

Report To: Board of Directors

Subject: Expanding the Greenbelt Proposal – NPCA Comments

Report No: FA-25-21

Date: April 16, 2021

Recommendation:

1. **THAT** Report No. FA-25-21 RE: Expanding the Greenbelt Proposal – NPCA Comments **BE RECEIVED**.
2. **THAT** staff **BE AUTHORIZED** to provide the NPCA’s comments on the Expanding the Greenbelt Proposal to the Environmental Registry of Ontario and partner municipalities in Welland River and Twenty Mile Creek watershed **BE ADVISED**.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of an initiative by the Province to expand the Greenbelt and the NPCA’s comments on this initiative.

Background:

On February 17, 2021, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) posted a notice on the Environmental Registry of Ontario launching a consultation on expanding the size of the Greenbelt Plan Area and enhancing the ‘quality’ of the Greenbelt. Two priority areas have been identified by the ministry:

1. Lands in and around the Paris Galt Moraine, which is a physiographic area currently located outside the Greenbelt in Waterloo Region and Brant and Wellington Counties;
2. Ideas for adding, expanding and further protecting Greenbelt Urban River Valleys.

Principles articulated by MMAH for potential expansions include expansions that:

- Support existing Greenbelt Plan objectives, vision and goals of providing permanent protection to the agricultural land base and ecological and hydrological features, areas and functions occurring on the landscape and providing for the inclusion of publicly owned lands in urban river valleys.
- Connect physically and/or functionally to the current Greenbelt by building upon the natural heritage, water resource and agricultural systems approach of the Greenbelt Plan and should

be directly connected or have a strong functional connection to not create unconnected islands of Greenbelt land.

While the province's focus is on the two priority areas highlighted above, they have also indicated they would consider input regarding other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt as well as other priorities that should be considered. It should be noted that the Province is not considering any land removals, land exchanges or policy changes at this time. Comments are requested by the close of the consultation period on April 19, 2021.

Note that Conservation Ontario has solicited comments from Conservation Authorities, to which the NPCA provided comments on March 29, 2021.

Discussion:

There is a portion of the Greenbelt within the NPCA Watershed (see Appendix 1), however, the two geographic areas of focus for growth are not located within the NPCA Watershed. As such, staff offered no comments on the merits of including those geographic areas. The other component of the Greenbelt that the Province is focusing on is Urban River Valleys. There is one existing designated Urban River Valley in the NPCA Watershed (Lower Twelve Mile Creek in St. Catharines).

The Province introduced Urban River Valleys into the Greenbelt Plan added in the 2017 update as a way to bring river valleys into urban areas outside of the Greenbelt. The goal of including these new features was to provide additional connections between the Greenbelt area and the Great Lakes and to protect natural and open space lands. Another important consideration is that the policies for Urban River Valleys only applies to publicly owned lands. Many of the existing watercourses in the municipalities that are outside the Greenbelt area are far removed from a direct connection to the Great Lakes, thus would not be suitable as an Urban River Valley.

In lieu of recommending new Urban River Valleys, staff recommended in comments to Conservation Ontario that consideration be given to extending the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System along the Welland River Valley and Twenty Mile Creek Valley. Both of these systems have their headwaters in the Greenbelt and are significant hydrologically and in a natural heritage context. Incorporating them into the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System would help in protecting these important systems.

The Greenbelt Natural Heritage System (NHS) is a Provincial framework derived from coarse data. While this was a good start at the time, this is an opportunity to refine the NHS and fill in gaps that are missing, not just in Niagara but across the entire Greenbelt area. Conservation Authorities, such as the NPCA, have helpful data available to help identify gaps in the NHS and should be approached for such data.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications to the recommendations of this report.

Links to Policy/Strategic Plan

Commenting on Provincial Policy initiatives supports the Strategic Plan's Mission Statement "to implement our *Conservation Authorities Act* mandate by remaining a responsive, innovative, accountable and financially sustainable organization" by "working in collaboration with our partners in conservation".

Related Reports and Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Map of the Greenbelt in the NPCA’s Watershed.

Appendix 2 – NPCA Comments to Conservation Ontario

Authored by:

Original Signed by:

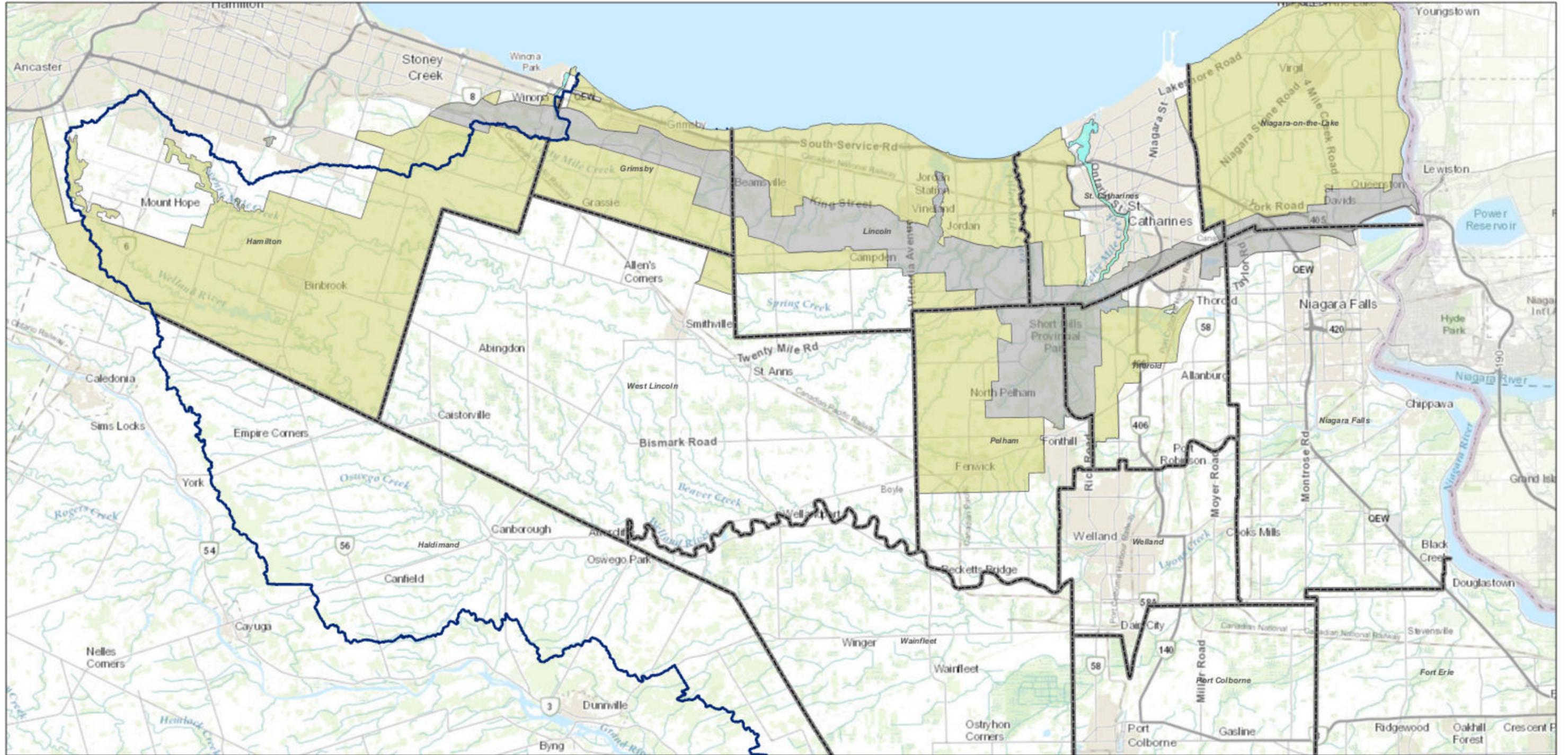
David Deluce, MCIP, RPP
Senior Manager, Planning & Regulations

Reviewed and Submitted by:

Original Signed by:

Chandra Sharma, MCIP, RPP
Chief Administrative Officer/Secretary-Treasurer

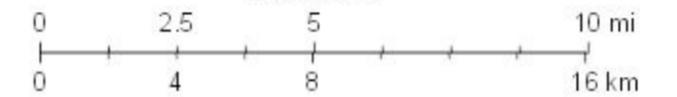
Appendix 1 - Greenbelt Area in NPCA Watershed



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- Corporate Watershed Divide NPCA
- Member Municipal Boundary Line
- MEMBER MUNICIPALITY Labels
- Greenbelt - Plan Designations
- NEC
- Protected Country
- Urban River Valley



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS

Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt

[\(ERO#019-3136\)](#)

Consultation Table

Please submit comments to Nicholas Fischer (CO) by March 29th, 2021

<mailto:nfischer@conservationontario.ca>

Name: David Deluce, MCIP, RPP – Senior Manager, Planning & Regulations

Conservation Authority:

As a reminder, please submit one comment table per CA. Thank you.

Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt	
Discussion Questions	CA Comments
What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of the Study Area of the Paris Galt Moraine?	This is outside of our watershed, therefore, we have no comments
What are the considerations in moving from a Study Area to a more defined boundary of the Paris Galt Moraine?	This is outside of our watershed, therefore, we have no comments
What are your thoughts on the initial focus area of adding, expanding and further protecting Urban River Valleys?	While we are supportive in principle to adding more Urban River Valleys, we don't have a lot of contiguous, open channel rivers running through our Urban Areas that would be suitable candidates for inclusion.
Do you have suggestions for other potential areas to grow the Greenbelt?	The NPCA recommends including the valley system for Twenty Mile Creek and the Welland River within the Greenbelt NHS. The headwater areas of both these rivers is already within the Greenbelt NHS. In the case of Twenty Mile Creek, the lower reach is also part of the Greenbelt NHS. It does not make sense for the middle reach to not be included.
How should we balance or prioritize any potential Greenbelt expansion with the other provincial priorities mentioned above? (see ERO posting for priorities)	It is acknowledged that growth management is important but equal importance must be placed on protecting the natural heritage system and water resources systems of the Greenbelt and Growth Plan.
Are there other priorities that should be considered?	No further comments.

General Comments

*Consultation on growing the size of the
Greenbelt* ([ERO#019-3136](#))

No further comments.

April 19, 2021

Honourable Jeff Yurek
Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
College Park 5th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

RE: Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting 019-3136

Dear Minister Yurek,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments towards the provincial “Consultation on growing the size of the Greenbelt”. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) offers the following general comments on the proposal. Please note that in addition to these comments, the NPCA also echoes the comments on this proposal that have been provided by Conservation Ontario.

While the NPCA is supportive in principle to adding more Urban River Valleys, the Niagara watershed does not contain many contiguous, open channel rivers running through our Urban Areas that would be suitable candidates for inclusion. There is one existing designated Urban River Valley in the NPCA Watershed (Lower Twelve Mile Creek in St. Catharines).

In lieu of recommending new Urban River Valleys, the NPCA recommends that consideration be given to extending the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System along the Welland River Valley and Twenty Mile Creek Valley. These two systems have their headwaters in the Greenbelt and are significant, both hydrologically and in a natural heritage context. In the case of Twenty Mile Creek, the lower reach is also part of the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System. It does not make sense for the middle reach to not be included. Incorporating both watercourses into the Greenbelt Natural Heritage System would help in protecting these important systems.

It is acknowledged that while growth management is important, equal importance must be placed on protecting the natural heritage system and water recourses systems of the Greenbelt and Growth Plan. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. For any questions or clarity on these matters, kindly contact CAO Chandra Sharma at csharma@npca.ca or 905-788-3135.

Respectfully,



David Deluce, MCIP, RPP
NPCA Senior Manager, Planning & Regulations