

## **BIG EAST RIVER DELTA HERITAGE AREA**

### **BACKGROUND**

During the summers of 1990 to 1992 fieldwork was completed to assess candidate areas in Muskoka for their heritage value. A final report was produced in 1994. In total 48 heritage areas and 11 heritage sites were recognized as being significant within Muskoka.

The current District Official Plan policies that pertain to heritage areas were approved in 1991. These policies need to be reviewed and enhanced where appropriate to help deal with land use issues related to the heritage areas. Heritage areas are at the very heart of what makes Muskoka such a unique and vibrant place.

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### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AREA**

Location: Chaffey Township, Huntsville

Size: 297 hectares

Features: This feature is located at the end of the Big East River hydrological system, which is the largest of the two rivers feeding into the North Muskoka River. The active delta is set between ridges and knobs of the underlying gneissic bedrock, which support Sugar Maple-Red Maple successional deciduous stands. The heavy sediment load carried by the river is deposited as levees as it meets the deeper waters of Lake Vernon.

### **CRITERIA FULFILLED:**

Distinctive Landform

Representation

Diversity

Rare Species

Fish and Wildlife Concentrations

Size and Linkage

Biogeographic Significance

### **OWNERSHIP & DISTURBANCE**

Ownership: The area is entirely privately owned. The area is designated as a Provincially Significant Wetland.

Most of the residential and cottage development is along the road on the southern boundary of the site and along the river upstream from the delta. Much of the delta feature is relatively undisturbed.

### **SENSITIVITY**

The sensitivity of the site is related to the wetland ecology of the delta.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Muskoka is reviewing existing land use policies within the District Official Plan as they relate to heritage areas. Landowner, agency and interest group involvement in the process will help determine appropriate policy for these valuable natural areas, and will help to identify local concerns and issues.