



INDICATOR: NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES WITH NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS PLANS/BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES

STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Enhance Resilience

TARGET: 12. By 2015, natural heritage systems plans and biodiversity conservation strategies are developed and implemented at the municipal and landscape scales.

THEME: Conservation Response

Background Information:

Buildings, roads, parking lots and other urban developments typically degrade and fragment natural areas (Johnson and Klemens 2005). Natural heritage system planning is a strategic approach to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity in settled landscapes. A natural heritage system is made up of features and areas, connected by corridors/linkages which are necessary to maintain biological and geological diversity, natural functions, viable populations of native species and ecosystems (OMMAH 2014).

Ontario's land use planning system consists of a wide range of legislation, policies and plans (Table 1). The Planning Act and Provincial Policy Statement provide overarching policy direction on land use planning in Ontario. Municipalities use this policy direction to develop their Official Plans and guide and inform policies at the local level (e.g., zoning by-laws, development applications, etc.). Geography-specific legislation and provincial plans such as the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, the Greenbelt Plan, the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan provide an additional level of policy direction for municipal planning within these regions. Landscape conservation plans developed by various conservation organizations and partners also provide support for natural heritage planning in the province. Together these plans include an area that covers most of the Mixedwood Plains Ecozone and portions of the Ontario Shield Ecozone.

Table 1. Overview of Ontario's Land Use Planning System.

Land Use Planning Legislation
Planning Act
Greenbelt Act, 2005
Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act
Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001
Lake Simcoe Protection Act, 2008
Places to Grow Act
Public Lands Act
Far North Act, 2010
Land Use Planning Direction and Land Use Plans
Provincial Policy Statement 2014
Greenbelt Plan, 2005
Niagara Escarpment Plan
Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan, 2002
Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Growth Plan for Northern Ontario



Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, 2009
Community-Based Land Use Plans under the Far North Act, 2010 (Whitefeather Forest Land Use Strategy, Cat Lake-Slate Falls Community Based Land Use Plan, Pauingassi Community Based Land Use Plan, Little Grand Rapids Community Based Land Use Plan)
Landscape Conservation Plans
Conservation Blueprints (Great Lakes, Superior Mixed Forest) (The Nature Conservancy Canada)
Original Big Picture, Big Picture 2002 (Carolinian Canada)
Greenway Program (Ontario Nature)
Biosphere Reserves (Niagara Escarpment, Long Point, Georgian Bay, Frontenac Arch) (UNESCO)
Conservation Authority Natural Heritage Strategies (Various conservation authorities)
Great Lakes Biodiversity Strategies (The Nature Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy Canada)
Algonquin to Adirondack Collaborative (various partners)

This indicator assesses trends in the number of Municipal Official Plans that identify natural heritage systems and associated features and areas, and include policies to protect these features and areas. The policies include those protecting the diversity and connectivity of natural heritage features and areas, and the maintenance or improvement of ecological function and biodiversity.

Data Analysis:

This indicator was adapted from the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005: Performance Monitoring Framework and Indicator Results (OMMAH 2014). Data for this indicator were obtained by reviewing a representative cross-section of 40 Municipal Official plans selected from all areas of Ontario. A range of single-tier, upper-tier and lower tier municipalities, as well as planning boards in northern Ontario, were included in the analysis. Care was taken to ensure that large, small, urban and rural municipalities from all regions of the province were also included in the analysis. To capture changes in Municipal Official Plans, the same sample was used in both 2009 and 2013.

Data for this indicator reflect direction provided in the Provincial Policy Statement, 2005. The Provincial Policy Statement was updated in 2014 following extensive public review. The revised Provincial Policy Statement now requires identification of natural heritage systems in the Mixedwood Plains Ecozone (ecoregions 6E and 7E).

Criteria for determining whether a municipality had policies that formally identified and protected natural heritage systems was necessarily broad, as prior to 2014, municipalities in Ontario were not required to identify and protect in policy natural heritage systems. As such, municipal official plans vary in how they identify and protect natural heritage systems.

Results:

Trend: Improvement **Data Confidence:** Medium **Geographic Extent:** Provincial

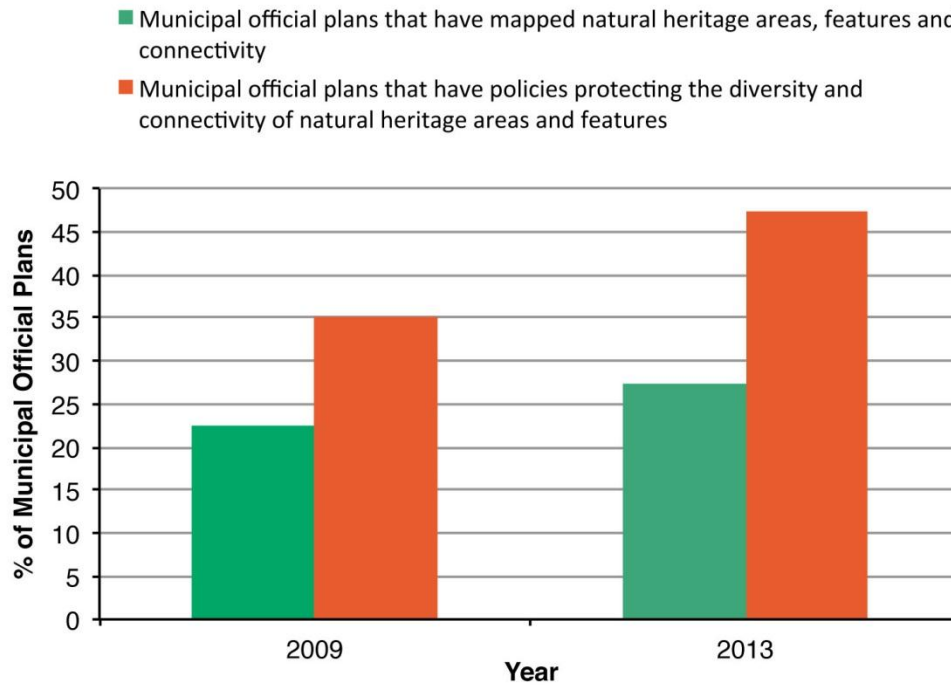


Figure 1. Change in the number of Municipal Official Plans that identify natural heritage features and areas, and incorporate related policy into to their Municipal Official Plans.

Status:

- The percentage of Municipal Official Plans that formally identify and protect natural heritage features and connectivity is low (< 50%).
- Between 2009 and 2013 the percentage of Municipal Official Plans that had mapped natural heritage features and areas and identified existing and potential linkages increased slightly from 22.5% to 27.5%.
- Between 2009 and 2013 the percentage of Municipal Official Plans that had policies protecting the diversity and connectivity of natural heritage features and areas increased from 35% to 47.5%.

Links:

Related Targets: N/A

Related Themes: N/A

Web Links:

Provincial Policy Statement, 2005: Performance Monitoring Framework and Indicator Results
<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page9100.aspx>

Provincial Policy Statement 2014 <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page10679.aspx>



References:

- Johnson, A.E., and M.W. Klemens. 2005. The impacts of sprawl on biodiversity. *In* E.A. Johnson and M.W. Klemens (Eds). *Nature in fragments: the legacy of sprawl*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (OMMAH). 2005. Provincial Policy Statement. Queen's Printer for Ontario, Toronto, ON. [Available: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page1485.aspx>]
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- Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Provincial Planning Policy Branch (OMMAH). 2014. Provincial Policy Statement, 2005: performance monitoring framework and indicator results. Queen's Printer for Ontario, Toronto, ON. [Available: <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page9100.aspx>]

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