such as the Lake Ontario shoreline could be added.</p> <p>The program could also ensure that monitoring and reporting on the health of the NHS is performed. This inaugural SHNHSR assessed physical, biological, and landscape ecology indicators and completed a best practices review of the Region's NHS protection and enhancement policy. In addition to the provision of various opportunities for improvement, the report serves as a baseline or reference point against which future reports can be assessed. As discussed in the Introduction, the report stemmed from the 2015-2018 Halton Region Strategic Action Plan. Establishing a program would ensure that future iterations of the report are completed. Further, this would provide support for assessing the effectiveness of NHS Policy Implementation as outlined above.</p>	
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<p>G.15</p>	<p>We should consider DFO Recommended Guidance for Aquatic Species at Risk Protection in Official Plans, March 29, 2018. (RC)</p>	 <p>March 29, 2018</p> <p>ATTENTION: Planning Department Personnel</p> <p>Subject: Consideration of Federal Aquatic Species at Risk in Municipal Official Plans</p> <p>Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is seeking your support in recognizing the need to consider <u>federal</u> aquatic species at risk (fishes and mussels) protection within your municipal planning documents. Recognizing that the Federal <i>Species at Risk Act</i> (SARA) has been in place since 2003, this does not impose any new legislative requirements. Such planning direction would simply add clarity early in the development approvals process by highlighting processes that are already in place, prevent unexpected delays for proponents, and will ensure that municipal activities and those of stakeholders are in compliance with federal legislation. Until recently, specific guidance on the need to proactively address aquatic species listed under the federal SARA and their habitats, within municipal official plans, has not been available.</p> <p>As you are aware, under the current <i>Provincial Policy Statement</i> (2014) and the <i>Natural Heritage Reference Manual</i> (2010¹), municipalities are required to consider provincial and federal interests such as protection of species at risk and their habitats. While these are identified specifically as species listed as endangered or threatened under the provincial <i>Endangered Species Act, 2007</i> (ESA), in fact, most of the aquatic species listed under the ESA are also listed under SARA, and therefore receive protection under both acts. DFO and provincial counterparts continue to work towards a coordinated planning and regulatory approach where both federal and provincial species at risk have been identified.</p> <p>DFO has prepared the guidance offered in Annex 1 (attached) for incorporation into official plans, as they are being updated in Ontario. This information will ensure that project proponents are aware of the need to comply with SARA requirements early in the planning process (including any potential permitting requirements). In developing this guidance, the proposed approach was reviewed with staff from the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment Canada, Conservation Ontario, and a number of municipalities in the process of updating their official plans at the time.</p> <p>Recent examples of how this guidance has been adopted appear within official plans for the City of Kingston, the City of London and Chatham-Kent.</p> <p>For further clarification, please contact Shawn Staton (by email shawn.staton@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or phone 905-315-5275) or Shelly Dunn (by email shelly.dunn@dfo-mpo.gc.ca or phone 905-336-6234), DFO Species at Risk Program, in our Burlington, Ontario office. Should you require any additional information to adopt this approach we would be happy to assist you.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>  <p>Martyn Curtis Regional Manager, Species at Risk Program Fisheries and Oceans Canada T: (204) 983-4223/ F: (204) 983-7983 E-mail: martyn.curtis@dfo-mpo.gc.ca</p> <p>Copy: Shawn Staton, A/Species at Risk Team Leader, DFO Shelly Dunn, Species at Risk Biologist, DFO Victor Doyle and Corby Chapin, MMAH</p> <p>Attachment (1) ANNEX 1: DFO's Recommended Guidance for Aquatic Species at Risk Protection in Official Plans</p>	<p>Annex 1: Recommended Guidance for Aquatic Species at Risk Protection</p> <p>Fisheries and Oceans Canada Recommended Guidance for Aquatic Species at Risk Protection in Official Plans</p> <p>The following guidance is recommended by Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to address federal <i>Species at Risk Act</i> (SARA) requirements for aquatic species at risk (fishes and mussels) protection, including waters supporting aquatic species at risk, their residences and critical habitat, within municipal official planning documents as they are being updated in Ontario. It is understood that the specific wording and placement of such policy direction will vary somewhat by municipality, but it is hoped that the intent of the recommended approach will be captured, and that consistency can be maintained to the degree possible.</p> <p>To understand where this guidance applies to aquatic (fish and mussel) species at risk within your municipality, please access relevant screening maps noted in #2 below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Natural Heritage features and areas should be recognized to include: "Waters supporting aquatic species at risk (fishes and mussels) listed in <i>Schedule 1</i>, the list of officially protected wildlife under the federal <i>Species at Risk Act</i> (SARA), their residences and critical habitats". 2. Proponents should be advised to determine the location of such waters and habitats "As identified on Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) aquatic species at risk distribution and critical habitat maps, available on the DFO website at http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/species-especes/fpp-ppw/index-eng.htm and in species-specific recovery documents available on the Species at Risk Public Registry at www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=24F72118-1 (advanced search for species)." Recognizing that the DFO maps are updated regularly to reflect any changes in species' status, distribution, residences or critical habitat, the municipality can choose whether or not to include such features/areas on its Natural Heritage maps. 3. Municipal plan policy direction for such waters and habitat areas should include a statement such as: "In accordance with federal requirements, development proponents are advised to demonstrate through an environmental impact study/assessment that (a) all reasonable alternatives have been considered to reduce and minimize impacts to natural heritage features and ecological functions, and the best solution has been adopted; (b) the proposed development and site alteration activities will not jeopardize the survival, recovery and conservation of species at risk protected in Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act, including their residences and critical habitat". 4. Policy direction should also include a statement that "Item 3 also applies if there may be potential impacts that would contravene the federal SARA from activities occurring in areas adjacent to the boundary of such waters, residences or critical habitats". 5. Policy direction and any municipal guideline documents should indicate that "Any Environmental Impact Study (or Assessment) for such waters or habitats should be developed in consultation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and indicate how the project will be carried out to remain in compliance with the Species at Risk Act (for example, by modifying the project to avoid impact, applying appropriate mitigation, or acquiring a SARA permit to carry out the activities, etc.)".¹
<p>G.16</p>	<p>Buffer framework</p>	<p>The Region has developed an "informal guideline" that outlines a process for determining buffers. It is called "Framework of Regional Natural Heritage System Buffer Width Refinements for Area-Specific Planning". It was finalized in February 2017, I think by Planning, but I do not know if it ever when through Council (the formal Guidelines do go through Council), so its status is a bit uncertain to me. Staff encourage applicants to use this Framework, but more than that, it tends to be used as a standard that needs to be met, albeit it is a "soft" standard. I believe the expectation is that it will be incorporated into</p>	<p>Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.</p>

		the EIA Guidelines, in which case it will assume whatever status they have, but we ought to clarify this so that if it is not brought into the EIA Guidelines, it is accounted for somewhere in policy.	
G.17	NHS Definition & Implementation, Sustainable Halton Report 3.02	Staff consistently suggest that development applicants use this report to guide them in the refinement of the RNHS when undertaking site-specific studies (Sub-watershed studies, EIAs, etc.). As with the Buffer Framework it tends to be applied as a “soft” standard. I have some problems with this in the first place as we did not write that report with that intent in mind, but agree it does contain some useful guidance. The issue is that there is no policy that provides any direction on its use. It is referenced in the EIA Guidelines, which provides some quotes from it, so is indirectly referred to in a formal guideline, but it is not very clear on how or if it should be used in the refinement of the RNHS. I agree that the development application process would benefit from some clear guidance on how the NHS should be refined. Rather than keep referring back to the D&I Report, I think the relevant guidance should be drawn from it, refined, and incorporated into revised EIA Guidelines. As for the Framework, this would resolve the issue. Otherwise, if the Region does not do this and staff continue to want applications to use the D&I Report for guidance, it should be mentioned in policy.	Included in Policy Audit Technical Memo for consideration.