



Bruce Trail  
CONSERVANCY

# Land Stewardship Conservation in Action

December 10, 2020



MISSION

**Preserving a ribbon of wilderness,  
for everyone, forever.**

VISION

The Bruce Trail secured within a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment.

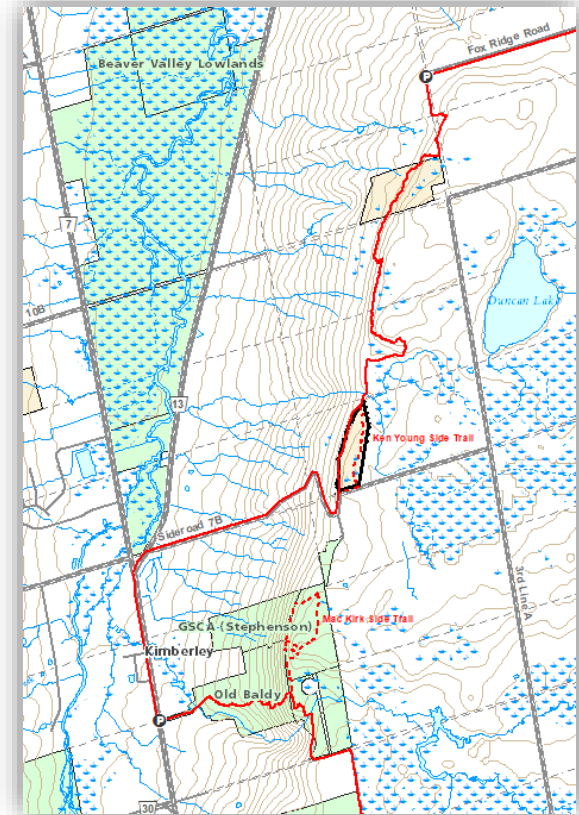
VALUES

Commitment | Integrity | Stewardship | Collaboration | Respect

# Land Stewardship Program

## - Overview -

- **1970's:** BTC began acquiring land to secure the Optimum Route
- **1996:** Land Stewardship Program was created to manage BTC land
- **1997/98:** BTC transferred ~4500 ac to Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT)
- **2019:** 315 parcels = 12,000 acres managed by the BTC



*First BTC acquisition was 1976 – K. Young property near Old Baldy in the Beaver Valley*

## BTC-Managed Land

- BTC = 6241 acres (155 parcels)
- OHT = 4581 acres (128 parcels)
- Easements = 313 acres (27 parcels)
- Ontario Nature = 764 acres (2 parcels)
- Ontario Realty Corporation = 20 acres (1 parcel)
- Management Board Secretariat = 8 acres (1 parcel)



## Land Stewardship Program

- 1 Land Stewardship Committee Chair
- 2 BTC Staff Ecologists/Land Stewardship Coordinators
- 9 Club Land Stewardship Directors (plus assistants)
- 250 Land Stewards



## Land Stewards

- Assigned a property to steward by Land Stewardship Director
- Visit property at least twice annually
- Provide written annual report to Land Stewardship Director and BTC staff after fall visit
- Keep a record of their observations on the property, noting misuse, changes, species, etc.
- Implement recommendations in Land Stewardship Plan for their property
- Make new recommendations for management based on their observations
- Bring problems to the attention of their Land Stewardship Director



## Land Stewardship Directors

- Recruit and train volunteers as Land Stewards
- Sit on the Land Stewardship Committee – 2x meetings/year
- Assist Land Stewards with the implementation of recommendations in each Land Stewardship Plan
- Keep their Club Executive & LS Committee advised of Land Stewardship activities and issues within each Club
- Collect annual reports from the Land Stewards and forward them to BTC Land Stewardship Staff



- Produce Land Stewardship Plans for each BTC managed property and update at least 5 older LS Plans per year
- Assist Land Stewardship Directors in solving issues related to unauthorized use of BTC managed land and provide advice/support on projects
- Provide Program's volunteers with necessary documents (Land Stewardship Plan, survey plan, maps, annual inspection forms)
- Produce and monitor Land Use Agreements (Brian)
- Assist in organizing Land Stewardship workshops
- Work closely with Land Stewardship Committee Chair to solve problems and increase effectiveness of the Program
- Liaise with OHT on stewardship issues and audit 10 OHT owned properties per year
- Community outreach and education, including the production of informative literature and liaising with other conservation organizations
- Sit on Land Stewardship Committee in ex-officio capacity

## Land Stewardship Staff





## Land Stewardship - After Acquisition

- Assign Land Steward
- BTC Land Stewardship Staff Site Visits
- Prepare Land Stewardship Plan
- Initiation of projects or recommendations from Land Stewardship Plan
- 10-year review of Land Stewardship Plan

## Staff Property Visits

BTC staff perform 3-season biophysical inventory (spring, summer, fall) to identify:

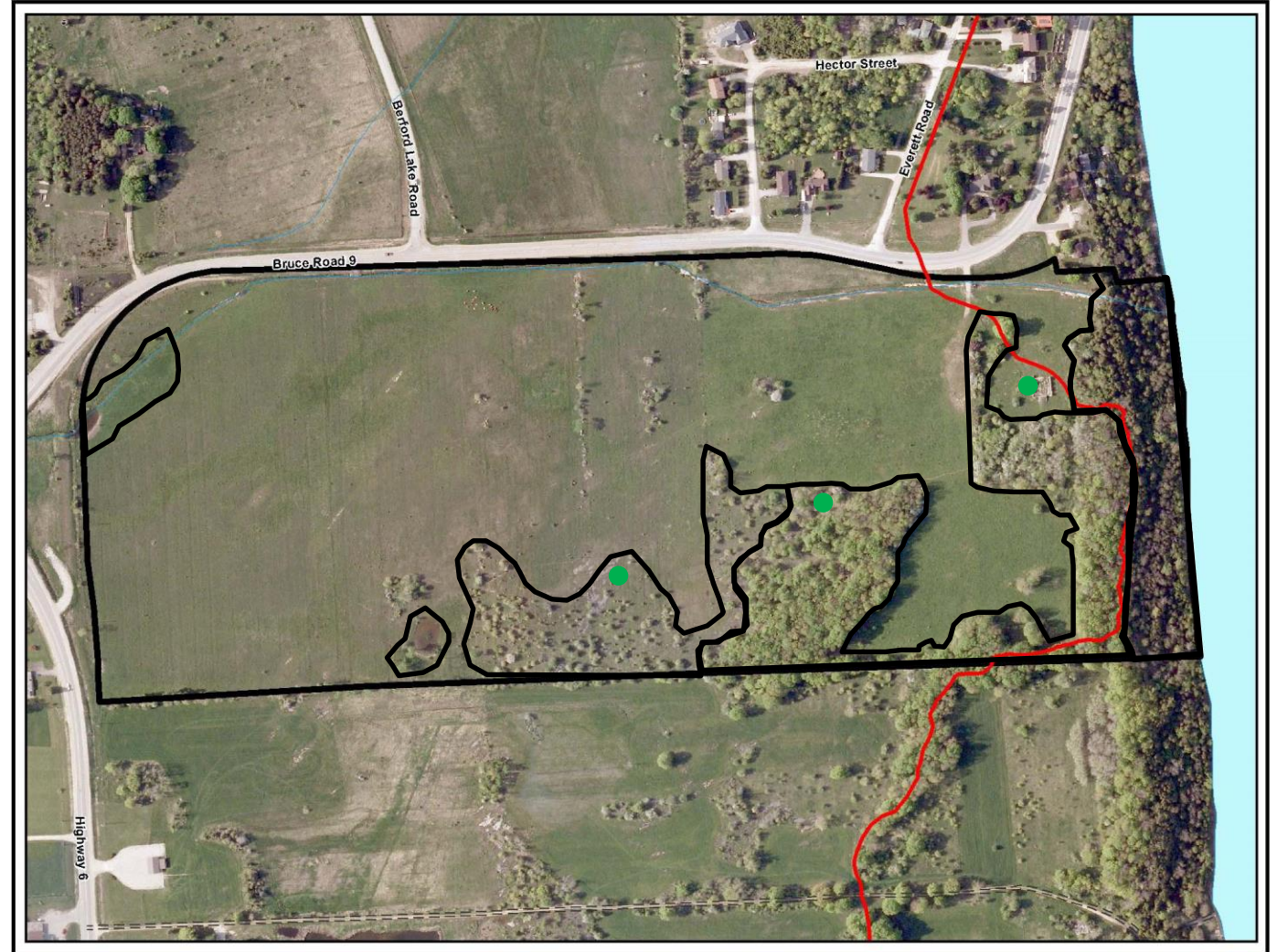
- Biophysical Features (plants, animals, geology, soils, hydrology)
- Species at Risk
- Ecological Communities
- Invasive Species
- Cultural Features (structures, agriculture)
- Encroachment/Trespassing



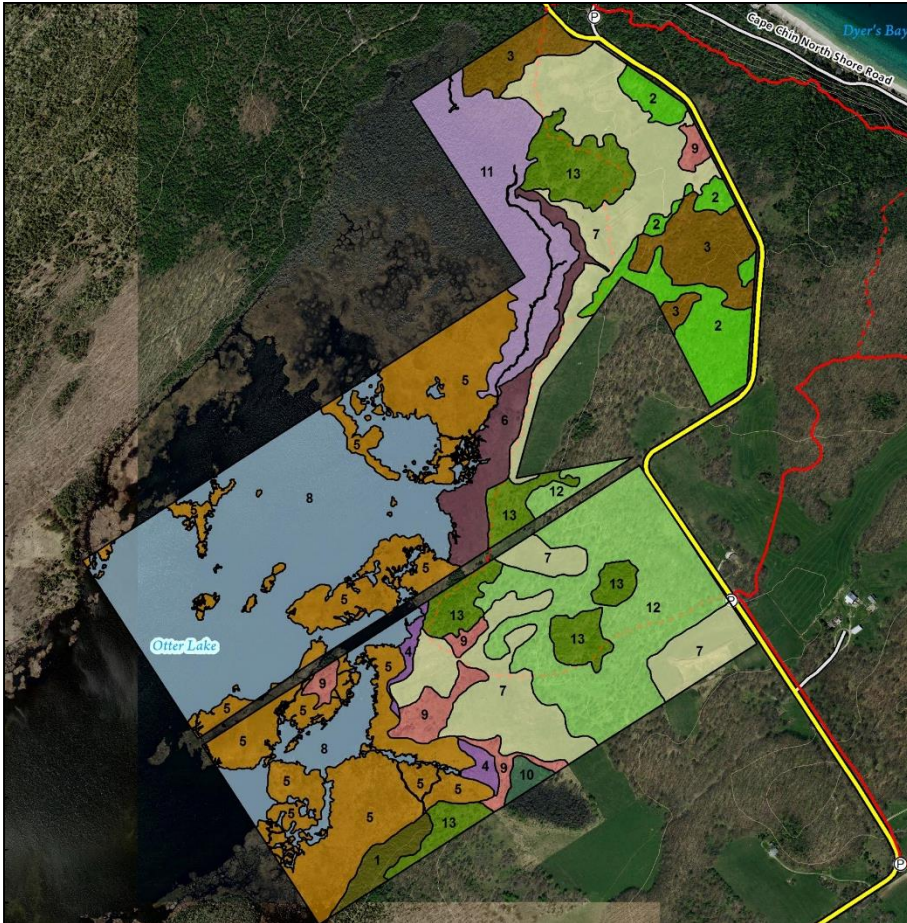


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# Biophysical Inventory



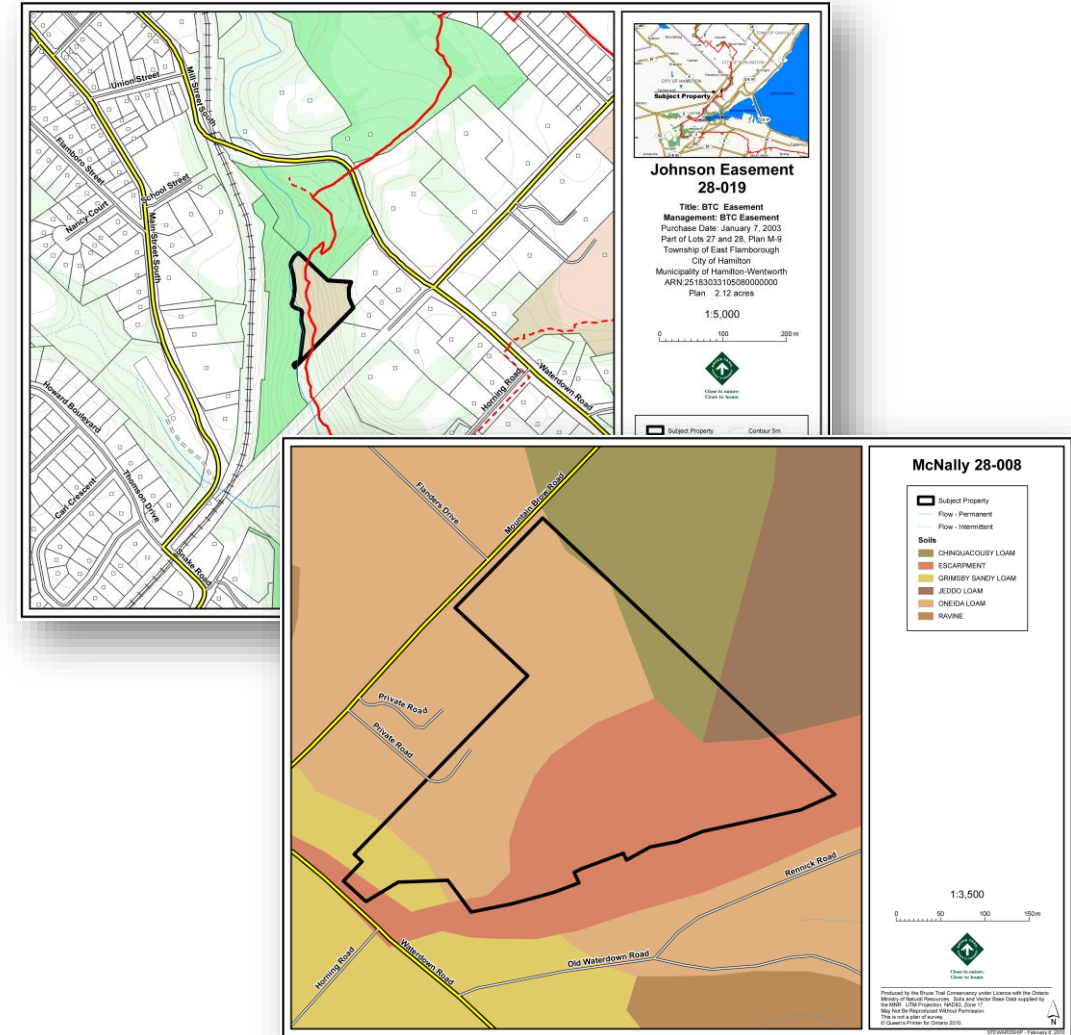
## Ecological Communities



- The Ecological Land Classification system was developed by the MNRF to standardize the criteria for which ecological communities were categorized.
- Gathering information about the amount and abundance of species in an area, along with soils and topography results in a unique community code.
- Knowing the ecological community type is important to help understand and manage our properties – some are rare.

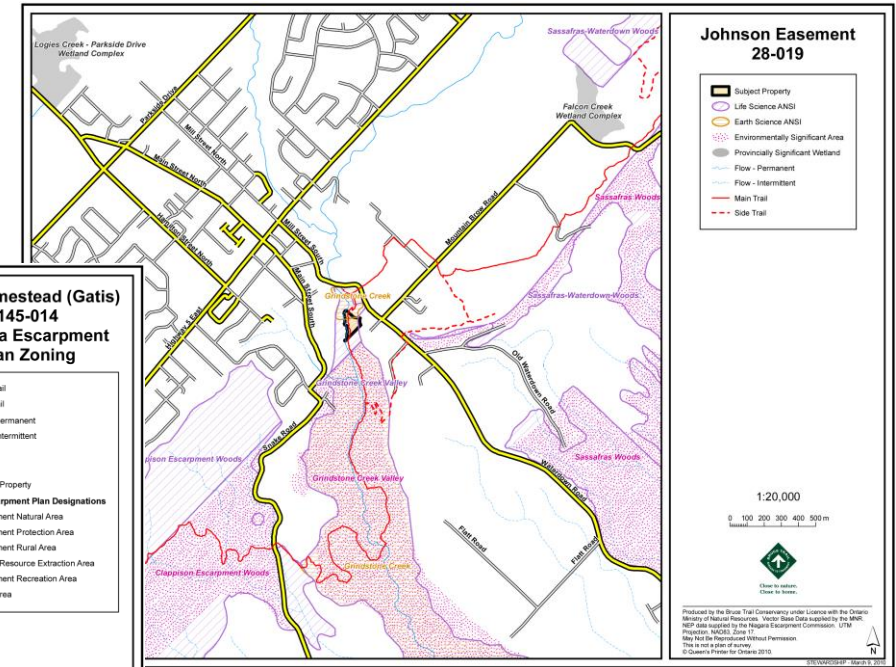
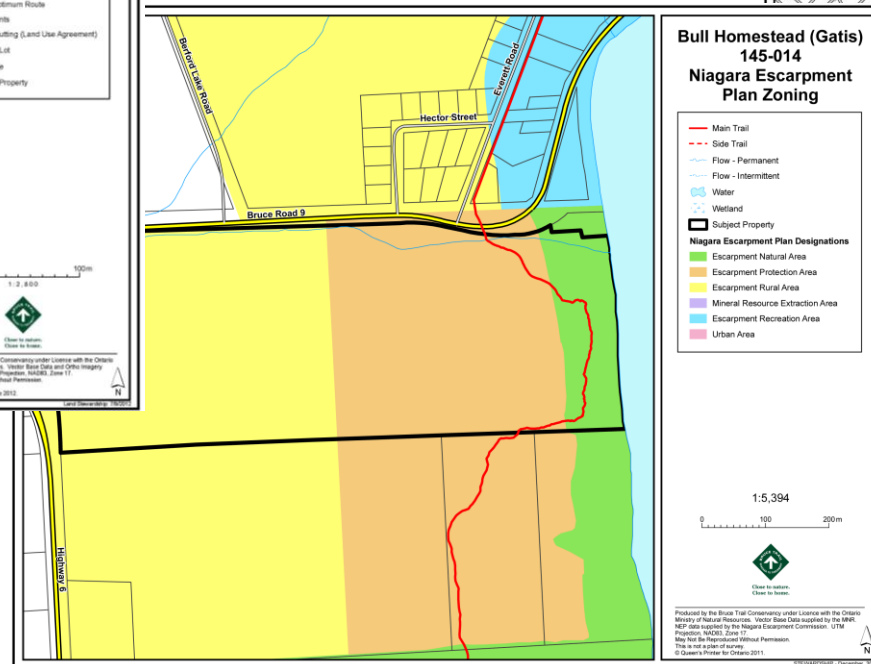
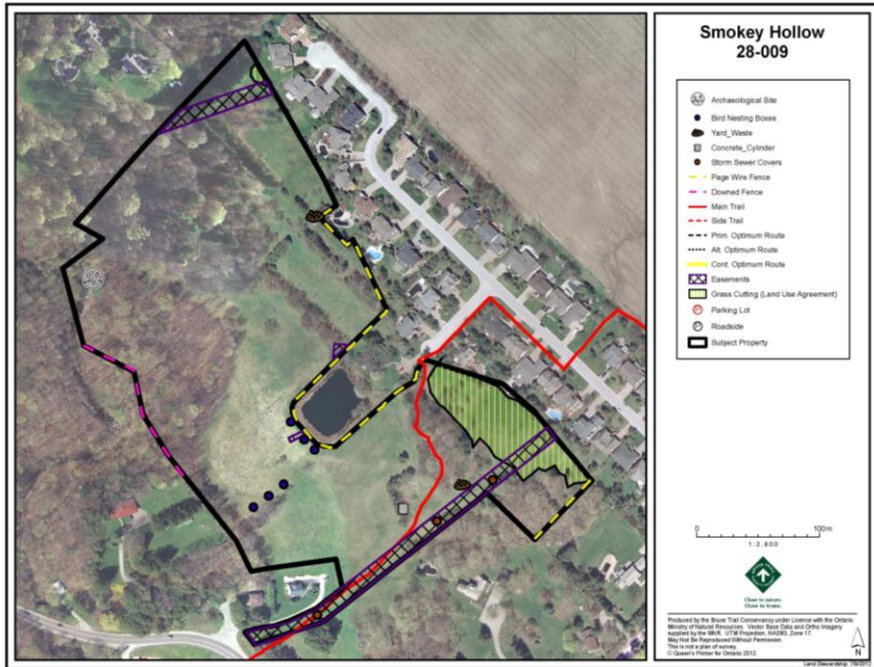
# Mapping

- Local and Regional Context
- Soils and Drainage
- Biotic Conditions
- Cultural Conditions
- Niagara Escarpment Plan
- Special Land Use Designations
- Sensitive features



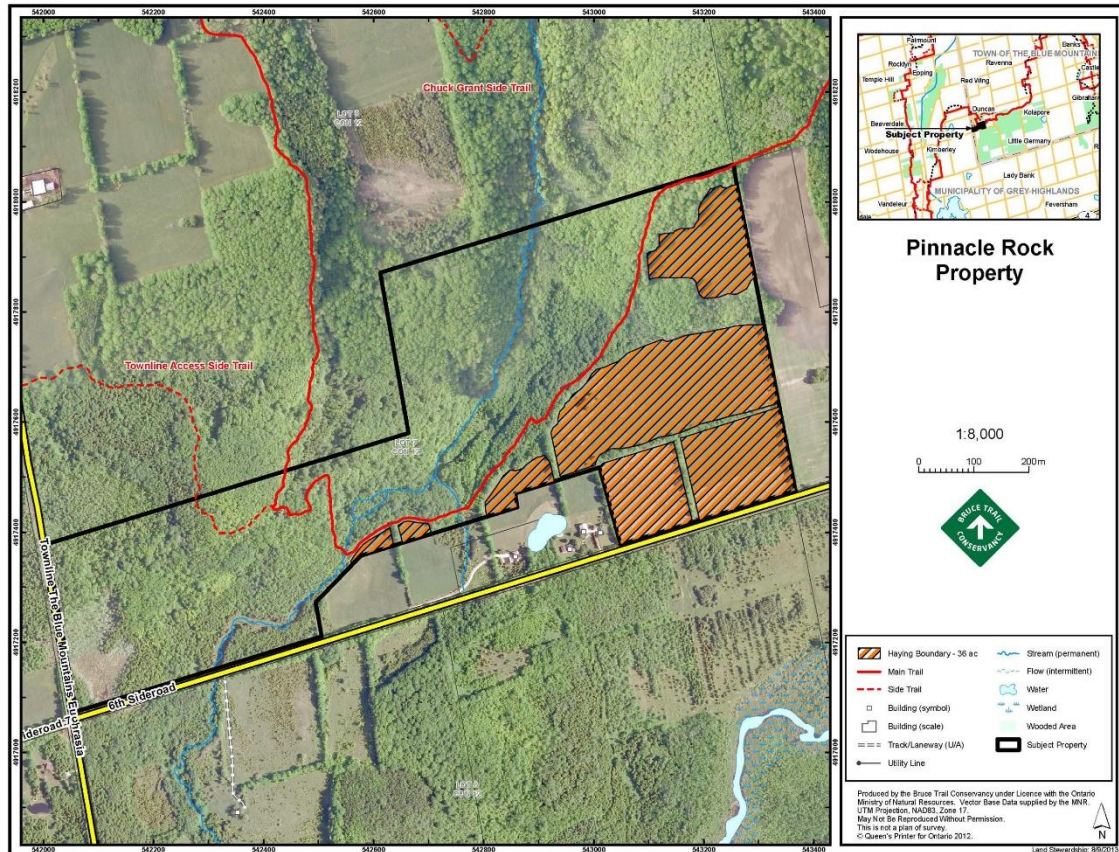


## Mapping – Cont'd





## Land Use Agreements



- Exist when a pre-authorized activity occurs on a BTC managed property that is anything other than hiking.
- Examples include: Haying, Riding of Horses, Snowmobile use, Mowing of Grass and Cattle Grazing

## Species at Risk

- A **sensitive species** is defined as rare in a given region based on the number of observations by either the federal, provincial, municipal government or a qualified organization
- Some designated “**Species at Risk**”: species that are either federally or provincially rare and displaying noticeable population declines.
- Species at Risk are protected under provincial/federal legislation
- The 2 organizations that designate Species at Risk are:
  - Committee on the Status of Wildlife in Canada – COSEWIC
  - Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario – COSSARO

**Special Concern** - A species with characteristics that make it sensitive to human activities or natural events.

**Threatened** - A species that is at risk of becoming endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.

**Endangered** - A species facing imminent extinction or extirpation.



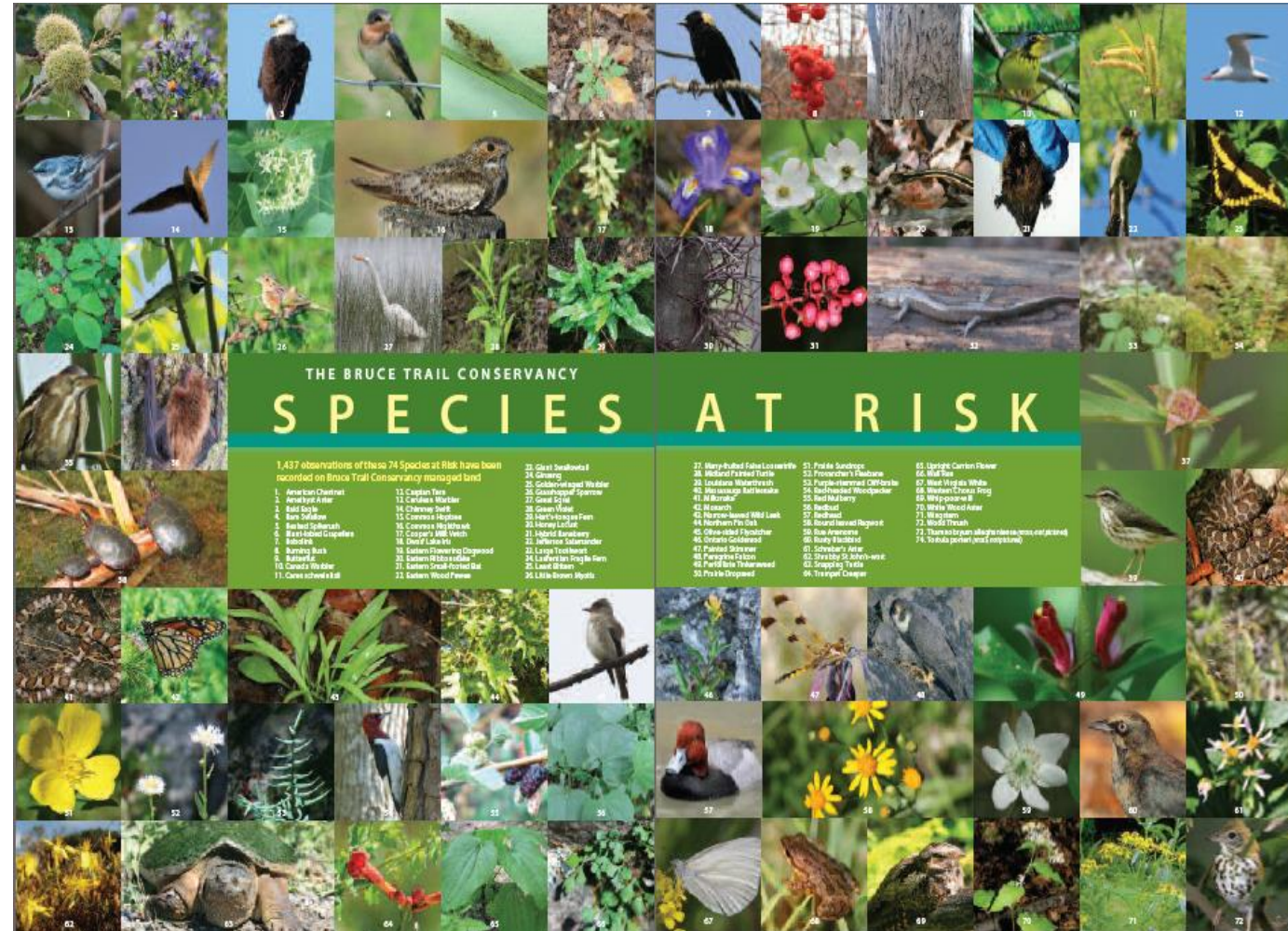


## Species at Risk

The BTC currently has 1537 records of 84 different species of conservation concern on BTC-managed land

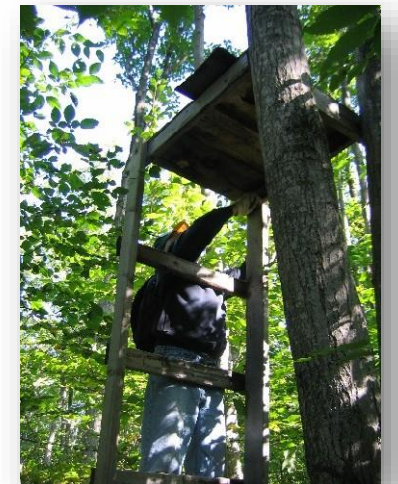
### The most abundant are:

- Butternut – Endangered
- American Hart’s Tongue Fern – Special Concern
- Bobolink – Threatened
- Eastern Meadowlark – Threatened
- Eastern Wood-pewee – Special Concern
- Wood Thrush – Threatened
- Monarch – Special Concern



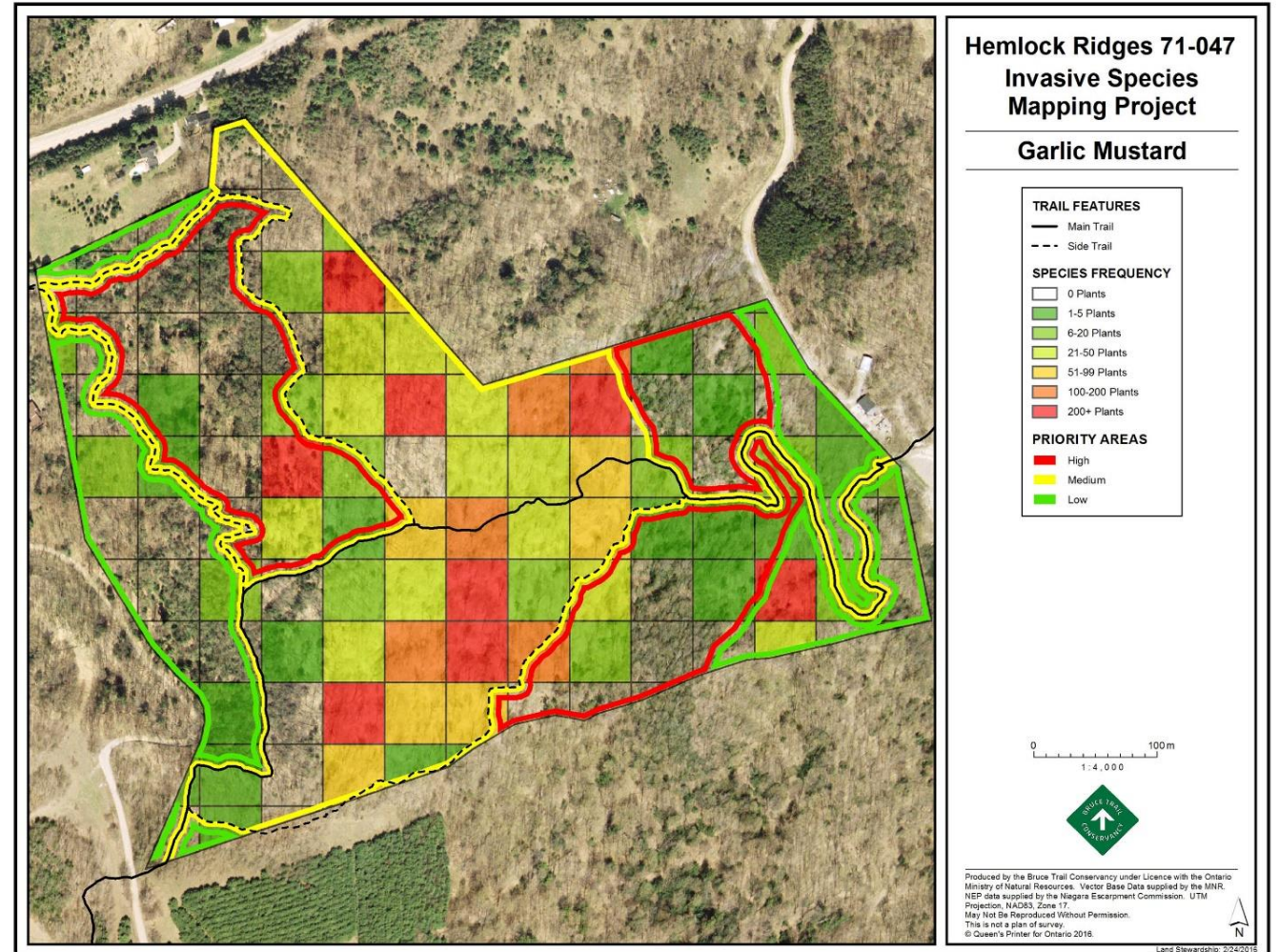
## Encroachment or Misuse

- Any instances where there are obvious signs of activities that are counter to BTC policy.
  - ATV/Motorized Vehicle Usage
  - Bicycling
  - Dumping of Yard Waste
  - Encroachment from Neighbouring Properties
  - Damage to Vegetation (including tree removal)
  - Hunting



# Invasive Species

- Target Species:
  - Garlic Mustard
  - Common Buckthorn
  - Dog-strangling Vine
  - Giant Hogweed
  - Japanese Knotweed
  - Wild Chervil



## Boot Brush Stations

- Began installations in summer of 2018
- 30 stations along the Bruce Trail in Peninsula section



# Conservation Works

- Tree/Shrub Plantings
- Wildflower/Grass Plantings
- Grassland Restoration
- Bird Boxes
- Bee Boxes



## Corporate Volunteer Events

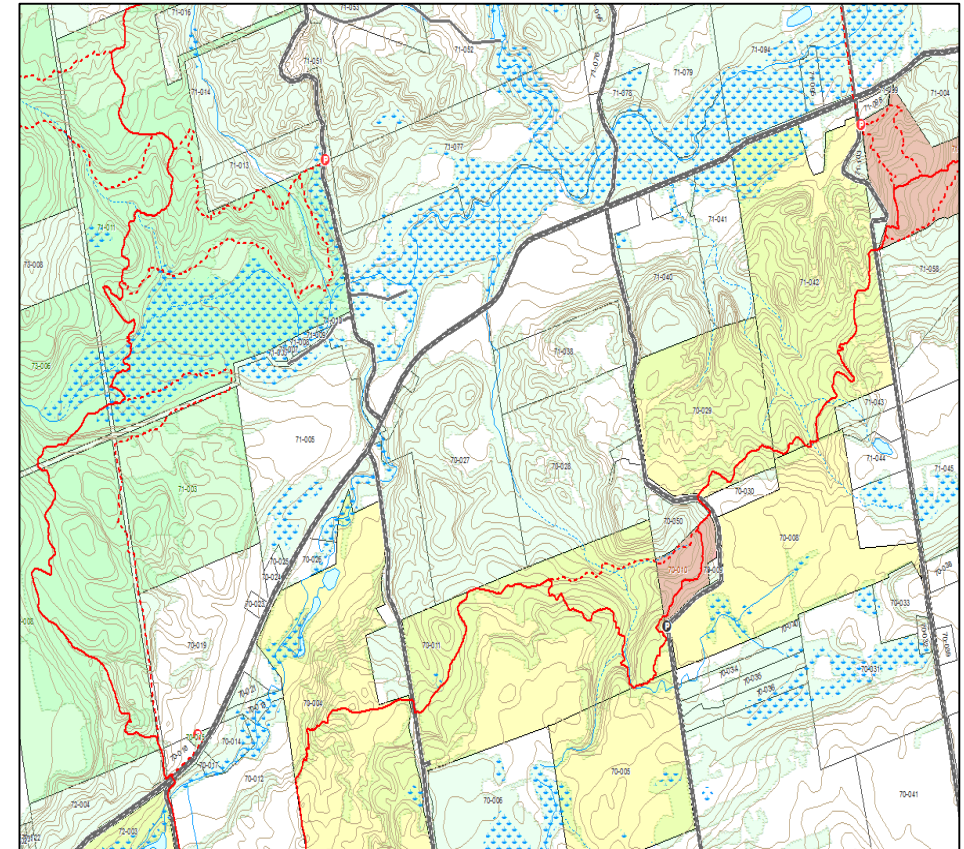
- Tree/Shrub/Wildflower Plantings
- Invasive Species Removal
- Bird/Bee House Installation
- Interpretive Hikes
- Trail Closures
- Construction



- 2004 – First BTC corporate volunteer group
- 2008 – BTC began asking for donations
- 2017 - Increased Events

# The Landowner Stewardship Program

- Focused on assisting private landowners with stewardship between ‘islands of conservation’
- Any landowner with Bruce Trail Optimum Route on their property can participate
- Program includes
  - Free site visit
  - Stewardship plan
  - Stewardship resources
  - Support for stewardship projects



## Landowner Stewardship Program – First Year Successes

- 13 landowners engaged across 4 club sections
- Invasive species removal ongoing across 6 acres of private property
- 73 native trees, shrubs and wildflowers planted (plus 1kg of seed)
- Neighbours working together to increase their impact!





## The Landowner Stewardship Program – What’s Next

- Continuing our work with landowners who joined in 2020 plus engaging new landowners
- Hoping to engage landowners across all 9 club sections next year
- Spread the word to your friends and neighbours!



For more information or to participate, email Mara McHaffie at [mmchaffie@brucetrail.org](mailto:mmchaffie@brucetrail.org)

## Special Projects

- Otter lake birding platform
- Devil's Monument safety measures
- Fox property – restoration and house
- Fisher's Pond prairie restoration
- Building/Structure Removal - Horwood - also viewing areas
- Parking Lots
- Trail Routing/Re-Routing on BTC Land
- Long-term Breeding Bird Surveys
- Barrier Installation
- Fencing

## Partnerships

- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Conservation Authorities – CVC, NPCA, GSCA, CH
- Ontario Nature
- Ontario Land Trust Alliance
- Ducks Unlimited
- McMaster University

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