Woodlands Conservation By-Law



Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Purpose of the Public Meeting
- History and Background
- Public and Stakeholder Consultation
- Why Have a Woodlands Conservation By-law
- History & Background
- By-law Overview
- Draft By-law for Discussion Purposes Overview
- Next Steps
- Question and Answer Period
- Closing Remarks



Purpose of Public Meeting

- To present a draft Woodlands Conservation By-Law for the purpose of facilitating discussion
- To outline key changes between the current by-law and the draft version provided for discussion
- To provide an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on all aspects of the of woodlands conservation in Oxford, including administration, enforcement and customer service activities



Provide Input to the By-Law Review



Oxford County's Online Town Hall

http://www.oxfordcounty.ca/Your-Government/Speak-up-oxford



Public and Stakeholder Consultation

- Broad consultation process has been initiated by County Council
- Will include direct contact with various stakeholder groups as well as use of various social media feeds
 - 3 initial Public Information Centres (Innerkip, Embro and Springford) to discuss the WCB issues



Public and Stakeholder Consultation

- This is the beginning of the process!
- The Draft By-law for Discussion was prepared from the current By-law and is intended to be a starting point for discussions going forward
- Feedback gathered from all sources will be documented and presented to Council for consideration and direction – the By-law as drafted today may look very different
- Consultation is intended to address all aspects of the WCB, including administrative, enforcement and customer service
- Further opportunities for input into the By-law through additional Public Meetings and consultation opportunities



Public Meeting in Innerkip on November 22

- Well attended with a lot of good discussion about issues , including:
 - more tree harvesting activities that do not require permits (i.e. trimming back fields, private drains)
 - more flexibility in dealing with fence rows and other similar 'minor' harvesting issues
 - reconsideration of some tree species covered by the by-law
 - by-law administration, enforcement and overall customer service related to the by-law
 - why have a WCB at all / what does the County do to promote good forestry except enforce a by-law



Why have a By-law

- County is committed to a comprehensive approach to preserving and enhancing/increasing forest cover through the Official Plan
- County Official Plan recognizes the WCB as an important tool for retaining and enhancing woodlands in both settlements and rural areas
 - promote sustainable forestry practices
 - protect and enhance the value of woodlands for economic, environmental and social value
 - promotes natural heritage resources



Why have a By-law

- 30+ municipalities in Ontario have By-laws, including all of Oxford's immediate neighbours
- the Ontario Professional Foresters Association (OFPA) recognizes that Municipal By-laws support the Associations mandate of using professionals to manage woodlands.



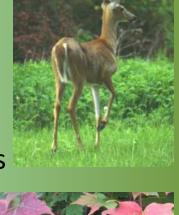
Oxford Natural Heritage Context

- Like most of SWO, two centuries of agriculture and development have transformed Oxford's natural environment
 - Woodland cover reduced from 75% to 13.2%
 - > 75% of original wetlands have been drained
 - Now patchwork of smaller, more isolated natural areas
- Approx. 16.7% of County now covered by natural features
 - 13.2% woodland
 - 6.7% wetland (often overlap with other features)
 - 3.5% other features (i.e. water bodies)



- Still many good quality habitats with large wetlands and several trout streams, but also low forest cover & many poorer quality sites
- Important to maintain, restore or, where possible, improve what is left





Natural Heritage Initiatives in Oxford

- Managing public land (15,900 trees planted on County lands 2016)
- Monitoring (ONHSS, CA report cards)
- Policies & By-laws (OP, ZBs, WCB)
- Education/ communication (e.g. website, factsheets, direct contact)
- Natural heritage tourism (e.g. hiking, fishing, paddling)

- Recognition Stewardship Award
- Incentive Programs (CWP wetland & woodland enhancement)
 - > 70 ac of new/restored wetland
 - > 500 ac of trees/shrubs planted
 - Numerous other projects
- Sustainability Plan & Reforest Oxford
 - Goal to plant 10,000 trees/yr.
 - Working with landowners & other partners









History & Background

- Original Woodlands By-law in Oxford enacted in 1946
 - amendments over the years reflecting changes to legislation and regulation governing tree conservation
 - County receives a significant number of enquiries relating to tree issues each year
- By-law is currently administered/supported through the Public Works Department via a By-law Officer appointed by Council



Overview of By-law

- The authority to enact a By-law to regulate the harvest of trees is found in the <u>Municipal Act</u>
- The current County By-law, generally:
 - identifies woodlands
 - sets out the requirements for obtaining permits to harvest trees
 - provides definitions
 - outlines opportunities and processes for obtaining exemptions from the By-law
 - outlines provisions regarding enforcement and penalties



Oxford Natural Heritage Systems Study Update

- Provides a 'landscape level' assessment of natural heritage features and functions on a County-wide scale
- Recently completed study builds on previous work and identifies significant, locally important and non-significant natural features, including woodlands
- ONHSS primarily developed to provide technical and scientific basis for informing the development of Official Plan policies, but may be used to inform the WCB



Draft By-law for Discussion Purposes Overview

- Amend definitions section
 - update and modernize the current definitions including the definition of 'Good Forestry Practices' and 'Woodlands'
 - With respect to Woodlands, clarifies how woodlands less than 1 ha can be protected through Local By-laws
 - updated definition also includes additional provisions related to measuring woodlands, the boundaries of woodlands and how a woodland is to be considered when dissected by roads, paths or watercourses



Draft By-law for Discussion Purposes (cont'd)

- Remove the 'Circumference Harvest' provisions/option and rely solely on the issuance of 'Good Forestry Practices' permits
 - CH is practice of cutting trees over a certain diameter
 - no account for species, age, quality, etc.
 - not considered to be a sustainable practice
 - New By-law introduces 'Minor Exemptions'
 - permits the staff to issue permits for minor exemptions to the By-law without the need for Committee approval
 - would apply in limited circumstances



Draft By-law for Discussion Purposes (cont'd)

- 'Minor Exemptions' examples
 - where perimeter trees along productive agricultural fields are interfering with operations, drains
 - installation, maintenance, repair of open or closed private drains
 - trees to be harvested are not part of an identified natural heritage feature or system
 - pruning or trimming trees along woodland edges and fence rows to accommodate passage of agricultural equipment



Draft By-law for Discussion Purposes (cont'd)

- Committee Exemption provisions revised to include more guidance regarding the granting of exemptions
 - new By-law includes more guidance regarding the intent and purpose of the By-law
 - possible introduction of a companion policy document to guide compensation where an exemption is granted



Woodland Conservation By-Law – Q & A

Next Steps

- Undertaking the Public and Stakeholder consultation
 All input will be documented and considered in the process going forward
- Process to develop the new WCB will include a thorough vetting of the administration, enforcement and customer service aspects of the By-law with a view to improving all processes and procedures and generally improving customer service



Question and Answer





Thank you very much for your participation and interest in this project.

