

Staff Report



To **Committee of the Whole**

Service Area Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services

Date Monday, March 6, 2017

Subject **Natural Heritage Action Plan (NHAP) Project Initiation**

Report Number IDE 17-25

Recommendation

1. That the Natural Heritage Action Plan project charter attached to Infrastructure, Development & Enterprise Services Report (IDE 17-25), dated March 6, 2017 be approved.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with information about the Natural Heritage Action Plan, to seek Council endorsement of the project charter, and to formally initiate the project.

Key Findings

The Natural Heritage Action Plan will create an implementation framework for Official Plan policies regarding the natural heritage system and watershed planning. This will include the identification and development of recommendations, strategies and guidelines that would assist staff to maintain, enhance and restore natural heritage, surface water and ground water features within the City.

Financial Implications

Funding is not required for the development of the Natural Heritage Action Plan. The action plan is being prepared by City staff and using existing resources.

Report

The Natural Heritage Strategy and Official Plan Amendment 42 established the vision and policy framework for protecting the City's natural heritage features and areas

In 2010 the City completed its natural heritage strategy which provided the technical basis and background for the development of a new comprehensive set of policies intended to update the City's Official Plan. This update became Official Plan

Amendment 42 (OPA 42) and provided a new set of natural heritage system policies for the City. OPA 42 was adopted by Council on July 27, 2010 and was approved by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on February 22, 2011. On June 4, 2014 OPA 42 was subsequently approved by the Ontario Municipal Board bringing **the natural heritage system policies into force and effect as part of the City's Official Plan.**

The policies contained in the Official Plan establish the requirements for protecting what is valuable

Roughly one fifth of the City is comprised of natural spaces and features that are a **part of the City's natural heritage system (NHS).**

The City's commitment to maintain, enhance and restore its NHS includes an environment first approach to ensure the integrity of the system is not compromised. The natural heritage system contributes to enhancing the quality of life within the city by preserving the integrity of a wide range of natural features and ecological services, while also providing natural and open spaces for leisure activities and enjoyment opportunities for residents and visitors.

The City's NHS is made up of a combination of natural heritage features and areas, including:

- Significant Wetlands and Other Wetlands;
- Significant Woodlands and Cultural Woodlands;
- Significant Valleylands;
- Significant Wildlife Habitats, including Ecological Linkages, and Habitats for (locally) Significant Species;
- Habitats of Endangered and Threatened Species;
- Significant Landform;
- Restoration Areas; and
- Wildlife crossings.

Together, these elements represent the city's natural assets including its biological, hydrological and geological diversity, ecological and hydrologic functions and connectivity which in turn support populations of indigenous species and sustain local biodiversity. Attachment 1 includes a copy of schedule 10 from the City's official plan showing the NHS.

As part of City's Official Plan policies aimed at maintaining, enhancing and restoring the NHS, there are requirements for additional studies, tools and resources needed to fulfil the vision and objectives for the NHS.

Watersheds are the most important scale for protecting the quantity and quality of water

The Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 placed renewed emphasis on the use of watershed planning as the basis for ecological and water resource related decision making. Changes proposed to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe have also provided additional direction on the need to integrate subwatershed

planning into community planning for secondary plans and master planning exercises for infrastructure including water, waste water and stormwater management. **This supports and aligns with the City's Natural Heritage System and Water Resource policies in the Official Plan. The City's water resource policies were recently reviewed and updated through Official Plan Amendment 48 which is currently before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).**

The City includes lands within 8 subwatersheds that are part of the broader Grand River Watershed. Subwatershed studies have been completed historically for some of these subwatersheds, typically in partnership with the GRCA and in advance of development occurring. A summary of the status of existing subwatershed studies along with a map of the subwatersheds within the City is included in Attachment 1.

Subwatershed studies set goals and objectives based on local needs. They are used to identify and assess streams, wetlands, forests, groundwater recharge areas, and other features. They can include inventories and long term monitoring stations for plants, animals, birds and other species, as well as information on stream flows, flood control and erosion, water quality, groundwater movement and other water resource features.

Subwatershed studies include recommendations and targets to protect, improve and restore water quality and quantity as well as establish specific criteria and actions for development, for water and wastewater servicing, for stormwater management and to support ecological needs. These studies need to be reviewed and updated from time to time as areas change and development or redevelopment occurs and incorporated into municipal master plan exercises and community plans.

The watershed planning and water resource policies of the Official Plan set out requirements and objectives based on a commitment to use subwatershed studies for the purposes outlined above. The Province has also indicated that it will be providing guidance around subwatershed study requirements by 2018 to assist municipalities with this task.

The Natural Heritage Action Plan (NHAP) will create an implementation framework for the City's Official Plan policies regarding the natural heritage system and watershed planning.

The NHAP will include the identification and development of recommendations, studies and guidelines to assist staff in maintaining enhancing and restoring natural heritage, surface water and ground water features within the City.

This is also anticipated to identify and inform continuous improvement opportunities for development review functions that deal with environmental planning requirements.

Development of a Project Charter

A project charter has been prepared and is included as attachment 2. This charter outlines the goal of the NHAP to identify and prioritize the development of additional resources (studies, guidelines and implementation tools) and recommendations which serve to implement the policies and objectives found within the Official Plan. One example of an existing guideline is the [Draft Guidelines for the Preparation of Environmental Impact Studies](#) (EISs) available on Guelph.ca. This resource provides greater clarity around the requirements for environmental studies being prepared as part of development applications.

The NHAP will assist staff in monitoring and assessing the overall state of the natural heritage features, biodiversity, surface water and ground water features in the City. As well as supporting the conservation, restoration and enhancement of natural spaces through utilization and implementation of the policies of the Official Plan and based on current scientific practice and principles.

The scope of the action plan (as set out in the project charter) includes:

- Identifying and developing studies, guidelines and tools to maintain, enhance **and restore the City's natural heritage system, surface water and groundwater** features;
- Establishing direction on the development of guidelines and manuals to support continuous improvement within development review processes (i.e. Environmental Implementation Report Guidelines);
- Promoting public awareness of the conservation of natural heritage features and areas, surface water and groundwater features;
- Establishing direction and prioritizing the review and update of subwatershed studies;
- Reviewing models for community engagement in natural heritage action plan implementation. This will include looking at existing Council appointed advisory committees that contribute to the implementation of **the City's NHS and water** resource policies; and,
- Providing direction and guidance on the identification and methods to measure progress, successes and opportunities in the implementation of the policies.

The scope does not include:

- Reviewing/updating the Official Plan policies (i.e. NHS policies, Open Space: parks and trails policies) and/or zoning by-law regulations
- **Reviewing/updating the City's urban forest** management plan
- **Development and implementation of the City's tree technical manual**
- Updates to the Source Water Protection Plan and Assessment Report for the Grand River Watershed
- Reviewing or updating City Trail Master Plan

Next Steps

Staff will be proceeding with the development of the communication and engagement plan to support the project and completion of the background review/ environmental scan to confirm a more detailed scope for the NHAP building from the project charter.

Once a final draft of the NHAP has been prepared and compiled a further staff report will be prepared and brought back for the consideration of Council. This will include a detailed framework that will identify future projects, budget and resource implications and proposed timing. It will also note any projects that were identified but determined to not be a priority at this time. This report is anticipated to be brought forward to Council by Q1 of 2018.

Financial Implications

None Applicable

Consultations

Not Applicable

Corporate Administrative Plan

Overarching Goals

Service Excellence
Innovation

Service Area Operational Work Plans

Our People- Building a great community together
Our Resources - A solid foundation for a growing city
Our Services - Municipal services that make lives better.

Attachments

ATT- 1	Official Plan Schedule 10 – Natural Heritage System
ATT-2	Summary of Subwatershed Studies and Map of Subwatershed in Guelph
ATT-3	Natural Heritage Action Plan Project Charter

Departmental Approval

Not Applicable

Report Authors

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Approved by

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and Urban Design



Approved By

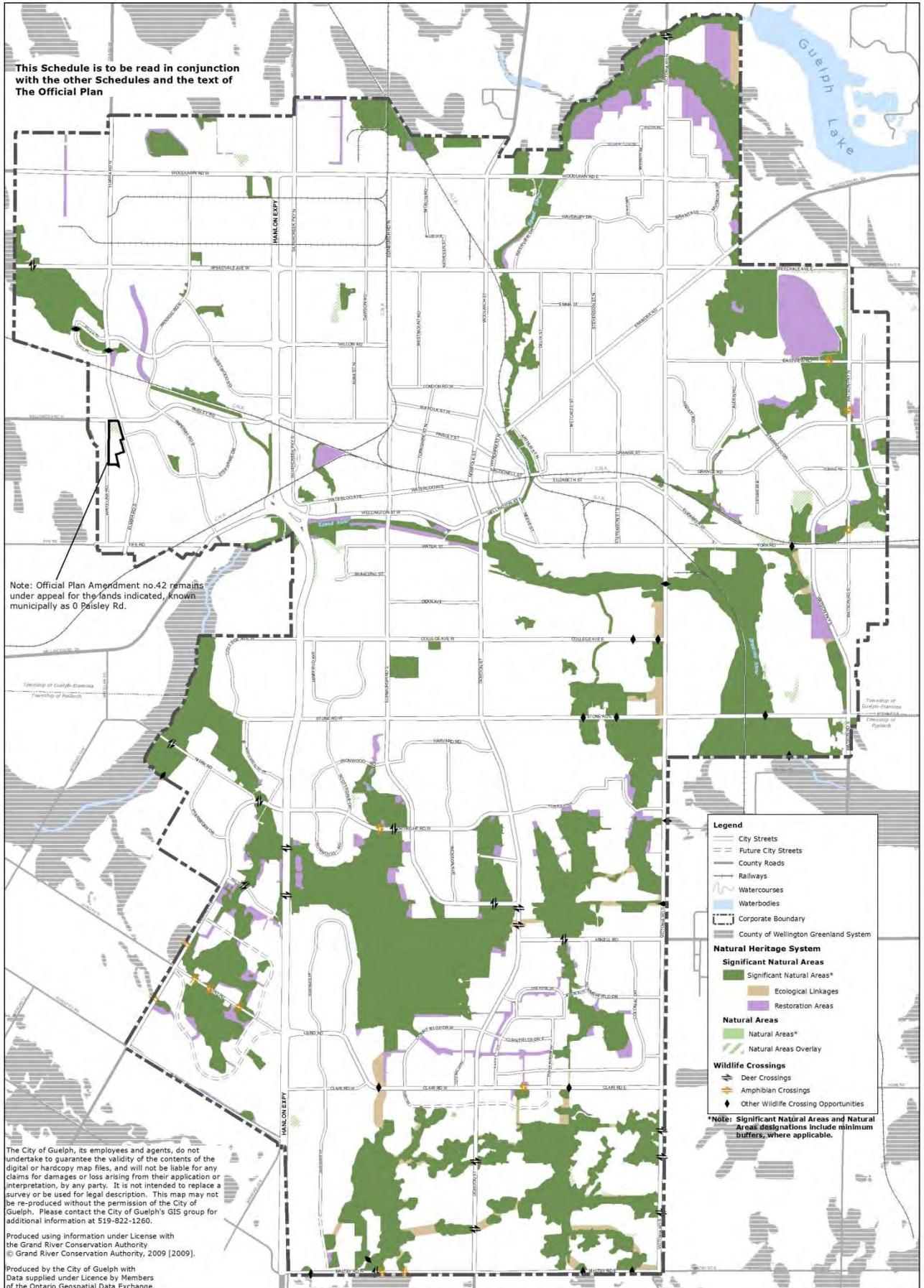
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ATT – 1 Official Plan Schedule 10 – Natural Heritage System



2001 Official Plan, September 2014 Consolidation

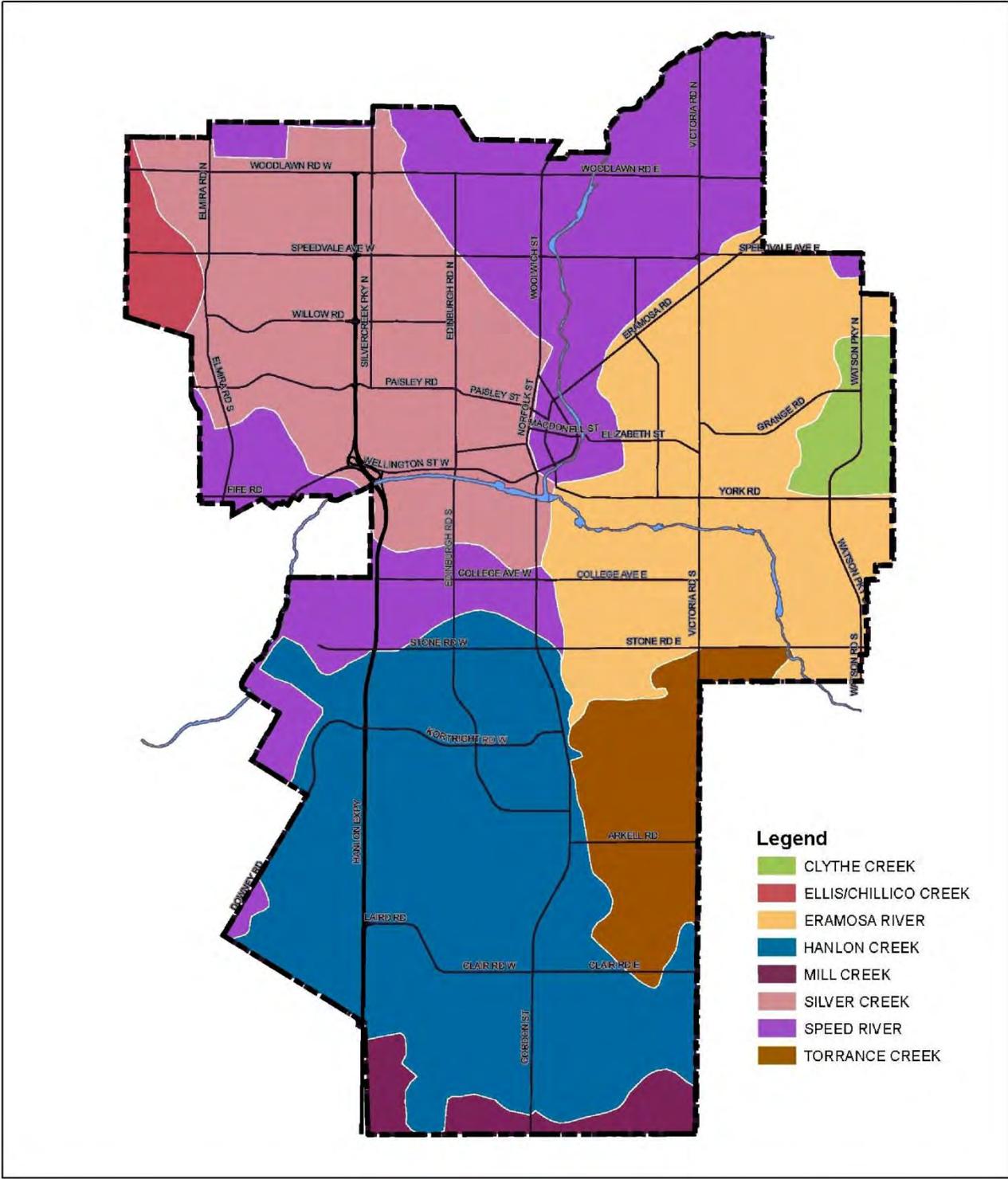
**CITY OF GUELPH
OFFICIAL PLAN
SCHEDULE 10:
NATURAL HERITAGE SYSTEM**

Natural Heritage System

Projection: UTM 17N NAD83
Produced by the City of Guelph
Planning Services
September 2014 Consolidation

ATT- 2 Summary of Subwatersheds

Subwatershed	Subwatershed Study	Prepared For	Update/Review and Related Reports	Notes
Clythe Creek	Clythe Creek Subwatershed Study, 1997	Metrus Developments Inc. (Approved by City of Guelph)	N/A	Completed to provide management direction and in anticipation of land use changes (urbanization in east Guelph)
Ellis/ Chillico Creek	East Side Subwatersheds Study 2005-2010 (2014)	Region of Waterloo, City of Cambridge, Grand River Conservation Authority	N/A	This subwatershed study is a characterization study only and was prepared to inform the City of Cambridge East Side Lands MESP project.
Eramosa River	Eramosa River Blue Springs Creek Watershed Study (1999)	Grand River Conservation Authority	N/A	Completed to characterize landscape, identify trail and heritage assets and sensitivities to potential land use changes (aggregates, golf courses, agriculture).
Hanlon Creek	Hanlon Creek Subwatershed Plan, 1993	City of Guelph, Grand River Conservation Authority	South Guelph Secondary Plan SEIS, 1998 State of the Watershed Study, 2004	The Clair Maltby Secondary Plan will be including updated data/information for the sub catchment areas of the subwatershed including for Halls Pond.
Mill Creek	Mill Creek Subwatershed Plan, 1997	Grand River Conservation Authority	N/A	Clair Maltby Secondary Plan will be including updated data/information for the sub catchment areas of the subwatershed that include lands within the City.
Silvercreek/ Howitt Creek	None	N/A	N/A	
Speed River	None	N/A	N/A	
Torrance Creek	Torrance Creek Subwatershed Study, 1998	City of Guelph, Grand River Conservation Authority	N/A	Completed to provide management direction and in anticipation of land use changes (urbanization in east Guelph)



ATT- 3 NATURAL HERITAGE ACTION PLAN PROJECT CHARTER

Version No.:	1
Date:	Jan 2017

Project Name:	Natural Heritage Action Plan (NHAP)
Current Name Phase:	Project Initiation
Project Team:	Melissa Aldunate, Manager of Policy Planning and Urban design April Nix & Adele Labbe, Environmental Planner
Division Functional Director:	Todd Salter, General Manager of Planning, Urban Design And Building Services
Project Sponsor:	Policy Planning and Urban Design

PROJECT DEFINITION

PROJECT PURPOSE: Describe the project and the reason it is required
The Natural Heritage Action Plan (NHAP) will create an implementation framework for Official Plan policies regarding the natural heritage system and watershed planning, including recommendations, studies and guidelines that would assist staff to maintain, enhance and restore natural heritage features, surface water and ground water features within the City.

PROJECT GOALS: What is the project trying to achieve, in detail?
The City of Guelph is undertaking the NHAP to identify and prioritize the development of additional resources (studies, guidelines and implementation tools) and recommendations which serve to implement the policies and objectives found within the Official Plan.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS: What factors will have to be achieved for the project to be successful?
The project will be a success if the following is achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of future projects (studies, guidelines), implementation tools and recommendations necessary to implement the envisioned outcomes from the City's Official Plan; • A priority based implementation framework of recommended projects and tasks for staff to follow to achieve the envisioned outcomes. • Identification of methods to monitor and measure progress, successes and opportunities in the implementation of the policies and action plan outcomes/deliverables. • Identification of needed resources to implement the action plan.

PROJECT STRATEGY: At a high level, how are you going to achieve your project goals?
Staff will complete a review of OP policies, environmental studies (EIS/EIR and Subwatershed Studies) and secondary plans to identify tasks and actions to be included within the framework. Staff will develop a technical framework to guide prioritization as well as integrate with existing work plans. This is not intended to form or create new City policies or Official Plan updates.
Staff will complete research and facilitate discussion and obtain input among project participants to provide its recommendations in a written report. These will be incorporated into

a single framework within the action plan for implementation purposes.

PROJECT BENEFITS: What are the tangible and intangible benefits of the project?

- Enhanced environmental protection and conservation
- **Supports one of the founding operating principles of the City’s Official Plan:** Environmental Sustainability (Section 2.2) through provision of greater community understanding of the value of the natural heritage system, and surface water and groundwater features.
- Achievement of Official Plan objectives
- The development of standards and guidelines to support the development review processes and the implementation of capital projects.
- Provides an effective work plan to support resource allocation

PRODUCT DEFINITION

END PRODUCTS: At the end of the project, what products will the project deliver?

- Staff will deliver a written report that will include a framework that provides a list of actions, resources, timing and scope for the identified actions as deliverables

KEY INTERIM PRODUCTS: During the project what are the key interim products to be delivered?

- A background review summary that includes a matrix of all identified studies, guidelines, tools and operational tasks (based on the Official Plan policies and related background review).
- A communication plan and an engagement plan for the project.
- A draft Natural Heritage Action Plan.
- A final report that identifies future projects necessary to implement the envisioned outcomes **from the City’s Official Plan and includes a** general long term schedule that prioritizes recommended projects and tasks for staff to follow to achieve the envisioned outcomes. This report should identify anticipated costs for implementation at a high level and whether projects are expected to require additional internal or external resource needs.

PROJECT SCOPE

Project Scope Is (Includes):	Project Scope Is Not (Does Not Include):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing OP policies to identify studies, guidelines and implementation tools to maintain, enhance and restore the City’s natural heritage system, surface water and groundwater features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing/updating the Official Plan policies (i.e. NHS policies, open space parks and trails policies) and/or zoning by-law regulations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish direction on the development of guidelines and manuals to support continuous improvement within development review processes (i.e. Environmental Implementation Report Guidelines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing/updating the City’s urban forest management plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting public awareness education and outreach about the conservation, protection and management of natural heritage features and areas, surface water and groundwater features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of the City’s tree technical manual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish direction on options, tools and studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates to the Source Water

around various themes related to the OP policies including themes such as: land securement, ecological monitoring and wildlife management.	Protection Plan and Assessment Report for the Grand River Watershed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish direction and prioritization of the review and update of subwatershed studies to support renewed emphasis on the role of subwatershed studies in community planning and municipal master planning exercises stemming from the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 and proposed changes to the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing or updating City Trail Master Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing models for community engagement in natural heritage action plan implementation. This will include looking at existing Council appointed advisory committees that contribute to the implementation of the City's NHS and water resource policies; and, 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide direction and guidance on the identification and methods to measure progress, successes and opportunities in the implementation of the policies 	

PROJECT PARAMETERS

SCHEDULE: A high level outline of key dates	
March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Initiation Report to Committee of the Whole
Q4 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft NHAP for input (internal/external)
Q1 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHAP to Committee of the Whole/Council for approval

BUDGET:
The action plan is being prepared by City staff and using existing resources.

PROJECT ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACTS

PROJECT TEAM
Melissa Aldunate
April Nix
Adele Labbe

INTERNAL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS
Policy Planning and Urban Design
Development Planning
Engineering and Capital Infrastructure Services
Parks and Recreation
Parks Operations and Forestry
Energy, Water and Climate Change Working Group
Operations & By-law and Enforcement (OTE)

ORGANIZATIONS IMPACTED BY THE PROJECT	
INTERNAL:	How?
Policy Planning and Urban Design	Implementation of the Official Plan and future updates. Responsible for implementing NHS policies and water resource policies.
Development Planning	OP implementation tools may assist in creating improvements to development review processes.
Engineering and Capital Infrastructure Services	OP implementation tools may assist in creating improvements to development review processes. Subwatershed management and implications to infrastructure design, management and maintenance, including climate change implications.
Parks and Recreation	OP implementation tools may assist in creating improvements to development review processes. Input related to the securement and protection of the NHS in relation to public open space and the development of the City's trail network.
Parks Operations and Forestry	Input related to implications on the City's management of urban forest resources, as well as the maintenance, restoration and stewardship of public open space including the trail network and natural areas.
Energy, Water and Climate Change Working Group	Input related to climate change implications and scoping of the NHAP to look at applicable approaches/tools. Interest in the protection of water resources as part of subwatershed plans.

EXTERNAL:	How?
Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information regarding environmental projects, tools and initiatives in the City and opportunities to participate
Developers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools may assist with further enhancements to development review processes
Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews development applications in relation to environmental matters including natural heritage and water resources • Participates in subwatershed plan updates
River Systems Advisory Committee (RSAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews city projects and selected development applications in relation to the City's River System • Participates in subwatershed plan updates

COMPLETION CRITERIA: How will you know when the project is completed and finished?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An action plan document will have been prepared and approved by Council

PROJECT PLANNING PARAMETERS	
DATE PROJECT COMPLETION DUE:	Q1 2018
ESTIMATED BUDGET:	\$0