

# Chatham-Kent Natural Heritage Implementation Strategy (NHIS) Status Report

## Introduction:

On July 3, 2014 the Municipality of Chatham-Kent council approved the 29 implementation recommendations of the Chatham-Kent Natural Heritage Strategy. The Natural Heritage Sustainability Committee was created to provide a wide range of input into the implementation of the Chatham-Kent Natural Heritage Strategy. Over the last 7 years many (16) of the recommendations have been implemented. Additionally, 3 recommendations were partially implemented, 2 have been initiated or are under way, 1 recommendation had previously been implemented and 7 recommendations have not been implemented. A summary of the implementation recommendations and their status follows. Note that the numbering of the recommendations follows that found in the original strategy.

1. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In the 2015 budget, the Municipality increase the Greening Partnership funding by an additional \$160,000/year to enable the Conservation Authority to hire two additional staff members responsible for land stewardship and GIS. This investment will enable the Greening Partnership to access additional funding opportunities, work with more landowners to educate them on the benefits of existing natural heritage features on their property as well as the benefits of, and opportunities for, enhancing those natural heritage features.

### **Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** Since additional funding was added to the Greening Partnership Budget; LTVCA has been able to acquire 8.1M in additional funding to support land stewardship initiatives. In other words, for every \$2.70 invested by the Municipality for natural heritage services the LTVCA is leveraging an additional \$3.86 for the community.

2. **Recommended Implementation Action** – By the end of 2014, the Municipality and the Greening Partnership will approach the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus to initiate discussions to provide opportunities for 3rd or 4th year students, or recent graduates, to participate in the implementation of the Greening Partnership program either through a co-op placement or other option agreeable to the University, Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority and Municipality.

### **Status: Implemented**

3. **Recommended Implementation Action** – By the end of 2015, the Greening Partnership and Chatham-Kent investigate opportunities to create a Carbon Offset program to enhance funding and educational opportunities. Collaboration with the

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority may result in cost savings that should be pursued.

**Status: Partially Implemented**

**Notes:** LTVCA continues to seek out creative methods and programs that enhance funding and projects. One such example is the recent Nature Smart Climate Solutions announcement of \$9 million dollars of which LTVCA provided input and will receive a portion of for land stewardship projects.

4. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2015, the Greening Partnership create an additional landowner recognition award category that acknowledges a landowner that has maintained a woodland on their property that is greater than 2 ha to emphasize the importance of maintaining these larger features on the landscape.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** Several awards have been given out during our AGM since 2014 and can be viewed within our annual report.

5. **Recommended Implementation Action** – The Municipality continue to fund the contract position for the Registered Professional Forester to provide advice and assistance to rural landowners with respect to good forestry management practices and woodlot assessments. The Municipality and LTVCA should also explore opportunities for merging the forester into the Greening Partnership portfolio in order to have all woodland and stewardship related efforts under the same management.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** This contract still stands for landowners to complete management plans and is financially supported by Chatham-Kent.

6. **Recommended Implementation Action-** Council approve the creation of the Natural Heritage Sustainability Committee and that the Committee report to Council at least once per year. The Natural Heritage Sustainability Committee will elect a Chair who will be responsible for preparing the annual report to Council and who will also be a member of the Sustainability Review Team which will be established pursuant to Policy 6.5.2.4 of the Official Plan.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** Chatham-Kent's Official Plan sets out policies for when an EIS or scoped EIS is required to support a development proposal. Given that the vast majority of development applications are within urban areas, there have only been a few occasions where an EIS has been required.

7. **Recommended Implementation Action** – By Spring 2015, the Municipality will create a natural heritage database that will incorporate municipal data as well as data layers from their partner agencies and those non-profit organizations, such as Carolinian Canada,

that would like to participate. The purpose of the database, from a natural heritage perspective, is to create the most up-to-date picture of the natural heritage landscape in Chatham-Kent and to identify priority sites for restoration and stewardship initiatives. The Sustainability Committee will be responsible for overseeing the creation of the natural heritage component of the database, any associated data sharing agreements and reporting to Council upon its completion.

**Status: Initiated**

**Notes:** Many elements created at the municipality and local conservation authorities – elements will be brought together as part of the Official Plan update.

8. **Recommended Implementation Action** – The Municipality add a standard condition of approval to all planning applications that involved an Environmental Impact Study requiring the proponent to submit digital data sheets for incorporation into the natural heritage database and that applicants be advised of this requirement at the pre-consultation meeting.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** Chatham-Kent's Official Plan sets out policies for when an EIS or scoped EIS is required to support a development proposal. Given that the vast majority of development applications are within urban areas, there have only been a few occasions where an EIS has been required.

9. **Recommended Implementation Action** – Prior to the next Official Plan Review, Chatham-Kent will work with their local partners, including LVTCA, SCRCA and Carolinian Canada Coalition as well as the community to identify and protect a natural heritage system through the creation of a shared natural heritage database, an update to the Natural Heritage Inventory and the creation of a Natural Heritage Master Plan. The Master Plan will be incorporated into the next Official Plan Review and will include an update to Schedule C. The Sustainability Committee will be responsible for identifying roles and responsibilities associated with this process and will provide updates to the Sustainability Review Team on a regular basis.

**Status: Not Implemented**

10. **Recommended Implementation Action** – By the end of 2014, the Municipality will create a page on their website dedicated to natural heritage, conservation and stewardship efforts. The web page will provide information on funding opportunities, education, available programs, events and volunteer opportunities. The page will also highlight and celebrate the success of local stewards. The Municipality will encourage their partners to provide a link to the webpage on their individual websites. The Sustainability Committee will be responsible for overseeing the creation of this webpage and reporting to Council upon its completion.

**Status: Previously Implemented**

**Notes:** Municipal staff had previously created a page on the Municipal website to showcase environmental stewardship activities in the community. However the page is no longer available on the [www.chatham-kent.ca](http://www.chatham-kent.ca) website.

11. **Recommended Implementation Action** – By Spring 2015, the Municipality, in cooperation with the Greening Partnership and Carolinian Canada, will prepare at least one short video highlighting a successful restoration project in Chatham-Kent and post this video to the City's YouTube page. A link to this video should be made available on the City's website Home Page banner for maximum exposure.

**Status:** Implemented

**Notes:** LTVCA continues to provide videos of projects, in 2020 several videos that highlighted on the ground work in Chatham-Kent were shown at the Galaxy Movie Theatre in Chatham before each movie showing.

12. **Recommended Implementation Action** – By Winter 2014, the Municipality will create an e-newsletter dedicated to natural heritage, conservation and stewardship programs, events and volunteer opportunities. The option to subscribe to this e-newsletter will be included on the "Subscription Details" webpage on the City's website. Through the Sustainability Committee, it will be determined which agency, or agencies, are responsible for inputting the information into the newsletter. The e-newsletter will automatically be sent to Council and all Chatham-Kent staff.

**Status:** Implemented

**Notes:** A newsletter was produced and distributed a few times over the first couple of years. LTVCA continues to do ongoing reporting on these topics through their networks as media consumption evolves.

13. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2014, Council will invite the LTVCA and the SCRCA to attend at least one Community Development Forum to present their Watershed Report Cards and/or to provide an update on the Greening Partnership initiatives and other CA programs that each CA has undertaken in the past year and to highlight areas where attention is needed in order to initiate continued positive change on the landscape. This will be an annual standing invitation to the CAs.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

**Notes:** Some updates have been provided to Council but not on an annual basis.

14. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2014, the Greening Partnership will present their annual report and the Greening Partnership Environmental Awards at a Community Development Forum meeting in conjunction with the annual watershed update. This will become an annual event.

**Status:** Implemented

**Notes:** Awards have been presented every year since 2014 at the LTVCA AGM in February. Awards are given in two or three categories:

1. Most involved school in environmental initiative
2. Most devoted landowner to land restoration

3. Most involved business/contributor to community environmental programming.

15. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2014, Carolinian Canada will be invited to give a presentation at a Community Development Forum to provide an overview of the Conservation Action Plans, the work that has been completed to date and to highlight areas where attention is needed in order to initiate continued positive change on the landscape. This will become an annual event.

**Status: Not Implemented**

16. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2014, Council will show their support for, and interest in, natural heritage conservation and restoration efforts by participating in an annual bus tour of stewardship sites. This will become an annual event and could be combined with a Community Development Forum meeting date in order to maximize efficiencies and to ensure availability.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** At least one and sometimes two LTVCA bus tours were held annually up until Covid-19. Municipal Council and staff were invited to these tours.

17. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2014, each Council member should participate in at least one habitat creation event hosted by the Greening Partnership and/or Carolinian Canada. Staff will provide Council with regular updates on scheduled events such that Council is aware of the date, time and location of each event. The municipality will publicize Council's attendance at these events on the Chatham-Kent Conservation Collaboration webpage.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** LTVCA continues to host events, self-guided tours and workshops. Invitations are sent to Chatham-Kent staff and Council.

18. **Recommended Implementation Action** – Prior to the end of 2014, the GIS Department will prepare a property information layer that identifies all municipally and publicly owned properties in Chatham-Kent. This layer will be utilized to identify publicly owned lands that would be suitable for tree planting. This information will be made available on the shared database and used to prioritize tree planting efforts.

**Status: Initiated**

**Notes:** LTVCA and CK staff have met to review potential municipal properties for planting.

19. **Recommended Implementation Action** – Prior to Spring 2015, the Manager, Parks, Cemeteries and Horticulture will, through the use of the enhanced database, identify one cemetery, preferably within an Erie-Rondeau Coast CAP priority restoration area, that has the capacity to accommodate a minimum 1ha tall grass prairie habitat creation. The Manager will work with the Greening Partnership and CCC to identify funding partners and potential volunteers that could participate in the creation of the habitat. The

Manager, Parks, Cemeteries and Horticulture will report to Council in Winter 2015 to provide an update on the status of the site selection and funding acquisition.

**Status: Implemented**

20. **Recommended Implementation Action** – Staff of the Parks, Cemeteries and Horticulture Department will work with the Greening Partnership staff and CCC to identify the location of the first 0.5ha of prairie habitat to be planted along the CASO Trail in the fall of 2014. The prairie habitat will be at least 10m wide. The site selection must take into account the ultimate goal of ten contiguous hectares of prairie habitat.

**Status: Not Implemented**

**Notes:** The Municipality has completed a natural heritage study of the CASO trail that is used to plan trail development activities. The Municipality's easement on the CASO trail is 3 meters wide and spans from Communications Road to MacPherson Line (32kms in length). Although no tall grass prairie has been planted along the CASO line as of yet, many tall grass prairie restorations occur throughout the Municipality.

21. **Recommended Implementation Action** – At the end of 2014, and every year thereafter, the Sustainability Review Team will prepare a report to Council outlining the KPI monitoring results.

**Status: Not Implemented**

22. **Recommended Implementation Strategy** – In 2014 the Sustainability Review Team will meet with their respective divisions/departments and prepare a summary report, to be presented to Council that identifies specific actions, programs or policies within their operation that could be used and/or revised to assist the municipality's efforts to enhance natural heritage cover. The summary report will be presented to Council in Spring 2015.

**Status: Not Implemented**

**Notes:** This Report marks the first time the implementation status of the NHIS has been communicated in its entirety.

23. **Recommended Implementation Strategy** – in 2014 the Manager Roads Department, Drainage Superintendent, Manager Parks, Cemeteries and Horticulture, Greening Partnership, the Conservation Authorities and CCC will cooperatively develop a Best Management Practices Guide for drain maintenance with the goal of improving riparian habitat and minimizing impacts to reptile and turtle habitat while still maintaining the necessary drainage requirements. The Best Management Practices Guide will be completed by Spring 2015 with training sessions provided to all staff responsible for design, review and implementation of drain maintenance by Summer 2015.

**Status: Implemented**

**Notes:** A BMP Guide (Drainage Act and Conservation Authorities Act Protocol) was developed provincially with Conservation Authorities. A BMP guide was developed federally with DFO regarding fisheries protection, a thorough mitigation plan was completed in partnership with Dillon Consulting to address protection of Species at Risk and a permanent full-time position was created and filled to assist with implementing and improving best management practices.

24. **Recommended Implementation Action** - In cooperation with the LTVCA and the SCRCA, Chatham-Kent will create landscaping guidelines and tree protection guidelines to be used in development review as well as in municipal projects to increase the canopy cover within the municipality and to minimize damage during the construction phase. Draft guidelines will be prepared by Summer 2015 with a final guideline available in Winter 2015. Upon approval of the guidelines, a training session will be hosted by the municipality in early 2016 to update the development industry and their consultants on the requirements of the guidelines. In addition, these guidelines will be added to the municipality's list of complete application requirements.

**Status:** Not Implemented

25. **Recommended Implementation Action** – Continue to support the School Tree Planting Programs through enhanced funding of the Greening Partnership.

**Status:** Implemented

**Notes:** LTVCA continues to work closely with schools, planting on school grounds as well as providing seedlings to students and the general public.

26. **Recommended Implementation Action** – in 2015, the Roads, Parks, Cemeteries and Horticulture and Planning Departments will investigate the feasibility of implementing a Street Tree Planting Program that provides one tree per household, at no cost to the landowner, within the municipal right-of-way. Funding requirements will be determined and funding sources identified by this team with the expectation that funding will rely on existing or future grants and will not rely on the tax base. Assistance from the Greening Partnership will be requested in terms of sourcing funds if necessary.

**Status:** Partially Implemented

**Notes:** The Municipality's development standards, approved in 2020, require that a new street tree be planted and funded by the developer for every residential unit approved for construction. LTVCA has been working with Maple City Homes and the CK Association of Realtors to offer trees to homeowners.

27. **Recommended Implementation Act** – In 2015, the Managers of the Roads, Parks, Cemeteries and Horticulture and Planning Departments and the Greening Partnership will collectively approach the University of Guelph Ridgetown Campus to determine if there would be opportunities to combine a Street Tree Planting Program with the horticulture programs offered at the University.

**Status:** Implemented

**Notes:** Discussions between Municipal and University of Guelph staff were held.

28. **Recommended Implementation Action** - In Spring 2015, the Managers will report to Council with respect to the feasibility, cost, funding sources and partnership potential for a Street Tree Planting Program.

**Status:** Not Implemented

**Notes:** LTVCA has offered free tree programs in the past, and continue to do so when grant money is available to cover the costs. LTVCA has also have planted many trees on streets and roadways with approval from the Infrastructure and Engineering Services department.

29. **Recommended Implementation Action** – In 2015, the Greening Partnership and CCC implement a landowner recognition program whereby all participating landowners are offered the opportunity to have their actions recognized through the installation of a small sign at the front of their property. Previous participants should be approached to determine whether their restoration efforts remain on the landscape and, if so, be offered an opportunity to participate in the recognition program too. Funding for these signs should be incorporated into future grant proposals.

**Status:** Implemented

**Notes:** Signs are designed, purchased and ready to be installed whenever a landowner is willing to do so. Many are already installed and can be seen throughout the watershed.

## **Impact:**

Since inception of the NHIS, the LTVCA has developed programming to include a more agriculturally-focused element, created a Species at Risk element, and enhanced incentives to landowners to include Wetland, Prairie/buffers, Cover Crops, soil sampling, and other agriculture related items to go along with Tree Planting initiatives. LTVCA's urban tree programs have also been enhanced with partnerships with the CK Public Health and Schools, CK Association of Realtors, Developers, and Community Volunteer groups. This work continues currently. In addition to LTVCA award recognition, Carolinian Canada offers a Landowner Leaders program and an online database called "In the Zone" to recognize landowners and their efforts while tracking project sites and community impact. Signs are awarded and offered for any enrollment listed above.