

RE INGERSOLL 1 SOLAR PROJECT

Natural Heritage
Evaluation of Significance Report

September 2, 2011

RECURRENT
ENERGY





RE Ingersoll 1 ULC

Natural Heritage
Evaluation of Significance Report

RE Ingersoll 1 Solar Project

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Project Report

September 2, 2011

RE Ingersoll 1 ULC
RE Ingersoll 1 Solar Project

Natural Heritage Evaluation of Significance

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Description

RE Ingersoll 1 ULC is proposing to develop and operate a 9.5-megawatt (MW) solar photovoltaic (PV) facility, on an approximately 40-hectare (ha) parcel of land, located in the Townships of South-West Oxford and Zorra, County of Oxford, approximately 6 km northeast of the City of Ingersoll (Figure 1.1); herein referred to as “RE Ingersoll 1” or the “Project”.

1.2 Legislative Requirements

Ontario Regulation (O. Reg.) 359/09 – *Renewable Energy Approvals Under Part V.0.1 of the Act*, (herein referred to as the REA Regulation) made under the *Environmental Protection Act* identifies the Renewable Energy Approval (REA) requirements for renewable energy projects in Ontario. As per Section 4 of the REA Regulation, ground-mounted solar facilities with a nameplate capacity greater than 10 kilowatts (kW) are classified as Class 3 solar facilities and do require an REA.

Section 24 (1) of the REA Regulation requires proponents of Class 3 solar projects to undertake a natural heritage evaluation of significance for each natural feature identified in the course of the records review and site investigation.

Natural features are defined in Section 1.1 of the REA Regulation to be all or part of

- a) an area of natural and scientific interest (ANSI) (earth science)
- b) an ANSI (life science)
- c) a coastal wetland
- d) a northern wetland
- e) a southern wetland
- f) a valleyland
- g) a wildlife habitat, or
- h) a woodland.

1.2.1 Records Review Report

Section 25 of the REA Regulation requires proponents of Class 3 solar projects to undertake a natural heritage records review to identify “whether the project is,

- (a) in a natural feature
- (b) within 50 m of an area of natural and scientific interest (earth science)
- (c) within 120 m of a natural feature that is not an area of natural or scientific interest (earth science).” (O. Reg. 359/09, s. 25, Table).

Subsection 2 of Section 30 of the REA Regulation requires the proponent to prepare a report “setting out a summary of the records searched and the results of the analysis” (O. Reg. 359/09). The Natural Heritage Records Review Report (Hatch Ltd., 2010a) was prepared to meet these requirements.

1.2.2 Site Investigation Report

Section 26 of the REA Regulation requires proponents of Class 3 solar projects to undertake a natural heritage site investigation for the purpose of determining

- whether the results of the analysis summarized in the (natural heritage records review) report prepared under subsection 25 (3) are correct or require correction, and identifying any required corrections
- whether any additional natural features exist, other than those that were identified in the (natural heritage records review) report prepared under subsection 30 (2)
- the boundaries, located within 120 m of the Project location, of any natural feature that was identified in the records review or the site investigation
- the distance from the Project location to the boundaries determined under clause (c).

The Natural Heritage Site Investigations Report (Hatch Ltd., 2010b) was prepared to meet these requirements.

1.2.3 Evaluation of Significance Report

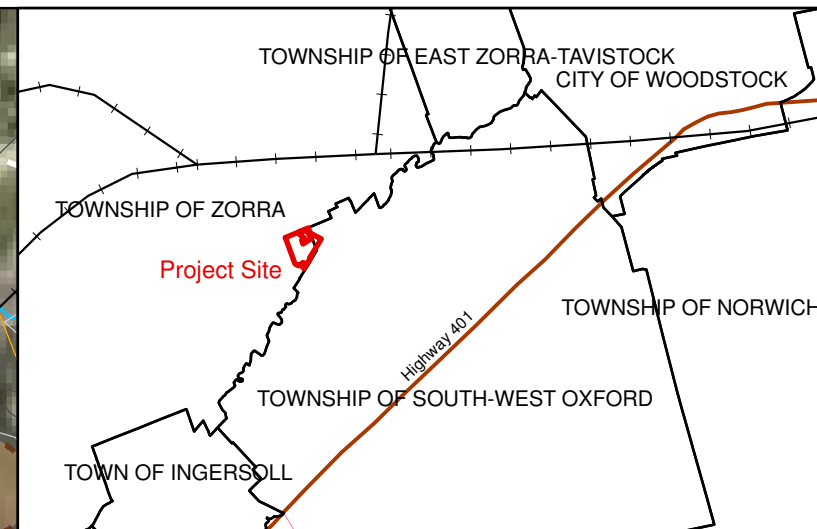
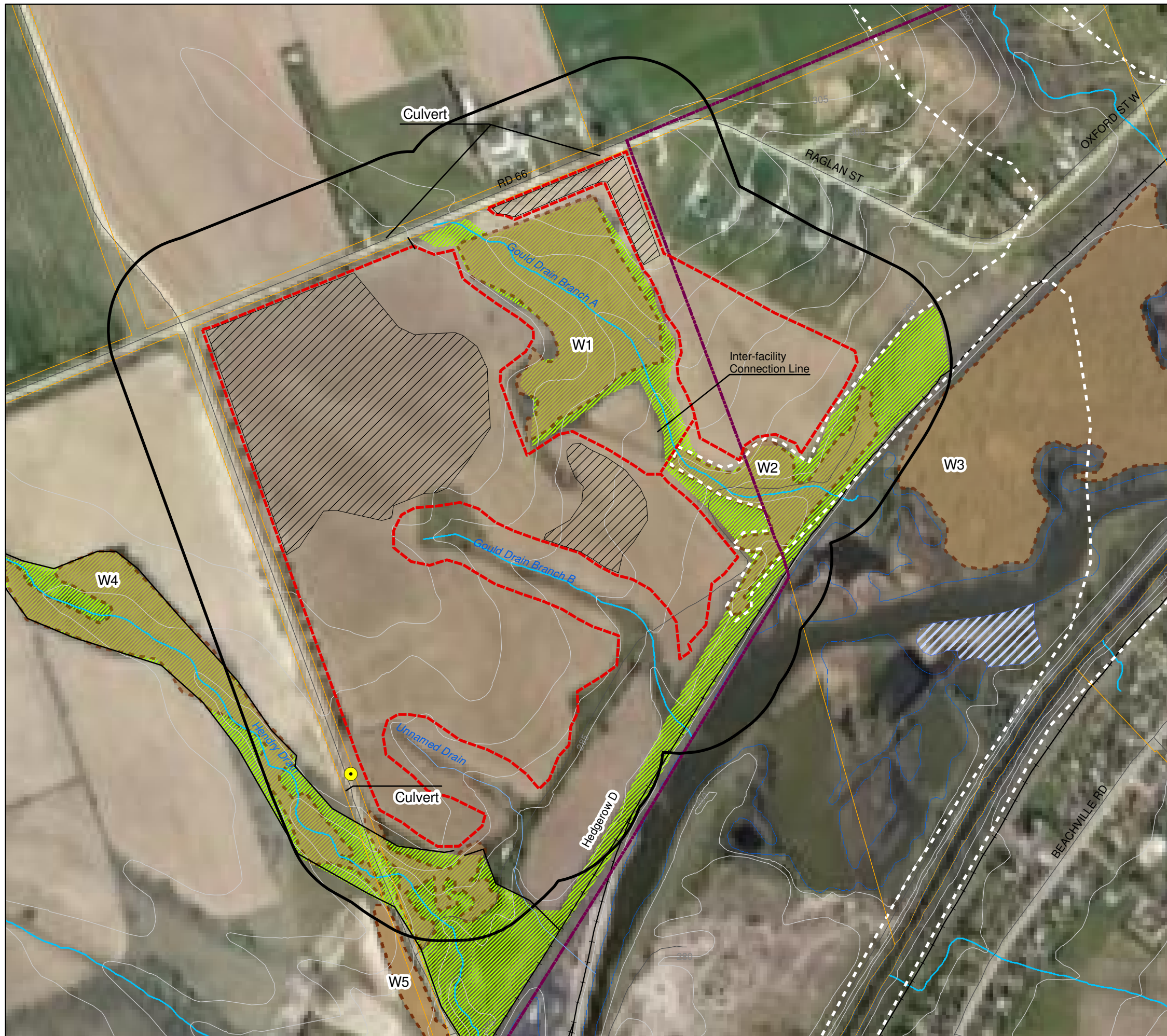
Section 27 of the REA Regulation requires proponents of Class 3 solar projects to undertake an evaluation of significance (EOS) report for natural heritage features identified during the records review and site investigation that sets out

- a determination of whether the natural feature is
 - ◆ provincially significant
 - ◆ significant
 - ◆ not significant
 - ◆ not provincially significant
- a summary of the evaluation criteria or procedures used to make the determinations
- the name and qualifications of any person who applied to evaluation criteria or procedures.

This EOS Report for the natural features identified within 120 m of the Project has been prepared to meet these requirements.

1.3 Evaluation of Significance Report Format

Section 1 of this EOS has identified the legislative requirements for an EOS under the REA Regulation and identified the reasons why an EOS is required for the Project. Section 2 provides a summary of the results of the records review and site investigation. Section 3 provides the evaluation of significance for wildlife habitat, while Section 4 provides the evaluation of significance for the valleyland, and Section 5 provides the evaluation of significance for the woodlands. Section 6



Legend

- Roads
- Topographic Contour (5m interval)
- Watercourse
- Parcels
- Wetland Area
- Woodland (beyond 120m)
- W1 Woodland Identifier

Project Components

- Connection Point With Existing Distribution Line
- Temporary Construction Laydown Area
- Project Location
- 120m Buffer from Project Location

Significant Natural Features

- Animal Movement Corridor
- Significant Woodland (within 120m)
- Valleylands/Animal Movement Corridor

0 75 150 300 Metres

1:5000

Notes: Base data downloaded from www.geographynetwork.ca, other environmental data from LIO. UTRCA data provided by UTRCA March 2010. UTM NAD83, March 2010.

Figure 1.1
 Recurrent Energy
RE Ingersoll 1
 Project Location
 and Significant
 Natural Heritage Features **HATCH™**

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identifies the conclusions of the evaluation of significance, and the references are provided in Section 7.

2. Summary of Results of Records and Review and Site Investigation

As stated above, natural features requiring an EOS are identified through the records review (Hatch Ltd., 2010a) and site investigation (Hatch Ltd., 2010b) required under Sections 25 and 26 of the REA Regulation, respectively. These studies have already been completed, and the results are summarized in Table 2.1. This report provides the evaluations for the features identified in Table 2.1:

- animal movement corridors associated with Branch A of Gould Drain, and Hendry Drain
- woodlands within 120 m of the Project location
- valleyland, and associated animal movement corridor.

Table 2.1 Natural Features on and within 120 m of the Subject Lands

Natural Feature	Project Location	Adjacent Lands (within 120 m)
ANSI – Earth Science	No	No
ANSI – Life Science	No	No
Valleyland	No	Yes
Wetland	No	No
Woodland	No	Yes
Wildlife Habitat	Yes	Yes

3. Wildlife Habitat – Evaluation of Significance

3.1 Description of Natural Feature

Animal movement corridors were the sole candidate significant wildlife habitat identified on and within 120 m of the Project location.

3.2 Evaluation Criteria and Guidelines for Wildlife Habitat, and Determination of Significance

The criteria processes outlined in the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) Natural Heritage Reference Manual (NHRM) (MNR, 2009) and Significant Wildlife Habitat Technical Guide (SWHTG) (MNR, 2000) are used to evaluate the significance of wildlife habitat. The specific criteria used in the evaluation from these sources are discussed by habitat type below.

3.2.1 Animal Movement Corridors

Potential animal movement corridors were identified in Branch A of Gould Drain on and within 120 m of the Project location, and the valleyland and Hendry Drain within 120 m of the Project location.

Evaluation methodology of animal movement corridors is identified within Section 8.7 of the SWHTG. The criteria for significance are outlined in Table Q-4 of Appendix Q in the SWHTG, and include the following:

- Importance of areas to be linked by corridor – Areas linking critical habitats/significant areas.
- Importance of corridor to survival of target species – Corridors linking significant or critical habitat for a target species.
- Dimensions of corridor – Most significant corridors should be at least 200 m wide.
- Continuity of corridor – Corridor should be unbroken.
- Habitat and habitat structure of corridor – Corridor with several layers of vegetation and other structures, such as watercourses.
- Species found in corridor or presumed to be using corridor – Corridors with high species diversity are significant.
- Risk of mortality for species using corridor – Corridors with low risk of road kills or adjacent to residential areas.
- Opportunity for protection – Corridors within areas that may be protected, such as undeveloped shorelines or borders of conservation areas.
- Provision of other related values (such as erosion protection).

The drains and valleyland are discussed separately below.

- Branch A of Gould Drain – This corridor links upland areas with the Thames River valley, a feature of significance within this portion of the province. This corridor is likely used by species such as deer, reptiles, and birds as they move from the river valley into the non-significant woodland and agricultural fields that may be used for foraging. This corridor represents one of three movement corridors from the Thames River valley between Beachville and the quarry operations, and is considered to be the least significant of these corridors given that it ends at Raglan St, and is not as wide or as sheltered as the corridors east and west of the Project location. Much of the corridor is narrow and does not contain several layers of vegetation, and therefore risk of mortality of species using the corridor is high. The corridor does have opportunities for protection given that much of the corridor is designated as hazard lands by the Conservation Authority. Vegetation within the corridor also provides water quality and erosion protection for the Gould Drain and eventually the South Thames River. As several of the criteria have been met (i.e., linkage from shelter to foraging, opportunities for protection, water quality and erosion protection), this corridor is considered to be significant.
- Hendry Drain – This corridor links upland areas with the Thames River valley, a feature of significance within this portion of the province. As a permanent waterbody, this corridor may be of importance for semi-aquatic species, such as amphibians and reptiles, as they move from the Thames River Valley to upland breeding habitats that may be present more than 120 m from the Project location. This corridor is also likely used by species such as deer, reptiles, and birds as they move from the river valley into the non-significant woodland and agricultural fields that

may be used for foraging. This corridor represents one of three movement corridors from the Thames River valley between Beachville (east of the Project location) and the quarry operations (west of the Project location). Portions of the corridor are narrow, however much of the corridor is wider than Branch A of Gould Drain and contains several layers of vegetation. The corridor does have opportunities for protection given that much of the corridor is designated as hazard lands by the Conservation Authority. Vegetation within the corridor also provides water quality and erosion protection for the Hendry Drain and eventually the South Thames River. As several of the criteria have been met (i.e., linkage from shelter to breeding habitat, opportunities for protection, water quality and erosion protection), this corridor is considered to be significant.

- Hedgerow D – This corridor links Hendry Drain, the Thames River Valleyland, and Gould Drain Branch A. This corridor is likely used by species such as deer, reptiles, and birds as they move from the river valley into the Hendry Drain corridor, and adjacent agricultural fields that may be used for foraging. This corridor is considered to be important for connectivity between the Thames River valleyland, Gould Drain Branch A and Hendry Drain without requiring crossing of the rail corridor. Much of the corridor is narrow and does not contain several layers of vegetation, and therefore risk of mortality of species using the corridor is high. The corridor is located on private land and therefore there is no protection ensured. As a criteria has been met (i.e., linkage between significant corridors), this corridor is considered to be significant.
- Thames River Valleyland – The Thames River Valleyland represents a critical animal movement corridor for semi-aquatic species such as turtles and frogs. This corridor also likely provides a movement corridor for waterfowl, other species of birds, mammals, and other reptiles. As a result, this corridor is identified as a significant animal movement corridor and no further evaluation is required.

3.2.2 Overall Evaluation

Based on the above evaluation, Branch A of the Gould Drain, Hendry Drain, Hedgerow D, and the Thames River valleyland are considered to be significant animal movement corridors.

3.3 Date of Beginning and Completion of Evaluation

The evaluation of wildlife habitat commenced with records reviews in June 2009 and is finalized with the completion of this report in November 2010. A site visit was completed in association with this evaluation on June 15, 2009 and May 12, 2010.

3.4 Name and Qualifications of Evaluator

Evaluations of wildlife habitat were completed by Sean K. Male of Hatch Ltd.

Sean K. Male, M.Sc. is a Terrestrial Ecologist specializing in assessments of terrestrial habitat, flora and fauna. Sean received his Bachelors of Science (Honours) in Biology from Queen's University, where he completed his Honour's thesis under Dr. Raleigh J. Robertson, studying the impacts of nestbox density in Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) on nest-building behaviour. He then completed a Master's of Science degree in the Watershed Ecosystem Graduate Program at Trent University under Dr. Erica Nol. Sean's thesis focussed on examining the impacts of a Canadian diamond mine on a population of breeding passerines. For his thesis, Sean spent two summers in the Canadian Arctic studying populations of Lapland Longspurs (*Calcarius lapponicus*) around the

Ekati Diamond Mine, located 300 km northeast of Yellowknife. While at Trent, Sean participated in the Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) Migration Banding Project at the Oliver Centre. Following his time at Trent, Sean participated in the Landscape Monitoring Program, participating in a study of the impacts of woodlot size on breeding birds.

Sean joined Hatch Ltd. as a Terrestrial Ecologist in 2006. Since joining Hatch Ltd., Sean has participated in several environmental assessments, REAs and other regulatory approvals for hydro, wind and solar power developments as the terrestrial biologist specializing in field investigations identifying flora and fauna species, including species of significance. He has developed and implemented baseline monitoring and impact assessment programs for both terrestrial wildlife and plant communities, including detailed bird and bat studies for several wind power developments, including the proposed 100-MW Coldwell Wind Power Development near Marathon, Ontario, a proposed 20-MW facility near Port Dover, Ontario, and a proposed 110-MW wind facility in southwestern Ontario. Sean has also conducted terrestrial and wetland vegetation surveys for several proposed hydropower projects totalling over 40 MW in southern and northern Ontario and has participated in fisheries surveys for several of these projects.

4. Valleyland – Evaluation of Significance

4.1 Description of Natural Feature

Valleylands are described within Section 1 of O. Reg. 359/09 as “a natural area:

- (a) that is south and east of the Canadian Shield
- (b) that occurs in a valley or other landform depression that has water flowing through or standing for some period of the year”.

There is a valleyland present adjacent to the southern boundary of the Project location. This valleyland, shown in Figure 1.1, encompasses a branch of the Gould Drain as it flows toward the South Thames River valley. The valleyland in this area is encompassed within a deciduous woodland.

4.2 Evaluation Criteria/Procedure

The criteria used to establish valleylands within was established by the County of Oxford. The County of Oxford considered a valleyland to be significant, as defined in Section 3.4.2.4 of the Official Plan (County of Oxford, undated), when it was within the outer limits of the Regulatory Flood Plain or erosion hazard lands as identified by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

4.3 Date of Beginning and Completion of Evaluation

The date of the beginning and completion of the evaluation are unknown.

4.4 Determination of Significance

The valleyland in the vicinity of the Project location is identified as being significant on Schedule C-1 – Environmental Features Plan of the Official Plan of Oxford County.

4.5 Name and Qualifications of Evaluator

The evaluation of valleyland significance was completed by the County of Oxford. Names and qualifications of individuals completing the evaluation are not available.

5. Woodlands – Evaluation of Significance

5.1 Description of Natural Feature

Woodlands are described within Section 1 of O. Reg. 359/09 as “land,

- (a) that is south and east of the Canadian Shield
- (b) that has per hectare, at least
 - (i) 1000 trees of any size
 - (ii) 750 trees measuring over 5 cm in diameter
 - (iii) 500 trees measuring over 12 cm in diameter
 - (iv) 250 trees measuring over 20 cm in diameter
- (c) that does not include a cultivated fruit or nut orchard or a plantation established for the purpose of producing Christmas trees.”

There are several woodlands identified within 120 m of the Project location. These woodlands are identified in Figure 1.1, and are labeled as Woodland (W) 1 through 6. All of these woodlands are deciduous woodlands consistent with the regional area.

5.2 Evaluation Criteria and Guidelines for Evaluating Significance of Woodlands

All woodlands of the study area were initially assessed as part of the Oxford Natural Heritage Study (ONHS) (Oxford County, 2006). THE ONHS conducted a landscape level study aimed at identifying significant terrestrial habitats. As part of the study, all patches were reviewed manually, and the boundaries corrected. Following the identification of patches, they were evaluated using a set of criteria (identified within Table 2 of the ONHS). The criteria for terrestrial patches include the following:

- Ecological Function
 - ◆ patches that contain rare species
 - ◆ patches that contain habitat designated in the Official Plans of the County of Oxford
 - ◆ patches within 150 m of designated, non-wetland habitats in the Official Plans (e.g., Life Science ANSIs, Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and other protected areas) or within 750 m of designated wetland habitats in the Official Plan (e.g., Provincially and Locally Significant Wetlands)
 - ◆ patches > 10 ha in size
 - ◆ patches with interior habitat

- ◆ patches that occur within well-head capture zones or intrinsic groundwater susceptibility areas
- ◆ patches that contain an open watercourse or are within 50 m of an open watercourse.
- Representation
 - ◆ patches with the largest amount of area on each landform and soil type in the County of Oxford and all patches that occur on valley lands
 - ◆ patches that contain large amounts of each natural vegetation community type: wet conifer >4 ha, wet mixed >60 ha, shrub >4 ha, wet deciduous >45 ha, conifer >15 ha and mixed >45 ha, open wetland >10 ha and deciduous >20 ha.

The criteria used in the ONHS address many of the criteria for establishing woodland significance identified within Table 15 of Appendix B of the Natural Heritage Reference Manual (MNR, 2009). The criteria identified within Table 15 are

- woodland size
- ecological function
 - ◆ woodland interior
 - ◆ proximity to other woodlands or other habitats
 - ◆ linkages
 - ◆ water protection
 - ◆ woodland diversity
- uncommon characteristics
- economic and social functional values.

Of those criteria identified within Table 15 of Appendix B, those that were not considered within the ONHS are linkages, uncommon characteristics, and economic and social values. The criteria used to assess the three non-significant woodlands within 120 m of the Project location are as follows:

- Linkages
 - ◆ Woodlands should be considered significant if they provide a connecting link between two other significant features each of which is within a specified distance (e.g., 120 m) and meet minimum area thresholds (e.g., 1 to 20 ha depending on circumstance). For the current Project, this would be a minimum of 2 ha in size given the amount of forest cover (12.5% according to the ONHS) within the land base.
- Uncommon Characteristics
 - ◆ Woodlands should be considered significant if they have
 - a unique species composition or site
 - a vegetation community with a provincial ranking of S1, S2, or S3
 - important habitat or a rare, uncommon, or restricted woodland plant species

- characteristics of older woodlands or woodlands with larger tree size structure in native species.
- Economic and Social Functional Values
 - ◆ Woodlands should be considered significant if they have
 - a high productivity in terms of economic value products together with continuous native natural attributes
 - a high value in special services, such as air quality improvement or recreation at a sustainable level that is compatible with long-term retention
 - important identified appreciation, education, cultural or historical value.

5.3 Date of Beginning and Completion of Evaluation

The ONHS was initiated through several pre-project meetings between November 2003 and January 2005, with work on the ONHS undertaken starting in January 2005 and completed in October 2006.

Investigations of woodlands assessed as not significant in the ONHS were commenced in May 2009 and finalized in May 2010, with the completion of this report.

5.4 Determination of Significance

5.4.1 Woodland 1

Woodland 1 met none of the criteria for significance identified within the ONHS (County of Oxford, 2006). As a result, Hatch Ltd. completed an assessment of those criteria not considered as part of the ONHS. The results are summarized below.

- Linkages – Woodland 1 meets the standard of significance for linkages as it is part of a natural heritage system associated with the significant valleyland and significant animal movement corridor of Gould Drain Branch A.
- Uncommon Characteristics – Woodland 1 does not meet the standard of significance for this criteria as
 - ◆ the woodland is not comprised of a unique species composition or site – the woodland is consistent with communities in the regional area
 - ◆ the woodland vegetation community does not have a provincial ranking of S1, S2, or S3
 - ◆ the woodland does not provide important habitat for a rare, uncommon, or restricted woodland plant species
 - ◆ the woodland does not have the characteristics of older woodlands or woodlands with larger tree size structure in native species.
- Economic and Social Functional Values – Woodland 1 does not meet the standard of significance for this criteria as
 - ◆ there is no economic value currently realized from this woodland

- ◆ there is no evidence of recreational use within the woodland, and it is not known to provide any additional economic or social species services
- ◆ there is no evidence of appreciation, education, cultural or historical value associated with the woodland on site. Consultation with the local municipalities as part of the REA process also did not identify any such value associated with the site.

Therefore, Woodland 1 meets the criteria for significance and is classified as “Significant”.

5.4.2 Woodland 2

Woodland 2 met none of the criteria for significance identified within the ONHS (County of Oxford, 2006).

As a result, Hatch Ltd. completed an assessment of those criteria not considered as part of the ONHS. The results are summarized below.

- Linkages – Woodland 2 meets the standard of significance for linkages as it is part of a natural heritage system associated with the significant valleyland and significant animal movement corridor of Gould Drain Branch A.
- Uncommon Characteristics – Woodland 2 does not meet the standard of significance for this criteria as
 - ◆ the woodland is not comprised of a unique species composition or site – the woodland is consistent with communities in the regional area
 - ◆ the woodland vegetation community does not have a provincial ranking of S1, S2, or S3
 - ◆ the woodland does not provide important habitat for a rare, uncommon, or restricted woodland plant species
 - ◆ the woodland does not have the characteristics of older woodlands or woodlands with larger tree size structure in native species.
- Economic and Social Functional Values – Woodland 2 does not meet the standard of significance for this criteria as
 - ◆ there is no economic value currently realized from this woodland
 - ◆ there is no evidence of recreational use within the woodland, and it is not known to provide any additional economic or social species services
 - ◆ there is no evidence of appreciation, education, cultural or historical value associated with the woodland on site. Consultation with the local municipalities as part of the REA process also did not identify any such value associated with the site.

Therefore, Woodland 2 meets the criteria for significance and is classified as “Significant”.

5.4.3 Woodland 3

Woodland 3 was identified as significant in the ONHS (County of Oxford, 2006). The woodland met the criteria for significance as

- a patch greater than 10 ha in size
- a patch with interior forest habitat
- a patch that occurs within well-head capture zones or intrinsic groundwater susceptibility areas
- a patch that occurs on valley lands.

5.4.4 Woodland 4

Woodland 4 met none of the criteria for significance identified within the ONHS (County of Oxford, 2006).

As a result, Hatch Ltd. completed an assessment of those criteria not considered as part of the ONHS. The results are summarized below.

- Linkages – Woodland 4 meets the standard of significance for linkages as it is part of a natural heritage system associated with the Thames River valley and significant animal movement corridor of Hendry Drain.
- Uncommon Characteristics – Woodland 4 does not meet the standard of significance for this criteria as
 - ◆ the woodland is not comprised of a unique species composition or site – the woodland is consistent with communities in the regional area
 - ◆ the woodland vegetation community does not have a provincial ranking of S1, S2, or S3
 - ◆ the woodland does not provide important habitat for a rare, uncommon, or restricted woodland plant species
 - ◆ the woodland does not have the characteristics of older woodlands or woodlands with larger tree size structure in native species.
- Economic and Social Functional Values – Woodland 4 does not meet the standard of significance for this criteria as
 - ◆ there is no economic value currently realized from this woodland
 - ◆ there is no evidence of recreational use within the woodland, and it is not known to provide any additional economic or social species services
 - ◆ there is no evidence of appreciation, education, cultural or historical value associated with the woodland on site. Consultation with the local municipalities as part of the REA process also did not identify any such value associated with the site.

Therefore, Woodland 4 meets the criteria for significance and is classified as “Significant”.

5.4.5 Woodland 5

Woodland 5 was identified as significant in the ONHS (County of Oxford, 2006). The woodland met the criteria for significance of a patch that occurs within well-head capture zones or intrinsic groundwater susceptibility areas.

5.5 Name and Qualifications of Evaluator

Woodland evaluations as part of the ONHS were completed by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Technical support toward completion of the ONHS was also provided by the Grand River, Long Point Region and Catfish Creek conservation authorities. Individual staff and their qualifications with respect to completing the ONHS are unknown at this time.

Evaluations of woodlands that were not identified as significant in the ONHS were completed by Sean K. Male of Hatch Ltd. (qualification provided in Section 3.5).

6. Conclusions

Results of the evaluation of significance are summarized in Table 6.1

An environmental impact study conducted according to the requirements of Section 38 (2) of O. Reg. 359/09 will be required in order to construct Project components within 120 m of these significant natural features.

Table 6.1 Significant Natural Features on and within 120 m of the Subject Lands

Natural Feature		Subject Lands	Adjacent Lands (within 120 m)	Notes
SIGNIFICANT	Woodland	No	Yes	There are five significant woodlands within 120 m of the Project location.
	Wildlife Habitat	Yes	Yes	Significant animal movement corridors are found on and within 120 m of the Project location.
	Valleyland	No	Yes	
PROVINCIALY SIGNIFICANT	Wetland	No	No	
	Earth Science ANSI	No	No	
	Life Science ANSI	No	No	

7. References

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