

Medway Valley Heritage Forest

Environmentally Significant Area

Welcome to the Medway Valley Heritage Forest Environmentally Significant Area (ESA). The publicly-owned lands cover 133 hectares (329 acres), roughly between the Elsie Perrin Williams Estate and Sunningdale Road West.

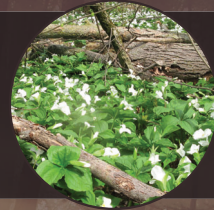
The ESA includes floodplain forests, swamps, marshes, and forested valley slopes. Medway Creek winds between steep banks up to 25 metres in height. Several small tributary streams feed the creek through steep-sided ravines.



Painted Turtle Photo Credit: Wendy Hamoud



Deer Photo Credit: Wendy Hamoud



White Williams Photo Credit: Cathy Quinlan

Trails

The map shows the 10.9 km of marked trails and pathways, identified with yellow markers on the trees, which follow both sides of the creek. The terrain is rolling with several steep climbs.

Shaping the Landscape

The Medway Valley was formed when glacial meltwater cut through the Arva Moraine during the retreat of the last glaciers more than 10,000 years ago. The gravelly moraine had been deposited by two glaciers, one moving north and the other south, pushing against each other. The area's geologic history can be seen in exposed, eroded creek banks or slip faces, where horizontal layers of sediment are revealed.

Plant Communities

The Medway Valley has a diversity of habitats including woodlands, floodplain meadows, and hawthorn thickets. The valley slopes and upland forests are home to Sugar Maple, American Beech, Black Cherry, Bitternut Hickory, and Basswood. Spring flowers include Red and White Trilliums, Mayapple, Violets, and Yellow and White Trout Lilies. There are a few large patches of Twinleaf.

In the damp flood plains, Willows, Black Walnut, Hackberry, and Sycamore grow. During the summer, look for colourful wildflowers such as Spotted Joe-Pye Weed, Blue Vervain and Swamp Milkweed.

In old orchards and abandoned pastures, shrubs such as hawthorn, Grey Dogwood, Crab Apple, White Elm, Basswood, and aspen are found. In summer, wildflowers fill the grassy meadows.

Wildlife

The valley provides habitat and food for many species of wildlife. Mallard and Belted Kingfisher are common year round, while Great Blue Heron and Wood Duck are regular summer visitors. The high banks often serve as nesting sites for bank swallows. Please do not disturb nests by climbing on the banks.

White-tailed Deer and smaller mammals are common in the ESA. The rarely seen Southern Flying Squirrel has also been recorded. Near the Creek, look for Muskrat, Mink, and Beaver, as well as frogs and turtles. Although 43 species of fish have been found in the creek, minnows, shiners, and carp are most commonly seen in the clear water. The ESA is home to several species-at-risk, both on land as well as in the water.

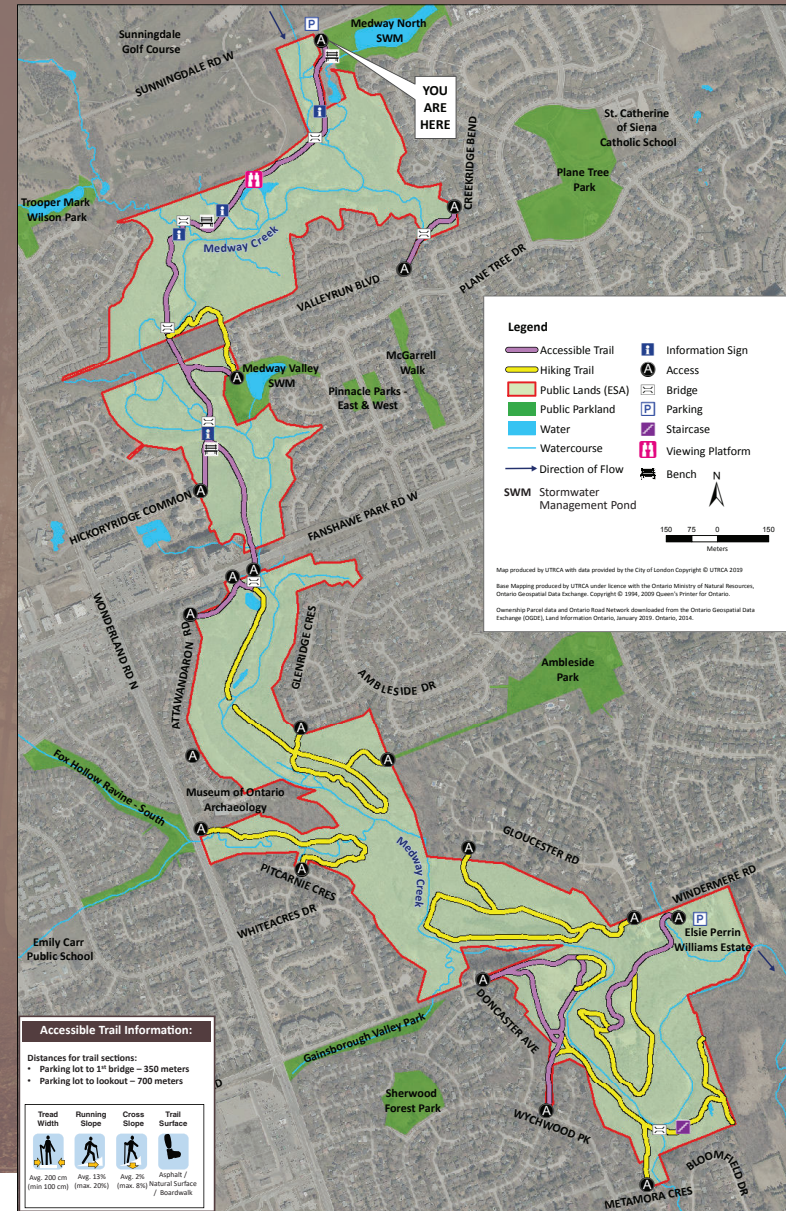
Community Partners

Adopt an ESA Groups, City of London, Friends of Medway Creek, Museum of Ontario Archaeology, Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

Things to Remember

To help protect the natural environment, please follow the rules when visiting London's ESAs:

1. Please use the official access points indicated on the trail maps.
2. Stay on the marked trails and pathways (identified with yellow markers on trees).
3. Bicycles are not permitted in ESAs except on specifically designated trails indicated by signs.
4. Access is allowed from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm.
5. Keep the ESAs litter free.
6. All pets must be on a leash (2m/6ft max.).
7. Do not feed the fish or wildlife.
8. Releasing or dumping fish, wildlife, or plants of any kind is prohibited and harmful to native species.
9. Fishing is permitted with a provincial fishing licence. No hunting is permitted.



Looking for more Information?

City of London, City Planning
www.london.ca/ESA, 519-661-4980
 Upper Thames River Conservation Authority
www.thamesriver.on.ca, 519-451-2800



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Early History

London is located in the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapeewak peoples, and the Medway's wooded slopes and creeks have been utilized by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years. The area was used for hunting, fishing, harvesting seasonal food and medicinal plants, and around 1000 years ago, for farming of the upland areas. More than 500 years ago, a large village stood near where the Museum of Ontario Archaeology is now located. The village was the home to hundreds of people whose descendants today are part of several Indigenous communities in southern Ontario.

Archaeological investigations conducted at this site date back to the mid-1800s, making it one of the longest continuously investigated sites in Canada. The Museum of Ontario Archaeology opened its doors at its current location in 1981. To learn more about the Indigenous heritage of this region, please visit the museum located on the north side of Snake Creek above Medway Valley.

Drone image of the Lawson archaeological site. Photo Credit: B. Collin Craxter, 2017



Winter Longhouse Photo Credit: Museum of Ontario Archaeology



Longhouse Photo Credit: Museum of Ontario Archaeology



Swamp Milkweed Photo Credit: Brenda Gallagher



Medway Winter Scene Photo Credit: Cathy Quinlan



Great Blue Heron Photo Credit: Wendy Hansford



Red Trillium Photo Credit: Wendy Hansford



Male Wood Duck Photo Credit: Vids

Recent History

In the 19th and 20th centuries, European settlers logged and farmed the valley area. After 1945, the land was retired from farming and allowed to naturalize. Following the demolition of an earlier house, the Elsie Perrin Williams Estate was designed and constructed in 1916-1917 under the direction of architect John M. Moore for Dr. Hadley Williams and Elsie Perrin Williams while overseas during WWI. The house was constructed with Spanish architectural influences.

Trails, river crossings, a small private golf course and picnic areas introduced local residents to the valley.



Elsie Perrin Williams Estate Photo Credit: Cathy Quinlan



Cathouse-1914 from SE corner Photo Credit: Heritage London Foundation

Conservation Efforts

With the first residential development in the 1950s, more local residents began enjoying the valley lands and appreciating its natural beauty. Some rural property owners transferred land to the City of London in the late 1940s and 1950s. In the 1960s, a trail was marked through the Medway Valley with the help of the Thames Valley Trail Association. The trail was named the Winder Trail in honour of local conservationist Steven Winder.

Since the 1980s, more ESA land has been acquired by the City of London and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA).

The City of London has designated the Medway Valley Heritage Forest as an Environmentally Significant Area (ESA). The natural area meets all seven of the London Plan ESA Criteria which can be found on the City Of London's website.

Invasive species management and ecological restoration work is funded by the City of London and enhanced by 'Adopt an ESA' groups such as the Friends of Medway Creek and local volunteers. The City and UTRCA received Federal recognition in 2017 for their leadership and innovative restoration work to protect the False Rue-anemone habitat in the ESA from invasive Goutweed. Since 2002, the UTRCA's ESA Team has completed most of the hands on aspects of ESA management under a contract funded by the City of London. The ESA Team is responsible for day to day monitoring, trail improvements, invasive species control, restoration, enforcement, and education.

The Friends of Medway Creek is a local volunteer group established in 2008 with the assistance of the UTRCA. The group's mission statement is "Community members promoting the protection and improvement of the Medway Creek watershed." They organize community events, pick up garbage, plant native trees and shrubs, remove invasive species, and secure funds from the City of London for benches and educational signs.

New members are always welcome!

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