

MORRISON LAKE WETLAND 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.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AREA

Location: Wood Township, Gravenhurst

Size: 425 hectares

Features: The site includes a shallow channel of Morrison Lake between Mile Island and the west shore, together with its immediate watershed and most of Morrison Creek as it drains the lake south into the Severn River. The upland areas of the site are gently rolling gneissic bedrock ridges, with a shallow, discontinuous mantle of sandy glacial till. The site includes a number of shoreline and interior wetlands.

CRITERIA FULFILLED:

Representation

Rare Species

Diversity

Fish and Wildlife Concentrations

Biogeographic Significance

OWNERSHIP & DISTURBANCE

Ownership: Approximately 60% of the area is privately owned. The area is a Provincially Significant Wetland the Crown land portions fall within a Conservation Reserve.

The disturbance associated with shoreline development has fragmented many of the Atlantic Coastal Plain communities, although those located along and at the mouth of Morrison Creek are relatively intact.

SENSITIVITY

The sensitivity of the area is related to the hydrological functioning of the wetland ecology and especially the Atlantic Coastal Plain communities that are vulnerable to changes in the natural fluctuations of the water levels.

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.