Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan

Highlights 2005-2010

The Great Lakes Wetlands Conservation Action Plan (GLWCAP) was developed in 1994 to enable government and non-government partners to work together more effectively to conserve the remaining wetlands in the Great Lakes basin. Implementation of the GLWCAP is coordinated by a team of representatives from Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Conservation Ontario, Ontario Nature, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Swamp Milkweed. Regina Varrin

Great Blue Heron, Denby Sadler

Phase Three (2005-2010) was extremely successful for the GLWCAP partners. The securement of 14,182 hectares of wetland (and wetland associated) habitat as well as the enhancement, creation, and restoration of at least 9,505 hectares allows for the protection of something bigger – ecosystem health and human health. The GLWCAP's ongoing focus on stewardship as well as maintaining and restoring existing wetlands, is an important one. Considerable effort has also been put into supporting local planning initiatives. Together, stewardship and local planning build a bottom-up focus that meets with top-down policy initiatives by higher levels of government.

This fact sheet highlights some of the work done in Phase Three. To read the full GLWCAP Highlights Report 2005-2010, visit: *glwcap.ca*.

GLWCAP Strategies

1. Increase Public Awareness and Commitment to Protecting Wetlands
2. Improve Wetland Science, Data and Monitoring
3. Secure Wetlands
4. Create, Reclaim, Rehabilitate and Manage Wetlands
5. Strengthen Legislation, Policies, Agreements and Compliance
6. Strengthen Local Planning and Commitment to Wetland Conservation
7. Improve Coordination
8. Evaluate the Program

Bogbean Buckmoth, Regina Varrin

Monitoring Wetlands in Durham Region

The Durham Region Coastal Wetland Monitoring Project (DRCWMP), being led by Environment Canada and the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, is a long-term program for monitoring the physical and biological conditions of 18 wetlands in Durham Region along the north shore of Lake Ontario. With over eight-years of data, study results indicate the health of many of these wetlands is deteriorating. The conditions of biological communities such as aquatic vegetation, birds, amphibians and fish are declining overall, as are water and sediment quality. These findings are being used to target and guide wetland restoration efforts, and where restoration efforts have been initiated, conditions appear to be improving.

Lake Ontario Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

A Lake Ontario Biodiversity Conservation Strategy was completed in 2009 and presents the recommendations of a binational approach to protect and restore, to the fullest extent possible, the native biodiversity and critical natural processes of Lake Ontario. The strategy identifies key biodiversity targets including islands, migratory fishes, the nearshore zone, benthic and pelagic systems, and coastal wetlands. Some of the recommendations

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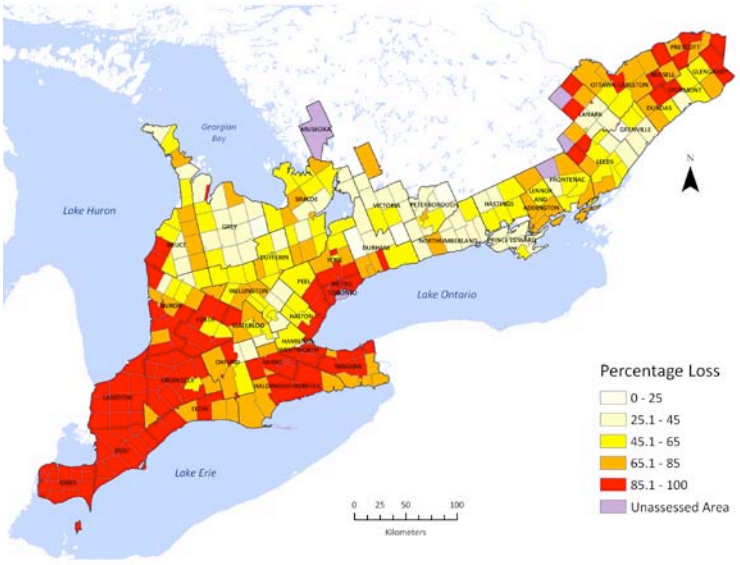
from this strategy include, securing 50 percent of unprotected and vulnerable coastal wetlands, tributary floodplains, and terrestrial systems in watershed conservation plans by 2015; increasing riparian and coastal natural cover by 2015; and developing basin-wide monitoring of coastal wetlands and other nearshore habitats.

Southern Ontario Wetland Conversion Analysis

A state of the art 1987 Environment Canada study assessed wetland extent over three points in time and provided the best measure of wetland status and trends across southern Ontario up to 1982. The original wetland area had been reduced by 61 percent overall, and by 68 percent in southern Ontario. Recently, the Southern Ontario Wetland Conversion Analysis (SOWCA) research project has converted the methodology of the original study into a Geographic Information Systems based one. This analysis builds on the 1987 study, extending the estimates of wetland status and trends in large wetlands (> 10 hectares), not including coastal wetlands, across southern Ontario to the year 2002, thus becoming the "fourth approximation." By 2002, the wetland area in southern Ontario was estimated to have been reduced by over 1.4 million hectares (72 percent) of the total pre-settlement wetland area. The largest losses of wetlands have occurred in counties with the greatest concentration of pre-settlement wetlands.

Full report available on the Ducks Unlimited Canada website: *www.ducks.ca/aboutduc/news/archives/prov2010/pdf/duc_ontariowca.pdf*



Minesing Wetlands, Ethan Meleg; inset: Green frog, Environment Canada

Managing the Minesing Wetlands

The Minesing Wetlands Natural Area is a 6,070 hectare complex of treed swamp, marsh, fen and floodplain forest located along the Nottawasaga and Mad Rivers west of Barrie. It is one of southern Ontario's most significant wetland systems and the third largest wetland in the southern portion of the province. Over three decades, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and partners of the Ontario Eastern Habitat Joint Venture have protected over 60 percent of the Natural Area, creating the fifth largest protected area in southern Ontario. In 2009, NCC and NVCA completed a five-year management plan to support the conservation of protected areas within the wetland. The management plan identified seven biodiversity targets that focus on conservation actions required for the protection of open fens, marshes and rare reptiles.

Giving Municipalities Reasons and Resources to Conserve Wetlands

In 2005, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) created a municipal extension program in order to communicate key messages on local wetland values to select municipalities as well as provide input and support to land use planning initiatives. One of the overarching goals of the program is to answer the question: what is in it for a municipality to conserve wetlands? From 2007 to 2010, DUC delivered eight workshops to municipal representatives, including councillors, staff, and committee members. Workshop topics were chosen to reflect wetland values and issues most relevant to those municipalities, and included interpretive tours of local wetlands to further illustrate concepts covered in presentations. Workshop participants have praised the workshops for providing credible, straightforward information on local wetland values and for the opportunity to discuss wetland issues with their peers, landowners, and conservation practitioners.

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