

Peterborough County Watershed Plan (Equivalent): Phase 1 Engagement Summary (March 2025)

Highlights

What is this summary?	It is a summary of the engagement opportunities being provided as part of this project and what was heard during the first phase (i.e., Phase 1) of community engagement on the County’s first Watershed Plan.
When was Phase 1?	March 2025
Who did we reach out to?	<p>The County, with the support of the Montrose Environmental team, reached out to County Council, the Williams Treaties First Nations and representatives from governmental agencies, utilities companies, academic institutions, lake associations, land trusts and other environmental organizations from within and around the County.</p> <p>A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) consisting of representatives from the County, all eight local area municipalities, the City of Peterborough, four local conservation authorities and two First Nations with reservation lands in the County is also being engaged for this project.</p>
Why is the County undertaking a Watershed Plan?	To provide (1) a framework for sustainable and science-based planning that will support the protection of the County’s valued natural heritage and water resources, and (2) high-level guidance to inform updates to the County’s and local municipality Official Plans in accordance with current Provincial direction.
Who was engaged and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project web page for the Watershed Plan was created in February 2025 and is being maintained for all interested parties. • County Council was engaged with a presentation on March 19, 2025. • The TAC was first engaged with a virtual session held November 27, 2024 and again on March 20, 2025. • A virtual session for governmental agencies, utilities companies, academic institutions, lake associations, land trusts and other community and environmental organizations was held March 25, 2025. • A virtual session for First Nations was held March 26, 2025.
Where can I get more information?	See the project web page for the Watershed Plan for a copy of the Phase 1 slide deck and additional information as it becomes available.

What can we expect next?	The next opportunities for engagement are expected to be in the Fall of 2025.
Who can we contact?	Please reach out to the County at planning@ptbocounty.ca with questions or comments about this project at any time.

1 Introduction and Background

This project is to develop the first Watershed Plan for Peterborough County. A watershed plan is a tool that helps municipalities and other interested parties (a) understand the current condition of water and land resources in the study area and (b) plan for the future health of the watershed.

This Watershed Plan will (at a high level and using available desktop sources):

- assess the extent and condition of forests, wetlands, streams and groundwater in the study area
- consider anticipated environmental stressors and land use changes (such as climate change and urbanization)
- identify high-level strategies and tools to help maintain, and in some cases improve, environmental conditions in the watershed in the face of these stressors and land use

Watersheds in Ontario are categorized as primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary. Peterborough County is responsible for watershed planning at the tertiary and quaternary level. There are five tertiary and 26 quaternary watersheds that overlap with the County’s boundaries.

The intent of this Watershed Plan is to:

- address the requirements of the Provincial Planning Statement related to watershed planning
- provide a basis and framework for more detailed priority-based subwatershed studies in the future
- inform sustainable growth, infrastructure planning, and restoration efforts on a County-wide scale

Montrose Environmental Group (Montrose) is leading a multi-disciplinary team who is working closely with the County and a Technical Advisory Committee (comprised of representatives from the local First Nations, municipalities and conservation authorities) to develop this Watershed Plan on behalf of the County.

1.1 Project Phasing and Who Was Engaged in Phase 1

This project was initiated in the fall of 2024 and is to be completed over 2025 in the following three phases:

- Phase 1 - Project Launch and Background Review
- Phase 2 - Watershed Characterization and Draft Planning Strategies
- Phase 3 - Watershed Planning and Management Recommendations

Montrose, on behalf of the County, will be reaching out to and seeking input from interested individuals and organizations as part of each of the three phases of the Watershed Plan project. We have just completed Phase 1 and are starting Phase 2.

Phase 1 included outreach to all of the agencies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, institutions and associations listed below. Those who participated in the Phase 1 engagement are indicated with an asterisk.

In total, in addition to County Council, 40 individuals were engaged who represented over 30 different organizations and / or agencies and / or associations as part of the Phase 1 engagement.

Notably, many of those listed have also shared data and / or mapping, and some were not able to attend the Phase 1 sessions but indicated interest in future engagement.

It is anticipated that there will be some additions to this list as the project advances.

Phase 1 engagement included outreach to all listed here. Those able to participate in a virtual session are indicated with an asterisk (*). Those who shared information / insights but were unable to attend a Phase 1 session are noted with two asterisks ().**

County Council*

Includes representatives from all eight local area municipalities

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

- Municipality of Trent Lakes*
- Township of Asphodel-Norwood
- Township of Cavan Monaghan*
- Township of Douro-Dummer*
- Township of Havelock-Belmont-Methuen*
- Township of North Kawartha*
- Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan*
- Township of Selwyn*
- City of Peterborough*
- Crowe Valley Conservation*
- Ganaraska Conservation*
- Otonabee Region Conservation Authority*

- Kawartha Conservation*
- County of Peterborough (Project Lead)*

Williams Treaties First Nations

- Alderville First Nation**
- Beausoleil First Nation
- Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation
- Chippewas of Rama First Nation
- Curve Lake First Nation (also on TAC)*
- Hiawathas First Nation (also on TAC)*
- Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation*

Agencies, Institutions, and Utilities

- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (Peterborough)**
- Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (Peterborough)**
- Ontario Waterpower
- Peterborough Public Health
- Peterborough Utilities Inc.*
- Trent Severn Waterway at Parks Canada
- Trent University, various departments**

Lake and Cottage Associations

- Big Cedar Lake Road Committee (South Shore)
- Big Cedar Lake Stewardship Association*
- Birchcliff Property Owners Association of Douro-Dummer, Inc.
- Buckhorn Sands Property Owners Association
- Coon Lake Cottagers
- Chandos Lake Property Owners Association*
- Eels Lake Cottagers
- Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (Peterborough)*
- Jack's Lake Association
- Julian Lake Cottagers
- Juniper Point Cottage Owners' Association**
- Kawartha Park Cottagers Association
- Long and Loucks Lake Cottager's Association*
- Looncall Lake Cottagers Association*
- Lovesick Lake Association (LLA)*
- North Kawartha Lakes Association*
- Sandy Point Road Association

- Stoney Lake Cottagers
- Upper Stoney Lake Association*
- Wolf Lake Cottage Association*

Other Local Organizations

- Baxter Creek Watershed Alliance*
- Coalition for Equitable Water Flow (CEWF)*
- Environment Council for Clear, Stony and White Lakes (ECCSWL)*
- Ontario Woodlot Association**
- Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture (PCFA)
- Peterborough Field Naturalists*
- Kawartha Conservation and Climate Partnerships*
- Kawartha Lake Stewards Association (KLSA)*
- Kawartha Land Trust (KLT)*
- Mun. of Trent Lakes Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) - Shoreline Sub-Committee*
- Rice Lake Tourism Association
- Shoreline Conservation: Peterborough County
- Watersheds Canada*

2 Phase 1 Feedback

Participants of the Phase 1 engagement session were invited to ask any questions or provide any comments related to the project. They were also specifically asked if they had:

1. Any comments or concerns related to the background review / key findings to date?
2. Any concepts or words they think should be included in the vision and /or goals for the Watershed Plan?

The following sub-Sections 2.1 and 2.2 summarize what we heard grouped into responses to the two questions above. Additional questions, along with answers to questions, are summarized in Section 2.3 and additional comments are summarized in Section 2.4.

2.1 Additional Sources of Potentially Useful Data and / or Mapping

From County Council:

- Studies done for quarry projects may include useful data (e.g., floodplain mapping)
- Coalition for Equitable Waterflow [Ed. note: Added to the outreach list and participated in Phase 1]

From the TAC:

- Source Water Protection Areas mapping including the Trent Source Protection Plan. Data available from the Conservation Authorities at: <https://trentsourceprotection.on.ca/>
- Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Sites
- Data that supports the development of Conservation Authority Watershed Report Cards and Lake/Subwatershed Background Reports (e.g., Pigeon Lake Plan)
- Some/many of the Oak Ridges Moraine Groundwater Program collection points may actually be or include surface water data
- Professor of Aquatic Science at Trent University
- Lake Partner Program, administered by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (i.e., reach out to the Assistant Coordinator of Lake Partner Program)
- Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) [Ed. note: FOCA was already on the outreach list]
- There is lake line mapping (e.g., high water levels, hazard limits) in progress by Ganaraska Conservation and Otonabee River Conservation Authority.
- Southern Ontario Land Resource Information System (SOLRIS) mapping may inform natural heritage system mapping.

From First Nations:

- The Plan should note the limitations of the mapping and desktop data clearly and up front recognizing that most / all of the data is both incomplete (e.g., not all wetlands or significant wildlife habitats captured) and needs to be supplemented by area and site-specific studies.
- In addition, Indigenous perspectives are largely lacking in what is considered “significant” by the Province and County.

From lake associations and other community / environmental organizations:

- [The Land Between](#)
- Kawarthas Naturally Connected (KNC) work done in 2011 to identified a preferred Natural Heritage System (NHS) for the broader area. It included extensive analysis of desktop data and mapping but no field verification. I focussed on priority areas but excluded some natural features and areas. So, it may not be entirely appropriate as an NHS map but may be a valuable reference for identifying linkages.

- Species data from: NHIC, iNaturalist, eBird
- Ontario Woodlot Association (e.g., recent LiDAR analysis) [Ed. note: contact information provided following the engagement session]
- Surface water quality – see [Kawartha Lake Stewards Association \(KSLA\) website](#) (e.g., 2021 - 2024 reports)
- Detailed shoreline mapping for some lakes from Kawartha Land Trust
- Professor of Aquatic Science at Trent University / Kawartha Highlands water quality testing [Ed. note: contact information provided following the engagement session]
- Lake Plans – like [Lovesick Lake Plan](#)

2.2 Ideas/Concepts for the Watershed Vision and / or Goals

From the TAC:

- Support for building / drawing on some of the language from the County’s 2023-2026 Strategic Plan which was developed collaboratively with all local area municipalities.

From all engagement sessions:

- Lake shorelines are very high priority areas; protection and restoration of shoreline health
- Water quality (including shoreline naturalization / health, septic health)

From First Nations:

- See the [First Nations in Ontario Water Declaration](#); water is the “bloodline” of the people.
- The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) should guide Indigenous engagement in land use planning. [Ed. note: e.g., Article 25: *Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.*]

2.3 Other Questions and Answers Provided

From all engagement sessions:

- Q: Will this study recommend priorities for further work such as floodplain studies?
- A: Yes, at the quaternary watershed scale
- Q: Will the slide deck be shared?
- A: Yes, a generic and accessible slide deck will be made available. Please note this will include draft materials and should be considered part of a “working document”.
- Q: Will minutes be taken and shared?
- A: Yes, a consolidated and accessible summary of the engagement feedback will be made available following each phase of engagement.

From lake associations and other community / environmental organizations:

- Q: What is meant by natural heritage? Natural Heritage System?
- A: For this project it means identifying and protecting the natural features and areas as defined in the Provincial Planning Statement and the County's Official Plan. Specifically, this includes Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW) and other non-PSW wetlands, Significant Woodlands, Significant Valleylands, Significant Wildlife Habitat (SWH), Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs) plus habitat for Endangered and Threatened Species and fish habitat. To create an NHS these various layers are to be defined, identified and then layered on top of each other to form a system with additional linkages identified where appropriate and needed. Notably, we do not have complete or accurate data / mapping for a number of these features and there still needs to be discussion about how to define some of them.
- Q: Will agricultural systems be considered through this project.
- A: They will not be the focus but will be considered peripherally (e.g., land cover assessments).
- Q: How will the results of the Watershed Planning process be used, and by what governments and agencies?
- A: The results of this plan will include:
 - An assessment (including County-wide mapping where possible) of available groundwater, surface water and watercourse, aquatic habitat and terrestrial habitats at the tertiary watershed scale (e.g., Kawartha Lakes Watershed, Otonabee River Watershed)
 - Summary of quaternary subwatershed characteristics (constraints, opportunities, considerations) for those subwatersheds that are directly or indirectly affected by urban development
 - An identification of key gaps to be filled as part of future studies (i.e., at the quaternary watershed scale)
 - High-level recommendations for protection and management of the water and natural heritage resources in the County in a context of urbanization pressures in the south, shoreline pressures across the county, and climate change

It is anticipated that this information and guidance will be primarily be used by the County and local area municipalities to help them sustainably manage growth and intensification pressures, and as a basis for future more detailed subwatershed studies.

- Q: Will the Plan provide data on what water bodies have reached, or are about to reach, their capacity to absorb new development and/or re-development without significant negative environmental impacts?
- A: No, it will not. However, it could potentially recommend Official Plan policies to encourage or require such studies and/or related monitoring be done.
- Q: Will the County and Townships use the Plan to help determine where future waterfront development and/or re-development should be prohibited, restricted, or allowed?

- A: Not specifically. However, it is expected to recommend Official Plan policies as well as management approaches that support sustainable waterfront/shoreline development.
- Q: Will the Plan be used to help guide management of water levels on the TSW (Trent-Severn Waterway) and feeder lakes? Greatly fluctuating water levels have significant impacts on fish spawning habitat and contribute to shoreline erosion.
- A: No. This study will not go into sufficient detail to be able to guide management of water levels. The Plan could, however, raise this as an item requiring further study (e.g., to understand erosion hazards, to protect the natural environment, etc.).
- Q: Would it be possible to have a more detailed project schedule and task list?
- A: Yes – see Table 1 below

Table 1 Outline of the Project Objectives and Relevant Tasks and Deliverables by Project Phase

Project Objectives	Relevant Task/Deliverable
Phase 1: Project Launch (including Background Review and Work Plan Confirmation)	
Conduct an in-depth review and technical summary of existing information and studies and undertake a process to create a Watershed Plan that aligns the County with policies and direction of Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) and Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.	Task 1-1 Data Compilation and Organization/Review Task 1-2 Watershed and Sub-watershed Delineation Task 1-3 Data Gap Analysis Task 1-4 Confirm Technical Work Plan and Engagement Process Task 1-5 Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Start-up meeting Task 1-6 Phase 1 Technical Memo Task 1-7 Phase 1 Engagement Meetings – Project Launch
Collaborate with local First Nations, municipalities, Conservation Authorities and the City of Peterborough to identify available background materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task 1-7.a Presentation to Council • Task 1-7.b TAC • Task 1-7.c First Nations • Task 1-7.d External Parties
Undertake a comprehensive and effective engagement process with all stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task 1-7.e Phase 1 Targeted Interviews Task 1-8 Phase 1 Feedback Record and Comment Dispositioning
Phase 2: Watershed Characterization and Planning (including Development of Vision, Goals, Objectives and Targets)	
Develop and conduct an in-depth review and technical summary of Watershed Planning elements as outlined in the PPS which include: water quantity and water budgets, water quality assessments, natural hazards, climate change, natural systems, cumulative effects, and land use and management scenarios.	Task 2-1 Watershed Existing Conditions, Issues/Constraints Task 2-2 Policy Review for Watershed Planning Task 2-3 Establish Vision, Goals, and Objectives Task 2-4 Develop Preliminary Natural Heritage System (NHS) Task 2-5 Develop Preliminary Water Resources System (WRS) Task 2-6 Integration considerations for NHS and WRS Task 2-7 Phase 2 Technical Memo
Prepare input for and gain approval for Municipal policies which implement the Vision, Goals, Objectives and Targets of the Watershed Plan.	Task 2-8 Phase 2 Engagement Meetings– Input to Vision, Goals, Objectives, Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task 2-8.a TAC • Task 2-8.b First Nations • Task 2-8.c External Parties

Project Objectives	Relevant Task/Deliverable
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task 2-8.d Phase 2 Targeted Interviews Task 2-9 Phase 2 Feedback Record and Comment Dispositioning
Phase 3: Watershed Management and Monitoring (e.g., Recommended Policies, Guidelines, Prioritizing Next Studies)	
Create general guidelines for development and infrastructure projects that incorporate watershed protection and climate change scenarios in accordance with the Watershed Plan.	Task 3-1 Water Management Guidance (Quantity/quality) Task 3-2 Climate Change Guidance and Natural Hazards Task 3-3 Cumulative Impact Guidance Task 3-4 Land Use Impact Management Task 3-5 Future Subwatershed Studies / Priorities
Provide recommended policy updates to the County's Official Plan based on the findings of the Watershed Plan.	Task 3-6 Recommend Policy Updates for County Official Plan Task 3-7 Monitoring and Adaptive Management Task 3-8 Guidance on local Outreach and Stewardship
Identify and prioritize subwatersheds based on existing or planned development pressures. Priority listing would be used for the development of subwatershed plans.	Task 3-9 Draft Watershed Plan Document and Geodatabase Task 3-10 Phase 3 Engagement – Input to Draft Watershed Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task 3-10.a TAC Task 3-10.b First Nations
Create guidance and procedures for ongoing watershed monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task 3-10.c External Parties
Further local stewardship, education, and outreach initiatives focused on watershed protection and climate adaptation.	Task 3-11 Final Watershed Plan, GIS and Phase 3 Comment Disposition Task 3-12 TAC Meeting - Final Watershed Plan Task 3-13 Presentation to Council

2.4 Other Comments

From County Council and lake associations and other community / environmental organizations:

- Recognize there is a lot of data to assemble and sift through. Pleased to see this Plan being advanced.

From the County:

- There are currently three Natural Heritage System (NHS) currently “out there” for Peterborough County: the 2021 NHS mandated by the Province (but no longer mandated), the 2022 Refined NHS put forward by the County (still draft) and the Kawartha’s Naturally Connected (KNC) Preferred NHS based on work done in 2011 (generally supported by the County but with some reservations). All of these are being considered at this time.

From the TAC:

- There are examples of planning tools for shoreline protection from other jurisdictions that should be considered. For example, Lake Simcoe Protection Plan, jurisdictions in the Muskokas. This is currently a gap in the County Official Plan.

From all engagement sessions:

- There is more intensive development pressure in the southern part of the County, but there is also more diffuse development / redevelopment pressure on a number of lake shorelines elsewhere in the County.

From First Nations:

- Williams Treaties First Nations never gave up their treaty rights related to having access to clean water. Planning /development in and near water is becoming more of a concern.
- Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) mapping and mapping of unevaluated wetlands is incomplete. This should be acknowledged in the Plan. This mapping system also fails to incorporate Indigenous perspectives which consider all wetlands “significant” irrespective of their size. Wetlands are generally of high ecological and cultural significance to Indigenous communities for many reasons including:
 - They support plants and wildlife that are a “medicine chest” and food source for the community;
 - Having multiple wetlands in the landscape allows the community to rotate among them from year to year and not overharvest in any one area; and
 - Wetlands, even if unevaluated, hold ecological and cultural significance for First Nations.
- Similarly, Species at Risk in Ontario mapping / knowledge is incomplete and fails to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and knowledge. They have their own species of concern such as Black Ash (used for basket making), Maples and Birch trees (for tapping), etc.
- Cumulative effects of land use changes are a key concern. Key concerns include:
 - Land development affecting Indigenous archaeological sites and traditional plant species,
 - Expansion of quarries and aggregate operations threatening groundwater filtration systems and cultural heritage sites
- Indigenous communities assert that treaties protect wetlands, water access, and beaver dams.
- A Friendship Accord was signed by the First Nations, county and two area municipalities.

From lake associations and other community / environmental organizations:

- Invasive plant species are a concern in some lakes (e.g., Big Cedar Lake, Eurasian milfoil).
- Watersheds Canada has funding to support naturalization / restoration on private lands on a first come first serve basis in the County. Do a range of applied projects (e.g., have restored more than 40 km of shorelines across Canada, completed more than 55 fish habitat creation projects, etc.).
- It might be helpful to see the coverage of the different NHS compared.
- The County often focuses on southern part of County because that is where the most intensive development pressures are being felt; but there is also a need for some stronger policies and / or regulations for shorelines in the northern part of the County.