



SOUTH NATION
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United Counties Partner Planning: Natural Heritage Systems

November 15, 2021



Our Local Environment; We're in it Together.



- One of Ontario's 36 Conservation Authorities
- Community-based watershed management
- 16 member municipalities
- 4,441 km² jurisdiction in Eastern Ontario





Protecting People and Property: Supporting Sustainable Development



Lemieux Landslide, 1993



Ottawa River Flooding, 2017

Through municipal agreements, we deliver:

- Hazard Mapping (Floodplains, Landslides, Erosion and Unstable Slopes)
- Environmental Planning Reviews
- Drinking Water Source Protection
- Municipal Septic Inspection Program

Through provincial and municipal partnerships, we:

- Deliver Flood Forecasting and Warning and Low Water Response Programs
- Maintain Water and Erosion Control Structures (8 structures)



Empowering Communities and Fostering Landowner Stewardship

Through partnerships with Municipalities and Counties we work together to offer:



In 2018, SNC planted its 3 millionth tree since 1990.

- **Tree Planting Programs**
- **Woodlot Advisory Service**
- **Clean Water Programs**

We also work with partners to support environmental initiatives that empower our communities to make environmentally sound decisions and actions.



Protecting Natural Spaces and Providing Outdoor Opportunities



Cass Bridge Conservation Area in Winchester, North Dundas

Through municipal cost-share agreements:

- Operate 14 day-use parks and trails and 9 docks and boat launches

Through donation and partial purchase :

- Own 13,000 acres of community land



Forest operations support community land management.

Through municipal cost-recovery agreement:

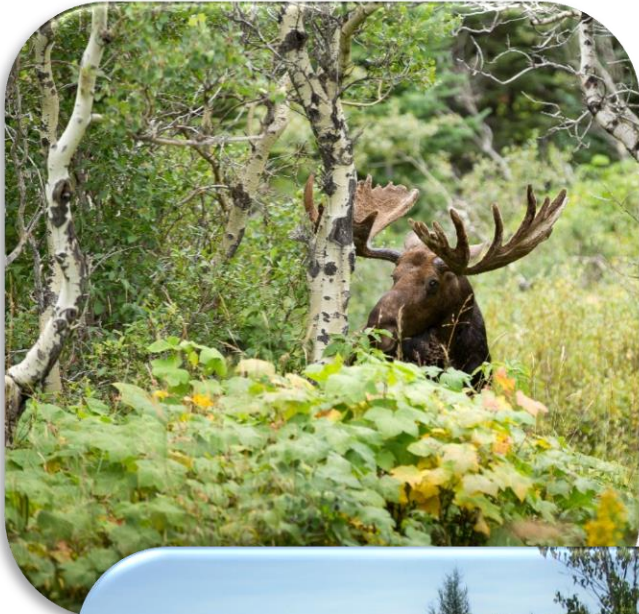
- Manage 20,000 acres of SDG community forest



Partner County Planning: Natural Heritage Systems



What is a Natural Heritage System?



- A **Natural Heritage System (NHS)** is interconnected natural features such as forests, rivers, wetlands, and agricultural lands.
- These systems are made up of core natural areas and natural linkages
- Support wildlife movement to maintain biological diversity, natural functions, and ecosystems.



Project Overview and Partners



County Planning for Natural Heritage



- The County Official Plan maintains maps and policies to protect the ecological integrity of Natural Heritage Systems.
- Both Counties worked collaboratively with the Conservation Authority.
- This approach was highlighted by the Province as an excellent example of municipal collaboration.





Fragmented vs. Connected Landscapes

FRAGMENTED LANDSCAPE

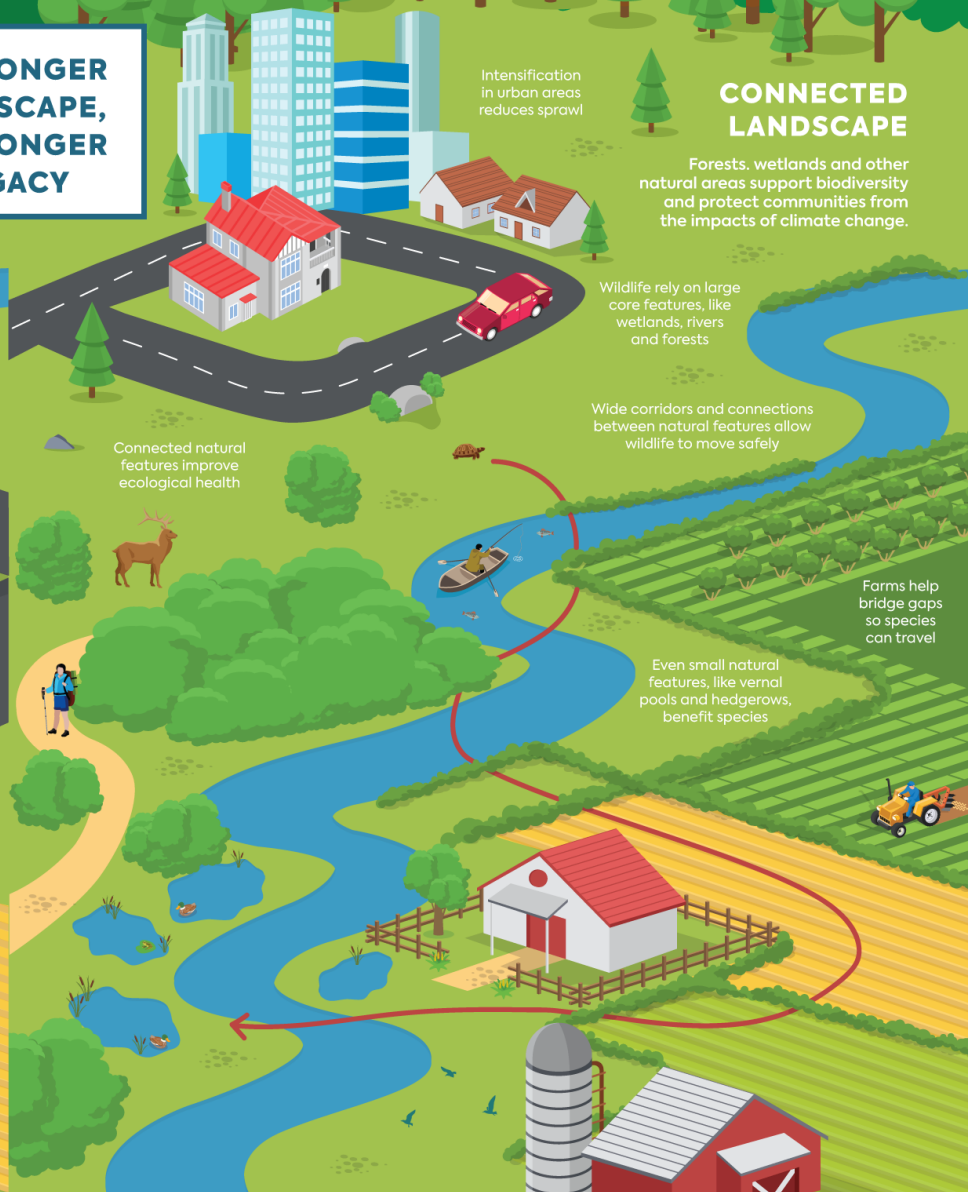
Habitat loss and fragmentation are leading causes of species decline in Southern and Eastern Ontario. Climate change is also causing a dramatic shift in the ranges of species.



A STRONGER LANDSCAPE, A STRONGER LEGACY

CONNECTED LANDSCAPE

Forests, wetlands and other natural areas support biodiversity and protect communities from the impacts of climate change.





Case Study: Alice The Moose

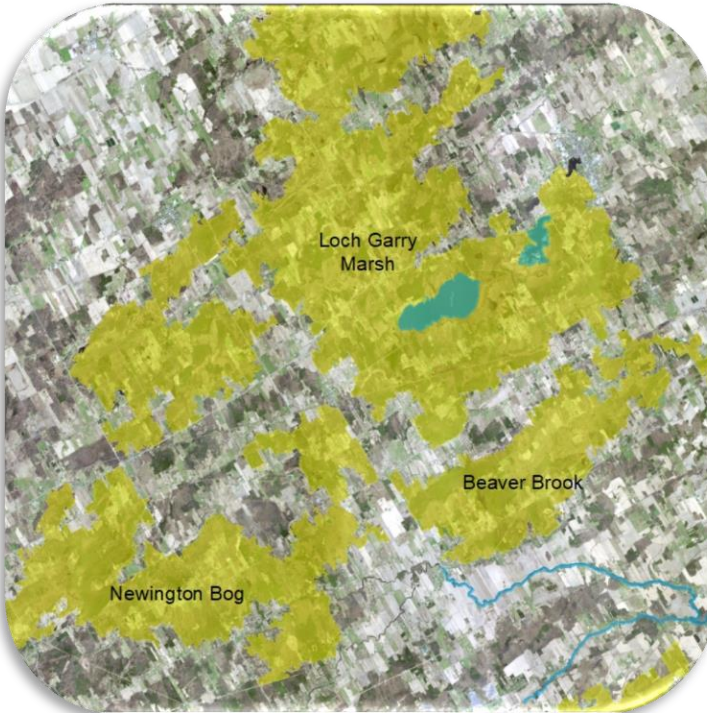


Study Undertaken by University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry:

- 700-pound female moose named “Alice” collared and released by researchers into the Huntington Wildlife Forest in Newcomb, New York in 2000 and travelled for 2 years.
- She ventured north and crossed the Canada-U.S. border, swam across the St. Lawrence River, walked across Hwy. 401, and eventually made it into Algonquin Provincial Park.
- Alice’s journey spanned 570 km.



Components of the NHS: Cores



Large natural areas



Remain naturalized



Protect biodiversity



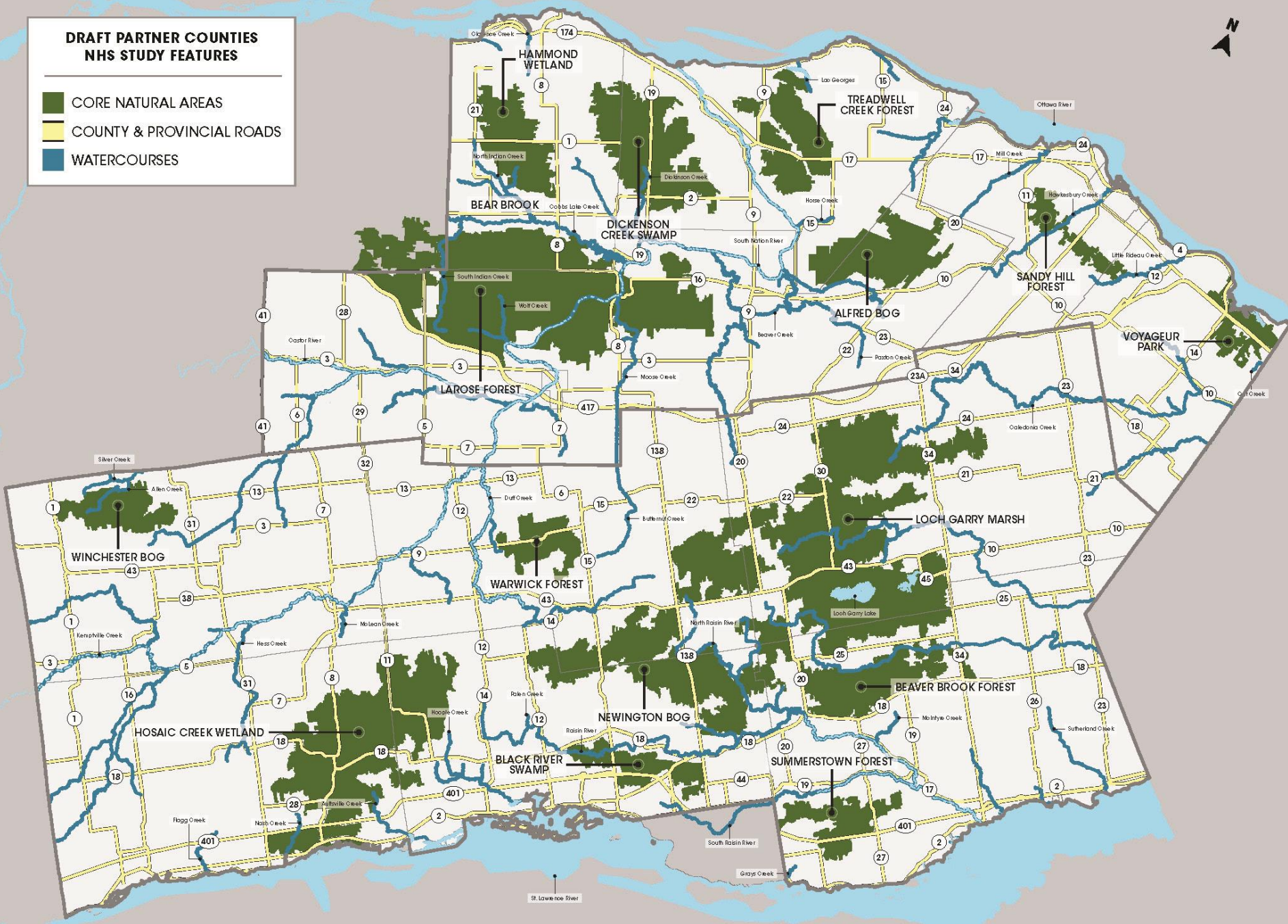
Socially significant



Include publicly owned lands

DRAFT PARTNER COUNTIES NHS STUDY FEATURES

- CORE NATURAL AREAS
- COUNTY & PROVINCIAL ROADS
- WATERCOURSES





Examples of Local Core Natural Areas



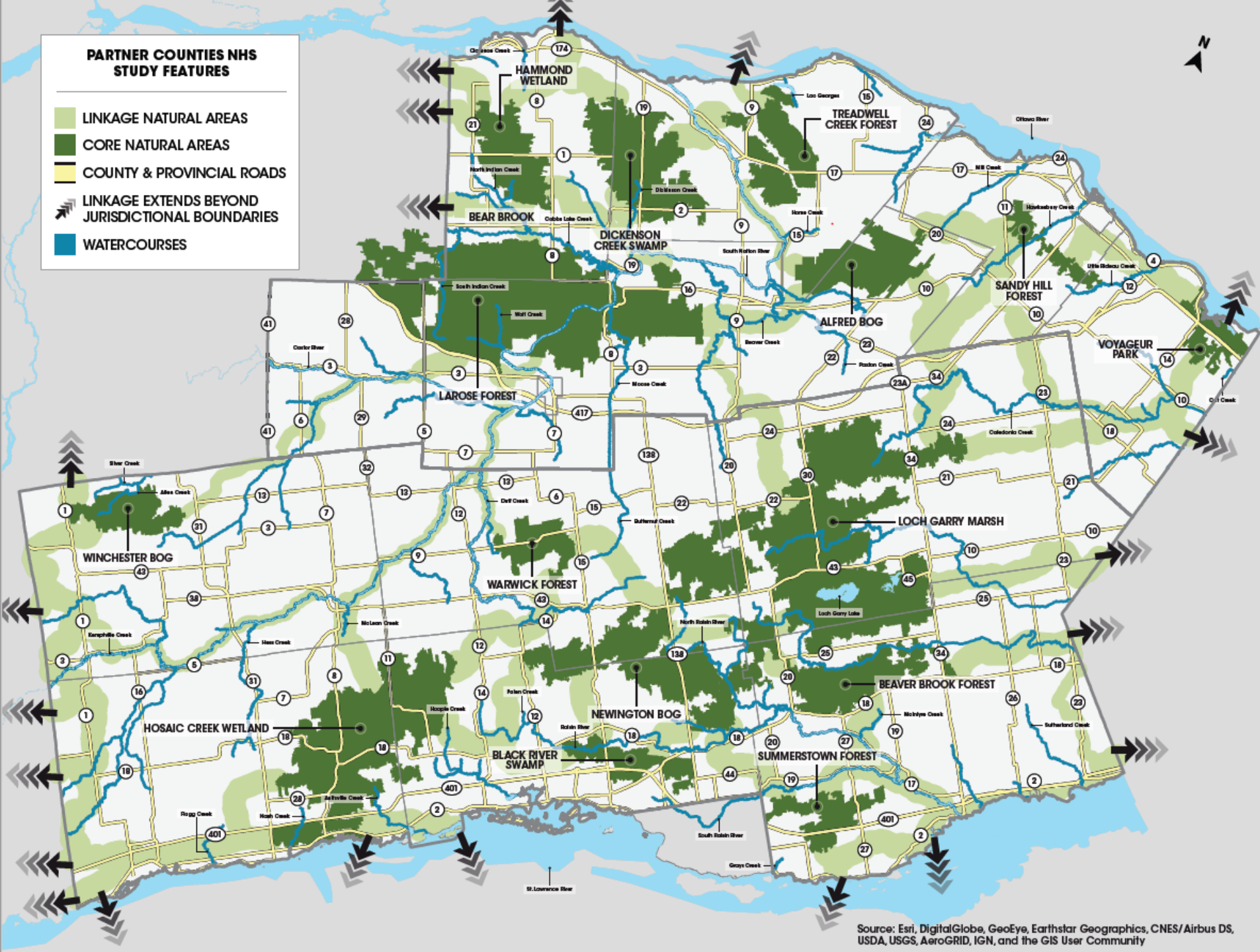
Loch Garry Marsh in North Glengarry

- Provincially Significant Wetland
- 4,000 acre drainage area
- Water in Loch Garry is supplied through snowmelt and rain
- Flood prevention and stormwater retention
- Groundwater recharge
- Ensures sufficient water supply to Town of Alexandria and the Delisle River
- Osprey nesting site and other bird species
- Wildlife includes beavers, turtles, moose, fish, etc.
- Recreational opportunities provide social and economic benefits



PARTNER COUNTIES NHS STUDY FEATURES

- LINKAGE NATURAL AREAS
- CORE NATURAL AREAS
- COUNTY & PROVINCIAL ROADS
- LINKAGE EXTENDS BEYOND JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES
- WATERCOURSES



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



Agriculture in the Natural Heritage System



- The NHS was mapped using approaches supported by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.
- Agricultural lands are working landscapes that provide valuable ecosystem services such as pollination, atmospheric regulation, soil retention, and wildlife habitat.
- Natural heritage policies recognize and value cooperation with private landowners to protect the environment and improve the quality of natural habitat and linkages.



Policy updates will address known gaps.

- This includes environmental impact studies, coastal wetlands, and watercourse setbacks.
- Policies will be implemented to enhance, protect, and restore the critical habitat within the NHS.
- These policies will also streamline environmental reviews to make small-scale development easier for private landowners.



NHS Implementation in County Official Plans



An Official Plan Amendment is needed.

- The proposed mapping and policy updates have been through significant public engagement.
- The NHS was reviewed by County and local municipal staff.
- The MMAH was consulted and has requested a presentation for the eastern municipal planning forum.
- An Official Plan Amendment will bring the Natural Heritage System into effect to benefit our local environment.



Why is this Important?



- As our landscape changes we need healthy Natural Heritage System to ensure we have a resilient landscape that can sustain our local wildlife and natural processes.
- A strong, more resilient local landscape equals a strong natural legacy and economic prosperity for future generations.

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