

NEW PROPERTY ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

MMLT's goal is to protect as much ecologically valuable habitat as feasible and to use these natural areas as a healing backdrop to help meet the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual needs of people. MMLT protects the significant ecological values of these areas that currently or could, in the future, contribute significantly to the conservation of biodiversity and environmental heritage in MMLT's catchment. This is accomplished through direct property ownership or by holding Conservation Agreements.

In contemplating the acquisition of a property or engagement in a Conservation Agreement with a landowner, MMLT will consider consistency with its mission, goals and priorities, and the organization's capacity and ability to fulfill perpetual stewardship responsibilities.

MMLT evaluates properties based on Ecological Quality, Community Engagement Potential, and Stewardship Requirements:

Ecological Quality

1. Enlarge protected lands: properties adjacent to MMLT protected lands, properties adjacent to other protected areas that significantly enhance the ecodiversity and biodiversity of the protected area.

2. Size and configuration: Large properties (> 500 ac. of natural habitat) with a shape that maximizes interior habitat (the area > 100m from human activity) and minimizes adjacent human influence.

3. Designated, minimally protected, ecologically significant areas: Areas such as Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW) or Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) (both protected only by policy) and Important Bird Areas (not legally protected) as well as adjacent lands that support the ecological functions of these areas. Wetland complexes are particularly at risk because only the wetlands and not their hydrological linkages or surrounding terrestrial matrix is protected.

4. Ecodiversity and Biodiversity: exceptionally rich ecodiversity (many different habitats) and biodiversity (many different species).

5. Natural Linkages: properties occurring in a belt of natural habitat connecting areas of high ecodiversity or biodiversity. Linkages at both the landscape scale (e.g., linking Pakenham Mountain to Mississippi Lake) and at smaller scales (e.g., between two properties) are considered.

6. Regionally noteworthy ecosystems: High quality examples of ecosystems such as bogs, fens, alvars, rock barrens, karst, coldwater streams and lakes, headwaters, white oak forest, significant bird migration corridors, and sand dunes which are infrequent in MMLT's catchment and therefore noteworthy.

7. Quality wetland ecosystems: Wetlands with species-at-risk (special concern, threatened, or endangered) provincially or federally; not significantly impacted by invasive alien species; with vegetation communities diverse in form (e.g., dense marsh, hemi-marsh, floating aquatics, open water); with high species richness; of significant size (>20 ac.); not significantly affected by other anthropogenic forces; and influenced by natural water level fluctuations.

8. Interior and Old Forest: Interior forest is high-quality forest habitat—a sheltered, secluded environment. Often defined the area > 100m from the forest edge, the most significant interior forest is > 200 m from the forest edge. Many bird species at-risk and in decline as well as bats rely on interior forest. Old forest (e.g., deciduous 120 yr., white cedar 110yr., hemlock 140yr., poplar 90 yr.) provides habitat particularly important for cavity users and ground-dwelling organisms. There are large snags, considerable coarse woody debris, and good, high canopy development in an old forest.

9. Noteworthy species: Species considered uncommon, sparse, rare, special concern, threatened, or endangered at the regional, provincial or national scale are considered noteworthy. Assessment is based on regional floras as well as species status assessments by provincial and federal governments and other conservation organizations.

10. Soundscape, Lightscape, Olfactoryscape: Aircraft sounds, human-generated (generators, traffic, voices) or human associated (e.g., dog barking) sounds. Sky darkness (stars clear, urban glow) and anthropogenic light visible at night. Presence of anthropogenic scents (smoke from fires, industrial odors, cigarette smoke, vehicle exhaust).

Community Engagement Potential

A. Natural beauty and Special features: Degree of engagement and the depth of the nature experience is partly determined by the natural beauty of the property and/or special features (scenic views, cultural heritage, connections to or nearness of other areas in public use (e.g., trails, parks)).

B. Wildness and Naturalness: “Wildness” of the land and the degree to which it appears to be in an ecologically natural state (minimal anthropogenic visual, auditory, olfactory intrusion perceivable on the property and on the surrounding landscape as perceived from the property) or having the potential to be restored to a wild state.

C. Access: Proximity to access points, presence of, or potential for development of parking, wilderness paths.

Stewardship Requirements

I. Buildings and other structures: Removal, maintenance, operational, liability and insurance requirements (heritage buildings, others).

II. Enforcement and Monitoring: Effort required by MMLT to regulate property use and conduct annual monitoring.

III. Stewards and partnerships: Availability of volunteers/stewards and potential property use by other organizations.

IV. Hazardous materials: Evidence/land use history suggesting site contamination, dump sites, or potential contamination from adjacent/nearby sources.

V. Use of adjacent land: Effects on the conservation values of the property from practices used on adjacent land (e.g., agricultural drainage, mining, logging, wind turbines/leases, road allowances, water extraction, waste dumping).

VI. Access and parking: Safe, adequate parking available or creation required and possible.