

**Evaluation of the Natural Areas Conservation Program
Final Report dated June 20, 2012**

**Recommendations & NCC Management Responses
8 March 2013**

Recommendation:

1. It is recommended that NCC work to ensure that any future Program includes a stronger stewardship component.

If the Program is renewed, it is recommended that NCC work to ensure that the allocation of Program funds between new acquisitions and stewardship purposes is appropriate and in accordance with operational needs. It is recommended that new acquisitions within priority sites should continue and that a greater percentage of the resources be allocated to ensure that the species at risk and elements of biodiversity on properties acquired through the Program (including both newly acquired properties and previously acquired properties) are protected in the long-term.

Furthermore, NCC should continue to explore the possibility of incorporating stewardship concepts that promote conservation on lands outside and adjacent to secured properties, with a view to promoting connectivity and/or establishing wildlife corridors to ensure conservation of the broader landscape in and around these sites. Approaches like those implemented by the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds 'FutureScapes' should be considered.

NCC's Management Response:

NCC agrees with this recommendation.

Ongoing stewardship of acquisitions in priority sites to ensure long-term protection

While the primary focus of the NACP (the Program) to date has been the securement (fee simple, and Conservation Agreements (CAs), including easement, covenant or servitude) of natural areas important for the protection of species at risk and other biodiversity, equally as important are funds for ongoing stewardship activities on lands acquired under the Program.

In any renewal of the Program, NCC would undertake an analysis of stewardship requirements to determine the appropriate allocation of Program funds that might be split between new property acquisitions and meeting stewardship requirements on Program lands in order to afford ongoing protection to biodiversity targets and species at risk identified on these lands. As part of this analysis, NCC would explore options for more specific stewardship requirements. It is expected that the Program, and its reported results, would be significantly strengthened if a stronger stewardship component existed.

The broader landscape

NCC agrees that there is a need for continuous research into stewardship concepts that promote the conservation of lands outside and adjacent to secured properties in order to promote connectivity and/or establish wildlife corridors on the broader landscape in and around lands secured under the Program. While these types of stewardship concepts are already incorporated into NCC’s planning processes, NCC recognizes the value of considering other approaches to stewardship and will conduct a specific review of such processes undertaken by a select group of other organizations with similar conservation missions, including those approaches specifically implemented by the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds, all with a view to enhancing conservation achievements.

Statement of Agreement / Disagreement with the Recommendation		
NCC agrees with this recommendation.		
Management Action		
<p>If the program is renewed:</p> <p>Ongoing stewardship of acquisitions in priority sites to ensure long-term protection</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCC will undertake an analysis of options for stewardship requirements to determine the appropriate allocation of Program funds between new property acquisitions and meeting stewardship requirements on Program lands. 2. NCC will share the results of this analysis of stewardship requirements with EC . <p>The broader landscape</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. NCC will conduct a specific review of stewardship activities that promote the conservation of lands outside and adjacent to secured properties in order to promote connectivity and/or establish wildlife corridors on the broader landscape in and around lands secured under the Program, as such stewardship activities are currently being undertaken by a select group of third party conservation organizations, including those of the Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds. 4. NCC will share the results of this review of stewardship activities with EC. <p>Where possible, and provided that the requisite funding and other required resources are available, NCC will consider implementing such additional stewardship activities, as NCC’s management deems appropriate, to further support the goals of the Program.</p>		
Timeline	Deliverable(s)	Responsible Party
Within six months following formal notification of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCC report analyzing stewardship requirements and recommending allocation of funds split between new property acquisitions and meeting 	NCC

Program renewal	<p>stewardship requirements on Program lands, to be shared with EC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCC report on the results of the review of select third parties' stewardship activities that promote the conservation of lands outside and adjacent to secured properties in order to promote connectivity and/or establish wildlife corridors on the broader landscape in and around lands secured under the Program, to be shared with EC. • NCC meeting minutes providing evidence of internal discussion regarding consideration of implementing additional stewardship activities. 	
-----------------	--	--

Recommendation:

2. It is recommended that NCC clarify the expectations of the OQO component of the Program and explore options for the delivery and reporting mechanisms for OQOs in any future Program.

A) NCC to clarify whether and how future OQO participation is to be supported.

If the Program is renewed, it is recommended that NCC work to clearly articulate the need for broad participation from OQOs in the Program. If a need is determined, NCC should explore how best to build capacity within this community to participate more fully in the future. This could be accomplished, for example, through direct support to the Canadian Land Trust Alliance or individual OQOs, by EC through its funding programs, or through other means deemed appropriate to: (i) grow awareness of the Program, its requirements and planning processes; and, (ii) support OQOs in their application, reporting, and fund raising processes. As well, NCC should explore innovative options for helping OQOs meet matching and endowment fund requirements.

In addition, if the Program is renewed, it is recommended that NCC explore options regarding funding, managing and implementing the OQO component.

Management Response:

NCC agrees with this recommendation.

If the Program is renewed, NCC will follow up with EC to clarify whether or not broad participation from OQOs in the Program is a desired goal of the Program. If determined to be the goal, NCC will then

investigate how best to support future OQO participation. NCC will consider options (including, but not limited to those specifically identified in the Evaluation) such as (i) delivering the OQO Program by way of third-party funding assists from NCC Regions and/or (ii) awarding funds to an entity (e.g. Canadian Land Trust Alliance or similar organization) for further distribution to qualified OQOs and/or (iii) by directing OQOs to other sources of potential funding (including EC programs) and/or (iv) by having NCC retain overall program management of Program-monies grants to OQOs from its National Office, and/or (v) by some combination of the foregoing. Results of the investigation will be shared with Environment Canada.

NCC recognizes the match funding constraints faced by OQOs and would undertake to explore other funding options by which OQOs might be able to source matching funds.

Further, if the Program is renewed with an OQO sub-granting component, NCC will examine other means (including, but not limited to those specifically identified in the Evaluation) by which support for Canadian land trusts applying for grants may be further enhanced. More focused efforts to support the efforts of OQOs would be made through the use of various media (including social media) to broaden awareness of the OQO sub-granting program, and provide more detailed on-line information concerning the guidelines and process by which funding decisions are determined.

Statement of Agreement / Disagreement with the Recommendation		
NCC agrees with this recommendation.		
Management Action		
<p>If the program is renewed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCC will contact EC to clarify whether or not broad participation from OQOs in the Program is a desired goal of the Program. 2. NCC will investigate how best to support future OQO participation, including, examination of OQO eligibility criteria for participation under the Program and review of alternative mechanisms of Program delivery. As part of this review, NCC will also explore options regarding funding, managing, and implementing of the OQO component. Results will be shared with EC. 3. NCC will review other options by which OQOs might source matching funds under the Program and share review results with EC. 4. NCC will examine and identify other means by which OQOs might be supported in applying for Program funding, including increased Program profile and more readily-available information on Program guidelines and share review results with EC. 		
Timeline	Deliverable(s)	Responsible Party

<p>Within six months following formal notification of Program renewal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of NCC contacting EC to clarify whether broad participation of OQOs in the Program is a desired goal. • NCC report reviewing eligibility criteria, alternative internal and external mechanisms for Program delivery and potential OQO match funding sources, to be shared with EC. • NCC report identifying other means to support OQOs in applying for the Program, to be shared with EC. 	<p>NCC</p>
---	--	------------

B) NCC to determine how to achieve greater integration in the delivery and reporting mechanisms for DUC.

If the Program is renewed, NCC should determine how to achieve greater integration and consistency of Program delivery between DUC and NCC, so as to realize more integrated priority site planning, performance measurement, and expenditure reporting, and ensure that all OQOs participate consistently and are subject to the same Program requirements.

NCC’s Management Response:

NCC agrees with this recommendation.

NCC recognizes there is a need for greater integration and consistency in the delivery and reporting mechanisms for DUC. Both NCC and DUC also, however, clearly recognize that fundamental differences exist with respect to each organization’s approach to delivering results under the Program. NCC notes that DUC’s size and landscape-level approach to wetland conservation may well justify a more customized approach to DUC meeting and reporting on its results under a renewed Program, when compared to the specific planning and reporting obligations of other, typically much smaller, OQOs.

Under a renewed Program, NCC would undertake to work closely with DUC to define and ensure that DUC’s Program delivery requirements with respect to priority site planning, performance measurement, expenditure reporting and stewardship endowment contributions are more closely aligned with NCC’s approach and are collectively delivered and reported on in a similar format that is acceptable to EC. These requirements would then be incorporated in detail within a new NCC-DUC funding agreement.

<p>Statement of Agreement / Disagreement with the Recommendation</p>
<p>NCC agrees with this recommendation.</p>
<p>Management Action</p>

If the program is renewed:

1. NCC will determine options on how to achieve greater integration and consistency of Program delivery. NCC will share options and recommendations with DUC and EC.

Timeline	Deliverable(s)	Responsible Party
Within six months following formal notification of Program renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCC report reviewing options to achieve greater integration and consistency of Program delivery, to be shared with DUC and EC.	NCC