

Meadowlily Woods Environmentally Significant Area (MW ESA)
Conservation Master Plan – Phase 1 (Natural Resource Solution Inc., Feb. 2019)
Received at EEPAC: Feb. 21, 2019 meeting
Reviewed by: Carol Dyck, Susan Hall, Sandy Levin, March 2019

OVERVIEW

This Phase 1 work identifies the ESA as a unique site that has a number of unique vegetation communities as well as an endangered plants. It also has a relatively low number of non-native plants. Given this ESA is only just becoming subject to new development pressures on its borders, it is imperative the City move quickly to complete the Master Plan and to begin to close informal trails that threaten this unique area, and enforce the no bike rules.

Locally rare communities identified by NRSI using Bergsman and DeYoung, 2006 to indicate frequency in London are:

MAS Shallow Marsh, 1.5% (within FOD7-3 along River) and cattail shallow marsh
Maple Hemlock Mixed Forest (FOM3-2) FOM is less than 2.5%
Meadow Marsh was 5.6%

In addition, two rare vegetation communities were found in multiple areas of the ESA:

Dry-Fresh Hickory Deciduous Forest (FOD2-3): This rare vegetation community encompasses two moderately sized portions of interior forest within the subject site.

Fresh-Moist Black Walnut Lowland Deciduous Forest (FOD7-4): This rare vegetation community is located to the east of Meadowlily Road South near the Thames River.

1. *“The subject site includes the currently mapped Meadowlily Woods ESA , as well as the Thames Talbot Land Trust west of Meadowlily Road South, public lands north of the Thames River and private lands east of the MW ESA where access was provided” (i).* EEPAC supports the extension of the ESA north of the river, particularly from the viewpoint of potential development north of the river in the Norlan/Highbury Ave. area.

The subject site and the revised, ESA boundary delineation doesn't include land east of Hamilton Road. Map 5, “Natural Heritage”, in The London Plan depicts the ESA extending east beyond the subject area to the edge of the urban growth boundary. Though MW ESA is identified as one of the largest natural areas within the City of London (i), it still does not include all potential sensitive areas and significant valley lands. A study of the whole area has the potential of providing a more holistic/landscape view of the area. This holistic approach and assessment of biodiversity, migration and movement of species might be used to determine best management practices for the area as a whole even though some lands might not be part of the ESA.

Recommendation 1: Include the area to the east of the MW ESA boundary to the urban growth boundary, as identified on Map 5 of the London Plan, in the natural heritage inventory of Meadowlily Woods ESA.

Recommendation 1a: If this is not possible, Map 5 of the London Plan must be revised to show this area as a separate ESA as suggested in the NRSI report as well as revised to show the recommended revised boundaries of the Meadowlily Woods ESA.

2. The Park Farm Landscape Plan Report (Biologic 1998) *“involved an examination of historical artifacts and methods to restore both the cultural and natural environment surrounding Park Farm, located with the MW ESA”* (p.8). The Friends of Meadowlily have also located an old mill that was not mentioned in report.

Recommendation 2: Identify the location of the old mill and examine any historical artifacts and methods to restore both the cultural and natural environment around the old mill.

3. *“Field work consisting of a detailed, multi-season inventory and evaluation was carried out in 2013. Also, background info was gathered from a range of groups and studies. The MW ESA has been the site of numerous biological studies extending from the late 1970’s to the present day including EIS’s, EA’s, Master Plans, Natural Heritage Studies, research programs and other inventories (p.6)”*. These have been reviewed and relevant information included in the CMP, Phase 1. As part of the fieldwork areas needing ecological restoration were identified. P.81 describes the restoration practices that are needed. *“They include: waste removal; invasive species management (Common Buckthorn, Tartarian Honeysuckle, Garlic Mustard and Japanese Knotwood); and vegetation plantings in areas where there has been an abundance of pedestrian traffic, unauthorized dumping of refuse and where invasive species have been removed”*(p.81).

Recommendation 3: Provide a listing of ecological restoration work that has been done since 2013 to remove refuse, to manage invasive species, to plant any vegetation, and to reroute or close trails in heavily used areas.

Recommendation 4: If not already part of the restoration work, remove buckthorn that is growing in or near rare vegetation communities such as the Hickory Forest ELCs east of the Sport’s Park.

Recommendation 4a: EEPAC would appreciate knowing what is in the 2019 budget for the work identified in Recommendation 4.

Recommendation 5: Monitor the Red Oak Forest vegetation communities for oak wilt.

4. The MW ESA was *“identified as having a fairly healthy vegetation community. In total there are 435 species of which 316 species (73%) are native (p.21). It includes 3 SARs (Butternut, Kentucky Coffee Tree and wood poppy) as well as 2 rare vegetation communities (p.27). Other significant species observed are Barn swallow, Chimney swift, Eastern Wood Pee-Wee, Eastern Meadowlark, Snapping Turtle and Monarch”*(p.85). Given the richness of diversity and landscape, much of the ESA has been designated “Nature Reserve”. Also, given the pressures from nearby development and the already observed off- trail use in the area, it will be important to protect this ecological jewel.

Recommendation 6: Map all informal trails and include a topographical map with both managed and unmanaged trails marked.

Recommendation 7: Identify areas of proposed and actual subdivision development near the recommended boundaries of the ESA. Increased population might result in increased pressure on the natural environment and harm to endangered species. Identify the location of managed trails before informal trails become the norm.

Recommendation 8: Three different Thames Valley Parkway projects are proposed for this area according to the Development Charges Background Study. Provide more information on where the trails are located, type of trail surface, use of bridges over the ravines and relationship in terms of timing with the next phases of the Conservation Master Plan process.

Recommendation 9: The property owners at the east end of the ESA should be approached to dedicate ESA lands to the City now or at least allow the UTRCA to manage the lands. Ravine J and K lands were part of scoping meetings.