



Toronto and Region
Conservation
for The Living City

November 21, 2013

Ms. Fiona Chapman, Acting Director
Waterfront Secretariat
100 Queen St. West - 12th Fl, East Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
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Dear Ms. Chapman:

Re: Motion to report on the Status of the Toronto Island Bird Sanctuary

Further to the Subcommittee to Review the Billy Bishop Airport Consultant Reports on November 7, 2013 and Councillor Vaughan's motion to provide clarification on the status of the Island Bird Sanctuary, please find the following information.

The Island Bird Sanctuary is the name often used to describe the Island's bird habitat but it does not actually hold any formal designation as a "Wildlife Sanctuary" and is therefore not protected as a Sanctuary under any legislation. However, the Toronto Islands by their very nature create a significant natural habitat for flora and fauna. The Toronto Islands have a number of important designations that do offer some level of protection such as a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) Complex, an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), and 4 Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA's).

Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW)

The Province of Ontario developed a system for evaluating relative importance of wetlands in southern and northern Ontario that has been used since 1984. This system, the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES), provides a framework for determining which wetlands are provincially significant, based on measuring attributes that relate to their features and functions. Four broad categories are evaluated and scored by the OWES: Biological, hydrological, social and special features. A cumulative score of over 200 points makes the wetland provincially significant.

The Toronto Islands Coastal Wetland Complex has been designated as a Provincially Significant Wetland. These wetlands provide feeding areas for colonial bird species, waterfowl and rare migrants as they move through the urban environment. The wetlands also provide important foraging area for many of the significant species nesting at Tommy Thompson Park. They provide foraging and resting area for hundreds of migrating bird species.

Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI)

Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest are areas of land and water that represent significant geological (earth science) and biological (life science) features. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) identifies ANSI's that are 'provincially significant' by surveying regions and

evaluating sites to decide which have the highest value for conservation, scientific study and education. Muggs Island and the wildlife sanctuary which includes Forestry Island, Snake Island, East Wards Island, Hanlan's Beach and West Algonquin were designated as Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest – Life Science due to their regional significance by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 1983.

Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA)

Within the City of Toronto's natural heritage system there are natural areas which are particularly significant or sensitive and which require additional protection to preserve their environmental qualities and significance. These areas are referred to as Environmentally Significant Areas or ESA's. ESA's are meant to capture the most locally and regionally significant terrestrial natural heritage areas within the City's natural heritage system. Portions of Muggs Island, Hanlan's Beach and Centre Island Meadow/Wildlife Sanctuary are designated as ESA's. These ESA's are comprised of woodlands, lagoon edges, wet meadows, dunes and sand prairies which support significant plant species and provide natural habitat for rare indigenous species. Within these plant communities there are 40 regionally rare species.

Municipal official plan policies play an important role in protecting provincially significant natural heritage features such as wetlands from development-related impacts. The City of Toronto Official Plan policy 3.4.14 concerning protection of provincially significant natural features is such a policy. In Ontario south of the Canadian Shield, development is not permitted near significant wetlands, significant wildlife habitat or Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI's), unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no negative impacts on the features or on their ecological functions.

In Ontario, wetlands and other significant natural heritage features, receive indirect protection through the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*, *Municipal Act*, *Endangered Species Act*, *Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act*, *Conservation Lands Act*, *Conservation Authorities Act*, *Environmental Assessment Act* and the *Ontario Water Resources Act*.

Migratory Bird Sanctuaries are created in Canada under the *Migratory Birds Convention Act*, 1994. They are administered by the Canadian Wildlife Service. The purpose of this Act is to implement the Convention by protecting and conserving migratory birds as populations and as individual birds, and their nests.

Please contact the undersigned at (416) 661 6600 ext. 5313 or ngaffney@trca.on.ca, if you have any questions or require additional information.

Yours truly,

Nancy Gaffney
Waterfront Specialist
Watershed Management Division

cc: Roz Dyers, City Clerk's Office