

**Biodiversity Strategy for the Port Franks Area
Public Meeting – Summary of Breakout Questions**

Saturday, September 12th, 2009

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Port Franks Optimist Centre

The following comments were made by those attending the above meeting. After each group discussed their question, the comments were presented back to the larger group.

1. What do you feel is the current condition of the ecosystems and biodiversity within the Port Franks area? *Note: An ecosystem is a system formed by the interaction of plants, animals, bacteria and fungi with their physical environment. Biodiversity refers to the variety of ecosystems and species within an area.*

Wildlife

- Fewer fish (in Sunfish Bay, fewer carp), turtles, butterflies, snakes; less loosestrife
- More geese, raccoons, wild turkeys, tent caterpillars, phragmites, beavers taking trees
- Salamanders, bald eagles observed
- Wild cats eating species
- Invading vegetation (flowers) small plants
- Lily pads (Sunfish Bay)
- Dune grass taking over in areas – no beach
- Lots of poison ivy
- People bringing in non-native trees/vegetation
- Hunting along the river is a problem

Water Quality/Quantity

- Quality/smell of Ausable River/Lake Huron
- Water quality is impaired in Ausable River from upstream sources
- Water level fluctuation – lake and river

Land Management/Erosion

- Changing/evolving mouth of Mud Creek (e.g., installation of unwanted walls along channel)
- Sand dunes along ABCA cut property eroding
- Gravel island in Cut is disappearing
- Beach is being lost due to dredging in Windsor Park
- River mouth needs to be addressed
- Shoreline erosion worse towards mouth of the river and upstream too
- Runoff is a problem; altering channel
- Runoff direction has changed and causing issues

Development

- Not much room to expand – development
- Would like lots (development) to have a natural component left

Other

- Burning waste (e.g., plastics)
- Co-existence of nature and public
- Ecosystem is fairing well

2. What biological/ecological changes have you observed in the Port Franks area?

Wildlife

- Dead fish following rainfall
- Decrease in turtles, frogs, geese, ducks
- Increase in ladybugs, mosquitos – loss of flow
- Cougars in the area
- Tent caterpillars
- Increase in Armstrong East trees
- Reintroduction of SAR (skink, milksnake, hognose)
- More grapevine
- Oak decline/diseases/dead branches
- Phragmites growing in silt

Other

- Agricultural runoff increase – Mud Creek, Ausable River
- Increased silt and vegetation (e.g., cornstalks and onions) filling in river
- Permanent docks interfering with the flow
- Sand blowing from the beach
- Increase in ATV use
- Armstrong West erosion at mouth
- More driftwood

3. What do you wish your community to look like in 20 years?

- Open, clean, local waterways – balance dredging with fish habitat concerns
- Balance development needs with biology
- Consistency amongst agencies about how to grow

4. What biodiversity issues could be addressed on private properties; and what can you do as an individual or as a community to protect the biodiversity within the Port Franks area?

Wildlife

- Feral cats
- Common reed grass – control measures?
- Planting native trees, etc.; a list of native vegetation for area; encourage nurseries to promote native plantings
- Landowners stop using potentially harmful pesticides (e.g., BT)
- Reduced numbers of frogs
- Increase algae:
 - Lower water flow rate?
 - Lower lake levels?
 - Water quality poorer? (excess nitrogen)
- Limit the amount of lawn on properties

Development

- Find balance between individual needs and community/ecological needs
- How to prevent major developments/subdivisions from coming in?
- Public input into new Lambton Shores Official Plan
- Support restrictive policies re: development

Suggestions

- Need a way/medium to share desire to keep Port Franks natural:
 - Communication
 - Bridging differences between residents with different views
- Meetings such as this should continue:
 - Allows for education
 - Sharing of knowledge and ideas
 - Venting of frustration
 - Community-building
- Have focal areas for action (e.g., clusters of 10 properties) – demonstration sites

5. What kind of information or education would you like to receive from the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority to aid you in helping to protect the biodiversity within the Port Franks area? e.g., site visits, public meetings/info sessions, literature.

- Put information in library (e.g., brochures, OAC plan, phragmites info/guide, presentations)
- Use community associations
- Involve schools
- Use a benchmark community as an example – learn lessons
- Community Stewardship Guide Workshop

- Provide information to tourists re: sand dunes, rare species, biodiversity – signage? You should feel like you are entering this great place
- How do non-residents get information (non-permanent?) from these meetings?
- How do we make people feel like they are coming into something special – see municipal plan
- Education has to go beyond Port Franks – have to reach other watershed residents; tourists – include information in rental cottage contracts/packages